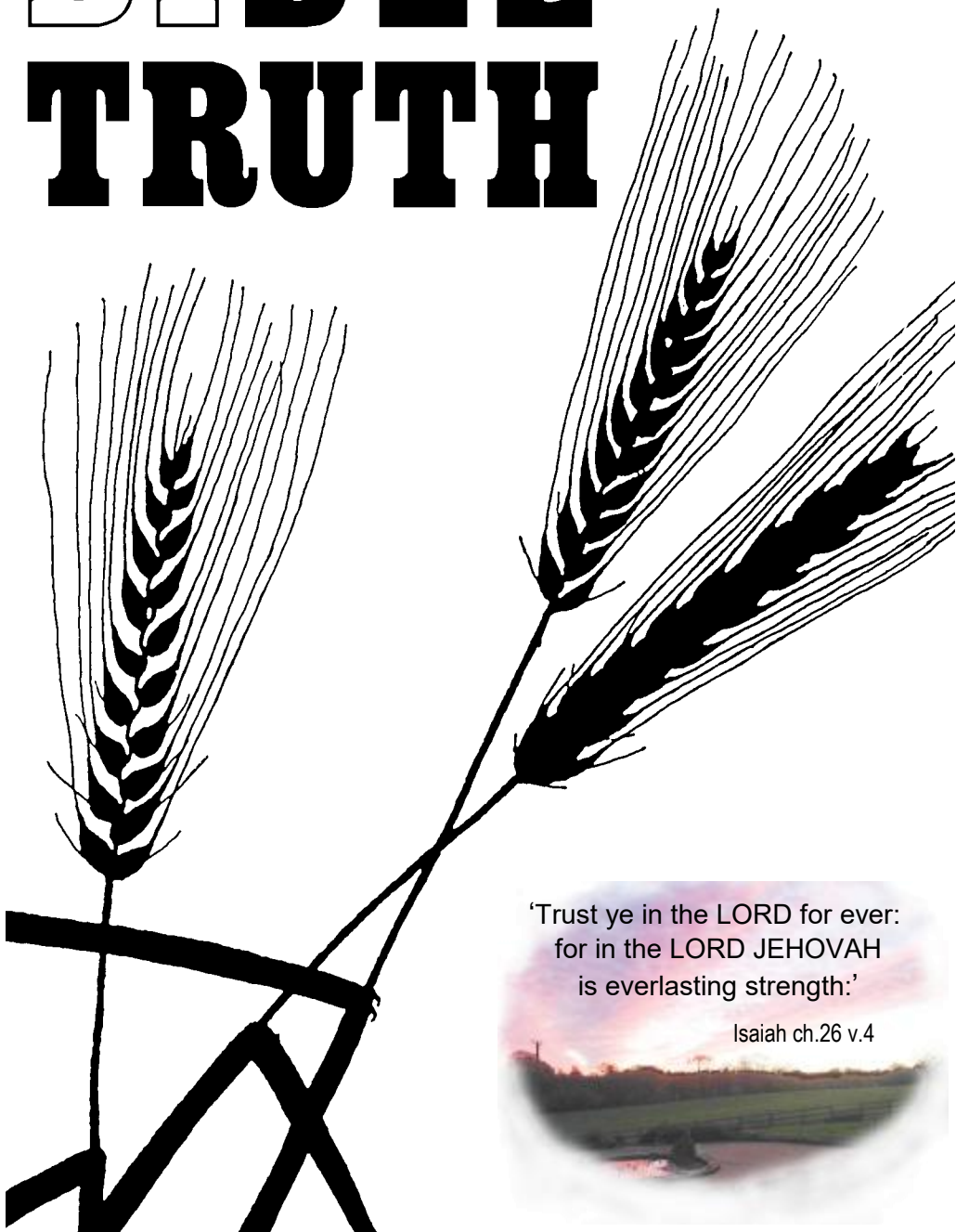


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'Trust ye in the LORD for ever:
for in the LORD JEHOVAH
is everlasting strength.'

