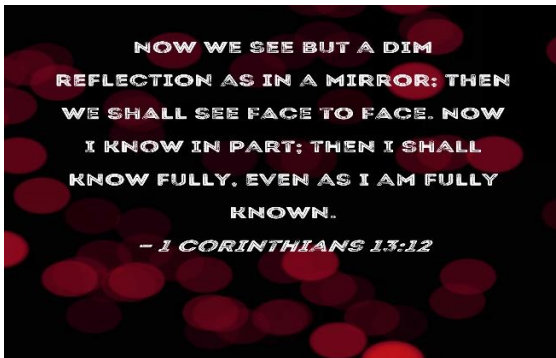


FBC Canton Sunday am October 19, 2025

Heaven is for Real: What will we know? Matthew 17:1-13

Introduction: What do people know in Heaven?



Are they aware of what is going on here?

Do they know others? Are they alone? Do they converse with God?

Do they lose identity?

Do they understand time like we do?

How can they know all this and have joy?

It is amazing how many of those questions are going to be answered in this text today.

I want you to be comforted by what you are about to learn and I want you to live for Heaven now.

Matthew 17 is a direct, immediate fulfillment of the promise of...

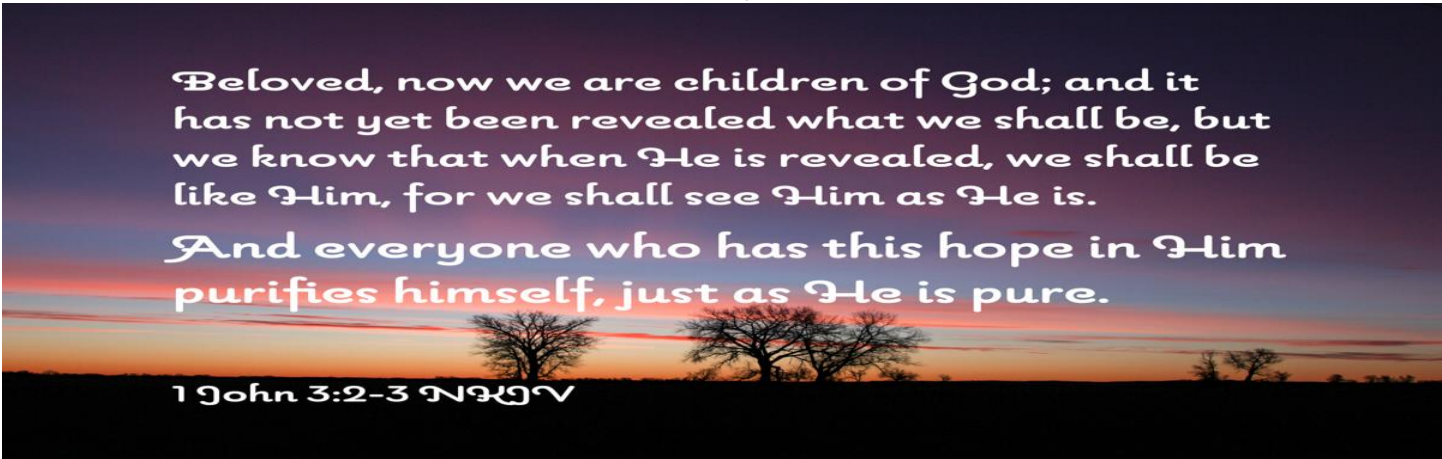
Matthew 16:27-28

²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

So 3 of Jesus followers...Peter, James and John got to see the son of man coming in his kingdom...in v. 1-13

- I. **God wants you to be transformed; salvation guarantees Heaven.**
 - a. **As Jesus was changed in form from the inside out, so will we=glorification.**

- i. Face shone like the sun.
- ii. Clothes like snow...not the yellow kind.



Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

1 John 3:2-3 NKJV

b. What happens when you are changed?

- i. **You will be more you than ever before.**
 - 1. Elijah and Moses are still Elijah and Moses=your identity will not be lost.
- ii. **You will have the greatest social connections.**
 - 1. Elijah and Moses are with one another.
 - 2. We are hard core addicted to dopamine hits from 'social media.' We have replaced real relationships with doom scrolling and likes.
- iii. **You will be more aware than you are today.**
 - 1. They are aware, not sleeping.
- iv. **You will know will finally know what is going on in the world.**
 - 1. They see what is happening here.
- v. **You will know the future as present.**
 - 1. You are aware of time, but not held by it.
 - 2. You are aware of others...Jesus, Peter, James, John
- vi. **You will know the greatest=Jesus; the why and the what.**
 - 1. Why he does what he does, and what he will do.
 - 2. Talking about his death and resurrection. Mark 9:9
- vii. **You will have ears to hear.**
 - 1. The voice they heard wasn't for Moses or Elijah, it was for Peter, James and John.

II. What difference does Heaven make in your life today?

a. Confirmed the Prophetic Word. II Peter 1:12-21

¹² For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³ Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, ¹⁴ knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed

me. ¹⁵ Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

b. Heard the Word. Romans 10:14-17

i. Hear him. *Faith comes by hearing the Word.*

1. The point was not to stay in a geographic location, but stay in humble reception...Hear Him!

c. Induced worship. Hebrews 13:15 Continual sacrifice of praise.

i. Wanted to stay and build booths...worship celebration.

ii. Fell on their faces.

d. Were relieved of their fear. Psalm 23 I will fear no evil

i. Visions of Heaven are not meant to put the believer in fear, even though they are awesome and powerful.

e. Sent them on a mission. Matthew 28:16-20 Go and tell.

i. Views of Heaven are meant to give us a vision

1. ...tell no one now, but later...tell everyone...

2. 'Go tell the world about me, I gotta go now for a little while, but goodbye is not the end.'

f. Purified their lives. I John 2:2-3

Conclusion: Heaven changes today, and will for forever change us.



For Christians this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven.

— Randy Alcorn —

AZ QUOTES

David Guzik Study Guide for Matthew 17

JESUS TRANSFIGURED, TRIUMPHANT, AND TAXED

A. Jesus is transfigured.

1. ([Matthew 17:1-2](#)) The transformation of Jesus before His disciples.

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

- a. **Jesus took Peter, James, and John**: Jesus did not invite all the disciples, but only these three. Perhaps Jesus did this to prevent the account of this amazing miracle being told of before the time was right ([Matthew 17:9](#)). Others have suggested that He did it because these three needed closer supervision than the others.

i. **After six days**: “Luke’s ‘about eight days after Jesus said this’ ([Luke 9:28](#)) is based on a Greek way of speaking and means ‘about a week later’.” (Carson)

b. **Led them up on a high mountain**: There have been several suggestions for the location of the Mount of Transfiguration.

