

Transfiguration

Introduction.

1. At Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked the disciples a great question. (Matt. 16:13-18).
 - a. It was 23 miles north of Bethsaida on the sea of Galilee.
 - b. It is to be distinction from Caesarea on the Mediterranean sea.
2. Not many days after this we read of the transfiguration of Jesus. (Matt. 17:1-8)
 - a. This was one the great events in the life of Jesus.
 - b. I would like for us to make a study of this glorious event recorded in three gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke.
3. Read Matthew 17:1-8 - See Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.

MAT 17:1 And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves.

MAT 17:2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

MAT 17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

MAT 17:4 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

MAT 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

MAT 17:6 And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid.

MAT 17:7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid."

MAT 17:8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone.

4. Let us follow Matthew's account and note some additional details added by Mark and Luke.

Study Of The Transfiguration

1. All three accounts stress that Jesus went upon "a high mountain" or "mountain" with Peter, James and John. (Matt. 17:1; Mk. 9:2; Lk. 9:28).
 - a. These three formed an inner circle. (Mk. 5:37; Lk. 8:51; Matt. 26:37; Mk. 14:33).
 - b. Jesus was loved all men and died for all men, but He was especially close to Peter, James and John.
2. We do not know the identification of the mountain.
 - a. Most scholars think it was Mt. Hermon that was in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Its elevation was about 9,100 feet. It was about 14 miles north of Caesarea Philippi.

- b. Tradition assigns it to Mt. Tabor in Galilee - elevation 1,748 feet. It was 6 miles south-southeast of Nazareth.
3. Matthew and Mark state it was after “six days,” but Luke states it was after “some eight days.”
- The Greek “hōsei” means “about.”
 - NIV has “about eight days.”
- a. There is a different way of calculating the days.
 - b. Matthew and Mark count the six days between the sayings of Jesus and the transfiguration.
 - c. Luke used the words “about eight days” or “some eight days” and seems to count the day of the sayings of Jesus, the six days between, and the day of the transfiguration.

One day - the day of the sayings at Caesarea Philippi. Matt. 16:13.	Six Days - Between the sayings and the transfiguration	One day - the day of the transfiguration.
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4. Luke tells us why Jesus and the others went upon the mountain - it was to pray. (Lk. 9:28).
- a. Matthew states they went “up to a high mountain by themselves.” (Matt. 17:1). Mark states “up to a high mountain by themselves.” (Mk. 9:2).
 - b. Prayer was a very important [vital] part of Jesus’ life, and it should be a very important [vital] part of our lives.
 - c. Prayer is not waste of time, but it is vital to our spiritual life.
 - d. We are encouraged to pray. (Col. 4:2; Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17; Matt. 7:7-11; Jas. 4:2,3).
5. He was transfigured before them.
- a. Matthew “He was transfigured before them” (Matt. 17:2).
 - b. Mark “He was transfigured before them.” (Mk. 9:2).
 - c. Luke “the appearance of His face became different” (Lk. 9:29).
 - d. Mark and Luke speak of His “face.” (Matt. 17:2; Lk. 9:29). All three writers speak of His garments.

MAT 17:2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.	MAR 9:3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. NIV “whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.”	LUK 9:29 And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.
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- 1) White garments were the apparel of angels. (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 7:13).
- 2) Moses’ face shone when he came from the mountain of Sinai. (Exod. 34:29ff; 2 Cor. 3:11).

Note: The word translated “transfigured” is used in Romans 12:2.

ROM 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- The word “transfigured” comes from the Greek word “metamorphoo” [me ta mor fo’ o].
- In Romans it denotes the great change that must occur in our “mind” [heart].
- Our English word “matamorphosis” comes from this Greek word.
 - 1) The change from a caterpillar to a butter.
 - 2) It refers to any abrupt and significant change in a creature’s appearance.
 - 3) This is what happened to Jesus. He had a supernatural change in His physical appearance that lasted a short time.

6. **Moses** and **Elijah** appeared on the mountain. (Matt.17:4; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30).

