

PERSONAL NOTES

God often begins His greatest works in ways that appear small and almost unnoticed. Bethlehem was only a village. Twelve ordinary disciples seemed an unlikely company through whom to transform the world. Pentecost began in an upper room with a relatively small gathering of believers. The Kingdom itself, Jesus said, resembles a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, which nevertheless grows into a great tree (Matt. 13:31-32).

Lecture 5: The Clouds of God

From Formation to Manifestation

Throughout Scripture, clouds are frequently associated with the manifest Presence of God. They accompanied Israel through the wilderness, filled the Tabernacle of Moses, overshadowed Mount Sinai, rested upon Solomon's Temple, and received our Lord into heaven. Clouds are never merely atmospheric phenomena; they often signify the nearness of God's glory. Yet there is another beautiful picture hidden within the Scriptures. Before rain can fall upon the earth, clouds must first be formed. Likewise, before the refreshing life of Christ can be poured out upon humanity, God must first prepare a people capable of carrying His Presence.

Even now, those clouds are quietly gathering. Across the nations, beyond the spotlight of religious recognition, the Holy Spirit is patiently preparing a people whose hearts have become wholly yielded to Christ. They are not united by denomination, nationality, culture, or human organisation. They are united by one overwhelming passion, to know Christ and to make Him known. Heaven sees what earth scarcely notices. While the world measures success by numbers and influence, God measures maturity by the measure of Christ formed within His people.

The Father has never hurried this work. For centuries He has been gathering living stones, shaping hearts through joy and sorrow, triumph and trial, until a people emerge who carry not merely His gifts but His very nature. These are the clouds of God, filled, not with natural water, but with the living water of His Spirit, waiting for the appointed moment when heaven's rain shall once again refresh the earth.

The little Cloud

One of the most remarkable prophetic pictures of this truth is found in the life of Elijah.

After years of drought, Elijah instructed his servant to look toward the sea. Six times the servant returned with the same report: *"There is nothing."* Yet the prophet refused to surrender his expectation. At last the servant returned with these memorable words:

"There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea."
1 Kings 18:44

To the natural eye the cloud appeared insignificant. It was scarcely worth mentioning. Yet Elijah immediately recognised what it represented. That tiny cloud carried within it the promise of an approaching downpour. Before long the entire heavens were covered with clouds, the winds arose, and abundant rain fell upon the land.

We must never despise the day of small beginnings (Zech. 4:10). What God plants in humility often matures into something that fills the earth with His glory.

The rain of His Presence

Throughout the Old Testament, rain became one of God's most tender pictures of Spiritual visitation. Rain refreshes weary ground, awakens dormant seed, restores fruitfulness, and gives life where barrenness once prevailed. In exactly the same way, the Presence of God revives hearts that have grown dry through disappointment, religion, or self-reliance.

Hosea declares with wonderful certainty:

"Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth." Hos. 6:3

Notice that Hosea does not merely promise information about God. He invites us into the **knowledge** of God Himself. This knowing is far deeper than intellectual understanding. It speaks of intimate fellowship, personal experience, and living communion. As we pursue Him, He comes, not reluctantly, but faithfully, like rain upon thirsty ground.

The Psalmist echoes this same truth:

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." Ps. 72:6

Freshly cut grass appears lifeless. Yet after the rain falls, hidden life begins to emerge once more. So it is with many believers. Seasons of pruning, disappointment, and apparent barrenness often prepare the soul for a deeper visitation of God. What appears to be loss frequently becomes the doorway to greater fruitfulness. The Father never wastes our seasons of cutting. They prepare us for seasons of overflowing life.

The Earth filled with His Glory

The prophets looked beyond individual blessing toward something infinitely greater. They foresaw an earth completely transformed by the knowledge of God's glory.

Habakkuk writes:

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Hab. 2:14

Isaiah repeats the same glorious vision:

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The manifestation of the sons of God will never be the result of human enthusiasm or religious ambition. It will be the spontaneous unveiling of a people in whom Christ has quietly and faithfully been formed over many years by the patient work of the Holy Spirit.

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Isa. 11:9

These promises reveal far more than increased religious activity. They point toward the progressive expansion of God’s Kingdom through the revelation of Christ. His glory fills the earth as His life fills His people. The knowledge of God is not merely taught; it is demonstrated. Humanity begins to encounter the character, wisdom, righteousness, compassion, and authority of Christ expressed through those in whom He lives.