- Mount Tabor (about 1,900 feet, 580 meters); but it isn’t **high**, and isn’t on the way from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum.
- Mount Hermon (about 9,300 feet, 2,835 meters) is **high**; but perhaps too high and too cold on its summit, where they seem to have spent the night. It also would not be close to the Jewish crowds that met Jesus immediately on His descent from the mountain ([Matthew 17:14](#), [Luke 9:37](#)).
- Mount Miron (about 3,900 feet, 1,190 meters) was the highest mountain in a Jewish area, and is on the way between Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum. Carson favors this location.

i. “The name of the ‘*high mountain*’ can never be known; for those who knew the locality have left no information. Tabor, if you please; Hermon, if you prefer it. No one can decide.” (Spurgeon)

c. **He was transfigured before them**: The word **transfigured** speaks of a *transformation*, not merely a change in outward appearance. The effect was extremely striking; Jesus became so bright in appearance that He was even difficult to look at (**like the sun**).

i. “The verb *metamorphoo* (‘transfigure,’ ‘transform,’ ‘change in form’) suggests a change of inmost nature that may be outwardly visible.” (Carson) It may be that this glory shone forth in the Garden of Gethsemane, when those who arrested Him fell back when Jesus said, “I am.” ([John 18:6](#)).

ii. Essentially this was not a **new** miracle, but the temporary cessation of an ongoing one. The real miracle was that Jesus, most of the time, could keep from displaying this glory. Yet John said, *We beheld His glory*. Peter wrote, *We were eyewitnesses of His majesty*.

iii. “For Christ to be glorious was almost a less matter than for him to restrain or hide his glory. It is forever his glory that he concealed his glory; and that, though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor.” (Spurgeon)

iv. This happened as a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in [Matthew 16:28](#). We should remember that chapter and verse divisions were certainly not in the original writings of the apostles, and did not come until the 16th Century.

d. **His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light**: It was **His face** that did shine as the sun. He wasn’t transformed into another being with another body; it was **His** own **face** that shone.

i. Jesus has His disciples with Him when He shines in His glory. He is not glorified apart from them, because they share in His glory. *Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me*

may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me. ([John 17:24](#))

ii. “Another thing which we may learn from our Lord Jesus Christ having shown himself to his apostles thus robed in brightness is, that we are scarcely aware of the glory of which the human body is capable.” (Spurgeon)

2. ([Matthew 17:3](#)) Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

a. **Moses and Elijah**: Remarkably, these two Old Testament persons **appeared** and spoke with the transfigured Jesus. Moses had lived some 1400 years before; Elijah some 900 years before; yet they were alive and in some sort of resurrected, glorified state.

i. It is fair to think that these two particular persons from the Old Testament appeared because they represent the Law (**Moses**) and the Prophets (**Elijah**). The sum of Old Testament revelation came to meet with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration.

ii. We can also say that **Moses and Elijah** represent those who are caught up to God (**Moses** at [Jude 9](#) and **Elijah** at [2 Kings 2:11](#)). More specifically, Moses represents those who die and go to glory, and Elijah represents those who are caught up to heaven without death (as in the rapture described in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)).

iii. From this we see: “Saints long departed still alive; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Talking with Him**: [Luke 9:31](#) tells us the theme of their conversation; they *spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*. They spoke of the upcoming work of the cross, and presumably of the resurrection to follow.

i. “And where could there have been found greater subjects than this wondrous death, and his glorious resurrection?” (Meyer)

ii. “They ‘appeared unto *them*’ but they ‘talked with *him*’: the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with the apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus.” (Spurgeon)

3. ([Matthew 17:4-5](#)) Peter equates Jesus with Moses and Elijah and is dramatically rebuked by a voice from the cloud of God’s glory.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a

voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

a. **Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah:** [Mark 9:6](#) and [Luke 9:33](#) point out that Peter didn't know what he was saying when he said this. Though said without careful thought, the effect of his words put Jesus on an equal level with Moses and Elijah, building equal shrines for each of them.

i. “Peter suggested the retention of the three in association: Moses, the law-giver; Elijah, the reformer; and Jesus, the Messiah.” (Morgan)

ii. “The [booths](#) **tabernacles** (the word normally means ‘tents’) would be temporary shelters of branches, such as were erected for the Feast of Tabernacles.” (France)

iii. “How selfish the one thought, ‘*It is good for us!*’ What was to be done for the rest of the twelve, and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world?” (Spurgeon)

b. **A bright cloud overshadowed them:** This is the cloud of God's glory, called the [shekinah](#) in the Old Testament. From this cloud of glory, God the Father spoke.

i. “When God draws near to man it is absolutely necessary that his glory should be veiled. No man can see his face and live. Hence the cloud, in this instance, and in other cases.” (Spurgeon)

c. **This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!** The Father, from heaven, rebuked Peter's attempt to put Jesus on an equal footing with Moses and Elijah — and **while he was still speaking**. It was important to interrupt Peter, so that all would know that Jesus is unique and the **beloved Son** — He deserves our special attention, so **Hear Him!**

i. One might say that everything that the Father said came from the Scriptures.

- In [Psalm 2:7](#), the Father says to the Son: [You are my Son](#).
- In [Isaiah 42:1](#), the Father says to the Son that He is [One in whom My soul delights](#). Or as [Matthew 12:18](#) quotes the passage: [in whom My soul is well pleased!](#)
- In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), God the Father says through Moses the prophet about the coming Jesus, [Him you shall hear](#).

ii. “The occasion was most august, yet no better words are needed by the Lord himself concerning his own Son than those recorded in former ages in the pages of Holy Writ...So that this voice of the Lord utters three Bible words, and surely if the Lord speaks in the language of Scripture, how much more should his servants? We preach best when we preach the word of God.” (Spurgeon)

iii. This is another development of the significant theme in Matthew of the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. With these words from heaven, God the Father clearly set Jesus above the Law and the Prophets. He is not merely another or even a better lawgiver or prophet. Jesus is the **only begotten Son**.

iv. "If the Father says, 'This is my Son,' observe the graciousness of our adoption! With such a Son the Lord had no need of children. He did not make us his children because he needed sons, but because we needed a father." (Spurgeon)

d. **Hear Him!** If we should listen to anyone, we should listen to Jesus. One would think that a voice from heaven would say, "Listen to me!" But the Father said, "**Hear Him!**" Everything points us to Jesus.

i. "Which words establish Christ as the only Doctor and Teacher of his church, the only one to whom Christians are to hearken: nor doth this destroy the ministers of the word, who are no more than the interpreters of what he hath said, and no more to be regarded than as by then we hear Christ speaking more plainly and frequently unto us." (Poole)

ii. "If Peter be our master, let us call him so; if Calvin be our master, let us call him so; and if Wesley be our master, let us call him so; but if we be disciples of Jesus, then let us follow Jesus, and follow him with other men only so far as we perceive they followed Christ." (Spurgeon)

4. (**Matthew 17:6-8**) The disciples react with a holy fear.

