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Suffering before the Glory Matthew 17:5-13

Matthew 17:5-13, *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.*

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.*

The first overt promise of the second coming recorded in Matthew's Gospel.

Our Lord has been commanding them to abandon everything and follow Him.

First, He is going to Jerusalem and then killed.

Those who follow Him also carry their cross and even if they must sacrifice their life, they must be willing to do that.

There will be a day when the Son of Man comes in the full blazing glory of the Father with His angels. Then He will in judgment upon every man.

There will be a glory time.

The Son of Man will come not in humiliation, but in royal majesty.

It is so balancing to what they have just heard, because they have just been told, in verse 24, that Jesus requires self-denial, cross bearing, and loyal obedience.

The way life would be suffering.

They are to anticipate rejection, hostility, and even death. But that will be wonderfully compensated by the coming in glory.

Now, the second coming of Jesus Christ is introduced here.

This becomes for Matthew, a very important truth.

He promises them a preview.

V 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.*”

Jesus is coming in His royal splendour, coming in His majestic glory.

We have the promise in verse 28.

V 1 and following, the preview itself.

A small glimpse of glory.

1. The transformation of the Son.

V 2, *“and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*

Metamorphosis, He was totally changed.

The term **morphoō** has to do with the body and form.

His body, his form was totally changed.

We don't know any of the explanation for it. It is supernatural.

2. By the testimony of the saints.

Why Moses and Elijah are there?

Moses representing king, priest, and prophet. Moses leader among leaders and unequalled.

- Moses gave the law,
- Elijah guarded the law,

What do they represent?

The law and the prophets.

The Old Testament.

They were there so that the people could see that the Old Testament was indeed fulfilled in this person Jesus Christ. He is the King. They needed to hear that.

New Testament chronologists tell us when things happened, indicate to us that this was the month of Tishri.

Tishri is six months from **Passover**.

Passover is when Jesus is crucified.

Tishri is six months earlier.

What happens in Tishri?

The Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus always celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths.

In Jerusalem they were celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles.

What does the Feast of Tabernacles commemorate?

It commemorates the wandering in the wilderness.

God delivers His people.

They wander in the wilderness, and, during that time, they lived in tabernacles. They lived in booths.

Then God led them into the Promised Land. It is a memorial to God, preserving His redeemed people.

God redeems and preserves them to take them into the land of promise.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a very important feast. But Peter James, and John wasn't there, and Jesus wasn't there.

Very likely that Peter was thinking about the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths and realizing how important it was to have such a thing. He has that in his mind.

They knew it was something they had to go to. All male Jews were required to go every year to the Feast of Tabernacles, and he wasn't there.

Zechariah 14:9, *"The Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one."*

So, there is the Lord in His kingdom reigning in the millennial kingdom.

Zechariah 14:16, *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

How many years are there in the millennial kingdom?

A thousand.

So, a thousand times they will do this.

Zechariah 14:18-19, *If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall be the ^[1]punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

There is only one of the Jewish, traditional, week-long feasts that's supposed to be kept in the kingdom, and that's it.

The Passover will be remembered.

The Communion Table will be remembered, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Why?

Because it, too, is a picture of redemption, of the leading out of bondage and into the promise.

So, it will be there, too.

Peter would know the passage of Zechariah.

Here we are in the kingdom, the King in His glory, Moses and Elijah are here. It is the same time of year they were supposed to be having the Feast of the Tabernacles. This has got to be the millennium.

Because in the millennium, we are supposed to keep this.

Peter is going to build the booths to have the feast. Since it's a Feast of Booths, let's get the booths up.

So, all of this certainly came together in Peter's mind and just sort of made him say, "This has got to be it."

3. The terror of the Father.

V 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!"

Someone else arriving.

Exodus 13:21, *And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.*

Whenever we see white clouds, guess who will be there?

God.

- ✓ God is a spirit, and as a spirit is invisible.
- ✓ God is an invisible spirit.
- ✓ God has no form.
- ✓ God is everywhere.
- ✓ God cannot be confined to a form in the fullness of Him.

When God does reveal Himself, in the Old Testament, He chooses to reveal Himself as light, as blazing, glowing light.

We see it in the garden in the Shekinah presence.

In **Exodus 33** as Moses says, *“Show me Your glory,”* or, *“Reveal Yourself to me,”* and he sees God’s glow, the light of God’s Shekinah, and it’s transferred to his own face.

In **Exodus 40**, when the tabernacle is built, which is to be symbolic of the dwelling of God among the people of Israel.

Exodus 40:34, *Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*

The priests couldn’t even move around and minister in there.

When it was time for them to move in the wilderness, the glory would go up in the sky, and it was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It would lead them through those 40 years in the wilderness.

