



Who Is Jesus

Part Twelve / Wednesday, February 27, 2019

THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

1 Matthew 17:1-8

2 **And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth**
3 **them up into an high mountain apart, [2] And was transfigured before them: and his**
4 **face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. [3] And, behold,**
5 **there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. [4] Then answered**
6 **Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make**
7 **here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. [5] While**
8 **he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of**
9 **the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye**
10 **him. [6] And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.**
11 **[7] And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. [8] And**
12 **when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.**
13

14 At the top of this page is a picture of the summit of Mount Hermon, rising some 10,000
15 feet above the plain of northern Israel. Once again, here is a picture of a place where
16 Jesus actually stood just days away from His date with a cross. I remind you again that
17 just behind this summit to the northwest (left) is the nation of Lebanon. To the
18 northeast (right) lies Syria (Damascus from this view point if about 50 miles away).
19 Some believe the Mount of Transfiguration is far to the south in the region of The Valley
20 of Armageddon, Mount Tabor. However, you will note on line 2 of this page, this event

1 took place just after Jesus talked to them at Banias on the lower slopes of this great
2 mountain.

3
4 Verse 1: After six days ... Six days after what? Six days after Jesus met with His
5 disciples in the nearby area of Banias and asked them, “**Whom do men say that I am?**”
6 In that previous chapter 16, Jesus was already on the slopes of Mount Hermon. To
7 assume that He then took His men far to the south to Mount Tabor makes little sense. I
8 have often argued this point with both pastors and guides. But the locale is not the
9 urgent message here; the Transfiguration (metamorphosis of Jesus is!)

10
11 In one of my favorite passages in Scripture, John 1, the beloved apostle wrote: John 1:14:
12 **[14] And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory,**
13 **the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.** That’s a
14 startling statement, isn’t it? For during Jesus 33 years of earth life and ministry, Jesus’
15 outward appearance was common; that is, He appeared much like the Jews of that day.
16 So when did John ever see Jesus as He will appear throughout eternity (His glory)?
17 Here - on Mount Hermon, the Mount of the Transfiguration. John, along with Peter and
18 James, received this brief but powerful preview of Christ’s future kingdom.

19 20 THE WITNESSES

21
22 Scriptures reveal three witnesses to Jesus’ glorification: Peter, James and John. The
23 fourth member of our Lord’s inner circle, Andrew, was not there. Why - I don’t know.
24 There were several instances where Andrew was excluded: the raising of Jairus’
25 daughter from the dead, for example, and when Jesus prayed in the Garden of
26 Gethsemane. Those who were with Him under the olive trees did not include Andrew.
27 Matthew 26:36-37 **Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane,**
28 **and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. [37] And he**
29 **took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and**
30 **very heavy.** But we never read of Andrew having a “snit” about those exclusions. He
31 was too busy bringing people to Jesus.

32
33 So why did Jesus include the three for this divinely designed presentation of His Son on
34 the Mount? One writer has suggested:

- 35 • the three were very reliable witnesses to confirm the event Deut. 19:15 **One**
36 **witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any**
37 **sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three**
38 **witnesses, shall the matter be established.**
- 39 • they stayed very close to Jesus - virtually all the time. Does Jesus play favorites
40 then? I believe so. James 4:8 **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to**
41 **you.**

- had Jesus chosen all the disciples to witness His transfiguration, they might have inadvertently badgered Jesus to become the political and military deliverer they expected Him to be.

WHAT DID THE WITNESSES OBSERVE?

Mark 9:2-3

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. [3] And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller* on earth can white them.

* "FULLER" An old art, done by both men and women, in cleansing and bleaching articles of clothing

This entire subject causes us to wonder. What really happened to Jesus? He apparently was still recognizable as the Gospel writers described Him. Mark wrote, Mark 9:2-3 (Phillips) **"His whole appearance changed before their eyes."**

Here's a thought: You probably have not heard many sermons on the Transfiguration. I don't know that I have preached but two or three in over a half century of preaching. Why do you think that is? In my case there are so many imponderables to consider. All we know for sure is that Jesus' countenance was changed, his clothes were dazzling white, and observing disciples were stunned by what was happening right before their eyes. Luke informs us that the dramatic change occurred while Jesus was praying. Luke 9:29 **And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.** Luke was not there so that information must have come from Peter, James or John.