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

a. **They fell on their faces and were greatly afraid**: They didn't fall on their faces when they saw Jesus transfigured; not when His face shone like the sun; not when His clothes became as white as the light; not when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him; not when Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus; and not even when the cloud of glory appeared and overshadowed them. But **when the disciples heard** the voice from heaven, **they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid**.

i. "They were in the immediate presence of God, and listening to their Father's voice: well might they lie and prostrate and tremble. Too clear a manifestation of God, even though it related to Jesus, would rather overpower than empower us." (Spurgeon)

b. **Arise, and do not be afraid**: The disciples were once again uniquely in awe of Jesus. This helps explain the purpose of the Transfiguration: to reassure the disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, even if He would indeed be crucified as He had so surprisingly revealed.

i. Note the context: Jesus just revealed His humiliation and sufferings to them. It makes sense that they receive another divine testimony to Jesus' status as the Son of God at this time.

c. **When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only**: It is significant that their entire focus was forced upon Jesus once again. The cloud was gone; Moses had left, and Elijah had disappeared.

i. It might have been that after the events of the transfiguration, *no one remained for the disciples*. Theoretically, when the experience was over, there would have been no Moses, no Elijah, and no Jesus. This is exactly the experience of many. They have some spiritual experience, or receive some ministry from the Holy Spirit of God; but when it is over, it is over — done and gone. Nothing remains.

ii. It might have been that after the events of the transfiguration, *only Moses remained for the disciples*. Theoretically, when the experience was over, there would have been only Moses. Though Moses was a great man, compared to Jesus he was like the moon is to the sun. It would be sad to exchange the grace and truth that came by Jesus for the law that came by Moses; but there are those sad ones who see Moses and his law only.

iii. It might have been that after the events of the transfiguration, *only Elijah remained for the disciples*. Theoretically, when the experience was over, there would have been only Elijah. Elijah was a man great for the power of his word and the boldness of his national reforms. Yet all this doesn't compare to the person and work of Jesus only.

iv. It might have been that after the events of the transfiguration, *all three remained*. At first, this might have seemed to be the best — why not all three? Yet now that Jesus has come, Moses and Elijah can fade into their supportive roles, and never be put on the same level as Jesus.

v. "Though the apostles saw 'Jesus only,' they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by...O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet 'Jesus only' shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you." (Spurgeon)

vi. "At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield. 'One is our Master,' and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only." (Spurgeon)

5. (**Matthew 17:9-13**) The problem of Elijah coming first.

Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.” And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

a. **Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead**: Wisely, Jesus told the disciples to not speak of the transfiguration until after His resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was the final confirmation of His ministry and glory; until then, reports of the transfiguration would be more likely to test the faith of those who did not see it rather than strengthen their faith.

b. **Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?** The disciples had heard that **Elijah must come**, according to the promise of Malachi 4:5: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD*.

i. Their question may go like this: “Jesus, we know that Elijah comes first before the Messiah. We know You are the Messiah, yet we just saw Elijah, and it seems that he came after You.”

c. **Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things**: Jesus reassured the disciples that Elijah would indeed come first. But the first coming of Jesus did not bring the great and dreadful day of the LORD. Instead, the Malachi 4:5 coming of Elijah is probably best identified with the appearance of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-13, and then the Second Coming of Jesus.

d. **But I say to you that Elijah has come already**: Yet there was also a sense in which Jesus could rightly say “**Elijah has come already**.” Elijah had arrived in the work of John the Baptist, who ministered in Elijah’s spirit and power (Luke 1:17).

i. This is evident from a comparison of the life and work of both Elijah and John the Baptist.

- Elijah was noted as being full of zeal for God; so was John the Baptist.
- Elijah boldly rebuked sin in high places; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah called sinners and compromisers to a decision of repentance; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah attracted multitudes in his ministry; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah attracted the attention and fury of a king and his wife; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah was an austere man; so was John the Baptist.

- Elijah fled to the wilderness; John the Baptist also lived there.
- Elijah lived in a corrupt time and was used to restore failing spiritual life; so was it true of John the Baptist.

. Chuck Smith

Verse by Verse Study on Matthew 17 (C2000)

- Let's turn now in our Bibles to Matthew chapter seventeen. The seventeenth chapter of Matthew actually begins with the twenty-eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter. It's unfortunate that the men who divided the Bible into chapters and verses made the chapter distinction where they did. They should have taken and included the twenty-eighth verse of chapter sixteen into chapter seventeen, and it would have eliminated a lot of questions. Because Jesus is talking to His disciples there at Caesarea Philippi and is talking to them about His death, and about the glory of His Father that He is going to bestow, and His coming in the glory of His Father, with His angels, rewarding every man according to his works.
- Then Jesus said, "verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, until they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom" ([Mat 16:28](#)). Now from that, there are people who have assumed that Jesus no doubt failed, because all of the disciples who were standing there did die, and the Lord has not yet come in His kingdom. So it's a very confusing thing. It would seem that Jesus made a false prediction of His return.
- However, if you don't have the chapter distinction, and you don't stop at the end of chapter sixteen, but you go immediately into chapter seventeen, you'll find out what Jesus was referring to. "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom",
- And after six days Jesus takes Peter, James and John His brother, and brought them up into high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him ([Mat 17:1-3](#)).
- So Jesus was referring to the fact that some of His disciples, and those that He was referring to were Peter, James and John, that they were actually going to see Him in the glory of His kingdom, and so He took them up into the high mountain. Now they were at Caesarea Philippi, which is at the base of Mount Hermon. And so it is quite obvious that the high mountain that He took them into was Mount Hermon.
- Now in years to come when they sought to establish the Holy Land as a tourist attraction for Christians from throughout the world, in establishing where the holy sights were, that is where the events actually happened, most of the holy sights were established by the mother of Constantine some three hundred years, plus or minus, after Jesus was crucified. And she

established the holy sights by her feelings when she stood in a spot, "oh, this feels like the spot where He must have been born. I feel an interesting sensation. Surely this must be the cave where He was born. Or this must be the place where the angel announced to Mary that she was going to conceive and have a child. This must be the place where He lived." And she went around the country establishing these holy sights, and they begin to build then these churches on these holy sights to commemorate these places where Jesus supposedly did these various things.

