

## ***The Transfiguration and the Second Coming***

*Thou hast been transfigured, O Savior, on Mount Tabor, indicating the transformation of mankind which shall take place at Thy dreadful Second Coming.*

*—From the Kathismata of the Transfiguration sung in Orthros*

*That Thou mightest clearly demonstrate Thine ineffable second coming, how Thou, the Most High God, shalt be seen standing in the midst of gods, Thou shonest ineffably upon the Apostles and Moses and Elias upon Mount Tabor. Wherefore, we all magnify Thee, O Christ.*

*—From the Ninth Ode of the Second Transfiguration Canon sung in Orthros*

In the icon of the Transfiguration, Christ is surrounded by a whole-body radiance of light. The use of this indicates that what is depicted is beyond time and space. This is what we experience in this event; the hymns tell us that the image of the dreadful Second Coming is given to us now.

The writings of the Apostles often distinguish between two ages: this present evil age and the blessed age which is to come (Luke 18.30, Ephesians 1.21). This present evil age began with the Fall of Mankind (Genesis 3) where by Man's disobedience we bound in slavery to the powers of this age: to sin, Death, and the Devil. The blessed age to come shall see the realization of Christ's rule (Ephesians 1.21).

The Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration are introduced with an account of the Second Coming where "the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father... Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (Matthew 16.27-28 ESV) At the close of the account, the three disciples keep silence until after Christ's resurrection.

The Transfiguration is set before the Passion on Christ in the Gospels so that we may know the end from the beginning and the path to follow (and is 40 days before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in the calendar). Because of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the age which is to come has broken into this current age (cf Hebrews 12). We in the Church are living in the Light of the Second Coming. As an example, the white baptismal garment shows we are robed in the light of divine glory (A. Schmemmann, *Of Water & the Spirit* cf. St Ambrose *On the Mysteries*), revealed to us in the Transfiguration.

For most of us, the end of the age is our death. As has oft been repeated, the Church is to prepare us for this end, the dissolution of soul and body. If we are faithful in Christ, then we shall be ushered into the age to come, and will experience the transformation of mankind at Christ's Second Coming. By God's grace, let us run with endurance the race set before us, taking up our own cross, while looking to Jesus (Hebrews 12.1-2) so we may delight in him, magnify both his First and Second Comings, and share in his glory.

*Thou hast smitten me with yearning, O Christ, and by Thy divine love hast Thou changed me. But with Thine immaterial fire, consume my sins and count me worthy to be filled with delight in Thee, that leaping for joy, O Good One, I may magnify Thy two comings.*

*—From the Ninth Ode of the Second Transfiguration Canon sung in Orthros*

*O Son of God, Who wast transfigured on Mount Tabor, save us who sing unto Thee. Alleluia!*