

Jesus Unveiled

Matthew 17:1-13

Introduction

Behind the Scenes: CGI, filming secrets, mocap, VFX, 3d digital doubles, motion control rigs, green screens, etc. (now I see all the glitches and mistakes in Marvel movies, etc.). In this passage we get a glimpse behind the scenes as Jesus offers his disciples a peek at his divine identity, glory, and purpose.

Hiding in Plain Sight: The disciples had walked with Him, served with Him, studied under Him and we see that they're getting closer to grasping his identity (e.g., Peter's "You are the Christ). But today is a chance for Jesus to show who he really is, to unveil what has been hiding in plain sight all along.

- Hide and seek with little kids (Jackson, Abby, and Joshua). When they're little they aren't great at hiding (saying, "I'm here" or jumping out of their spot). All they really want is to be found. When you open the door or pull back the curtain, they're full of joy and laughter. The real joy is in being found.
- Jesus is meant to be found. He is not hiding from you, he is revealing himself to you ("seek [him] and you will find [him] when you seek [him] with your whole heart").

¹ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ 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." ¹⁰ And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹¹ He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.¹

¹ ¹ Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ἕξ παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν. ² καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἰμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς. ³ καὶ ἰδοὺ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας συλλαλοῦντες μετ' αὐτοῦ. ⁴ ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ, Κύριε, καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι· εἰ θέλεις, ποιήσω ὧδε τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωϋσεὶ μίαν καὶ Ἠλίᾳ μίαν. ⁵ ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἰδοὺ νεφέλη φωτεινὴ ἐπεσκίασεν αὐτούς, καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης λέγουσα, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ. ⁶ καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ μαθηταὶ ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα. ⁷ καὶ προσῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀψάμενος αὐτῶν εἶπεν, Ἐγέρθητε καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε. ⁸ Ἐπάραντες δὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς αὐτῶν οὐδένα εἶδον εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον. ⁹ Καὶ καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων, Μηδενὶ εἶπητε τὸ ὄραμα

Segue: This passage is pregnant with the promises of the OT (Moses and Elijah, two pillars of the Hebrew Bible). You immediately recall Jesus' baptism (cf. 3:17) where a voice from heaven says virtually the same thing ("this is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased"), but even there the promises of the Hebrew Bible are recalled (as the "voice from heaven" is referencing the son of God from Psalm 2 and the servant of God in Isaiah 42).

- This story is the next step in Jesus' revelation to his followers.
- There are so many puzzling and powerful moments in this narrative but the challenge for us today is the same challenge of Peter, James, and John as they beheld the glory of Jesus on that mountain — to see Jesus for who he really is, in all of his beauty and majesty — and to worship and obey him, to follow him, to trust him.

1. Beautiful Revelation (vv. 1-3)

¹ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Jesus takes his **inner circle** with him up the mountain (levels of proximity: crowd, disciples, *the three*). God's revelation moves differently among us (e.g., talents). Not everyone can handle what God is ready to reveal at any given moment. We often want God to reveal himself but when we aren't ready to receive it.

Receiving vs. Discovering: and led them up a high mountain by themselves Notice just how passive these "varsity disciples" are in this event.

- He led them up and was transfigured before them (they didn't transform him). Moses and Elijah appeared to them (they didn't conjure the prophets). The cloud overshadowed them; the voice spoke to them; Jesus reassured them.
- **This whole event is for them.** Jesus knows his true identity; he knows who he is. Every revelation from God, every word he sends is a gift of grace to us. That's why every word of the Bible is a gift to be received and treasured.

Our knowledge and perception are limited. We can't find our way to God; he makes his way to us. This is the essence of salvation: we don't find God, we don't figure him out. He seeks and saves us; he pursues us. In his grace, these disciples don't uncover God, he unveils himself to them.²

- This does not mean that they understood it fully; but it was a crucial step in their discipleship and it confirmed fully that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

ἕως οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγερθῆναι. 10 καὶ ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγοντες, Τί οὖν οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγουσιν ὅτι Ἡλίας δεῖ εἶθ' ἔλθειν πρῶτον; ¹¹ ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Ἡλίας μὲν ἔρχεται καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα. ¹² λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι Ἡλίας ἤδη ἦλθεν, καὶ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτὸν ἀλλὰ ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἠθέλησαν· οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει πάσχειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν. ¹³ τότε συνῆκαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς.