The Kingdom advances from the inside outward. Before rivers flow through the earth, springs must first be opened within the hearts of God’s people. Before creation is refreshed, Christ must become the overflowing fountain within His sons.

Christ formed before Christ revealed

One divine principle quietly governs every work of God: He always **forms** before He manifests. God never reveals outwardly what He has not first accomplished **inwardly**. The hidden work always precedes the visible work.

This is why Paul could write with such deep affection:

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Gal. 4:19

Notice the emphasis. Paul’s concern was not merely that believers should become more knowledgeable or more active. His burden was that Christ Himself should be formed within them. Formation always precedes manifestation.

The Lord is far more interested in what we are **becoming** than in what we are doing. Activity without formation produces exhaustion. Ministry without transformation produces imitation. But when Christ has truly been formed within us, ministry flows as naturally as fruit grows upon a healthy tree. The outward life simply becomes the visible expression of the inward Christ.

Becoming before doing

One of the great principles of the Kingdom of God is that **becoming always precedes doing**. The world teaches us to measure success by activity, achievement, and visible accomplishment. God’s Kingdom works in the opposite direction. Before He entrusts a person with ministry, He first shapes that person’s character. Before He sends them into the harvest, He cultivates the field of their own heart.

This divine order is seen throughout Scripture. Moses spent forty years in Midian before leading Israel. David was formed in lonely fields long before he occupied a throne. Joseph endured years of

obscurity before governing Egypt. Even our Lord Jesus spent thirty quiet years preparing for three years of public ministry. Heaven is never in a hurry, because the Father values **formation** above performance.

The manifestation of the sons of God will therefore not arise from gifted personalities or extraordinary human abilities. It will be the natural outflow of lives in which Christ has been deeply formed. What the Holy Spirit has patiently accomplished in secret will one day become visible before the nations. Ministry that originates in formation carries the fragrance of eternity.

Rivers of Living Water

Our Lord stood in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles and uttered one of the most astonishing invitations ever spoken.

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37-38.

The river is Christ Himself dwelling within His people through the Holy Spirit. Every believer becomes a sanctuary from which heaven’s life may flow into a thirsty world. Just as Ezekiel saw water flowing from beneath the threshold of the Temple until it became a mighty river bringing healing wherever it went (Ezek. 47:1-12), so the Lord intends that His people become living temples through whom His Presence continually refreshes the nations.

The Garden of God

From the opening pages of Genesis to the closing chapters of Revelation, God reveals Himself as a Gardener. Eden was His first garden, but His ultimate purpose reaches far beyond a geographical location. He desires a people who become His cultivated garden, planted by His own hand and watered by His own Spirit.

The Tree of Life, once standing in the midst of Eden, ultimately finds its fullest expression in Christ Himself. As He lives within His people, that Tree begins to flourish once again. The fruit of His Spirit becomes visible. The leaves of His healing extend to the nations. What was lost through Adam begins to be restored through the Last Adam.

This is why Scripture so often compares God’s people to vineyards, olive trees, fruitful fields, and flourishing gardens. The Father delights in **growth**. He patiently removes every hindrance so that His life may increase within us. Every season has purpose. Times of pruning prepare us for greater fruitfulness, while seasons of waiting deepen our roots until we become firmly established in His love.

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The deeper our fellowship with Christ becomes, the more freely His life flows through us. Rivers do not struggle to flow; they simply overflow because they have first been filled. Likewise, the ministry of mature sons is never manufactured. It is the spontaneous overflow of hearts continually filled with the Presence of God.

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All of these prophetic pictures, the cloud, the rain, the river, the garden, and the Tree of Life, ultimately point to one glorious reality: the manifestation of Christ through His Body.

The clouds become heavy because they have first been filled.

The rain falls because the clouds release what heaven has placed within them.

The rivers flow because they originate from an inexhaustible source.

So it is with God's sons.

Only that which has first been formed within them can ever flow out through them.

This is why the ministry of mature sons differs so greatly from ministry produced merely by natural gifting. Gifts may attract attention for a season, but life imparts life.

Methods may influence behaviour, but Christ transforms nature. The world is waiting, not for another movement, but for the manifestation of a people so filled with Christ that His Presence overflows wherever they go.

The Garden of God is therefore not merely a place, it is a people. Wherever Christ lives unhindered, Eden begins to blossom again.

