

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry  
for the Christian community*

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## WHEN WE SEE JESUS

How will each of us react when, finally, we see Jesus with our physical eyes? Are we already anticipating that event, and preparing ourselves for the glorious instant of visual reality (Revelation 19 v 7 and 22 v 17)? After all, at present we see Jesus only through the eyes of faith (Hebrews 2 v 9) but our faith is based on a relationship, not a religion. I'm not talking about any dreams and visions we may experience during the course of this life. Nor am I considering what the departed Christians may experience when, absent from the body, they are present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5 v 8 AV) - see footnote below. No, I mean the moment of rapture when we shall all see Him as He is (1 John 3 v 2). This will be a very physical event, when the bodies of those believers who have already died, their spirits being "asleep in Jesus", are raised and those Christians who are still alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16 - 17). At that moment our physical bodies will become immortal and imperishable, our eyes functioning with perfect vision, and we will see face to face Him whom we are now learning to love heart to heart (1 Corinthians 15 v 51 - 54 and 13 v 12, Philippians 3 v 20 - 21). I'm sure our reaction on seeing Jesus then will be a direct reflection of our relationship with Him while we have been Christians here.

Our reaction at the first sight of Jesus should not be taken as a foregone conclusion. There is a wide range of reactions in scripture, and here we look briefly at some of these under four headings. May this help us as we engage in the enormously important duty of preparing ourselves for the momentous event. With John we should be saying: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22 v 20).

### 1. Theophanies in the Old Testament

It is a well-established biblical doctrine that whenever Old Testament characters are recorded as seeing God it was in fact Jesus whom they saw in His pre-incarnation person. Verses underlying this doctrine, which is known as the Theophany, include John 1 v 18, John 14 v 9, 1 Timothy 6 v 15b - 16, Hebrews 1 v 3. No one has yet seen God the Father, nor can anyone do so, until Jesus has finally purged us of all dross at His "judgement seat" (1 Corinthians 3 v 10 - 15, 2 Corinthians 5 v 10, Revelation 1 v 14 and Psalm 11 v 4 - 5a). He can then present us to His Father faultless and with great joy (Jude v 24). Here we look at just five reactions to seeing Jesus in the Old Testament.

- a) Abraham - Genesis 18 v 1 - 2 and v 10 - 14.  
While two of Abraham's three visitors were most likely angels, clearly one was "the Lord". Abraham's immediate reaction was to "bow low to the ground" (v2).
- b) Jacob - Genesis 32 v 24 - 30.  
Jacob's reaction firstly was to wrestle with the Lord, possibly because at that point he did not know who He was, especially as it was dark. Then, when he did realise it was God, he bartered with Him!
- c) Joshua - Joshua 5 v 13 - 14.  
Joshua's reaction was to fall face down to the ground, asking that he might hear His Word.
- d) Nebuchadnezzar - Daniel 3 v 24 - 26.  
Nebuchadnezzar's reaction was to leap to his feet in amazement and acknowledge immediately the one true God.
- e) Isaiah - Isaiah 6 v 1 - 8.  
Isaiah's reaction in v 5 was to acknowledge his own unworthiness and guilt. Incidentally, John 12 v 41 shows "the Lord" as Isaiah saw Him was indeed Jesus.

So, a great variety of reactions even in Old Testament times, but the life of each of these characters was never the same again.

### 2. Seeing Jesus in the flesh in the New Testament

This is the great substance of the four Gospels, and people's reactions to seeing Jesus as "the Word made flesh" were many and varied. The circumstances then might not have been quite the same as ours will be at the moment when we see the Lord in His great glory, but still, John tells us that they all saw His glory in one way or another (John 1 v 14). From the shepherds and wise men at Bethlehem to the centurion at the foot of the cross, no one could fail to react to His spirit, His authority, His personality, His teaching and knowledge, His miraculous power, His love for all, His compassion, and His understanding of the human condition. On the basis of what we read in Isaiah 53 v 2 - 3, it is very unlikely that anyone just reacted positively to Him because of His appearance; He did not seek attention through carnal celebrity looks. However, reactions during His life ranged from immense devotion and life-changing discipleship, to frenzied hatred. What a man!

### 3. Seeing Jesus between His resurrection and His ascension.

In the six weeks or so that Jesus remained on Earth in His resurrection body He was seen by many (1 Corinthians 15 v 5 – 8), and as we look at their reactions we get a little closer to the possible variety of reactions that may occur when He appears at the Rapture. Again, just five examples must suffice for now.

