

Mark 9: 9-13; "What does Rising from the Dead Mean?", Sermon # 73 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 13th, 2010, in the Morning Worship Service.

It should be pretty obvious to us from these verses that I have just read to you that these three men who saw the transfiguration, who saw Moses and Elijah in the glory, did not yet understand what it meant for a person to rise from the dead. If this is the case, then I wonder if it might not also be true, that there might be some persons here this morning who do not understand what it means either? The truth of the matter, concerning these men not understanding, came out when Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone about the transfiguration "until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." They obeyed Jesus in keeping the matter of the transfiguration to themselves, but among themselves they were asking; what does the rising of the dead mean? They did not know what it meant. This should show us that there were, in those days, before Christ's resurrection, many people who were in great confusion about this subject. This confusion had resulted from what the disciples had heard the scribes teach. The disciples asked Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Sometimes the truths related to the fulfillment of prophecy are not easy or obvious. So in order to bring clarity to your thinking, I would like to ask you to think about this question of theirs, together with me, so that we might grow in our understand of the greatness of Christ's kingdom and His glory. "What does the rising from the dead mean?" I want to answer this question by showing what these words imply in the context of these verses. There are 3 things which are implied. First of all – Christ is linking His resurrection from the dead, for believers, with the glory of building His Church. Secondly – Christ is linking His resurrection to His own sufferings, and to the labors and the sufferings of all of all of his saints. And Thirdly – Christ is linking His resurrection to a correct view of the fulfillment of prophecy. I pray that these truths will bring hope and encouragement to all of God's dear people to persevere in their labors, and better endure their sufferings, for the sake of the glory and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st – Here in these verses Christ is linking His resurrection from the dead, for all believers, with the glory of building His Church. (Verses 9 and 10)

Remember the context. The disciples and Jesus are coming down off the mountain where Jesus had been transfigured; that amazing revelation and manifestation of His true and everlasting glory and power had been revealed to these men. They had had a taste and caught a glimpse of "the kingdom of God having come with power." But here is something just as amazing; they are instructed to keep quiet about it, "until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." That is; they were not to breath a word about it to anyone until the Lord Jesus had fulfilled His mission and ministry to accomplish redemption for all of God's people. But after that, they could, and they would be able to speak of it. Why was this? Well, I think

that in God's mind it is not a good thing for people to boast in their spiritual experiences. You can see this if you will turn to 2 Corinthians 12, verse 1. Here Paul says, "It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast." "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." "Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities." "For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth." "But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me." Now, it is agreed by all commentators that Paul is speaking of himself here, but he is doing so in the third person so that he will not fall into pride. It appears that before he wrote this, he had already been lifted up in his heart over this experience, because God had to give him something unpleasant to his flesh; he goes on to say, in verse 7. "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure." Paul is saying here that whatever revelations of truth and doctrine that have been given to you, you need to be humbled by them, rather than let yourself think that you have become someone great as a result of receiving them. If God knows that you, as a believer, cannot sufficiently guard your heart from pride, he will no doubt give you a thorn as well. Paul says that he will not boast of his experiences except in thinking of them as having happened to someone else, not him. As for himself, he says, he will boast in his infirmities. God had chosen to let this thorn remain with Paul even though he says in verse 8, "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me." "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'" "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Now I need to ask you this morning whether you have learned this precious lesson yet, or not, in living your Christian life? Can you really say as Paul does here in verse 10 – "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake?" "For when I am weak, then I am strong." The reason that Paul can say this is that he would prefer Christ's strength to his own. He would prefer Christ to be seen, rather than himself, by other people. In verse 11 he says, "I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me." But what person in their right mind would boast of their weaknesses and infirmities; their persecutions and distresses? It is because there is, for the believer, a greater revelation of the glory of Christ, and the sufficiency of His power and His grace, which is made real to our hearts by faith, in relation to those things which are difficult for us. This is where Christ's power is at work in us, and this is where it will be seen and known by us. Now Paul does say that he will speak the truth. But he will not be a fool in speaking it. He will be a fool for Christ. He will not be a fool by boasting in himself. He does know that as it says in Psalm 44: 8 – "In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever." This is why I say that in these verses

that we are studying, that Christ is linking His resurrection from the dead with the glory of building His Church. When he was raised from the dead, and His redemptive work was finished, then His power to save people from their sins and to build His Church by His resurrection power should be spoken of, and not before. Before that, He knew that He must humble Himself even to the point of death, even the death on the cross. It was not the time for His exaltation. It was the time for His humiliation. But now that Jesus has been raised from the dead, it is time for you and I, who are His disciples, to speak of His glory. It is His glory, not ours which needs to be seen. It is His word, accompanied by His resurrection power, that needs to be heard in our generation.