² "As [these disciples] would come to realize, they were being privileged to glimpse something of [Jesus'] preincarnate glory and anticipate his coming exaltation (2 Pt 1:16-18; Rev 1:16)... The contrast between [Jesus' prediction of his death] (Matt 16:21) and this glorious sight would one day prompt [his] disciples to marvel at the [humility] that brought him to the cross" (Carson).

Transfiguration:³ ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. Jesus was visibly transformed (μεταμορφώω) in front of them. His appearance was altered (e.g., face shining like the sun, clothes white as light). A few passages immediately come to mind:

- The description of God in Daniel 7:9a: “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool.”
- “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev 21:23). “And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:5).

“It is as if the ultimate identity of the eternal Son is allowed to peep through; the three disciples become ‘eyewitnesses of his majesty’.⁴ It is hard not to see here also a foretaste of the glory of the exalted Son⁵, of whom ‘every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’⁶” (Carson).

- **Stop and focus on Jesus.** See him clearly. Grasp his majesty. Feel the weight of his glory. *That’s what we’re doing when we pray, read his word, worship in song...* We’re catching a glimpse of the glory of God.

Perspective: Perspective is an amazing thing (e.g., 3D sidewalk chalk art, standardized time such as the Allegheny observatory in Pittsburgh via telegraph: individual time meant late to trains or deadly collisions). We all have varied perspectives. An airline pilot flying over the southeastern U.S. called the local tower and said, “We are passing over at 35,000—give us a time check.” The tower said, “What airline are you?” “What difference does it make? I just want the time.” replied the pilot. The tower responded, “Oh, it makes a lot of difference. If you are Virgin-Atlantic Airlines, it is 1600. If you are Delta, it is 4 o’clock. If you are Southwest, the little hand is on the 4 and the big hand is on the 12. If you are Frontier—it’s Thursday.”

- This moment on the mountain is all about perspective, it’s about going up on the mountain and seeing what is really going on (more than what we perceive from the valley). The transfiguration is a chance to glimpse what is really going on behind the scenes, and to see things, *if only dimly and for a moment*, from God’s perspective.

Prophetic Visitors: ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

³ “The Transfiguration,” Sufjan Stevens, *Seven Swans*: When he took the three disciples to the mountainside to pray / His countenance was modified, his clothing was aflame / Two men appeared, Moses and Elijah came / They were at his side / The prophecy, the legislation spoke / Of whenever he would die / Then there came a word of what he should accomplish on the day / Then Peter spoke, to make of them a tabernacle place / A cloud appeared in glory as an accolade / They fell on the ground / A voice arrived, the voice of God / The face of God covered in a cloud / What he said to them, the voice of God, the most beloved son / Consider what he says to you, consider what’s to come / The prophecy was put to death, was put to death / And so will the son / And keep your word, disguise the vision / Till the time has come / Lost in the cloud, a voice / Have no fear, we draw near / Lost in the cloud, a sign / Son of man, turn your ear / Lost in the cloud, a voice / Lamb of God, we draw near / Lost in the cloud, a sign / Son of man, son of God / Lost in the cloud, a voice / Have no fear, we draw near / Lost in the cloud, a sign / Son of man, turn your ear

⁴ 2 Pt. 1:16

⁵ cf. Rev. 1:12-16

⁶ Phil. 2:10-11

up a high mountain. Look who shows up. Moses and Elijah. Why them? The whole scene is full of callbacks to these prophetic forerunners (both received revelation on a mountain, Moses at Sinai and Elijah at Horeb).⁷

- Even the way Jesus carries out this mission is following the pattern of Moses. Moses took three from his inner circle (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu). It was a six day event at Sinai for Moses (Jesus went up the mountain after 6 days). God spoke from a cloud in both instances, etc.