Isaiah ch.26 v.4



Send In The Clouds

by Jackie Edwards



When the weather has been hot and dry, it is a natural thing to long for some rain. In Summer 2021 parts of western North America experienced very hot weather and the ground was so dry that rain was desperately needed. These drought conditions caused great forest fires, and no doubt farmers were in despair as it is impossible to grow crops in such conditions.

Back in the days of Elijah, there was a drought lasting three and a half years. This was during the time of king Ahab. Can you imagine it, no rain in all that time, and being unable to grow food, causing great famine. All you can say is that back in those days there were far fewer people than now, and probably much more vegetation. Nevertheless, things would have become very dire! Even the brook 'Cherith' where Elijah abode for part of the time eventually dried up, and so he had to move on.

'And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.'

1 Kings ch.18 v.1

After meeting with Ahab, and dealing with the false prophets who had led God's people astray by worshipping Baal and having called down fire from Heaven which devoured his offering to the Lord on an altar saturated with water, he proved beyond all measure to the people that, '... the LORD he is the God; the LORD he is the God' (v.39). Elijah then instructed Ahab to '... Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not'. (And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain (vv 44-45). As he did so, Elijah then famously girded up his loins, and by the Hand of Almighty God '...ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel' (v.46). So the much needed rain came!

But clouds are not just the source of rain. In our Bible we read many times of their association with the presence of the Lord. So not your everyday ordinary clouds then! It seems that the Lord uses these clouds to conceal or envelop Himself, and certainly the Old Testament is full of such incidences.

‘And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared **in the cloud.**’

Exodus ch.16 v.10

‘And **the LORD descended in the cloud,** and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.’

Exodus ch.34 v.5

‘And the LORD came down **in the pillar of the cloud,** and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.’

Numbers ch.12 v.5

There are many similar instances of clouds being associated with the Lord God and His presence upon the earth, but seemingly not however, before the Fall in the garden of Eden. Perhaps that tells us that in their original pure states prior to the first sin, they were able to look upon the Lord in His Glory? But whatever, it is interesting that after their sin in the garden, Adam and Eve hid themselves from God’s presence, whereas now, if the Lord appears to men He cloaks Himself in a cloud - to subdue His Glory from overcoming those summoned before Him perhaps?

Moses, as we read in our Bibles, had very close contact with Almighty God, especially during the years that the Israelites dwelt in the wilderness. In fact, there were times after he had been with the Lord upon Mount Sinai - which was shrouded with clouds, and at times with rumblings and thunder and lightning - whereby upon his return to the people of Israel, he had to cover his face because a part of God’s Glory (which Moses must have been bathed in whilst in the Lord’s presence), shone from his face!

And then the death of Moses poses a bit of a mystery. In the *Moffatt translation* of the Bible, it says the following.

‘So Moses the servant of God died there in the land of Moab, as the Eternal ordered; the Eternal buried him in the valley opposite Beth-peor within the land of Moab, but to this day no one knows his burying place.’

Deuteronomy ch. 34 vv 5-6

The *King James* version says similar. I have recently been given a copy of *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, (known as a 'Learned and Authentic Jewish Historian' translated by William Whiston, A.M.), and his opinion is a little different.

'All those who accompanied him were the senate, and Eleazar the high-priest, and Joshua their commander. Now as soon as they were come to the mountain called Abarim (which is a very high mountain situate over against Jericho, and one that affords, to such as are upon it, a prospect of the greatest part of the excellent land of Canaan), he dismissed the senate; as he was going to embrace Eleazar and Joshua, and was still discoursing with them, a cloud stood over him on [of ?] the sudden, and he disappeared in a certain valley, although he wrote in the holy books that he died, which was done out of fear, lest they should venture to say, that because of his extraordinary virtue, he went to God.'

Josephus Book 4 ch.8 v.48

So we are left considering that perhaps Moses did not actually die, but was taken up in the cloud. This would explain his appearance with Elijah at the Transfiguration with Our Lord. On the other hand, it may be that God wished Moses' body to be hidden away and personally buried him in the particular unnamed valley mentioned by Josephus.