As already suggested in these notes, the very word "transfigured" has the basic meaning of changing into another form (our English word "metamorphosis.") The writer to the Hebrews was inspired to discuss the physical image of Jesus: Hebrews 1:1-3 **God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, [2] Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; [3] Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;**

WHAT WAS GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS?

I believe it was primarily to prepare those present to get prepared for death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 **Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher**

1 of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the
2 shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3
4 We must remember that while Jesus was God - truly so! - He was also a man for 33 human years, subject to all the pain, temptations and set-backs that we know. A week or so earlier in Baniyas, Jesus had told His men that they were now heading south to Jerusalem where He would be killed. Make no reservation about this: Jesus knew He was headed for one of the most painful and humiliating deaths any one could ever suffer.

Matthew 16:21 **From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.** Oh, yes, our Lord knew exactly what lay in His path. The Father God gave His Son an overwhelming reminder of Who He had been and Who He would be again in a month or so when He ascended back to Heaven, the Resurrected Savior and King of Glory! Oh, that must have been an incredible boost to Jesus!

5
6 For a brief shining moment, Jesus appeared in His heavenly form. And, for the three
7 highly-privileged disciples, God confirmed His Son's earthly mission: Matthew 17:5
8 **While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice**
9 **out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;**
10 **hear ye him.** This was a heavenly confirmation, in effect: "If My Son informs you that
11 He is headed to Jerusalem to die, be buried, and then rise to life in three days....BELIEVE
12 HIM!"

13
14 At the earliest point possible, the believer must realize that God means what He says - or
15 what He has written in His holy Word.

16 17 ONCE AGAIN, PETER PUTS HIS FOOT IN HIS MOUTH

18
19 You know, for a person whom many believe was the head of the church, Peter had the
20 propensity for saying foolish things. Now he mistakenly places Jesus on the same level
21 with Moses and Elijah when he proposes: Matthew 17:4 **Then answered Peter, and**
22 **said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three**
23 **tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.** Even today there are
24 well-meaning believers who elevate humans to deity; that is, praying to one or more of
25 the saints, or elevating the status of the virgin Mary, kneeling before her as if she is more
26 than a human being. There is no scriptural basis for doing this. "Worship of saints," no
27 matter who they may be, is a man-made concept, in which the Commandment, "Thou
28 shalt have no other gods" is violated.

1 TWO MULE LOADS OF DIRT

2
3 Most Christians know the story of the Syrian General Naaman, the leper, who was
4 cleansed of his disease when he “dipped” in the Jordan River seven times. The prophet
5 Elisha sent word to him to do this, and while Naaman at first rebelled, he finally obeyed
6 and a miracle took place.

7
8 Great story! But what this General did afterward “flummoxes” me!! Here’s the story,
9 direct from the holy pages of the Word:

10
11 **2 Kings 5:14-17 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan,**
12 **according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the**
13 **flesh of a little child, and he was clean.**

14 **[15] And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and**
15 **stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all earth,**
16 **but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing (gift) of thy servant. [16]**
17 **But he (Elisha) said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.**
18 **And he urged him to take it; but he refused. [17] And Naaman said, Shall there not**
19 **then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy**
20 **servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods,**
21 **but unto the Lord.**

22
23 What a preposterous “take home gift!” Here this general has been sovereignly and
24 miraculously delivered from leprosy, so what does he take back to Syria? DIRT!

25
26 So what makes me think of that? The three disciples who saw the astounding
27 transfiguration of the Son of God! They really had little idea what they had just
28 witnessed and, as a result, like Naaman, would have been thrilled to haul out some “holy
29 dirt.” Matthew 17:9-12 **And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged**
30 **them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the**
31 **dead. [10] And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias**
32 **must first come? [11] And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first**
33 **come, and restore all things. [12] But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and**
34 **they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall**
35 **also the Son of man suffer of them.** These men had just witnessed one of the most
36 incredible scenes in human history - STARRING Jesus Christ! So what do they talk
37 about as they descend the mountain? A DEAD PROPHET - Elias (Elijah).