It is a great part of our witness to our Lord that we bear witness to His resurrection, and through Him, to our own, both spiritually in our regeneration, and also what will take place on the Day when Christ returns. It is not good to boast in ourselves or our experiences, but in the Lord we can boast all day long. This is the glory of Christ's building His Church. It is all based upon His being raised from the dead. God the Father has the power to be able to apply His righteousness and His grace to our heart and lives as sinners who are guilty; as sinners who are polluted; as sinners who are helpless; as sinners who are hostile to God. And so by His great power and glory in Christ we come to Him. And when we come to Him, and we find salvation in Him, and we find that it is His glory, the glory of His grace, that sustains us in all of our difficulties and sufferings. I want to open this up more in this, my second point by saying this:

Secondly – Christ is linking His resurrection to His own sufferings, and to the labors and the sufferings of all of his saints.

These disciples; Peter, James, and John were not looking for Christ to have to suffer. They were looking for Him to come and establish a temporal earthly kingdom and for His glory to be seen by men, without His having to suffer, or without their having to suffer. But the Lord Jesus was reproving this conception of theirs, by telling them that they should not speak a word of His glory and the glory of His kingdom, to others until He was raised from the dead. His saying this implied that he was going to have to die, and his death might be sometime soon. They were confused. They knew that their scribes had told them that Elijah would come first, before the Messiah. If their Jesus was the Messiah, why was not Elijah with them? Why had he not come first? Why did he appear in the transfiguration and then vanish? They didn't understand the prophecy of Malachi Chapter 4, and verse 5. So Jesus says to them, "Indeed Elijah is coming first and restores all things." Let's turn over and look at this prophecy in Malachi 4: 5. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." "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." Now couple this verse with Malachi Chapter 3, and verse 1. "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me." "And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight." Now, these

verses in Chapter 4, at first glance, might appear to be speaking of God sending Elijah the Tishbite, the same man who was active in Israel in the days of king Ahab, to do this great work of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, and to prepare the way before Christ. But Jesus says that it was John the Baptist that was being referred to. The prophecy does not say, "Elijah the Tishbite". It says, "Elijah the prophet". Now turn over with me to Luke Chapter 1, and verse 13. Zacharias, the soon-to-be father of John the Baptist, is being given this good news of the birth of his son, by an angel of the Lord. He is troubled and afraid. In verse 13 it says, "But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.'" "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." "For he will be great in the sight of Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink." "He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God." "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." You can see from these words that John the Baptist most certainly is the fulfillment of the prophecies in Malachi 3: 1 and 4: 5. John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come first.

This is also confirmed for us if we turn over to Matthew 11: 13. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." "And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come." Now this is pretty plain is it not? John the Baptist would come and he would preach in the spirit and power of Elijah and by the means of the blessing of the spirit upon him; he would have the same kind of ministry as Elijah in the days of king Ahab had – He would turn the hearts of the fathers to think of their children and their need of Christ and His righteousness. But the prophecies do not specifically speak of John the Baptist having to suffer and die as he did. So Jesus had to plainly tell His disciples in verse 13 that "Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him. The words, "as is written of him", do not refer to the clause, "they did to him whatever they wished". They refer to his indeed coming before, preparing the way of the Lord, even as the scribes had said. Jesus even goes further here and he also speaks of his own sufferings in relation to His labors and His glory. "And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" You see, Jesus was letting His disciples know, in no uncertain terms that suffering and glory are integrally linked for Him in His life and ministry. And they are integrally linked together in our life and whatever labor and service that we will do for Him. This is why I say that when we receive a great revelation of glory in connection with the preaching of the Scriptures, and it comes to our soul with power, we need to understand that this revelation is meant to motivate us to great labor for Christ, and to expect also to suffer in certain ways that He has appointed so that God would be glorified in us. Let me give you an example of this. Turn with me to Acts Chapter 9.

