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Appendix II

Moses and Elijah

The circumstances surrounding the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 16:28-17:9³⁸⁹) are exceptional. They are exceptional for two reasons.

First, because Moses and Elijah uniquely represented the Law and the Prophets in the Jewish mind, and here they stand together as two crucial witnesses under the Old Covenant. What they bore witness to was the perfection of the Lord's manhood. He had been tempted by Satan; He had been abused, persecuted, provoked and maligned by his fellowmen, disappointed in his friends, and misunderstood by his family. He had suffered the insults of the world and its thanklessness; yet He had never failed to respond to human need in love and gentleness, nor to human wickedness with anything but perfectly righteous anger. He had, in short, displayed all the potential glory of true manhood, without spot or blemish even in the eyes of his worst enemies, not one of whom in the end could find any fault in Him whatever. He had been made perfect by the things which He endured (Hebrews 5:8³⁹⁰) and as He stood glorified in the presence of two witnesses, God had declared Him wholly pleasing in his own sight.

It was to this perfection of his manhood that Moses and Elijah now bore witness as He came to the threshold of entering into glory from the Mount of

³⁸⁹ “Verily, I [Jesus] say to you There are some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. And after six days Jesus takes Peter, James, and John his brother, and brings them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord it is good for us to be here: if you wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him. When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were very afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down the mountain Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.” Matthew 16:28-17:9.

³⁹⁰ “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered [experienced].” Hebrews 5:8

Transfiguration. He had kept the whole Law in letter and in spirit and thus had every right to pass into heaven without experiencing death.

The Scriptures constantly affirm that any man who perfectly fulfills the Law shall indeed be worthy of eternal life (Leviticus 18:5; Ezekiel 20:11,13; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12; and Luke 10:28³⁹¹). Divine satisfaction can be entirely satisfied via this route. Only this One Man had ever fulfilled the whole Law and was therefore "worthy." Moses and Elijah seem to have been called upon to bear witness to the fact of this worthiness and its significance in the light of the death he was to embrace entirely of his own free will (Luke 9:30-31).³⁹²

Since the Law requires a minimum of two witnesses (Matthew 18:16),³⁹³ both Moses and Elijah were needed, and they were ideally appropriate. But in order to doubly certify these two witnesses, a third witness added his testimony — the Father in heaven (Matthew 17:5).³⁹⁴ Three witnesses, the maximum that the Law could

³⁹¹ “You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.” Leviticus 18:5.

“[in the wilderness] I [God] gave them my statutes and showed them by judgments, which is a man do, he shall even live in them But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. . . .” Ezekiel 20:11, 13.

“For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who does those things shall live by them.” Romans 10:5.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continues not do to all things which are written in the book of the law. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. The law is not of faith, but, The man who does them shall live in them.” Galatians 3:10-12.

“A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him [Jesus], saying, Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He [Jesus] said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? He, answering, said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself. And [Jesus] said to him, You have answered right: this do, and you shall live.” Luke 10:25-28.

³⁹² “[on the Mount of Transfiguration] there talked with him [Jesus] two men who were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory and spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Luke 9:30-31.

³⁹³ “. . . in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Matthew 18:16.

³⁹⁴ “While he [Peter] yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well

require, thus testified to the perfection of him who was worthy to become the sacrificial Lamb. He was declared wholly innocent that he might become altogether guilty — on our behalf, and not on his own.

However, in order that a record on earth might later be made of this threefold testimony in heaven, three favoured disciples were present as witnesses at the time of this critical certification. It was only after this validation of Himself that the Lord came back down from the Mount of glory and "set his face to go up to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51), at the same time seeking to impress upon the disciples the significance of what going up to Jerusalem would mean for Himself and for them (Mark 9:9,10).³⁹⁵

But how did Moses and Elijah thus appear in person before the resurrection? If the resurrection of the body is essential to a true reconstitution of the person and if that bodily resurrection is yet future, how did they appear so identifiably themselves at this time?

This is the second special aspect of their appearance at this time, and it hinges upon the fact that both had experienced a unique end. We know that Elijah was translated, carried up to heaven bodily so that he was never buried in the earth (2 Kings 2:11).³⁹⁶ It is apparent, therefore, that the means for his re-appearance as a whole person were still available. His body was somehow preserved — presumably for this very purpose.

What about Moses? The circumstances surrounding his death were also exceptional. We are told in Deuteronomy 34:6³⁹⁷ that Moses died and was buried: but in this unique instance he was buried by God, not by man. And we learn from Jude 9 that the archangel, Michael, was specifically appointed to protect this body. Indeed, Michael may have actually been appointed to the task of interment. It is apparent that Satan, perceiving that this specially treated body had some important significance in the purposes of God, attempted to seize it, perhaps in the hope of

pleased; hear him." Matthew 17:5.

³⁹⁵ "As they came down the mountain [of Transfiguration] he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man was risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." Mark 9:9, 10.

³⁹⁶ "And it came to pass, as they [Elisha and Elijah] 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." 2 Kings 2:11.

³⁹⁷ "And he [the Lord] buried him [Moses] in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knows of his sepulchre unto this day." Deuteronomy 34:6.

destroying it or even in the hope of using it for embodiment himself; just as he later was to use Judas (Luke 22:3; John 13:27³⁹⁸) after failing to acquire Peter (Luke 22:31,32³⁹⁹). Jude 9⁴⁰⁰ tells us that Satan and Michael contended over the body and the contention was so strong that Michael had to call upon the Lord for assistance. Clearly the body of Moses, like the body of Elijah, was needed for very particular reasons, and both bodies became the subject of special treatment — and perhaps of special interest also to Satan.

It does seem that the circumstances behind the presence in person of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration were indeed of particular significance. We cannot, therefore, draw from this scene any firm conclusion regarding the position or state of the departed saints under *ordinary* circumstances. We have here a unique event that demanded exceptional steps to be taken under circumstances which are clearly made the occasion for certain statements (especially Deuteronomy 34:6 and Jude 9, previously cited) that underscore its *extra-ordinary* nature.

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³⁹⁸ “Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.” Luke 22:3.

“[at the Last Supper] when he [Jesus] had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus to him, That which you do, do quickly.” John 13: 26, 27.

³⁹⁹ “The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fails not.” Luke 22:31, 32.

⁴⁰⁰ “Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you.” Jude 9.