- Luke states “they appeared in glory.” (Lk. 9:31).
- All three accounts mention they talked with Jesus. (Matt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30).
 - a. **Moses** had died in about 1406 B.C.. This was 40 years after the Exodus in 1446 B.C..
 - 1) He was 120 when he died. (Deut. 34:7).
 - 2) He died “in the land of Moab.” (Deut. 34:5,6).

DEU 34:5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

DEU 34:6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.

3) His exact burial place is not known.

b. **Elijah** did not die, but was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire. (2 Kgs. 2:11).

2KI 2:11 Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

1) He did not enter the heaven of heavens. (Jn. 3:13), but “went up by a whirlwind to heaven.” “Heaven” does not denote where God dwells, but the sky.

JOH 3:13 "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man.

2) Observe Jesus is the only One who has gone to heaven.

3) Elijah went to “Abraham’s bosom” or “Paradise.” See Luke 16:19-31.

7. Luke informs us that it was night (Lk. 9:32), and **what was discussed on that great occasion.** (Lk. 9:31).

LUK 9:31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

- The Greek literally has “His exodus” (death).
- a. It is clear that the death of Jesus was not an accident.
- b. It was planned. (Jn. 3:14-16; Matt. 16:21; 20:27, 28; 26:28; Eph. 1:4).
- c. His death would occur at Jerusalem. (Matt. 16:21; Lk. 9:31).

8 Peter wanted to build three tabernacles (tents, booths). (Matt. 17:4; Mk. 9:5; Lk. 9:33).

- The Greek is “skene.” NIV “three shelters”
- Luke tells us that Peter “not knowing what he said.” (Lk. 9:33).
- Peter did not understand that the death of Christ was God’s will.
- He should have known that Jesus had to die. (Matt. 16:21).
- Matthew has “Lord,” Mark has “Rabbi” and Luke has “Master”. (Matt. 17:4; Mk. 9:5; Lk. 9:33).
- Matthew has “I will make” and Mark and Luke have “let us make.” (Mk. 9:5; Lk. 9:33).
- a. One “tent” for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Jesus. He may have been seeking to put them on an even plain.
- b. Moses and Elijah were great men, but they do not “hold a candle” to Jesus.
- c. Jesus was the Son of God, the King of king, the Lord of lords, the One who had created all things. (Jn. 1:3).

Note:

- Mark adds about Peter, “For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.” (Mk. 9:6).
- Luke comments “not realizing what he was saying.” (Lk. 9:33).
- The idea seems to be that he spoke without thinking through what he was saying.

9. Matthew stressed “a bright cloud overshadowed them.” (Matt. 17:5).

- Mark states “then a cloud formed, overshadowing them” (Mk. 9:7).
- Luke states “a cloud formed and began to overshadow them.” (Lk. 9:34).

LUK 9:34 And while he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

- Luke also tells us “they were afraid as they entered the cloud.” (Lk. 9:34).

10. God confirmed the Sonship of Jesus. (Matt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35).

- All three accounts affirm that a voice came out of the cloud. (Matt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35).
- The writers all set forth that God affirmed the Sonship of Jesus.

MAT 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"	MAR 9:7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"	LUK 9:35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"
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- a. This was declared at His birth. (Matt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-35).
- b. This had been done at His baptism (Matt. 3:16, 17), and was done on another occasion when Jesus was troubled. (Jn. 12:27, 28).

JOH 12:27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

JOH 12:28 "Father, glorify Thy name." There came therefore a voice out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

- c. The Sonship of Jesus was manifested by His miracles. (Jn. 20:30-31).
- d. It was manifested at His resurrection. (Rom. 1:4).
- e. It was manifested at His ascension. (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:8-11).

ACT 1:8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. "

ACT 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

ACT 1:10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them;

ACT 1:11 and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

LUK 24:51 And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them.

MAR 16:19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, **He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.**

11. Matthew affirmed God was "well-pleased" with Jesus. (Matt. 17:5). These words are omitted by Mark and Luke. (Mk. 9:37; Lk. 9:35), but the context shows God was pleased with Jesus.