When they came into the Promised Land and built the temple. **1 Kings 8:10-11**, *And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹ so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.*

When we come to the Gospel, we find Jesus Christ as God revealed Himself on the mountain, on the face of Moses, in the tabernacle, and in the temple as light.

God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ as light veiled by human flesh.

Jesus Christ was the Shekinah of God.

The glow of God.

The glory of God.

The blazing, dazzling, glistening light of God veiled in human flesh.

John 1:14, *We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

We saw the glory.

We saw the Shekinah.

We saw the blazing light, that which could only be true of God we saw in Him, full of grace and truth.

If we ask John, **when did you see that, John?**

John would tell us that I was on the mountain with Him, and He was transfigured. (**Matthew 17**)

Peter said the same thing in **2 Peter 1**, *“We do not speak to you cunningly devised fables when we speak about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus. But we were eyewitnesses of His royal majesty. We saw the glory, too.”*

When did Peter see the glory?

On the holy mountain. As recorded in Matthew chapter 17.

Bible tells us that when Jesus returns, He will come in great glory.

Jesus Christ also is revealed as light.

John 8:12, *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”*

God chooses primarily to reveal Himself as glorious, dazzling light.

In the book of **Revelation** when we get to the eternal heaven, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, there is no moon, no sun, and no stars to light it because the glory of God is the light of it.

The Lamb is the lamp.
A great picture.

In heaven forever, Jesus is the lamp containing the light of the glory of God.

The same was true on earth, while Jesus was here.
He was the light of the glory of God veiled.

In heaven it will be unveiled.
That light will be the eternal domain for all eternity, in glorious, blazing light.

So, when Jesus wants to reveal Himself for who He really is, He pulls back the veil of His flesh and reveals Himself as glorious, radiant, dazzling light.

The Shekinah of God.

They were looking for a greater prophet than Moses to lead another exodus. Jesus was talking about His exodus.

V 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!"

God gives testimony about the deity of Jesus three times.

Matthew 3:17,

John 12:28-29, and

Matthew 17:5.

God speaks out of heaven and says, "This is My beloved Son," or, "This is the one."

Now, that is testimony beyond argumentation.

When God gives His testimony, men should listen.

This is very traumatizing thing, and they are already scared.

V 6, And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

They went flat, prostrate on the ground, and were scared.

They were very afraid.

Why are people so afraid in the presence of God?

What scares them so much?

God is infinitely holy, and men are hopelessly sinful.

Suddenly you will feel naked.

You feel exposed.

Adam and Eve sinned.

What's the first thing they said?

Genesis 3:10, *So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."*

They made aprons to cover themselves.

They were ashamed to be seen, because they knew they were not only being seen on the outside, but they were being seen right through to the sin.

Sinners in the presence of an infinitely holy God always feel like they need to hide. That's just how it is.

The disciples, if they had been holes, would have crawled into the ground. But since they were just men, they just fell flat on it, their faces down in it.

Judges 6:22-23, *Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face." ²³Then the Lord said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die."*

Judges 13:21-22, *When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord. ²²And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"*

God sees through to the sin.
God penetrates to the very core of your being.
God knows how ugly you really are.

You will be consumed by His holy justice.

Isaiah felt in chapter 6 when he saw God and said, "Curse me, God, wipe me out."

Daniel felt that way when he came to the messenger from God.
Daniel 8 The Bible says he was very much afraid.
Daniel 10, again the same kind of traumatic fear.

Habakkuk 3:16, *When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entered my bones; And I trembled in myself, That I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops.* They reacted liked anyone should react in the presence of an infinitely holy God.

They fell on their face.

V 5, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

God is not talking about some kind of relationship on the surface, or some kind of functional relationship.
God is talking about essence.

“This is My Son” in the sense that the Son is the same as His Father.

This is the same essence as I am.

This is Me.

“This is My beloved Son,”

To tell us that there is not only an essential relationship between the two, but a love relationship.

Not only a relationship of being, but a relationship of feeling, of commitment, of identification in every way.

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Everything He is doing is according to the divine plan.

What Jesus does please Me.

He is doing it the way the plan says.

- ✓ He is obedient.
- ✓ He is faithful.
- ✓ He is a servant.
- ✓ He is going to the cross because that’s the plan.
- ✓ He is going to Jerusalem because that’s the plan.
- ✓ He is going to suffer because that’s the plan.

I Am well pleased with it all.

He was the beloved Son of God who came to do the will of God, and the Father says, "I Am pleased."

So, confirmation comes from Moses and Elijah.

That means the Old Testament.

Now confirmation comes from God Himself.

V 5, Hear Him!" "Listen to Him."

Deuteronomy 18:15, *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,*

Deuteronomy 18:18-19, *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. ¹⁹And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.*

You listen to Him.

If He says that you must have self-denial, cross bearing, and loyal obedience to enter His kingdom, then listen to what He says.