38
39 Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. But these three men still had no clue!
40 They were looking for a mighty ruler! Not a suffering servant enroute to a Roman cross
41 of execution. John MacArthur expressed it eloquently: *The Christ that most Jews of*

1 *that day were expecting was not the Christ who had come. Instead of coming to conquer,*
2 *He had come to die. Instead of coming in divine glory, He came in humble meekness.*
3 *And instead of coming to deliver the Jews from political bondage, He came to deliver*
4 *from sin's bondage all men who would trust Him.*

5
6 It seems to this teacher that the three trusted disciples wanted to argue with Jesus. They
7 asked the Lord about the coming of Elijah before His kingdom....how the appearance of
8 Elijah they had just seen on the mount would fit in with Biblical prophecy. In effect, "If
9 You are the Messiah, as you have declared and we have believed, why did Elijah not
10 appear BEFORE You began Your ministry? Religious leaders clung tenaciously to the
11 scribes' teaching that Elijah had to come first. Malachi 4:5-6 **Behold, I will send you**
12 **Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: [6]**
13 **And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the**
14 **children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.** First of all, the
15 earthly ministry of Jesus was not what Malachi wrote about - the great and dreadful day
16 of the Lord. We receive further light on that subject in Rev. 11:12-19, which was a
17 prophecy yet to come. So the disciples were taking scriptures out of CONTEXT.

18 19 SO WHY THE TRANSFIGURATION? 20

21 1. First this event should have secured in the minds of the disciples that it was absolutely
22 necessary that Jesus die on the cross. Remember, Peter had just denied this truth:
23 **Matthew 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far**
24 **from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.**

25
26 2. The second lesson was to confirm that Christ would return to reign in glory - just as
27 the disciples had witnessed ever so briefly just moments before.

28
29 3. Jesus' men had just received confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God who deserves
30 our complete trust, reverence and obedience.

31 32 THINK IT THROUGH: 33

34 Jesus had promised some of His disciples that they would see coming in kingdom
35 splendor before they died - and on Mount Hermon, they had indeed seen Him in His
36 glory. Luke 9:27 **But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall**
37 **not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.** What a quick fulfillment of that
38 prophetic word!

39
40 And in the midst of the wonder of what the disciples had just witnessed, they wanted to
41 joust theology with Jesus Himself!

WHY MOSES AND ELIJAH?

By the time of Jesus' Transfiguration, there must have been millions of saints who had already finished their earthly pilgrimage. Why call back these two - Moses and Elijah? Why not angels? Why not David? Why not Isaiah?

I do not presume to know exactly why God chose Moses and Elijah. Perhaps as we study the Old Testament there are clues that come into play. I only offer these as suggestions, not as theology.

1. God honors people of prayer.

My late and great mentor Leonard Ravenhill wrote, "No man is greater than his prayer life. That the Almighty will condescend to lay hold of a person is wonderful. That this same holy and undefiled God will allow a man to lay hold of Him in prayer is more wonderful still, it seems to me."

2. A Promise Fulfilled

Just before his death on Mount Nebo (which in the country of Jordan today) God showed Moses the Promised Land, a land of milk (goats) and honey (date palm). But then Moses died and God buried him on that very summit before he ever set foot in Israel. But at Jesus' Transfiguration, at least for a few moments, God brought back the great leader to set foot in the land of which he had dreamed.

3. Love of the People of God

Both of these men had proven not only their love of God, but love for God's people. Moses offered himself as a "sacrifice" for the Israelites when they were so rebellious. Exodus 32:30 **And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.** Elijah had withstood evil Queen Jezebel and her demonic prophets atop Mount Carmel, realizing such an act could possibly cost him his life.

4. Both Men Were Lonely

Most people prefer fellowship to loneliness. But Elijah and Moses were products of the country. They understood solitude. One of my friends said, "Flowers don't grow on the turnpike nor do springs flourish there." Loneliness is not all bad - not if one pursues seeking after God and meditation. I wonder how Moses would have felt as he climbed

1 Mount Sinai where he would spend nearly seven weeks, alone with God.

2
3 5. Both of these men had been severely wounded in the house of their friends - as Jesus
4 Himself was wounded.

