

# *MATTHEW 17:1-13*

## *A FORETASTE OF GLORY*

Have you ever been punched in the gut, whether literally or metaphorically? Have you ever gotten news that turns just turned your world upside down? If so, now think back on it in retrospect and see if, in context, things weren't as bad as they seemed at the time. We've all gotten bad news or what we thought was bad news, only to see that something better has come from the situation. Many of us have been in a spot where we thought our lives, at least as we have come to know them, were over.

The person who's never been off the farm or out of the old neighborhood and never experienced the other things in this world, has no idea of the options available to him. All he knows is what he knows. Nothing is better or worse than what he knows. And then one day, he travels for whatever reason and sees things in a different light. Now he knows that things can be better and worse than all he has known. And that is what Peter, James and John are about to experience.

The last time we were in this text, we talked about Peter's declaration of just who Jesus really was as well as Jesus' declaration about how He MUST die and why. This was a sobering thought for the disciples. And while I can imagine there were many times over the three and a half year ministry of Jesus that they were stunned and amazed, the revelation that very soon Jesus was would die, and die in such a heinous way, took them aback. And it's on the heels of this reality that we find ourselves in today's text. We are barely a week after their time at Caesarea Philippi. Try to put yourselves in this context. The person you have come to love, the person who always has the answers, the person around whom your entire purpose in life has been built has just told you that He is going away. But He is more than going away; He has foretold His own death. And it's not a "natural death", it is the death of a criminal. It is a death surrounded by violence and chaos. Jesus has explained to them why this has to happen this way, but I'm sure they still aren't satisfied with His explanation. I'm sure they are still trying to digest it. And I believe it is for this reason that this next periscope is placed

here. Jesus now tries to take their minds off the present and give them a glimpse of something much grander that will one day come and eclipse their reality in the present world.

16:28

*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."*

*Chapter 17*

*1 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 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." 5 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!" 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*

At the end of chapter 16, Jesus made a remarkable statement; one which is commonly misunderstood.

**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."**

- This is commonly linked to Jesus' parousia – His Second Coming. But it is just a foretaste of that. Verses 1-13 clarify that for us.
- It has been 6 days.
- Only Peter, James and John are there. (leadership roles) The same three He took further into the garden just before His arrest. The others are at the foot of the mountain.
- Which mountain? Probably not Mt. Tabor, but Mt. Hermon.
- Exodus 24:9-18, Moses took a small group up Mt. Sinai. This is the imagery that fills in the background of the text. Moses was a deliverer of his people.
- **Also: Dt. 18:15-**
- **15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all**

- you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'
- 17 "And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. 18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.
  - These are the links that would have formed in the Jewish mind of that time.
  - Jesus' transfiguration:
    - Psalms 104:1,2
    - 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul!
    - O Lord my God, You are very great:
    - You are clothed with honor and majesty,
    - 2 Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment,
    - Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.

**Daniel 12:3**

**3 Those who are wise shall shine  
Like the brightness of the firmament,  
And those who turn many to righteousness  
Like the stars forever and ever.**

**2 Peter 1:16-18**

**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.**

**This is a foretaste of what we can expect. We get new bodies and new garments. We will be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.**

Why Moses and Elijah? Not a symbol of the Law and the Prophets.

- Both men's lives ended in mystery. Moses being buried by God and Elijah

taken up in a whirlwind. Elijah was not one of the writing prophets.

- The “Prophet that is to come” is linked to Moses, which ties in with this event. Elijah was clearly linked to eschatology in the mind of the Jew.
- **Mal. 4:5,6**

**5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet  
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.  
6 And he will turn  
The hearts of the fathers to the children,  
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,  
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”**

**John 1:21**

**21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”  
He said, “I am not.”  
“Are you the Prophet?”  
And he answered, “No.”**

These verses make clear how they understood Elijah and “the prophet” (Jesus) to be linked to coming of the Messiah.

*4 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.”*

Why 3 tabernacles? If they were on Mt. Hermon, there were already 8 shrines, (tabernacles) to pagan gods of the day.

The Hush!

*5 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!” 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*

Why fear? Link back to Moses not being able to see God’s face on Mt. Sinai

without dying.

Why hear Him? This comes on the heels of Jesus' declaration of His death. **And when they lifted their eyes, there was no one else on whom they could focus.**

**Focus on Jesus and His mission. This will give them the context and purpose for their own, as it does for us.**

*9 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."*

*10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"*

*11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. 12 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." 13 Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

- Verses 11 and 12 explain the figurative speech of Elijah's return.
- Why can't they tell the others? They will after the resurrection. But for right now, there is a tendency for people, even the disciples to misinterpret God's plan. It will all become clear in the Upper Room at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit will "explain" it to them.
- By speaking of His resurrection here, Jesus is clearly pointing to His death.
- But the resurrection also points them to a place beyond His death – glorification, which is our hope!

So Jesus did all this in order for some of the disciples, those that would be in more of a leadership role among the original group, that they would have a foretaste of the hope that is to come. **This is what would empower them to continue their ministries even in the face of martyrdom! And it is our hope also!**

Exodus 33:18-23, Moses asked to see God's glory and God responded, but Moses couldn't see God in all His glory and live, so he had to hide his face. Moses later glowed as he reflected the glory of God to Israel. But now, centuries after Moses, we have a mountain where Jesus' is glorified but the three disciples don't die! In

Jesus unholy humans can be in the presence of God without fear of death! And Jesus doesn't just reflect the glory of God; He produces that righteousness and His glorification comes FROM Him. It is no mere reflection! Jesus can give you what Moses and Elijah couldn't!

On the mountain, God enveloped them with the cloud, His shekinah glory! And they fell in fear, but they weren't harmed. **When we fall before God in worship, when see ourselves as sinners in need of His grace and then realize that we have been redeemed, we can worship him in humility and confidence at the same time!**

Jesus told them, "Don't be afraid!" Why could they be surrounded by the glory of God glorified and not have to fear? Because Jesus bridged that gap! They believed Jesus was who He said He was and in return Jesus gave them a foretaste of His glory and what they as well as all other believers can look forward to!

And that was what compelled and drove them through their missions until their deaths. And that is the only thing that can do that and have any lasting effect! Jesus told them, in these verses, I MUST die in order that you can live – and not "just live" but be able to live in an eternal glorified state! That is what Jesus was willing to do for us? He died for us that we would literally be able/ have the hope/ have the motivation/ the willingness/ the power to live for Him! And then we one day not just have a foretaste of glory, we will be glorified like and Him and be with Him!

To be in the presence of God, to have peace with God is what everyone wants, whether they know it or not. Everyone wants peace in his or her life. Everyone wants to "be right." But most seek bend life into their own mold, to move the world into compliance with what they want. This is futile and is the source of all discontentment. Only when we fall on our faces as did Peter, James and John in fear and humility, yielding to God in worship will we find peace, because it is only at that time we are "right" with creator of the universe. Only then are we flowing with the traffic of the universe. Anything else is an attempt to cross 285 in rush hour or try to go north in the southbound lane.

Jesus gave them a foretaste of glory and we can taste it also.

**1 Cor. 13:12**

**2 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.**