

Introduction: This week we celebrate how the Lord Jesus in Matthew 17 provides a timely revelation of glory to the trio who would be responsible for leading the Apostles: Peter, James and John. Through the testimony of these three witnesses, Jesus left an eye-witness account of the Transfiguration to be passed on to the whole church, (2 Pt 1:16-17). Sadly, as we'll *also discover*, the Three quickly forgot God's glory fully revealed in His Son – as they descended again into the harsh realities of this sinful world. May we learn to hold onto every picture of Christ's glory which Scripture gives us as we study the disciples' failure in this regard.

**Monday: read Matthew 17:9-13.** It is amazing to see how prone the disciples were to forget the glory of the Son which they beheld on the mountain - and to compare what they had seen of Jesus' glory to what they had *heard* from religious authorities of the day – namely the scribes (Matthew 17:10), who taught that Elijah must reappear before the Messiah could come. In this way, the Scribes perpetuated the myth of Israel's righteousness by promising that both Elijah and the Messiah would come simply to reward Jewry and to wreak vengeance on the Romans.

This same superstition about Elijah appears as Jesus hangs on the Cross in Matthew 27:45-49, where the unbelieving crowd cruelly halts aid to a dying Jesus, (the vinegar on the stick in Mt. 27:48), so that they can see if 'Elijah' will indeed come to Christ's aid. In this glorifying of this Old Testament prophet for their own purposes of self-exaltation and the destruction of their enemies, these Jews show that they *hate* Jesus' loving forgiveness of sinners, desiring instead vengeance on all their foes. They would rather have their distorted view of Elijah's vengeance fall upon the heads of the Romans – while all the while they are *blind* to their own personal need for a Savior!

Meditate and Pray: *“Lord, in these days of distorted political hopes, where so many in our nation seem determined to wreak vengeance on any and all who would stand in the way of their own selfish desires for personal happiness, prominence and wealth, keep us focused on the saving purpose for which Jesus came – not to exalt our fantasies for self-advancement, but to save and sanctify us from a life-time of sin. Keep us focused on the main fountain of forgiveness, and not on the carnal desires of the crowds around us. Amen.”*

**Tuesday: read Matthew 17:1-9.** Where should our focus be if we are to avoid wresting Scripture away from its true meaning – even as the Jews of Jesus' day misunderstood Elijah's purpose and sought to misuse his example to satisfy their carnal desire for power over their foes? The answer is given by Jesus in the simple command of Matthew 17:9, which reads as follows in the ESV: *And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”*

Ah! Here is the key to understanding Scripture. It is as if Jesus were saying to the disciples and to us: “Study, reflect and speak of what you see in the Bible... only in light of the Resurrection!”

Meditate and Pray: *Lord, thank you that we have the privilege of living the whole of our lives in the light of your Easter victory over sin and death. Give us joy in worshipping our risen Savior, and in studying all of Scripture in the light of His rising. Help the preaching of our church likewise to focus properly on Jesus, risen from the dead. Amen.*

**Weds/Thurs: read Matthew 17:9-13.** According to Matthew 17:9, there would be a proper time to understand the roles of Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament, and their prophetic purpose in pointing to Christ. That time would be, “after the Resurrection!” Thus we learn that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the “starting point” for all Bible characters – including great men like Moses and Elijah! Let's consider today one way in which “starting” with the Resurrection of Jesus deepens our understanding of God's prophets of old:

First, we start with the Resurrection at Easter *as the fulfillment of the hopes of the Old Testament prophets*. Elijah and Moses both prophesied in word and deed of the need for God's people Israel to "circumcise their hearts" in repentance and faith – as the only right response to God's redeeming work. Sadly, the people of Israel continued unrepentant and unheeding of this prophetic message. As Hebrews puts it, "God was not pleased" with most of Israel, and they died in the desert because of their sins.