When Elijah was taken up into heaven it was via a chariot and horses of fire, not through a cloud as such, but a whirlwind. What a sight that would have been. I doubt that the sky was clear, as normally such winds are accompanied by stormy skies! If we go back in time to the life of Enoch, according to the *Book of Jasher*, we read in chapter three that he, like Elijah, was also taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, with horses and chariots of fire.

In the book of Ezekiel, chapter one verse four, we read of a whirlwind and a cloud combined.

'And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a **great cloud**, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.'

And what of the New Testament, do we continue to see these clouds of God still playing a prominent part? The Transfiguration is certainly one such important event. In Matthew chapter seventeen we read that,

‘And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him’.

Saint Luke continues the narrative thus,

‘And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, **there came a cloud**, and overshadowed them: and they feared **as they entered into the cloud**. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen’.

Luke ch.9 vv 30-36

That the cloud is important - for within dwelt the presence of Almighty God - is indicated in 1 Corinthians chapter ten verses one and two. For Paul tells us this,

‘Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all **our fathers were under the cloud**, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat;’.

The two witnesses spoken of in the book of Revelation, after lying dead in the street three and a half days - would not be buried, we are told - and after these three and a half days, the Spirit of God would enter into them, raising them up - causing fear to fall upon the onlookers. And then -

‘... they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended **up to heaven in a cloud**; and their enemies beheld them’.

Revelation ch.11 v.12

However, whatever, or whoever you perceive these two witnesses to be or represent, it is abundantly clear, that the Lord God Almighty delivers them - and miraculously so.

Even up to the end of this current world system Almighty God continues to use His clouds. Our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of Almighty God, after His resurrection and having finished His work of teaching His disciples, was finally taken up in a cloud.

‘And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, **he was taken up; and a cloud received** him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’

Acts ch.1 vv 9-11

Undoubtedly we need to consider clouds in a new light! They are not always bearers of rain nor winter storms. Who is to say when the Lord Himself will once again be clothed in a cloud and descend upon the earth? This is especially so in these end times when we do not know for sure exactly how near the return of Our Lord is, events can happen very quickly and remember, the days will be shortened. As we have seen with this Corona Virus that has caused havoc throughout our lands, and indeed the whole world.

Whatever may occur between now and that time, we need to remember Paul’s message to Timothy, in his second book chapter one verse seven, ‘For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind’. This is particularly important in these current times. Especially being of a sound mind - when the world around us seems to have gone insane! We should NOT fear. Instead have Faith and Trust in Almighty God and His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Remember how Elisha, in 2 Kings chapter six verse seventeen, prayed for the eyes of his servant to be opened, when this clearly terrified man lamented that they were surrounded by the king of Syria’s men. When his eyes were opened what did he see? ‘... behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha’.

As C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *Mere Christianity*, concerning the angels of God and their dwelling places - ‘we have to consider that there are other dimensions to that of our own. If you were to tell an imaginary person living in a two dimensional world, about our own of three dimensions, they would find it virtually impossible to comprehend. And so it is for us to consider the fourth and fifth dimensions!’

Overall, we know very little about this world in which we live. Take for example the atom. We used to think that an atom was the smallest particle of matter. Now we are dabbling in the world of quantum physics, where we see that the atom is not after all, the smallest particle - and this is how we have managed to accomplish microchips, and so forth, powering our laptops and mobile phones.

If we could but see, it is probable that every time we pray unto our Lord, that His angels are around us, and that they are ascending and descending all the time like those in Jacob's dream (see Genesis ch.28 v.12), ensuring all our prayers come up before the Lord on High.

So I conclude with some words from my favourite Gospel - that of Saint Luke. This is from chapter twenty-one, the equivalent of Matthew chapter twenty-four, where we read about the return of our very dear Lord, Jesus Christ.

'And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And **then shall they see Son of man coming in a cloud** with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.'

Luke ch.21 vv 25-28