- In her establishing of the holy sights it's obvious that she wasn't too familiar with the scriptures. And it's also obvious that they wanted to make it convenient for tourists. So they established the sight of the transfiguration on Mount Tabor, which is sort of in the middle of the land near the Sea of Galilee, and in the area of the Valley of Megiddo. They said that's where Jesus was transfigured, so they would have an excuse to build a huge church on the top of Mount Tabor. And after all, how many tourists are going to journey all the way up to Mount Hermon to see the place where He was transfigured.
- The multiplying of the loaves and fishes; though it was around the upper end of the lake near Bethsaida, yet, at that time there weren't any roads going around into that area, and so they established a church down near Magdala, which is closer to where all of the tourists can go. And so that's where they established the loaves and fishes.
- And then the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, they established that in the place the Church of the Crucifixion, within the walls of the old city of Jerusalem. Though the scripture tells us plainly that they took Him outside the walls, in the place where He was crucified, there was a garden and in the garden a cave. So they have established that inside the gate of Damascus, and they have, of course, recently excavated the ancient gate of Damascus. And you can actually see the very gate that Jesus no doubt went through when He went over to Golgotha and was crucified. But it was convenient for tourists to get things close together, and so they established the holy sights that way.
- Tabor is not an especially high mountain; in fact, it isn't even as high as Mount Gaber, right in that same area. Hermon is the highest mountain, 9800 feet high. And is the fact that Jesus was all the way up in Caesarea Philippi, it doesn't seem reasonable that He would hurry down to Mount Tabor, which would be a good six-day journey, I mean really hustling, in order that He might go up to the top of, to be transfigured for His disciples. But traditions such as the -- would have you and -- and when you go there, if you go with someone other than me, they probably take you to Tabor and let you get the same sensation that Constantine's mother got, as you stand in the place.
- There are three Churches of the Ascension on the top of the Mount of Olives, and all of them swear that theirs is on the exact spot. One will even show you a footprint that He left in the rock when He ascended. Even though the scripture said, He went as far as Bethany and there

He ascended into heaven. But they didn't read that gospel, and so they established all the Churches of Ascension on the top of the Mount of Olives. So I guess distorting news isn't anything new.

- So Jesus was referring to the fact that these disciples were going to see Him in His glory. And as He was transfigured before them, they actually saw God's glory upon Him. He was transfigured. His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was as white as the light. And there appeared unto Him, Moses, and Elijah talking with Him. Matthew does not tell us what they were talking about, but Luke's gospel tells us that they were talking to Him about His death that He was soon to accomplish in Jerusalem. They were there talking to Him.
- Now, what tremendous persons to talk to Jesus. Moses, who of course stood for the law, and Elijah who was the head of the prophets. And inasmuch as in the law, all of the sacrifices and the feast and so forth were spelled out. Now He who was the fulfillment of all of this, which was just a shadow. Now the substance, Christ is here and the sacrifices which were all just a shadow of that which was to come, is now to be fulfilled. And so Moses is no doubt talking to Him and has himself a better understanding than even when he wrote the Pentateuch. Elijah talking with Him also concerning this death that He was to experience.

- Then answered impulsive Peter, [our good friend] and said unto Jesus, It's good for us to be here: if you will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah ([Mat 17:4](#)).

- Isn't it interesting what stupid things we say when we should keep our mouths shut? But sometimes we think, well, we ought to say something, and when we talk for just the sake of being, many times people just talk for the sake of talking and that's always dangerous. You put your brain in neutral and start talking; it's amazing what will come out. And you think, "I got to say something". And so impulsive Peter, got to say something, "Lord, it's good for us to be here, let's build three tabernacles, for Moses, Elijah and you".

- But while he spoke, he was interrupted by a bright cloud that over shadowed them ([Mat 17:5](#)):

- You remember in the Old Testament there was a bright cloud that lead the children of Israel when they came out of the bondage of Egypt, and that cloud followed them or led them through the wilderness. And it was the cloud that represented the Shekinah, the glory of God. Later when the tabernacle was completed, and they were ready to begin the sacrifices, this bright cloud descended there on the tabernacle, the glorious presence of God. It was that which filled the Holy of Holies. And then later on when Solomon had completed the temple, and when they dedicated the temple, again this bright cloud came upon it.
- And now once more, the bright cloud.

- And the voice out of the cloud, which said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him ([Mat 17:5](#)).

- They had heard the law. They had heard the prophets, but now God is saying, "hear Him."
- In Hebrews chapter one, we read those momentous words. "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spoke unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His own dear Son" ([Hebrews 1:1-2](#)).
- And so the Father is affirming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." The law is represented, the prophets are represented, but now God is saying, "listen to Him," the full revelation of God, the pure revelation of God, the true revelation of God in Jesus Christ. "Hear ye Him."
- And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and they were frightened. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, don't be afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man is risen again from the dead ([Mat 17:6-9](#)).
- Now just keep this quiet, don't go spreading it until I am risen from the dead.
- And His disciples [a little confused,] said, Why is it that the scribes tell us that Elijah must first come? ([Mat 17:10](#))
- Now again the question of Elijah and this question is a legitimate question, because in the last of the books of the prophets in the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, and in the last chapter, in fact one of very last promises of the old testament, the fifth verse of chapter four of Malachi, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
- So here is a prophesy that before the Lord comes, Elijah will first come to turn the hearts of the people to their fathers, that is to the religion of their fathers, and to the God of their fathers. And thus believing that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Peter had just confessed this six days earlier. "We know you're the Messiah, then where is Elijah? If Elijah has to first come, and here you are, where is Elijah?"
- Now it needs to be noted, that Jesus declared, and notice carefully, verse eleven,
- Elijah shall truly first come, and restore all things ([Mat 17:11](#)).
- Jesus is reiterating the fact that that will happen; Elijah will indeed come and restore all things. Now the confusion in the minds of the disciples arose over the fact that they were anticipating that Jesus would immediately establish God's kingdom upon the earth. They were expecting it in their lifetime. They were waiting for Him to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. What they didn't know is that from the time of the Ascension of Jesus Christ until His coming to establish the kingdom, would be a long period of time. They did not foresee this two thousand-year interval that would exist, and thus, anticipating the immediate establishing of the kingdom.

How do you fit together the fact that Elijah is going to first come? And Jesus repeats the prophecy of Malachi. "Elijah shall indeed first come, and restore all things."

- Now when we get into the book of Revelation and John is dealing with the third section of the book, as he is talking about the things which will be after the church things, John declares in chapter eleven that he saw these two witnesses, and God gave to them power to witness for a period of time, three and a half years. And during the time of their witness, they will be able to exercise supernatural-type power. They will be able to stop the heavens, that it rain not during the time of their prophecy. They'll be able to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies. The very things that Elijah did while he was here upon earth; praying, and it rained not, calling down fire upon the captains who were commissioned by the king to bring him back as captive.
- And it is obvious that one of the two witnesses in Revelation chapter eleven will indeed be Elijah, and that is the complete fulfillment of what the Lord has declared here. Elijah shall first come and restore all things. However, inasmuch as there was a double coming of the Messiah, first in humiliation to bear the sins of many, to die in the place of us for our sins, and His second coming to come in power and glory to establish the kingdom of God.
- So there were two forerunners, the one John the Baptist, and Jesus then said,

- But I say unto you, that Elijah has come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatever they pleased. Likewise also will the Son of man suffer of them. And the disciples understood that He was speaking to them of John the Baptist ([Mat 17:12-13](#)).