Into the deep with God

Many believers are content to remain where the water barely reaches their ankles. They rejoice in salvation, yet seldom venture beyond the familiar shoreline of spiritual experience. But God continually invites His people into greater **depths** of Himself.

The Psalmist wrote:

"He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink in abundance like the depths." Ps. 78:15

David understood something of these depths. Again and again his heart cried out for more of God.

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God." Ps. 42:1

This holy longing is one of God's greatest gifts. Spiritual hunger cannot be manufactured by human effort. It is awakened by the Holy Spirit Himself. The more we taste of Christ, the more deeply we desire Him. Every genuine encounter with His Presence leaves us longing for still greater measures of His life.

Ezekiel beautifully illustrates this journey. At first the river reached only to his ankles. Then it rose to his knees. Soon it reached his waist. Finally, it became waters deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed (Ezek. 47:1-5).

This is God's invitation to every believer. He does not merely call us to stand beside the river, admiring its beauty. He invites us to abandon the safety of the shore and lose ourselves completely in its current. The deeper we enter into Christ, the more completely Christ is revealed through us.

Summary

The Father is quietly gathering the clouds of His Presence across the earth. Long before rain refreshes the nations, He first prepares the vessels through whom that rain will come. Hidden from the applause of men, He is forming a people whose hearts have become reservoirs of His life, ready to pour out His love, truth, wisdom, and power at His appointed time.

God always establishes inward reality before outward manifestation. Christ must first be formed within us before He can be revealed through us. For this reason, the Holy Spirit patiently shapes our character, deepens our faith, and enlarges our capacity to carry His Presence. Becoming always precedes doing.

The rivers of living water spoken of by Jesus flow from within those who continually drink of Him. As believers remain rooted in Christ, His life naturally overflows into every sphere of influence, bringing healing, restoration, and hope to a thirsty world. The Garden of God begins to flourish wherever His Spirit is given freedom to reign.

The invitation remains the same today as it was in every generation. God calls His people away from the shallow edges of spiritual experience into the deep river of His Presence. Those who respond discover that the deeper they journey into Christ, the more abundantly Christ flows through them.

The clouds are gathering. The river is rising. The rain is beginning to fall. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth, not merely through sermons and programmes, but through a mature people in whom Christ has been fully formed. As His life overflows through His sons, the nations will behold the beauty of the King, and the earth will rejoice beneath the refreshing rain of His Presence.

Do you enjoy swimming upstream? God is taking you back to the origin. The source. His original purpose. We are the Garden of God in the earth, His glory. In us, the Tree of Life is growing to His full size. What God planned from the beginning is being established. The Sons of God are the clouds of His coming or manifestation. He will flow from our innermost beings as the **RAIN OF GOD'S PRESENCE**, the water of His knowledge (life) covering the earth bringing complete deliverance from the slavery to corruption. What a day, the Day of the Lord!



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How much of God can you have?

Just as much as you really want!



Questions

1. Why does God compare His people to clouds?

2. What does Elijah's small cloud teach us?

3. Why is rain a picture of God's Presence?

4. What does Habakkuk 2:14 reveal about God's purpose?

5. Why must Christ be formed before He is revealed?

6. What is the significance of the rivers of living water?

7. What does the Garden of God represent?

8. What lesson does Ezekiel's river teach us?

9. Why does God value formation above activity?

10. What is the central message of this lecture?

Study Answers

1. Because He prepares them to carry the life-giving Presence of Christ, so that, in His appointed time, they may refresh the earth like rain.
2. That God often begins His greatest works in ways that appear small and insignificant before they grow into mighty demonstrations of His glory (1 Kings 18:44-45).
3. Because rain brings life, fruitfulness, and restoration, just as the Presence of God refreshes and renews those who seek Him (Hos. 6:3; Ps. 72:6).
4. That the whole earth will one day be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
5. Because God's outward work always flows from His inward work. Formation precedes manifestation (Gal. 4:19).
6. They represent the continual overflow of Christ's life through believers who remain filled with the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).
7. It represents a people in whom the life of Christ flourishes, producing the fruit of the Spirit and bringing healing to the nations.
8. That God continually invites His people into deeper experiences of His Presence until they are completely surrendered to His life (Ezek. 47:1-5).
9. Because lasting ministry flows from Christlike character rather than from natural ability or religious performance.
10. God is preparing a mature people who will become living channels of His Presence, so that Christ may overflow through them like life-giving rain, bringing healing, restoration, and the knowledge of God's glory to the earth.