We have here, in chapter 9, verses 1-19, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who become the great Apostle Paul. He was a persecutor of the Church. He was a blasphemer and an insolent man. But he received mercy and grace and a revelation of the glory of Christ when he was converted. Verse 3 – "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven." "Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" "And He said, 'Who are you, Lord?" "Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." "So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" "Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." If you will hold you place here in Acts 9, and turn over to Acts 22, verse 9, something more is added for our understanding. "And those who were with me," he says, "indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me." "So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?" "And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do." Now watch this – "And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus." "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." "And at that same hour I looked up at him." The veil was removed from his heart. Something like scales fell from his eyes it says in Acts 9: 18. But if you will now turn back to Act 9: 13 we find something that relates directly to our study. Ananias did not want to go to Saul, and this is what he said to the Lord, when the Lord told him to go. "Then Ananias answered , 'Lord I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem." "And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on Your name." This is the verse that I want us to see. "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." "For I will show him how many things (or how much) he must suffer for My name's sake." Saul, in his conversion was given a revelation of the glory of Christ. But in the words spoken to him by Ananias, he is told that the Lord would also show Paul just how much he would suffer for His name's sake. Did you know that all the sufferings that you will endure as a Christian, for the sake of the Lord's name, are all proportioned out for you, but that the glory revealed to you by Christ as well, will permit you to endure them?

Oh, how I hope that you will receive this great truth. It was the resurrected Christ who said these things to Ananias in relation to Paul. Ananias was the preacher of God's word. The glory of God and of Jesus Christ had been revealed to Saul in his conversion, and that glory would transform that sinful man into an Apostle. The glory of Christ's powerful grace would sustain Paul in all of his labors and all of his sufferings for Christ. This would take place by the resurrection power of Christ. And Paul always longed and prayed for a greater revelation of that glory. You see this in Philippians 3, verses 7-10. "But what things were gain to me, these I

have counted loss for Christ." "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means I might attain to the resurrection from the dead." That ties it together does it not? Paul had Christ's great glory revealed to him on the road to Damascus. And that was sustaining him in all of his labors and all of his sufferings, but he still longed for more. He wanted to know more of the power of Christ's resurrection; to receive greater power to continue to labor and suffer until God gave him the upward call. Is this you my friends? Biblical Knowledge is not enough to sustain and empower by itself, but the glory of God with that knowledge is. How I pray that you and I would behold it in our everyday living for Him. What does this look like?

As I have said to you; there is a time for His glory being revealed; then a time for suffering for His name's sake; and then comes the fuller revelation of His glory, both in being able to endure the sufferings, and then also at the time of our death. It is not just that glory, glory, dwelleth for us, sometime in the future, in Immanuel's Land. But it dwells right now, in our hearts, when we live by faith in the Son of God. When we believe in Christ, we will speak of His glory. 2 Corinthians 4: 13 says, "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will present us with you.'" These verses follow shortly upon verses 6 and 7 which say, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now, we know that it is not good to take our pearls and to throw them before the swine. But it is good to speak of the glory of what Christ has done at the cross, and the glory which we have known in our hearts; provided we keep from exalting ourselves. God is glorified in our dependence upon Christ. You see, there is a glory in Christ's building His Church, that began when Christ was raised from the dead. This was the beginning of His kingdom coming with power. The glory of this power is known by each and every Christian individually, and it is also known collectively by Christ's Church. Turn with me to 1st Peter 1, verse 10 – "Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." "To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into." "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The revelation of Jesus Christ

spoken of here is most certainly to be thought of as the revelation of Christ's full glory being seen and known, when we die, and when we are brought to heaven; and also the glory that will be revealed when Christ returns, and when we are raised from the dead. We do look for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ in these important ways, and we use the knowledge of this greatest of revelations to fuel our obedience to God. For Peter in verse 14 says, "As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" "And If you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves through the time of your stay her in fear...." This is the kind of holy fear that I spoke to you about last Sunday. And it is linked to the revelation of the glory of Christ, I am saying, in the building of His Church.

When Christ rose from the dead, He began building His Church. But in His building His Church, He does so through the manifestation of His glory in the regeneration of His people by His Spirit, and by giving them joy and rejoicing in the midst of their trials. Listen to 1st Peter 1, verse 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, who having not seen you love." "Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls." That is a wonderful description of what I am talking about. This is what Christ's rising from the dead produces in your life when you are trusting in Him. It produces the fruits of love and joy. These graces which are produced in us by God's Holy Spirit, fill our souls with the glory of Jesus Christ.