- Now when Zacharias the priest was in the temple offering the incense, because when they cast lots that was his chore that he received in that particular course of his priesthood. As he was standing before the altar of God, offering the incense, suddenly there appeared unto him the angel Gabriel. And he was frightened, and he said, "Fear not, Zacharias, for you have found favor with God, and your wife Elisabeth in her old years is going to conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name John, and he will go forth in the Spirit and in the power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers"([Luke 1:13-17](#)).
- Now that was the prediction made by Gabriel to Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. And of course Zacharias said, "How can this be? My wife is an old woman, she is stricken with years, that is, she is bent over in years." And the angel said. "Because you've doubted the word of God, you'll not be able to speak until the day that the child is born"([Luke 1:18-20](#)).
- And the people all wondered why Zacharias was in the temple so long because they were waiting outside. The people would wait outside, and the priest would come out and give them God's blessings and so they were waiting for that blessing. And man, he was in there, and they watched the sundial going down, and what's taking him so long? And finally when he came out, they were amazed that he wasn't able to give them the blessing. He wasn't able to speak.

He went back to the hill country. His wife Elisabeth conceived, and of course John the Baptist was born.

- Now when John began his ministry he attracted many people. And they came out of the villages and out of the cities to be baptized, and to hear his words. And because the people were gathering to him, there was a stir among the Pharisees and Scribes and all, and they sent out certain men to him, to find out where he got his authority to do these things. Who gave you the authority? Who are you anyhow? Are you the Messiah? No. Are you Elijah? He said, no. Yet Jesus is declaring, "if you're able to receive it, this is Elijah, of whom the scripture spake".
- Now not the complete fulfillment, not the restoring of all things, that the children to their fathers, and the restoring of the religious order, that will come when Elijah comes again preceding the coming of Jesus Christ during the time, just after the church is removed. So I have no anticipation of seeing Elijah, even as I have no anticipation of seeing the anti-christ. And I am not looking for Elijah. I am not looking for the anti-christ. I am looking for Jesus Christ to come and take me to be with Him, and then is when these other events will be triggered.
- So Elijah will come again, Jesus said that. Elijah shall indeed come first to restore all things. "But Elijah has already come", Jesus said, "And they did not know him, but have done to him whatever they wished, and they are going to do the same, so am I going to be suffering at their hands."

Matthew Henry Commentary on Matthew 17

Chapter 17

In this chapter we have,

- I. Christ in his pomp and glory transfigured ([v. 1-13](#)).
- II. Christ in his power and grace, casting the devil out of a child ([v. 14-21](#)). And,
- III. Christ in his poverty and great humiliation,
 - 1. Foretelling his own sufferings ([v. 22, 23](#)).
 - 2. Paying tribute ([v. 24-27](#)).

So that here is Christ, the Brightness of his Father's glory, by himself purging our sins, paying our debts, and destroying for us him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus were the several indications of Christ's gracious intentions admirable interwoven.

[Mat 17:1-13](#)

We have here the story of Christ's transfiguration; he had said that the Son of man should shortly come in his kingdom, with which promise all the three evangelists industriously connect this story; as if Christ's transfiguration were intended for a specimen and an earnest of the kingdom of Christ, and of that light and love of his, which therein appears to his select and sanctified ones. Peter speaks of this as the power and coming of our Lord Jesus (2 Pt. 1:16); because it was an emanation of his power, and a previous notice of his coming, which was fitly introduced by such prefaces.

When Christ was here in his humiliation, though his state, in the main, was a state of abasement and afflictions, there were some glimpses of his glory intermixed, that he himself might be the more encouraged in his sufferings, and others the less offended. His birth, his baptism, his temptation, and his death, were the most remarkable instances of his humiliation; and these were each of them attended with some signal points of glory, and the smiles of heaven. But the series of his public ministry being a continued humiliation, here, just in the midst of that, comes in this discovery of his glory. As, now that he is in heaven, he has his condescensions, so, when he was on earth, he had his advancements.

Now concerning Christ's transfiguration, observe,

- I. The circumstances of it, which are here noted, v. 1.
 - 1. The time; six days after he had the solemn conference with his disciples, ch. 16:21. St Luke saith, It was about eight days after, six whole days intervening, and this the eighth day, that day seven-night. Nothing is recorded to be said or done by our Lord Jesus for six days before his transfiguration; thus, before some great appearances, there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, Rev. 8:1. Then when Christ seems to be doing nothing for his church, expect, ere long, something more than ordinary.
 - 2. The place; it was on top of a high mountain apart. Christ chose a mountain,
 - (1.) As a secret place. He went apart; for though a city upon a hill can hardly be hid, two or three persons upon a hill can hardly be found; therefore their private oratories were commonly on mountains. Christ chose a retired place to be transfigured in, because his appearing publicly in his glory was not agreeable to his present state; and thus he would show his humility, and teach us that privacy much befriends our communion with God. Those that would maintain intercourse with Heaven, must frequently withdraw from the converse and business of this world; and they will find themselves never less alone than when alone, for the Father is with them.
 - (2.) Though a sublime place, elevated above things below. Note, Those that would have a transforming fellowship with God, must not only retire, but ascend; lift up their hearts, and seek things above. The call is, Come up hither, Rev. 4:1.
 - 3. The witnesses of it. He took with him Peter and James and John.

- (1.) He took three, a competent number to testify what they should see; for *out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.* Christ makes his appearances certain enough, but not too common; *not to all the people, but to witnesses* ([Acts 10:41](#)), that they might be blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.
- (2.) He took these three because they were the chief of his disciples, the first three of the worthies of the Son of David; probably they excelled in gifts and graces; they were Christ's favourites, singled out to be the witnesses of his retirements. They were present when he raised the damsel to life, [Mk. 5:37](#). They were afterward to be the witnesses of his agony, and this was to prepare them for that. Note, A sight of Christ's glory, while we are here in this world, is a good preparative for our sufferings with him, as these are preparatives for the sight of his glory in the other world. Paul, who had abundance of trouble, had abundance of revelations.
- II. The manner of it ([v. 2](#)); *He was transfigured before them.* The substance of his body remained the same, but the accidents and appearances of it were greatly altered; he was not turned into a spirit, but his body, which had appeared in weakness and dishonour, now appeared in power and glory. *He was transfigured, metamorphoutheu-he was metamorphosed.* The profane poets amused and abused the world with idle extravagant stories of metamorphoses, especially the metamorphoses of their gods, such as were disparaging and diminishing to them, equally false and ridiculous; to these some think Peter has an eye, when, being about to mention this transfiguration of Christ, he saith, *We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made it known unto you,* [2 Pt. 1:16](#). Christ was both God and man; but, in the days of his flesh, he took on him the *form of a servant* *morpheun doulou*, [Phil. 2:7](#). He drew a veil over the glory of his godhead; but now, in his transfiguration, he put by that veil, appeared *en morpheu theou*-in the form of God ([Phil. 2:6](#)), and gave his disciples a glimpse of his glory, which could not but change his form.
The great truth which we declare, is, that *God is light* ([1 Jn. 1:5](#)), *dwells in the light* ([1 Tim. 6:16](#)), *covers himself with light*, [Ps. 104:2](#). And therefore when Christ would appear in the *form of God*, he appeared *in light*, the most glorious of all visible beings, the first-born of the creation, and most nearly resembling the eternal Parent. Christ is *the Light*; while he was in the world, he *shined in darkness*, and therefore *the world knew him not* ([Jn. 1:5](#), [10](#)); but, at this time, that Light shined out of the darkness.
Now his transfiguration appeared in two things:
 - 1. *His face did shine as the sun.* The face is the principal part of the body, by which we are known; therefore such a brightness was put on Christ's face, that face which afterward *he hid not from shame and spitting*. It shone as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, so clear, so bright; for he is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world. The face of Moses shone but as the moon, with a borrowed reflected light, but Christ's shone as the sun, with an innate inherent light, which was the more sensibly glorious, because it suddenly broke out, as it were, from behind a black cloud.