- Mark "My beloved Son"
 - Luke "This is My Son, My Chosen One."
- a. Jesus was One who came to this earth to do the will of His Father.
 - b. Jesus always did the will of His Father. (Jn. 4:34; 5:30).

12. God declares we are to "listen" to Jesus. (Matt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35; Heb. 1:2).

MAT 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud,

saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

MAR 9:7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

LUK 9:35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"

HEB 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- a. We are not to heed Moses and Elijah who were prophets of God.
- b. The Old Law was set aside when Jesus died on the cross. (Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:4).
- c. The Law ceased to be binding, as a matter of salvation, on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2).
- d. The New Covenant went into effect that day.
- e. Jesus is the Mediator of a new covenant. (Heb. 8:6-13).

Note:

- Jesus was a man (Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:1,2), but He was far more than a man. (Matt. 1:23; Isa. 9:6, 7; Jn. 1:1-3; 14:9; Heb. 1:1-3).
 - Our world dishonors Him when it seeks merely to make Jesus a great man and deny His Deity.
13. The disciples fell on their faces and were very afraid. (Matt. 17:6). Mark and Luke omit this fact, but do indicate the disciples were frightened on this occasion. (Mk. 9:6; Lk. 9:34).
 14. Matthew states "Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." (Matt. 17:7).
 15. "And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone." (Matt. 17:8). See Mk. 9:8; Lk. 9:36.
 - a. God was glorifying His beloved Son.
 - b. The spotlight was to be placed on Him.
 16. Luke adds "And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen." (Lk. 9:36).

Closing Comments

1. Today we must honor God's Son as God did. (Jn. 5:23).
 - a. This is something that is done daily by our lives and by our worship
 - b. We should constantly show others that Jesus is **Lord** of our lives.
2. We must confess Him, and not be ashamed of Him or His teachings. (Matt. 10:32, 33; Mk. 8:38).
3. Jesus is the One who has "all authority." (Matt. 28:18). See Jn. 17:2; Deut. 18:15-19 "authority over all flesh"

“has the words of eternal.” (Jn. 6:68).

a. The apostles are authoritative because they were appointed by Jesus to speak the words of Jesus - the words of the Father.

1) We must listen to them. (Lk. 10:16).

2) Paul and all the apostles spoke the commandments of the Lord. (1 Cor. 14:37).

3) They had “all truth.” (Jn. 16:13).

b. Elders have authority as long as they abide by the teachings of Christ.

4. Jesus will retain this authority until He comes again. (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

5. We need to follow in the foot steps of Jesus. (1 Pet. 2:21).

1PE 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

6. Jesus is now being honored at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:32, 33; Heb. 1:3).

ACT 2:32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

ACT 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

HEB 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

7. This passage also supports immortality and shows that man does not cease to exist at death.

a. Moses and Elijah were very much alive and conscious and able to converse with Jesus about His death. (Lk. 9:31).

b. Jesus emphasized that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. (Matt. 20:30-32).

MAT 22:30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

MAT 22:31 "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying,

MAT 22:32 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living. "

c. The account of the rich and Lazarus reveals there is consciousness and life after death. (Lk. 16:19-31).

Unanswered Questions

1. We do not know how the apostles recognized Moses and Elijah.

a. The accounts of the transfiguration are abbreviated, and that detail is not given.

b. The question may be a point of curiosity to us, but is unimportant to the emphasis of the event.

- c. Of course, Jesus knew who they were as God's eternal Son and He may have revealed it to the apostles.
2. We do not know why John omitted the transfiguration account in his gospel.
 - a. John omits many things found in the Synoptic gospels.
 - b. The gospel of John has a lot of discourses not found in the Synoptics, and only records some of the events found in the other gospels.
3. We do not know why they kept silent about the transfiguration for a long time. (Lk. 9:36).
4. We do not know the exact location of the transfiguration.
5. We do not know the details of Christ's discussion with Moses and Elijah. (Lk. 9:31).

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