

A Godly Life Leads to a Blessed End

2 Kings 2:1-12a

Transfiguration Sunday

Feb. 11, 2018

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What do you think it was like up on that mountain with the disciples and Jesus? There are tons of questions with not so many answers given. Why did Jesus only want Peter, James, and John, to see this amazing event? Why did Moses and Elijah get picked as the ones to come down from heaven to discuss Jesus' trip to the cross? Why this mountain, at this time?

We don't know a lot of the "whys," but we can be thankful that our God gave us this account. How better to get ready for the season of Lent than by seeing Jesus show us that he is truly God so that when we see Jesus go to the cross we can know that it is our God doing all the work and not some man as many of the people believed and still believe today.

But I guess it shouldn't surprise us that our God gives us this account with so many questions and little answers. It isn't like this is the first time we've come across a section of scripture where we are wondering why did God do that. In a way it is fitting that Elijah and Moses were there on the mountain with Jesus. They were prophets that saw God's amazing works on display throughout their ministries. We get an example of one today in the life of Elijah.

Elijah is one of two recorded people to have escaped the process of death. Enoch the father of Methuselah and great grandfather of Noah also escaped death when the Lord took him up to heaven. However, with Elijah we get to see how the Lord brought him home.

And what does the Lord want to teach us with a lesson like this? What are we to take away from this? Much like the Transfiguration we are left with many questions without many answers. What made Elijah so special that he escaped the pains of death? Why did the Lord record this event? In the end we don't know a lot of the specific whys, but we can certainly come away with a truth or two that can be beneficial to our lives today.

By seeing Elijah brought to heaven we can see what kind of people the Lord brings into heaven, godly people. This truth can give us great comfort as God's people, heaven is real, and God really brings his people there. But, this truth also serves as a warning. It calls us to not lose our status as God's people until our dying day so that we can go to heaven because our God brings his godly people home.

What made Elijah so special? Nothing really. He was a sinner like you and me. Yes, he did some amazing things in the name of the Lord. He stood toe to toe with the most evil king of Israel, Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Ahab led Israel in bringing human sacrifices to the idol Baal. His wife Jezebel also hired 400 women designated as "priestesses" to lead Israel in legalized adultery and glorification of the goddess of love, Ashtoreth.

Israel was rotting from within, destroying itself spiritually and morally. Although Elijah was accused of causing trouble in Israel, his powerful and spectacular ministry of rebuking sin and pointing people to the true Lord had been a salutary influence in Israel.

Elijah took on the prophets of Baal by calling fire down from heaven to prove who the true God was. He was a prophet on the run always looking over his shoulder waiting for his enemies to come for his life.

But, he wasn't perfect by any means. He was also someone who tried to give up the work thinking that everything he did was in vain. He didn't see the point of reaching out to the lost and straying at times because they were never going to come back or to repent of their sins in his eyes.

Yet, Elijah was taken up into heaven. What does that teach us? God brings his sinful people to heaven. He brings people like you and me to heaven. People who often struggle to stand up for the Lord because we too find our efforts to be in vain, at least in our eyes. We too need to be reminded by our God, like Elijah was, that he can still work faith in the hearts of a fallen world. We also have our great moments where we have seen the Lord at work in our lives.

This lesson is great news for us because we see firsthand that our God brings his godly people home to heaven. We see it with Elijah, but we know it be true especially on this day. We actually see that

our God can bring us home to heaven because Jesus is exactly who he says he is his. He really is our God and our Savior who opened heaven so people like Moses, Elijah, and his disciples of all times, can be in heaven when we leave this world. What a joy it is to know for sure that heaven is our home.

But, we can still lose this inheritance. While nothing can take this away from us, we can certainly give it up. Elijah's call to heaven serves also as a call to action. God does bring his godly children home to heaven but that requires us not to lose our godliness. We too live in a world not much different than the one Elijah lived in. We too see the moral corruption of the world around us rotting this world from the inside out.

But, don't think that this world can't touch your faith. It effects every day. It gnaws at us trying to get us to be more willing to accept sin as ok or not so dangerous, so we don't flee from it. We might speak against the corruption we see in this world.

We might speak against homosexuality, abortions, adultery, theft, and murder, but this world is slowly trying to keep us from speaking up. In many ways the world's filth has already quieted our voices. How often do we say something is wrong when we see others doing it but when we are guilty of the same sin we make excuses or treat it as not as big of a problem because for us we think it is somehow different.

If someone loses their temper they have anger problems but when we do it, we are just blowing off steam. If someone commits adultery in their heart or physically we condemn them as sinners but when we do it, we say it was just looking or we had to follow our heart. When someone bows to a false god we point out their idolatry but when we bow to the altar of money or family we call it being wise and faithful. When it comes to the sins of this world we too are guilty of them all either by our own actions and thoughts.

Too often we let this world get the best of us and it is causing our own soul's destruction. Does this mean that God will not take us to heaven for failing? No, we all fail, but we can't think it is ok to fail. When we start believing that we can do what we want when God says we can't then we will lose our godliness and our trip to heaven will be cancelled.

When Elijah was taken up to heaven he was called the "horseman and chariots of Israel." Elisha would be called this when he died. The reference isn't to the chariots of fire that came and separated Elijah and Elisha. It was a reference to Elijah. As a prophet he was a defender of God's Word to the end much like a soldier in an army. We are all the horsemen and chariots of God's people as we fight in what is called the Church Militant.

We are apart of God's army here on earth and our job is to defend the Word by proclaiming it faithfully and following it faithfully. That is what godly living is all about and God's people do this while they live here on earth.

We will not do this perfectly but that doesn't mean our mistakes are ok. We strive for perfection but when we are not perfect we will not fall into despair because the leader of our army, Jesus Christ, won the war for us. He gave us a home in heaven and he gave us the comfort in knowing that our many sins are forgiven.

We know this because of what happened with Jesus who revealed his true Godliness on that holy mountain. He showed us that he is our God before he completed his work, so we never have to doubt his love and his victory. Elijah's trip to heaven wasn't a lie. He really went to heaven because Jesus really came and saved us from our sins. Now we know that when our time to ride the world winds of God to heaven we know that we really are going to heaven.

But we must continue to hold on to the truth. We must continue to keep the enemies of the world at bay. Let us keep from slipping into the sin of not caring or not trying or not working. We have been made into godly people and we will go to heaven. We know this because Jesus came and died for us so that we can ride world wind to heaven when our time of serving in the Lord's army is over and we join that much more glorious existence as members of the Saints Triumphant. Amen.