- 2. His raiment was white as the light. All his body was altered, as his face was; so that beams of light, darting from every part through his clothes, made them white and glittering. The shining of the face of Moses was so weak, that it could easily be concealed by a thin veil; but such was the glory of Christ's body, that his clothes were enlightened by it.
- III. The companions of it. He will come, at last, with ten thousands of his saints; and, as a specimen of that, there now appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him, [v. 3](#). Observe,
 - 1. There were glorified saints attending him, that, when there were three to bear record on earth, Peter, James, and John, there might be some to bear record from heaven too. Thus here was a lively resemblance of Christ's kingdom, which is made up of saints in heaven and saints on earth, and to which belong the spirits of just men made perfect. We see here, that they who are fallen asleep in Christ are not perished, but exist in a separate state, and shall be forthcoming when there is occasion.
 - 2. These two were Moses and Elias, men very eminent in their day. They had both fasted forty days and forty nights, as Christ did, and wrought other miracles, and were both remarkable at their going out of the world as well as in their living in the world. Elias was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot, and died not. The body of Moses was never found, possibly it was preserved from corruption, and reserved for this appearance. The Jews had great respect for the memory of Moses and Elias, and therefore they came to witness of him, they came to carry tidings concerning him to the upper world. In them the law and the prophets honoured Christ, and bore testimony to him. Moses and Elias appeared to the disciples; they saw them, and heard them talk, and, either by their discourse or by information from Christ, they knew them to be Moses and Elias; glorified saints shall know one another in heaven. They talked with Christ. Note, Christ has communion with the blessed, and will be no stranger to any of the members of that glorified corporation. Christ was now to be sealed in his prophetic office, and therefore these two great prophets were fittest to attend him, as transferring all their honour and interest to him; for in these last days God speaks to us by his Son, [Heb. 1:1](#).
- IV. The great pleasure and satisfaction that the disciples took in the sight of Christ's glory. Peter, as usual, spoke for the rest; Lord, it is good for us to be here. Peter here expresses,
 - 1. The delight they had in this converse; Lord, it is good to be here. Though upon a high mountain, which we may suppose rough and unpleasant, bleak and cold, yet it is good to be here. He speaks the sense of his fellow-disciples; It is good not only for me, but for us. He did not covet to monopolize this favour, but gladly takes them in. He saith this to Christ. Pious and devout affections love to pour out themselves before the Lord Jesus. The soul that loves Christ, and loves to be with him, loves to go and tell him so; Lord, it is good for us to be here. This intimates a thankful acknowledgment of his kindness in admitting them to this favour. Note, Communion with Christ is the delight of Christians. All the disciples of the Lord Jesus reckon it is good for them to be with him in the holy mount. It is good to be here where Christ is, and whither he brings us along with him by his appointment; it is good to be here, retired and alone with Christ; to be here, where we may behold the beauty of the Lord

Jesus, [Ps. 27:4](#). It is pleasant to hear Christ compare notes with Moses and the prophets, to see how all the institutions of the law, and all the predictions of the prophets, pointed at Christ, and were fulfilled in him.

- 2. The desire they had of the continuance of it; *Let us make here three tabernacles.* There was in this, as in many other of Peter's sayings, a mixture of weakness and of goodwill, more zeal than discretion.
- (1.) Here was a zeal for this converse with heavenly things, a laudable complacency in the sight they had of Christ's glory. Note, Those that by faith *behold the beauty of the Lord* in his house, cannot but desire to *dwell there all the days of their life.* It is good having a nail in God's holy place ([Ezra 9:8](#)), a constant abode; to be in holy ordinances as a man at home, not as a wayfaring man. Peter thought this mountain was a fine spot of ground to build upon, and he was for making tabernacles there; as Moses in the wilderness made a tabernacle for the Shechinah, or divine glory.
It argued great respect for his Master and the heavenly guests, with some commendable forgetfulness of himself and his fellow-disciples, that he would have tabernacles for Christ, and Moses, and Elias, but none for himself. He would be content to lie in the open air, on the cold ground, in such good company; if his Master have but where to lay his head, no matter whether he himself has or no.
- (2.) Yet in this zeal he betrayed a great deal of weakness and ignorance. What need had Moses and Elias of tabernacles? They belonged to that blessed world, *where they hunger no more, nor doth the sun light upon them.* Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and bidden his disciples expect the like; Peter forgets this, or, to prevent it, will needs be building tabernacles in the mount of glory, out of the way of trouble. Still he harps upon, *Master, spare thyself,* though he had been so lately checked for it. Note, There is a proneness in good men to expect the crown without the cross. Peter was for laying hold of this as the prize, though he had not yet fought his fight, nor finished his course, as those other disciples, [ch. 20:21](#). We are out in our aim, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. It is not for strangers and pilgrims (such as we are in our best circumstances in this world), to talk of building, or to expect a continuing city.

Yet it is some excuse for the incongruity of Peter's proposal, not only that *he knew not what he said* ([Lu. 9:33](#)), but also that he submitted the proposal to the wisdom of Christ; *If thou wilt, let us make tabernacles.* Note, Whatever tabernacles we propose to make to ourselves in this world, we must always remember to ask Christ's leave.

Now to this which Peter said, there was no reply made; the disappearing of the glory would soon answer it. They that promise themselves great things on earth will soon be undeceived by their own experience.

- V. The glorious testimony which God the Father gave to our Lord Jesus, in which *he received from him honour and glory* ([2 Pt. 1:17](#)), when *there came this voice from the excellent glory.* This was like proclaiming the titles of honour or the royal style of a prince, when, at his coronation, he appears in

his robes of state; and be it known, to the comfort of mankind, the royal style of Christ is taken from his mediation. Thus, in vision, he appeared with a rainbow, the seal of the covenant, about his throne ([Rev. 4:3](#)); for it is his glory to be our Redeemer.

Now concerning this testimony from heaven to Christ, observe.