"As we read through the Bible, we find gold coin after gold coin on the pathway of biblical promises. These gold coins appear to have been minted in the same place, and as we examine them, we notice... there is a definite relationship between them. The later ones assume the design and impress of the earlier." There is no way to understand the latter without the former. These are "the promises God makes about the coming Redeemer who will set things right." The growing pile of promises create expectations for fulfillment. When we start thinking in this way, we begin to expect and anticipate that what *happened* is a pattern for what *will happen*.⁸

- So, when Moses and Elijah show up, the disciples are remembering all that God had done through them, and they see how Christ is acting in a similar but greater fashion.
- When Jesus' face begins to shine, the perceptive person will remember Moses coming down from the mountain (Ex 34), having been in the presence of God, his face reflecting God's glory as light, to the point that he must cover it with a garment.
- But here's the kicker, Jesus is *like* Moses and Elijah **but better**.⁹

True and Better: His transfiguration is truly in the pattern of Moses and Elijah but it is escalated. Moses reflected God's glory. Elijah proclaimed God's glory. **Jesus reveals God's glory.** Jesus is the fulfillment of the law (e.g., Moses) and the prophets (e.g., Elijah).

- This point was made in our Advent series on John 1 (don't believe me, you'll have to go watch them because I don't have time to preach a sermon within a sermon — sermon inception).

Jesus is not reflecting something outside of him, or proclaiming something outside of him. He is not just mirroring or preaching the glory of God, **he is the glory of God**.¹⁰

- Moses reflected the glory of God, Jesus radiated the glory of God. Moses' radiance was derivative, Jesus' was essential.
- In Exodus, Moses' garments hide the light of his glory; in Matthew, the light of Jesus' glory penetrates through his clothes.
- Moses is God's servant, Jesus is God's son.
- Moses is human, Jesus is heavenly.

⁷ Ex 24; 1 Kgs 19.

⁸ Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology?*

⁹ "Moses was the model for the eschatological Prophet (Deus 18:18) and Elijah for the forerunner (Mal 4:5-6; Matt 3:1-3; 11:7-10; 17:9-13). Both had strange ends; both were men of God in times of transition, the first to introduce the covenant and the second to work for renewed adherence to it. Both experienced a vision of God's glory, one at Sinai (Exod 31:18) and the other at Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Now, however, the glory is Jesus' glory, for it is he who is transfigured and who radiates the glory of Deity (rather than Moses or Elijah). Both suffered rejection of various kinds (for Moses, cf. Stephen's summary, Acts 7:35, 37; and for Elijah, cf. 1 Kings 19:1-9; Matt 17:12). Together they may well summarize the Law and the Prophets (the Hebrew Bible). All these associations gain importance as the narrative moves on and Jesus is perceived to be superior to Moses and Elijah and, indeed, to supersede them (vv.5, 8)" (Carson).

¹⁰ Jn 1:14-18.

- Elijah proclaimed the word of God, Jesus embodied the word of God.

In this sense, Jesus is truly the new and better Moses, come to fulfill the law and the true and better Elijah as the Word of God made flesh.

2. Divine Validation (vv. 4-8)

⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Human Response: ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. This section might as well be called **“Peter’s big mouth.”** John Ewart sign, **“Never miss a good opportunity to shut up!** (Brian Regan, “When’s the baby due”). We spend so much time talking **at** God (telling him what he should do) that we often miss an opportunity to listen, learn, and be changed (is

- There are just times when we need to be quiet. Speak less and listen more.

You have to love Peter, with bluster and passion, he has to open his big mouth. Peter (ever-ready to be the self-appointed spokesman), speaks up. He senses they are seeing *something* great. He suggest building three structures (τρεις σκηνας), some sort of temporary shelter (tabernacle or tent). The “tent” harkens back to the tabernacle in the OT and some think it has connection to the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) which we see in our city depending on where you go (look for temporary structures).