- a) The two Marys - Matthew 28 v 9.  
Matthew records that when they saw Jesus they clasped His feet and worshipped. There are at least two, and possibly three, occasions in the Lord's ministry when women anointed his feet, although we cannot be sure if either of these two Marys was among those involved. What we can be sure about is that the ladies' attention to His feet, whether bowing, clasping or anointing, was a sign of great devotion, love and respect, not even feeling worthy of lifting up their eyes.
- b) The eleven disciples – Matthew 28 v 17.  
When they saw Jesus they worshipped, but with some doubts. Such a reaction suggests that some who will see Jesus will not really know what is happening. Such a sad response would come about because of the widespread lack of teaching about the Lord's return, and the seriously faulty theology which denies the full and imminent reality of the Rapture.
- c) The two on the Emmaus road – Luke 24 v 16.  
The eyes of these two dear disciples were veiled. How sad that such is the measure of unbelief and unpreparedness amongst Christians, that the person of the glorious Saviour may not even be recognised by some on His return.
- d) The eleven disciples, and others – Luke 24 v 37.  
In Luke's account of Jesus' appearance in the upper room on the first Sunday evening we read that some were startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a ghost! Far from greeting the Lord on His return in the clouds some believers will react with fear and shock. The fact is that even those who are true Christians, but who deny the literal truth of the Rapture, will be raptured.
- e) Thomas – John 20 v 28.  
On the second Sunday evening Thomas, absent a week earlier, sees the resurrected Jesus for the first time and his reaction was exactly as it should be – "My Lord and my God".

### 4. Seeing Jesus after His ascension

Over the years since the Lord Jesus returned to glory there have been others who have seen Him, and as well as the Rapture there will be other appearances that are still in the future. Once more we will look at five examples.

- a) Stephen – Acts 7 v 55 – 56.  
At his moment of martyrdom Stephen was permitted a sight of his glorified Lord, normally seated at the right hand of the Father, but at that moment standing to greet Stephen. He reacted by fearlessly witnessing about the glorious sight.
- b) Saul/Paul – Acts 9 v 5.  
"Who are you, Lord?" Of course, up to that moment Saul was unsaved, but as he confirmed years later when giving his testimony (Acts 26 v 13 – 16 and 1 Corinthians 15 v 8), that was a moment when his whole attitude towards Jesus was completely changed and he was never the same again – born again indeed.
- c) John - Revelation 1 v 17.  
From verse twelve John recounts the sight of the glorified Jesus, whom he knew so well on earth, and his reaction was simply to fall at his feet as though dead; although Jesus certainly didn't leave him there!
- d) Israel – Zechariah 12 v 10.  
Following the Rapture, when Israel will be the main channel of God's witness on Earth during the Tribulation, Jesus will suddenly appear to God's ancient and eternal covenant people, and their reaction will be one of bitter mourning because of their earlier rejection. That moment will be the fulfilment of the Lord's own prophecy in Matthew 23 v 39.
- e) All people – Matthew 24 v 30 – 31, Philippians 2 v 9 – 11, Revelation 1 v 7 – 8.  
Finally, when everyone else will see Him, the predominant reaction will be mourning. While the tribulation saints will be rescued (Revelation 7), among the remainder of the peoples of the Earth all those who rejected the Saviour and His testimony in their hearts (Romans 2 v 14 – 16) will suddenly realise their eternal doom. That mourning will not be replaced by joyful recognition of the Lord, but bitter tears of remorse for each one's rejection of the opportunity for repentance that was granted to them at some point in life (Genesis 18 v 25).

"We shall see His lovely face, some bright golden morning;  
When the clouds have rifted, and the shades have flown.  
Sorrow will be turned to joy, heartaches gone forever.  
No more night, only light, when we see His face."

*Norman J Clayton*

### Footnote

My understanding from scripture as to the present state of departed Christians is that while their bodily remains are left behind at death, their spirits go to be with the Lord in a conscious "sleep". I believe they have a very clear awareness of being in the Lord's presence (Luke 16 v 23 and 23 v 43), and probably an awareness of being in fellowship with each other, but have no consciousness of earthly events or of the people they have left behind, otherwise it would not be paradise for them! But their present reality is spiritual, while they await the redemption of their bodies, just as we do (Romans 8 v 23 – 25). 1 Thessalonians 4 v 14 tells us that at the Rapture all those departed spirits will return with Jesus for this amazing redemption moment.