He is not off target.

He is on target.

God not only sets His seal of evidence on the deity of Jesus Christ but sets His seal of approval on His operating in accord with the plan.

Transformation of the Son.

The testimony of the saints.

Terror of the Father.

4. Picture of second coming.

V 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."*

- ✓ Christ is the centre of this picture.
- ✓ Christ will be the centre of the second coming.

When Christ comes, **Matthew 24, 25, and 26**, says, "He will come in glory and power."

Here we see Him in glory in power.

Zechariah 14:4, *And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.*

- ✓ The Mount of Olives Jesus Christ will come.
- ✓ **V 1**, When Jesus took them to the preview, he took them up to a high mountain.

Interesting that even the preview happens on a mountain, just as the reality will.

When Jesus comes in glory, He will come to His people.
He will come to His people to gather them together.

When He goes into the mountain, He took Peter, James, and John, and they are there with Him when He was glorified.
They are representative of the people to whom Christ returns.

When Christ returns, He returns with His saints to get His saints.
Those saints that have already been gathered to Him, they will come with Him, represented by Moses and Elijah.

So, we have the full picture.

- We have the saints to whom He comes, in Peter, James, and John, waiting on the earth.
- We have the saints with whom He comes already glorified in Moses and Elijah.

We know that Jesus is coming in blazing glory, coming to a mount?

A glimpse of the second coming.

Moses died. We know He died because there was a dispute over His body. **Jude** tells us.

Did Elijah die?

He never died.

He just got in his chariot one day and took off. When the trip was over, he was in heaven.

- Moses represents the saints that died.
- Elijah represents the saints that are translated.

All the parts are there.

Marvelous.

- The mountain is there.
- The people to whom He comes are there.
- The people with whom He comes are there.
- The ones who died are represented there.
- The ones translated are represented there.

It all happens on a mountain.

No wonder Peter says, “when I talk about the second coming, I am not giving you some fairy tale. I was an eyewitness of it.”

When did you ever see it?

On the holy mountain.

V 7, *But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.”*

Peter, James, and John are now in the dirt, face down, scared.

V 8, *When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*

He walked over, and He just taps them.

They only see Jesus.

What does that mean?

It is over.

This wasn't the kingdom just a preview.

V 28, *“the Son of Man coming in His royal majesty.”*

They saw it.

They were so traumatized in it that they would never forget it.

Never.

Years later, when they might question, or when someone might question, there was little question in their minds.

Peter can write, at the end of **2 Peter**, when the scoffers come along and start to argue about, “Where is His coming.”

They only show how stupid they are. We know He is coming. We have no doubt. It was an indelible experience. One they would never forget as long as they lived.

It was over, and they were back to normal.

Why?

Because it wasn't time for glory.

Before there was glory, there had to be suffering.

What would be your reaction to that statement?

Peter would say, "I got to get down this hill. Wait till Andrew hears this."

- We got to spread out. Wait till we tell them who this is.
- We have seen it.
- We met Moses and Elijah.
- We were with them up in a mountain over here.
- They were ready to go.

As they were coming down the mountain, and they were just filled with all this, Jesus commands them.

V 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."

This is so painful.

Zacharias' problem when John the Baptist was born, he didn't believe. So, the Lord made him dumb so he couldn't tell anybody he was going to have a son.

Very hard on a father that he couldn't say anything.

Why does He keep saying this?

He said this before.

Why does Jesus tell us not to say again?

Matthew 16:20, *Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.*

Because the world of that day,

- They wanted a political Deliverer.
- They wanted somebody to overthrow the Romans.

Their misguided intentions and expectations only confused the scene.

If they come down and spread, it then again there will be another rebellion.

V 9, *"Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."*

Jesus is saying to them that,

- ✓ I didn't come to conquer the Roman.
- ✓ I came to conquer death.

They will know that that is a spiritual reality.

- Not an earthly one,
- Not a political one,
- Not a material one,
- Not a military one,
- Not an economic one.

Jesus is not involved in politics.

He is involved in conquering death and sin and hell.

If you wait till after the resurrection, they will see that. So, they aren't to say anything.

5. Connect with the forerunner.

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

They had just seen Elijah, so Elijah was on their mind.

They knew Elijah was to be the forerunner of the Messiah because that's what prophet Malachi prophesied.

Malachi 4:5-6, *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."*

Prophecy that Elijah would come as the forerunner to Messiah. This one thing they couldn't quite understand.

How can this Jesus that you follow be the Messiah when there has yet been no Elijah?

Because Malachi said that the Elijah would come first.

If there is no Elijah, how can He be the Messiah?

Now, there were some people who really wanted Him to be in that messianic context. In **Matthew 16**, when Jesus said to the disciples, "Who do men say that I am," they answered, "*Some say that you are Elijah.*"

Some thought He could be Elijah getting things ready for the Messiah, but He couldn't be the Messiah because there hadn't been an Elijah.