Misunderstanding: This is Peter’s m.o. He knows something big is happening but often misunderstands what it really means (e.g., Jesus you are the Christ but surely you can’t die). In this moment he knows it is a big deal to witness Jesus radiate (disco-ball Jesus) but somehow wants to build three similar shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He entirely misunderstands the significance of the presence of Moses and Elijah.

- Peter is thinking Jesus is being elevated to their great stature. He is putting Jesus at the same level as these great prophets.
- But the prophetic presence of these two witnesses is meant to show that the law and the prophets bore witness to Jesus, they pointed to him!
- Jesus so far outpaces Moses and Elijah that, when they are put next to him, the disciples are commanded to listen to Jesus. Moses and Elijah are here in this story in a supportive role, to confirm Jesus’ authority. Let’s not get it backwards. The OT looks forward in anticipation. Jesus is not trying to prove that he is on the same level as Moses. Moses and Elijah are there to demonstrate Jesus’ supremacy.

Divine Interruption: God himself will set the record straight. ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud¹¹ overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." It seems that God gets tired of Peter's foolish blabbery and interrupts him ("he was still speaking"). However well intended Peter's words, he blurs the uniqueness of Jesus, the Son of God. So God preempts him, interrupts him, and shuts him up.

- When God speaks there is nothing else to do but listen.
- What God says is largely a repetition of Matt 3:17 (baptism), which is a reference to prophecies in Ps 2:7 and Is 42:1 stressing that Jesus is both Son and Suffering Servant (the prophets foretold this and God confirmed it, yet the disciples are still slow to comprehend it).

What Is God Doing:

- God the Father validates the identity of God the Son this is my beloved Son
- God the Father cherishes the beauty of God the Son with whom I am well pleased
- God the Father confirms the authority of God the Son listen to him

When the Father looks at the son, he cherishes what he sees (we should do the same). He tells us to listen to him (we should do the same). See, hear, and follow Jesus.

- Peter needs to be quiet and listen to Jesus. This is what he is referring to in 2 Peter 1 when he says: "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:16-19).

Fearful Response: ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. Terror is a good response to this situation. There is a great danger that we treat the revelation and presence of God with casual familiarity. When Isaiah saw the Lord he was "ruined." In the presence of the creator God, the God of angel armies, the one who spoke all that is into being, they can do nothing but fall to their faces.

- We worship what we fear. We serve what we fear. We submit to what we fear. Which is why God is the only one worthy of our fear (and our worship and submission). If you can live your life with no thought of God, no care for the things of God, no grief of sins against God – then you haven't seen God for who he really is. If all you fear is money (or lack of it) and people (and their opinions), then you are worshipping the wrong savior. And you are worshipping people and things that have no hope and no power?

¹¹ The "cloud" is associated, in both the OT and intertestamental Judaism, with eschatology (Ps 97:2; Isa 4:5; Ezek 30:3; Dan 7:13; Zeph 1:15; cf. 2 Baruch 53:1-12; 4 Ezra 13:3; 2 Macc 2:8; b Sanhedrin 98a; cf. Luke 21:27; 1 Thess 4:17) and with the Exodus (Exod 13:21-22; 16:10; 19:16; 24:15-18; 40:34-38). Of the synoptics only Matthew says that the cloud was "bright," a detail that recalls the shekinah glow.

Comforting Touch: ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” The visible glory of God brings terror, but Jesus calms his disciples' fears. When they get to the appropriate place of brokenness and submission, Jesus reaches down and comforts them. Fear magnifies the greatness of the moment and, this act of complete reverence serves as a prelude to seeing Jesus for who he really is.¹²

- Too often we want to skip the awe and worship and jump straight to encouragement. Too often we want comfort before we are willing to fall on our faces in brokenness.
- But the “fear of the Lord” is the first step on the path to “wisdom.”¹³

Singular Vision: ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. In that moment, they saw nothing but Jesus. The to-do list was gone. Decorum falls aside. The right words don't need to come: they beheld nothing but the glory of God in Jesus.