- 1. How it came, and in what manner it was introduced.
 - (1.) There was a cloud. We find often in the Old Testament, that a cloud was the visible token of God's presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud ([Ex. 19:9](#)), and so to Moses, [Ex. 34:5](#); [Num. 11:25](#). He took possession of the tabernacle in a cloud, and afterwards of the temple; where Christ was in his glory, the temple was, and there God showed himself present. We know not the balancing of the clouds, but we know that much of the intercourse and communication between heaven and earth is maintained by them. By the clouds vapours ascend, and rains descend; therefore God is said to make the clouds his chariots; so he did here when he descended upon this mount.
 - (2.) It was a bright cloud. Under the law it was commonly a thick and dark cloud that God made the token of his presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a thick cloud ([Ex. 19:16](#)), and said he would dwell in thick darkness; see [1 Ki. 8:12](#). But we are now come, not to the mount that was covered with thick blackness and darkness ([Heb. 12:18](#)), but to the mount that is crowned with a bright cloud. Both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament dispensation had tokens of God's presence; but that was a dispensation of darkness, and terror, and bondage, this of light, love, and liberty.
 - (3.) It overshadowed them. This cloud was intended to break the force of that great light which otherwise would have overcome the disciples, and have been intolerable; it was like the veil which Moses put upon his face when it shone. God, in manifesting himself to his people, considers their frame. This cloud was to their eyes as parables to their understandings, to convey spiritual things by things sensible, as they were able to bear them.
 - (4.) There came a voice out of the cloud, and it was the voice of God, who now, as of old, spake in the cloudy pillar, [Ps. 99:7](#). Here was no thunder, or lightning, or voice of a trumpet, as there was when the law was given by Moses, but only a voice, a still small voice, and that not ushered in with a strong wind, or an earthquake, or fire, as when God spake to Elias, [1 Ki. 19:11, 12](#). Moses then and Elias were witnesses, that in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son, in another way than he spoke formerly to them. This voice came from the excellent glory ([2 Pt. 1:17](#)), the glory which excelleth, in comparison of which the former had no glory; though the excellent glory was clouded, yet thence came a voice, for faith comes by hearing.
- 2. What this testimony from heaven was; This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. Here we have,
 - (1.) The great gospel mystery revealed; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This was the very same that was spoken from heaven at his baptism ([ch. 3:17](#)); and it was the best news that

ever came from heaven to earth since man sinned. It is to the same purport with that great doctrine ([2 Co. 5:19](#)), *That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.* Moses and Elias were great men, and favourites of Heaven, yet they were but servants, and servants that God was not always well pleased in; for Moses spoke unadvisedly, and Elias was a man subject to passions; but Christ is *a Son*, and in him God was always well pleased. Moses and Elias were sometimes instruments of reconciliation between God and Israel; Moses was a great intercessor, and Elias a great reformer; but in Christ God is reconciling the world; his intercession is more prevalent than that of Moses, and his reformation more effectual than that of Elias.

This repetition of the same voice that came from heaven at his baptism was no vain repetition; but, like the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, was to show the thing was established. What God hath thus spoken once, yea twice, no doubt he will stand to, and he expects we should take notice of it. It was spoken at his baptism, because then he was entering upon his temptation, and his public ministry; and now it was repeated, because he was entering upon his sufferings, which are to be dated from hence; for now, and not before, he began to foretel them, and immediately after his transfiguration it is said ([Lu. 9:51](#)), that *the time was come that he should be received up*; this therefore was then repeated, to arm him against the terror, and his disciples against the offence, of the cross. When sufferings begin to abound, consolations are given in more abundantly, [2 Co. 1:5](#).

- (2.) The great gospel duty required, and it is the condition of our benefit by Christ; *Hear ye him.* God is well pleased with none in Christ but those that hear him. It is not enough to give him the hearing (what will that avail us?) but we must hear him and believe him, as the great Prophet and Teacher; hear him, and be ruled by him, as the great Prince and Lawgiver; hear him, and heed him. Whoever would know the mind of God, must hearken to Jesus Christ; for by him God has in these last days spoken to us. This voice from heaven has made all the sayings of Christ as authentic as if they had been thus spoken out of a cloud. God does here, as it were, turn us over to Christ for all the revelations of his mind; and it refers to that prediction concerning *the Prophet God would raise up like unto Moses* ([Deu. 18:18](#)); *him shall ye hear.*

Christ now appeared in glory; and the more we see of Christ's glory, the more cause we shall see to hearken to him: but the disciples were gazing on that glory of his which they saw; they are therefore bid not to look at him, but to hear him. Their sight of his glory was soon intercepted by the cloud, but their business was to hear him. We walk *by faith*, which *comes by hearing*, not *by sight*, [2 Co. 5:7](#). Moses and Elias were now with him; the law and the prophets; hitherto it was said, *Hear them*, [Lu. 16:29](#). The disciples were ready to equal them with Christ, when they must have tabernacles for them as well as for him. They had been talking with Christ, and probably the disciples were very desirous to know what they said, and to hear something more from them; No, saith God, *hear him*, and that is enough; him, and not Moses and Elias, who were present, and whose silence gave consent to this voice; they had nothing to say to the contrary; whatever interest they had in the world as prophets, they were willing to see it all transferred to Christ, that in *all things he might have the pre-*

eminence. Be not troubled that Moses and Elias make so short a stay with you; hear Christ, and you will not want them.

- VI. The fright which the disciples were put into by this voice, and the encouragement Christ gave them.
 - 1. The disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. The greatness of the light, and the surprise of it, might have a natural influence upon them, to dispirit them. But that was not all, ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, extraordinary appearances of God have ever been terrible to man, who, knowing he has no reason to expect any good, has been afraid to hear any thing immediately from God. Note, even then when fair weather comes out of the secret place, yet with God is terrible majesty, Job 37:22. See what dreadful work the voice of the Lord makes, Ps. 29:4. It is well for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.
 - 2. Christ graciously raised them up with abundance of tenderness. Note, The glories and advancements of our Lord Jesus do not at all lessen his regard to, and concern for, his people that are compassed about with infirmity. It is comfortable to think, that now, in his exalted state, he has a compassion for, and condescends to, the meanest true believer. Observe here,
 - (1.). What he did; he came, and touched them. His approaches banished their fears; and when they apprehended that they were apprehended of Christ, there needed no more to make them easy. Christ laid his right hand upon John is a like case, and upon Daniel, Rev. 1:17; Dan. 8:18; 10:18. Christ's touches were often healing, and here they were strengthening and comforting.
 - (2.) What he said; Arise, and be not afraid. Note, Though a fear of reverence in our converse with Heaven is pleasing to Christ, yet a fear of amazement is not so, but must be striven against. Christ said, Arise. Note, It is Christ by his word, and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises up good men from their dejections, and silences their fears; and none but Christ can do it; Arise, be not afraid. Note, causeless fears would soon vanish, if we would not yield to them, and lie down under them, but get up, and do what we can against them. considering what they had seen and heard, they had more reason to rejoice than to fear, and yet, it seems, they needed this caution. Note, Through the infirmity of the flesh, we often frighten ourselves with that wherewith we should encourage ourselves. Observe, After they had an express command from heaven to hear Christ, the first word they had from him was, Be not afraid, hear that. Note, Christ's errand into the world was to give comfort to good people, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might serve God without fear, Lu. 1:74, 75.
- VII. The disappearing of the vision (v. 8); They lift up themselves, and then lift up their eyes, and saw no man, save Jesus only. Moses and Elias were gone, the rays of Christ's glory were laid aside, or veiled again. They hoped this had been the day of Christ's entrance into his kingdom, and his public appearance in that external splendour which they dreamed of; but see how they are disappointed. Note, It is not wisdom to raise our expectations high in this world, for the most valuable of our glories

