

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Exodus 24:12-18

This account of Moses' ascent of Mt. Sinai (Horeb) introduces the long collection of ceremonial regulations in Exodus 25-31 (P). Verses 12-14 come from the earlier sources of the Pentateuch (JE), and 15-18 comprises P's retelling. Whereas the older tradition had no qualms about saying that the LORD visited the mountain in person and spoke with Moses in face-to-face, P avoids giving God such human characteristics and tells us that Moses saw only the *glory* of the LORD on the mountain .

Psalm 2

This *royal psalm* reflects the coronation of the king in Jerusalem. The psalmist mocks the subject nations that suppose they will now escape Judah's rule because of the succession of a new king (2:1-3). God's announcement of a new king in Zion constitutes the LORD's derisive word to those nations (2:4-6). The LORD then proclaims the king's divine sonship (2:7) in words reminiscent of the relationship of the Egyptian pharaoh to the god Ra. The new king then repeats the promise of God to give the king dominion over the subject nations (2:8-9). In 2:10-13 the discourse returns to the psalmist who warns foreign kings that they should avoid God's wrath by fulfilling their vassal treaties with the new king.

or

Psalm 99

This *hymn* is called by some interpreters an *enthronement psalm* out of the belief that it was used as part of a yearly enthronement ceremony in which Israel recognized Yahweh as king. The *cherubim* (1:1, singular: *cherub*) are winged sphinxes, very common in the royal iconography of the near east. The Ark of the Covenant, Yahweh's throne, had figures of cherubim that comprised his seat. The hymn celebrates Yahweh's permanent residence in Jerusalem (Zion) as righteous judge and lawgiver.

2 Peter 1:16-21

The unknown author of 2 Peter knows and refers to 1 Peter (2 Peter 3:1) and clearly has read and used the Epistle of Jude. The letter-writer inveighs against opponents who are almost certainly Gnostic in conviction, *i. e.* people who deny the goodness of the created, material world and think of salvation as transfer of their soul into a purely spiritual realm. Christian Gnostics thought of Christ as a savior who came to reveal this other, spiritual realm to us and denied that Christ would come again to redeem this (material) world of ours. "Myths" (1:16) are probably the intricate genealogies of the heavens characteristic of the Gnostics. For the Gnostics the savior was but one of several emanations of the "Father of Lights."

Matthew 17:1-9

Moses's encounter with the LORD at Sinai resulted in a change in his appearance, according to Exodus 34:29-35). The author of Matthew, who regarded Jesus as the Second Moses, tells us that Jesus experienced a similar change on a sacred mountain. (Christian tradition has made Mount

Tabor, overlooking the Valley of Jezreel, the Mount of Transfiguration, but the mountain has no identification in Scripture. Many first-century Palestinian Jews expected the prophet Elijah to appear at the time of judgment, and Moses was Israel's lawgiver who had given the Torah on which Israel would be judged. The vision clearly means that Jesus belongs in their company. The Rabbis called such a voice from the cloud as we find in our lesson a *bat qol*, a heavenly "echo."

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