- As a church, as people of God, we don't need a new gimmick, a new program, a new book or strategy, we don't need a new preacher, or more money. We need a clear, singular, focus on Jesus. In that moment they realized who he really was, God become flesh; more than a prophet, priest, or politician.

This is the exhortation all throughout Scripture. *Keep your eyes on Jesus:* “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1-2)..

- “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2).

How many of us need God's perspective on things? It's not going to come by obsessing over your problems or conjuring some ingenious solutions; it's going to come from seeing Jesus clearly.

- The biggest problems are not our bills, relationships, health, leaders (despite how problematic some of those things are). Our biggest problem is our hearts and the sin they harbor. The problems “out there” are myriad but the bigger problem is “in here” and it can only be changed by a radical reorientation of our loves (from sin and self to God).

Behold and Become: This is the beauty of worship. We become like what we behold (“we become what we worship”). Children imitate (for better or for worse) what they see in their parents (repeated word, “that d*mn cat sh*t on the floor again”). That's why Jackson used to say he wanted to be a “dad” when he grew up (because that's what he saw I was). - or - Joshua calling a button-up a “grandpa shirt”.

- The more we study, listen, or watch someone the more we begin to emulate them (that's why we need to be careful the kind of content we fixate on).
- That's also why discipleship is not merely information transfer, it involves example (e.g., DeVargas witnessing Dad helping others; caught not taught).

¹² Dan 10:7-12; Matt 14:25-27.

¹³ Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7; Prov 9:10.

That is why the more you behold Christ, the more you fix your attention on Christ, the more you worship Christ, the more you become like Him.

- “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being *transformed* into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18).
- God uses our worship of Jesus to transform us, by the power of his Spirit, more into his image (e.g., radically Christ-focused worship).

3. Path of Suffering (vv. 9-13)

⁹ 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.” ¹⁰ And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” ¹¹ He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Leaving the Mountaintop: ⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain,

- God never meant us to live on the mountaintop. The disciples came down off the mountain right into the problems of real life.
- “God does not make the mountains in order to be inhabited... We only ascend to the heights to catch a broader [perspective] of the earthly surroundings below. But we don't live there. We don't tarry there. The streams begin in the uplands, but these streams descend quickly to gladden the valleys below” (Henry Drummond)
- After the Sundays of life, there are always Mondays. But now they have a different angle to view these problems and have been strengthened for the task ahead.¹⁴

Suffering Savior: ¹⁰ And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” ¹¹ He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. The puzzle is starting to come together. They understand that John the Baptist came as a forerunner (an Elijah), and now they are understanding more that Jesus' mission was to die. They are starting to grasp the path of Jesus and, therefore, the path of discipleship.

- Jesus' point is clear: John the Baptist did fulfill his mission as forerunner, but he was killed doing it. “In the same way [he] is going to suffer.”
- Jesus' ministry of redemption must be accomplished through his suffering and death.

¹⁴ Messianic Secret: Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” They had been launched on a road to fully understanding, as they travelled the road to the Resurrection. In Matthew this is Jesus' fifth and last command for the disciples to be silent (see on 8:4). This time Jesus permits his disciples to tell everything after the Son of man (see excursus on 8:20) “has been raised from the dead.” Why did Jesus tell them to be quiet? The story would only stir up superficial political messianism. If Jesus' closest disciples found it hard to understand a suffering and dying Messiah, how would the crowds fare?

- The beautiful road to the resurrection is paved with the brutal death of the Son of God. Suffering precedes splendor. The cross of Christ must come before the crown of Christ. Too often... we want the crown without the cross; the glory without the suffering; the blessings without the price.
- This is the beauty of the gospel, that God "made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf so that we could become the righteousness of God." Jesus took the downward path so that we could be raised to life.

Conclusion

- Can you and I see Jesus for who he really is: God become flesh; Christ come to save.
 - Radiates the glory of God.
 - Unveils the presence of God.
 - Embodies the pleasure of God.
 - Speaks the word of God.
- See him, listen to him, follow him.
 - As you see him you become like him.
 - As you listen to him, you learn his kindly rule in your life.
 - As you follow him, you reflect the gospel to the world.