and joys here are vanishing, even those of near communion with God are so, not a continual feast, but a running banquet. If sometimes we are favoured with special manifestations of divine grace, glimpses and pledges of future glory, yet they are withdrawn presently; two heavens are too much for those to expect that never deserve one. Now they saw no man, save Jesus only. Note, Christ will tarry with us when Moses and Elias are gone. The prophets do not live for ever (Zec. 1:5), and we see the period of our ministers' conversation; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. 13:7, 8.

- VIII. The discourse between Christ and his disciples as they came down from the mountain, v. 9-13. Observe,
 - 1. They came down from the mountain. Note, We must come down from the holy mountains, where we have communion with God, and complacency in that communion, and of which we are saying. It is good to be here; even there we have no continuing city. Blessed be God, there is a mountain of glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down. But observe, When the disciples came down, Jesus came with them. Note, When we return to the world again after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be our comfort that he is with us.
 - 2. As they came down, they talked of Christ. Note, When we are returning from holy ordinance, it is good to entertain ourselves and one another with discourse suitable to the work we have been about. That communication which is good to the use of edifying is then in a special manner seasonable; as, on the contrary, that which is corrupt, is worse then than at another time.
- Here is,
 - (1.) The charge that Christ gave the disciples to keep the vision very private for the present (v. 9); Tell it to no man till the Son of man is risen. If they had proclaimed it, the credibility of it would have been shocked by his sufferings, which were now hastening on. But let the publication of it be adjourned till after his resurrection, and then that and his subsequent glory will be a great confirmation of it. Note, Christ observed a method in the manifestation of himself; he would have his works put together, mutually to explain and illustrate each other, that they might appear in their full strength and convincing evidence. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Christ's resurrection was properly the beginning of the gospel state and kingdom, to which all before was but preparatory and by way of preface; and therefore, though this was transacted before, it must not be produced as evidence till then (and then it appears to have been much insisted on by 2 Pt. 1:16-18), when the religion it was designed for the confirmation of was brought to its full consistence and maturity. Christ's time is the best and fittest for the manifesting of himself and must be attended to by us.
 - (2.) An objection which the disciples made against something Christ had said (v. 10); "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" If Elias make so short a stay, and is gone so suddenly, and we must say nothing of him; why have we been taught out of the law to expect his public appearance in the world immediately before the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom? Must the coming of Elias be a secret, which every body looks for?" or thus; "If the resurrection of the Messiah, and with it the

beginning of his kingdom, be at hand, what becomes of that glorious preface and introduction to it, which we expect in the coming of Elias?" The scribes, who were the public expositors of the law, said this according to the scripture ([Mal. 4:5](#)); *Behold I send you Elijah the prophet.* The disciples spoke the common language of the Jews, who made that the saying of the scribes which was the saying of the scripture, whereas of that which ministers speak to us according to the word of God, we should say, "[God](#) speaks to us, not the *ministers;*" for we must not receive it *as the word of men,* [1 Th. 2:13](#). Observe, When the disciples could not reconcile what Christ said with what they had heard out of the Old Testament, they desired him to explain it to them. Note, When we are puzzled with scripture difficulties, we must apply ourselves to Christ by prayer for his Spirit to open our understandings and to lead us into all truth.

- (3.) The solving of this objection. *Ask, and it shall be given,* ask instruction, and it shall be given.
- [1.] Christ allows the prediction ([v. 11](#)); *"Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things,"* so far you are in the right." Christ did not come to alter or invalidate any thing foretold in the Old Testament. Note, Corrupt and mistaken glosses may be sufficiently rejected and exploded, without diminishing or derogating from the authority or dignity of the sacred text. New-Testament prophecies are true and good, and are to be received and improved, though some hot foolish men may have misinterpreted them and drawn wrong inferences from them. He shall come, and restore all things; not restore them to their former state (John Baptist went not about to do that), but he shall accomplish all things (so it may be read), all things that were written of him, all the predictions of the coming of Elias. John Baptist came to restore things spiritually, to revive the decays of religion, to *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children;* which means the same with this, *he shall restore all things.* John preached repentance, and that restores all things.
- [2.] He asserts the accomplishment. The scribes say true, that *Elias is come,* [v. 12](#). Note, God's promises are often fulfilled, and men perceive it not, but enquire, *Where is the promise?* when it is already performed. *Elias is come, and they knew him not;* they knew him not to be the Elias promised, the forerunner of the Messiah. The scribes busied themselves in criticizing upon the scripture, but understood not by the signs of the times the fulfilling of the scripture. Note, It is easier to explain the word of God than to apply it and make a right use of it. But it is no wonder that the morning star was not observed, when he who is the Sun itself, was *in the world, and the world knew him not.*

Because they knew him not, *they have done to him whatsoever they listed;* if they had known, they would not have crucified Christ, or beheaded John, [1 Co. 2:8](#). They ridiculed John, persecuted him, and at last put him to death; which was Herod's doing, but is here charged upon the whole generation of unbelieving Jews, and particularly the scribes, who, though they could not prosecute John themselves, were pleased with what Herod did. He adds, *Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them.* Marvel not that Elias should be abused and killed by those who pretended, with a great deal of reverence, to expect him, when the Messiah himself will be in like manner treated. Note, The

sufferings of Christ took off the strangeness of all other sufferings ([Jn. 15:18](#)); when they had imbrued their hands in the blood of John Baptist, they were ready to do the like to Christ. Note, As men deal with Christ's servants, so they would deal with him himself; and they that are drunk with the blood of the martyrs still cry, *Give, give,* [Acts 12:1-3](#).

- (4.) The disciples' satisfaction in Christ's reply to their objection ([v. 13](#)); *They understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.* He did not name John, but gives them such a description of him as would put them in mind of what he had said to them formerly concerning him; *This is Elias.* This is a profitable way of teaching; it engages the learners' own thoughts, and makes them, if not their own teachers, yet their own remembrancers; and thus knowledge becomes easy to him that understands. When we diligently use the means of knowledge, how strangely are mists scattered and mistakes rectified!