Meditate and Pray: But let us give thanks that, when Christ arrived on the scene to do battle on the Cross with sin and Satan, Moses' and Elijah saw their message fulfilled and vindicated. God came to redeem His own by sending His Son as the final prophet of the Old Testament. What joy for Elijah and Moses to meet Jesus on the mount and to bask in the light of their prophetic hope as it was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus! How do we sing of this prophetic hope fulfilled in Jesus, as Moses and Elijah finally beheld the Lamb of God whose blood would be strong enough to finally and fully cleanse the sins of their people? Look at hymn # 242:

*Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain  
Could give the guilty conscience peace  
Or wash away the stain.*

*But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away;  
A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.*

*My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine,  
While, like a penitent, I stand,  
And there confess my sin.*

*My soul looks back to see  
The burdens Thou didst bear  
When hanging on the cursed tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there.*

*Believing, we rejoice  
To see the curse remove;  
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
And sing His bleeding love.*

**Friday: read Matthew 17:9-13 and Hebrews 12:1:** How beautiful that Moses and Elijah were not the only ones who saw their ministry vindicated by the revelation of glory on the mount of Transfiguration. John the Baptist, despite his mistreatment at the hands of the people of Israel (Matthew 17:12), would have rejoiced from Heaven to see the glory of Christ as he met with Elijah and Moses! Do you think that John was aware of this meeting? Well, consider the words of Hebrews 12:1 as they are expounded by John Owen, who describes the communion which the Heavenly saints have with us on earth through Jesus Christ:

*"When we are in our trials, which way so ever we look, we may (by faith) behold the face of some of other of these saints looking on us and encouraging us from the pages of Scripture..."*

*"All the saints that have gone before us do as it were stand looking on us in our striving, encouraging us in our duty, and read to testify unto our success with their applause..."*

*"The church triumphant has communion with the church militant. The assembly above has not lost its interest in the church below... As we rejoice in their glory, safety and happiness, so they are full of affections towards us, with earnest desire for our deliverance." (John Owen, Vol 7 Hebrews, page 221; Vol. 1 page 259)*

Meditate and Pray: Do we believe that there is such a close connection between the church on earth and in Heaven? In his joy at seeing Elijah and Moses with Jesus, Peter was not wrong to rejoice at this connection! After all, what is it that joins us with the saints in Heaven? Is it not that we are joined in union with the same

Savior? Oh yes, dear earth-bound believer, struggling in the earthly pilgrimage of faith with “weary feet and slow” – We are one and the same family, brought together under one Head, even Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:10)!

**Sat/Sun: read Hebrews 11:5, 27; Matthew 17:1-3 and 2 Kings 2:1-18.** How early did the saints of old understand and believe in the reality of eternal life with God, and that God had the power to carry them through death into eternal joy in Heaven?

Well, according to Hebrews 11:5, God chose Enoch to be translated, though he was as early as the seventh generation from Adam (Jude 14). According to Genesis 5:22-24, Enoch lived for over 300 years, “walking with God” in communion and friendship, until one day God simply took him, body and all, to Heaven! Though undoubtedly many looked for this prominent prophet of old, whose ancient prophecy is contained in Jude 14-15, they could find neither his body nor any signs of his death – because God translated him to Heaven without dying. Surely this was a testimony to others in Enoch’s evil days before the Flood, showing that God indeed was and is able to preserve the believer for everlasting life!

In the same way, God took Elijah up to Heaven in a whirlwind of glory in 2 Kings 2:11 – as further proof that God’s arm is long enough to reach down from Heaven and take the believer safely from this life – without any permanent scars from death.

But the most amazing statement about such amazing miraculous feats is that they were performed by sinners such as ourselves who nevertheless had the grace of faith. “By faith Enoch...” “By faith Elijah...”, and (lest we forget), ... “By faith Moses!”

Meditate and Pray: How then were these prophets of old able to endure this wicked world, and what are we to fix our eyes upon when the world seeks to pressure us into believing that, “this world is all there is?” Well, let Moses’ example in Hebrews 11:27 be our watchword:

“By faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered **because He saw Him who is invisible.**”