I like what Jonathan Edwards in his Treatise on the Religious Affections says about this. He says this: "Their joy was *full of glory*." "Although the joy was unspeakable, and no words were sufficient to describe it; yet something might be said of it, and no words more fit to represent its excellency than these, that it was *full of glory*; or, as it is in the original, *glorified joy*." "In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled, as it were, with a glorious brightness, and their natures exalted and perfected." "It was a most worthy, noble rejoicing, that did not corrupt and debase the mind, as many carnal joys do; but did greatly beautify and dignify it." "It was a prelibation (a foretaste, or a pre-pouring out) of the joy of heaven, that raised their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness; it filled their minds with the light of God's glory, and made themselves to shine with some communication of that glory." "Hence the proposition or doctrine, that I would raise from these words is this, true

religion, in great part, consists in holy affections." He also says, "The *nature* of this joy; *unspeakable, and full of glory*. "Unspeakable in the *kind* of it; very different from worldly joys, and carnal delights; of a vastly more pure, sublime, and heavenly nature, being something supernatural, and truly divine, and so ineffably excellent!" "The sublimity and exquisite sweetness of which, there were no words to set forth." "Unspeakable also in *degree*; it having pleased God to give them this holy joy with a liberal hand, in their state of persecution." That is what Christ's rising from the dead means to you. It means the glory of Christ in you, and the glory of Him working through you.

Now finally, and briefly - Christ is linking His resurrection to a correct view of the fulfillment of prophecy.

In closing this message, I want to stimulate your thinking to the idea that prophecy is not something that is always fulfilled in a literal physical way. It is sometimes fulfilled in a literal spiritual way. This is seen in this text in the words, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. John the Baptist was not literally Elijah, or else you and I would believe in re-incarnation. Indeed, John the Baptist denied that he was Elijah in John 1: 21. But John the Baptist was the spiritual fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi. Let us receive this as a principle of how we should interpret prophetic Scripture. Christ is coming again someday. He will come in the glory of His Father and all the holy angels. He will come literally and bodily upon the clouds. No one knows the hour nor the day. But I would like to have you think about the fact that there have been a number of spiritual "comings of Christ" in the days since His resurrection from the dead. He came in the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. 3,000 people were saved that day by the glory of Peter's preaching on Christ's sufferings and His Resurrection. Christ came spiritually in judgment upon the nation of Israel in 70 A.D. in fulfillment of His own words, that "they did not recognize the time of their visitation." Christ came in power in the days of Constantine, Emperor of Rome, in 325 A.D. and the persecution of the Emperors stopped for awhile, although the glory of Christ had been in hearts of all those who had suffered through the persecutions of 10 successive Emperors. Christ came spiritually in the days of the Reformation to be the Lamb who would stand upon Mt. Zion (His true Church) in fulfillment of Revelation 14: 1-5. He would use her witness, then, and her witness now, to cause the false system of Roman Catholicism to be successfully challenged. He came and brought the mighty revivals in the 1st and 2nd Great Awakenings in this country. And I believe that He will come in judgment and in great saving strength to help His Church at the end of the 1260 years of the Church's Babylonian captivity when her witness is slain. I believe that He will come and spiritually raise His Church's witness from the dead by means of the conversion of the Jews and their being brought into His Church. This is the 1st resurrection of Revelation 20, verses 5 and 6. He will come spiritually in great glory in His gospel being preached through them to all the nations, so that many are converted. This is called by many Reformed pastors of the past – The Latter Day glory of the Church.

Now I will ask a question in closing which I do not have the answer for. Does the "Elijah is coming first" of Mark 9: 12, and the phrase, "Indeed Elijah is coming first and will restore all things" of Matthew 17: 11, have a double reference in relation to the spiritual coming of Christ at the end of the 1260 years prophecy and the beginning of the Millennium? Will there be a certain man like Elijah, or a group of men, raised up to preach to the Jews? The Scriptures only give a possible hint in the tenses of these words in the verses which we have studied. Of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, verse 6, the ministry of the first relates to Elijah the prophet. He had "power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls on the earth." His ministry was prophetic of the teaching ministry during the time of the 1260 days. That witness is overcome and killed at the end of the 1260 days. But it was resurrected after the 3 and one half days. Perhaps great preachers will be raised up in those days, who will be able to preach in the power and with the spirit of Elijah. Perhaps it will be through this means that, in terms of the gospel, that the glory of the Lord will come to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. May it be so, dear Lord.