Why do the scribes say Elijah has to come first?

Because it was in Malachi chapter 4.

But they really enhanced it.

They said that Elijah would come, and he would gather the people. He would restore everything, get ready for the Messiah.

They believe that Elijah would be a flaming, fiery, great, and terrible reformer who would reform the people, bringing holiness out of unholiness, bringing order out of chaos.

- He would destroy all evil.
- He would set everything right.

So that all the perfection would be set in motion.

When the Messiah arrived, He would just sort of fall into it. They saw Elijah as the restorer, and then the Messiah come to control it.

But they keep saying that Elijah ought to come.

Why did they say that?

If You are the Messiah, then where is Elijah?

V 11, Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.

Elijah will come.

He will restore all things.

Before the setting up of the kingdom, Elijah will come.

What does that verse 11 tell us about the future?

What is going to happen in the future before the kingdom is established on the earth before the glory?

Who is going to come?

Elijah will come.

“He will come, and he will restore things.”

V 12, But I say to you that Elijah has come already,

Elijah came.

They didn't know who he was.

V 12, But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished.

V 13, Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist is Elijah.

He is Elijah in the way the prophet spoke.

When the prophet said, “Elijah must come,” he didn't mean the actual Elijah.

Jesus was speaking of one who would come in the same manner as Elijah, with the same style as Elijah, in the same mode of operation as Elijah, one like Elijah. Elijah-like man will come.

Of course, the problem with the Jews was, they were looking for the literal Elijah.

The Jews asked John the Baptist the same question.

John 1:21, *And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

V 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.*

He is not Elijah, but he was one who came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

But because they rejected him, he couldn't be the fulfilment of Malachi's prophesy.

He couldn't be the Elijah before the kingdom.

So, there yet will be another who will come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

That Elijah will be fulfilling that prophesy before the coming glorious kingdom.

Malachi the prophet said, "Elijah will come."

What he meant was one in the spirit and power of Elijah.

An Elijah-like prophet.

- If they had received John the Baptist,
- if they had believed his message,
- if they had received the Messiah,

➤ if the Messiah had set up His kingdom,

John the Baptist would have fulfilled that prophecy.

He would have been that Elijah-like prophet to restore all things for the kingdom. But when they did to him whatever they desired.

What did they do to him?

They cut off his head.

They refused him.

They didn't allow him to restore.

V 12, *But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished.*

They wiped out the Elijah-like preparer of the Messiah.

They killed the Messiah.

Consequently, they rejected the restoration, and they rejected the kingdom.

So, Elijah couldn't then be John the Baptist.

John the Baptist couldn't be that Elijah to fulfil that.

In the future, before Jesus comes again, another great prophet will come in the spirit and power of Elijah to set things right.

He will restore all things.

They won't do to him what they did to John the Baptist.

They won't miss who he is.

After him will come the King in His royal majesty and glory.

Matthew 11:11-14, *“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.*

If they had taken John's message and received him and received the Christ, he would have been that Elijah fulfilment.

But because they killed him and killed the Messiah, there has yet to come another one like Elijah.

John would have been the one.

Luke 1:17, *He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

He was to be the fulfilment if they had believed, but they didn't.

What does this mean as far as the deity of Christ?

The Old Testament said that before the Christ comes, there will one like Elijah. One like Elijah did come.

Just because the world rejected him doesn't mean he wasn't that fulfilling Elijah.

So, while the Jews would step in and say, "This can't be the Messiah because there's been no Elijah."

Jesus says, "Indeed there was an Elijah, and if you had listened to him and believed him, he would have fulfilled that Elijah prophecy."

The only reason John the Baptist couldn't fully fulfil because they killed him along with the Messiah.

When Christ comes again, He will be preceded by another Elijah.

Conclusion:

V 12, *"Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.*

Not glory yet.

Suffering now.

Jesus is saying, "I have to go and suffer."

Matthew 16:21, *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*

V 24, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

If you are going to follow Me,

- You are going to deny yourself.
- You are going to die to your own desires will, and sin.
- You are going to take up your cross.

In other words, you are going to bear a reproach.

Some people don't believe Christians ought to be allowed in society.

Some people believe in mocking them and scorning them in some cases taking their lives.

You are going to have to take up that cross and follow Me.

This is suffering.

Someday there will be glory, and that's in the future.

But this is suffering.

Jesus tells them they are going to suffer.

But in the middle, He gives them a glimpse of glory.

At the very word's apostle Paul to Timothy, who was indeed in suffering as well for the reproach of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:12, *If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.*

Our great hope!

No matter what small measure of suffering we endure in this life, it's not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us in Christ.

Romans 8:18, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

This glimpse of glory only gives us a preview of what that will be like.