



¹ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, ² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. ³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. (Matt 17:1-3)

Every year in our Church Calendar, we address the glorious Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount. This event is of singular importance to the believer in setting forth "*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*" that is made available in Christ Jesus to us. Not only shall we take up and bear our cross daily for Him, as He did once-and-for-all for us, but we shall follow Him in every glorious avenue of His walk in this life - and straight forward and upward (Excelsior - ever upward!) beyond the veil of tears and into the glistering radiance of Heaven itself.

Christ was transfigured before the eyes of His trusted disciples - Peter, James, and John. But also appearing there in glorious apparition were Elijah (Elias) and Moses. If Elijah and Moses can aspire to such glory in Christ, so can the believer who remains among us in this life!

We read the account of Elijah's being taken by fiery escort directly to Heaven without suffering the physical death to which all mortals are heir. *11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.* (2 Kings 2:11-12) Thus was Elijah removed from the living of earth and joined to that of Heaven with pains of death. So Elijah, like many believers who remain at Christ's return, was taken up without experiencing the first death.

Moses did not depart this life under the same terms as Elijah. After forty years of hard wandering and leading of a rebellious people, God allowed Moses to view the Promised Land across Jordan Banks from atop Mount Nebo (Pisgah) without being privileged to cross over. It turned out to be a disappointment with joyful results, for Moses went to a far better Mount of Promise as we see in the Gospel account of the Transfiguration.

1 And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, 2 And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost

sea, ³ And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. ⁴ And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. ⁵ So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. ⁶ And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. (Deut 34:1-6)

There are two salient points of interest to us given account here:

1. Moses died on Mount Pisgah in Moab and God buried in a lonely valley of Moab;
2. No man knows the place of Moses grave.

What is important about this? Elijah had no grave, Moses had a hidden grave which he truly did not occupy, and Jesus Christ, too, had only a "borrowed tomb!" This is true of all who follow Christ in the "**Way, the Truth, and the Life**" through His walks along the Galilean Shore, to Jordan River, to the Temple, to Bethany, to Pilate's Court, to the cross, to the tomb, and, finally, to the Resurrection and Transfiguration!

Do we trust our Lord Jesus Christ when He speaks the Truth in frank wonder? *⁴⁷ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am that bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* (John 6:47-51) Do you see the sacramental importance of the Bread that is represented in the Service of Holy Communion? Moreover, if Jesus is the Bread of Life - and the Word that came down from Heaven - we consume that Bread symbolically and truly in the Supper of the Lord, and also in the Communion of His Word which we consume and digest through hearing and reading. Have we believed truly?

Do we believe the next profound statement of Christ? *²⁵ Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*** (John 11:25-26) Well, do you believe this? If so, why the crocodile tears at the parting of a loved one¹. I will quote the simple phrase of John Donne: "*Send not, therefore, to know for whom the bell tolls - it tolls for thee.*" We weep and mourn for ourselves, truly, and not the dear one in Christ departed. They are in fine fettle with the Lord while we continue to endure a life of struggle and disappointment alone and without their comforting presence.

The Scriptures are replete with the coming joy of the Christian who dies believing the Promise made to Abraham and consummated in the sacrificial Death, Burial, Resurrection AND Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why are our ears so open to hear of the tribulations we face in this world, and so stopped of hearing of the glory to come?

There is no passage of time without the occurrence of events. In the depth of dark and extreme galactic space, there is no time that transpires between heavenly bodies because there is no event schedule by which we measure time. The same may be true of death, and may be confirmed in the words of the Apostle Paul. *⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the*

¹ The answer for the Christian is a simple one, the tears we shed are selfish. We shed our tears and tear our heart at the temporary separation from one we love who has gone before us, leaving the Shadowlands for the real and bright world of Heaven. We know we will miss them and not see them again until we join them in those Undying Lands of reality.

twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:51-57)

If any Christian or clergy tells me that he understands fully this last mystery, I will doubt him. But I will not doubt the veracity of the Promise itself. We need not understand all that is made available to us in Heaven of its grandeur and glory; but it will be enough for us to know that where Christ is, there is joy and bliss to heal and satisfy the sin-sick soul. Truly, there is a Balm in Gilead, and I have laid hold of it. I love to read the words of John Jasper, an old black preacher of the Third Baptist Church in Richmond, before, during, and following the War Between the States. A friend asked him what he wanted to receive first when he reached the far shores of Jordan - the crown of gold, the golden slippers, etc - to which Jasper replied, "*Natu'ally, I wants my crown of glory and dem golden slippers, and all of those other ben'fits that acru' to me, but not Fust! Fust, I wants to see the face of my Savior who bled and died for me.*" John Jasper died describing the measureless beauty of heaven in a sermon while standing in his pulpit at age 89 years. Jasper was illiterate in the writings of men, but he certainly had a commanding hold on the vocabulary of Heaven.

The transfiguration of Christ serves to inform us that we, too, shall be transformed with a glorious new body that is no longer subject to pain, suffering, or death. "*Believest thou this?*"