5
6 We recall that Moses' own brother Aaron had failed him. And God's professing
7 prophets certainly missed the boat with Elijah. As Jesus left Mount Hermon, the Mount
8 of Transfiguration, Jesus was heading for bitter betrayal by many of His friends. So did
9 Jesus feel a certain empathy with these two? I don't know; I merely offer the
10 possibilities.

11 12 What Must His Transfiguration Meant To Jesus?

13
14 Jesus certainly knew what was coming to Him, just a couple weeks from then. The
15 dreadful cup of mankind's sin may have been the most bitter dregs of all. He Himself
16 was sinless; yet now the Father insists that His Son become sin for us, that on Him would
17 be the iniquity of us all.

18
19 **Matthew 26:39-42 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed,**
20 **saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I**
21 **will, but as thou wilt. [40] And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them**
22 **asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? [41]**
23 **Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but**
24 **the flesh is weak. [42] He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O**
25 **my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be**
26 **done.**

27
28 Oh yes, Jesus knew full well the price to be paid, the agony, the blotching of a perfect life
29 with stains of iniquity. *Finite reasoning cannot fully comprehend the occasion. Fleshly*
30 *eyes would fail to discover the awful spectacle of the cup in that crisis hour when the*
31 *sweat of the suffering Messiah ran crimson down His brow and the soul of the Only*
32 *Begotten was "sorrowful, even unto death." The eyes of Christ were not limited, nor*
33 *was His mind the stunted mind of mortal, so that the terrifying impact of the contents*
34 *should escape detection. As other slept close by, Jesus watched. And as He watched, a*
35 *sinner spat out blasphemy—and it settled into the cup. A lustful rascal desecrated a*
36 *woman's virtue—and it reached the cup. A drunken son strangled a tender mother—and*
37 *murder made its way to the cup. A depraved degenerate snatched a wee babe from its*
38 *mother's arms and dashed its brains out on the rocks—and depravity was in the cup.*
39 *Every deed of nameless wrong hatched in the black haunts of Hell, every smear of*
40 *debauchery and stain of iniquity, settled like thick black dregs to the bottom of the cup.*
41 *The Sinless One drew back. His flawless character revolted. The wheels of redemption*

1 *stood still as Jesus, with trembling fingers, raised the cup. His garments were now gory*
2 *in the sweat of His soul agony. The God-man now presses the cup to His lips and its*
3 *contents slip away. He who knew no sin has become sin for us that we might become the*
4 *righteousness of God in Him!*

5 Shuler's Short Sermons / Jack Shuler / pages 113-114 / Zondervan Publishing

6
7 Now....2,000 years later, I find myself wondering if, in that greatest test of His life, in the
8 gathered shadows of Gethsemane, if Jesus remembered back - just a few days ago on the
9 slopes of Mount Hermon - when in His Father God's great mercy, for a few moments He
10 was transfigured....back to the days when He thought it not unequal to be God, and where
11 He would be enthroned again in just a month and a half. How consoling that precious
12 time must have been to our Lord.

13 14 What The Transfiguration Of Jesus Should Mean To You And Me

15
16 This precious moment in Jesus' life should be a spiritual entre to each of us to the
17 wonders of eternity, awakening in each of us a hunger for that time we are gathered into
18 the folks of Heaven. Why? 1 John 3:2 **Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and**
19 **it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we**
20 **shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.** We - you and I - redeemed by the
21 blood of the Master will be like Him and we shall see Him! 1 Cor. 2:9 **But as it is**
22 **written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of**
23 **man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.**

24
25 This staggering episode in the life of our Lord Jesus should make us long for His
26 appearing. We will be changed - not just for a few moments, but for all eternity.

27
28 Oh I want to see Him / Look upon His face
29 There to sing forever of His saving grace
30 On the streets of Glory let me lift my voice
31 Cares all past / Home at last!
32 Ever to rejoice!

33
34
35 **Next week: ON THE JERICHO ROAD**