

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

BIBLE TEXT: Matthew 17 :1-13

LESSON 114 - SENIOR COURSE

MEMORY VERSE: "Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5).

Bible Text in King James Version:

Matthew 17:1-27 (KJV)

¹ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

⁴ Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

⁵ While he yet spake, 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; hear ye him.

⁶ And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

⁸ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

¹⁰ And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes

Bible References:

I Jesus' Transfiguration and the Appearing of Moses and Elijah

1 He took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain apart, Matthew 17:1;

Matthew 16:28 (KJV)

²⁸ Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Luke 9:28 (KJV)

²⁸ And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

2 When transfigured, His face shone as the sun and His raiment white as light, Matthew 17:2;

Mark 9:3 (KJV)

³ And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Revelation 1:16 (KJV)

¹⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

3 Moses and Elijah appeared in glory with them, communing with Jesus, Matthew 17:3;

Luke 9:31 (KJV)

³¹ Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

II The Disciples Overpowered by a Voice out of the Cloud

1 Peter impetuously proposed three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, Matthew 17:4;

Mark 9:6 (KJV)

⁶ For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

2 Suddenly the disciples were overshadowed with a bright cloud, Matthew 17:5;

Revelation 1:7 (KJV)

⁷ Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

3 The Voice spoke out of the cloud: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," Matthew 17: 5;

Deuteronomy 18:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

III At the End of the Transfiguration No Man Seen but Jesus Only

1 Great fear came upon the disciples and they fell upon their faces, Matthew 17:6;

Acts 9:3-4 (KJV)

³ And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

⁴ And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

2 Jesus, touching them, commanded them to arise and not to be afraid, Matthew 17:7;

Revelation 1:17 (KJV)

¹⁷ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

3 Lifting up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only, Matthew 17:8;

Hebrews 1:1-2 (KJV)

¹ 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

that Elias must first come?

¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

¹² But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

¹³ Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

IV The Prophecy that Elijah Would Appear Again on Earth

1 Jesus charged them to tell no man of the transfiguration, until He was risen from the dead, Matthew 17:9;

Matthew 16:20 (KJV)

²⁰ Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

2 His disciples asked Him, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Matthew 17:10;

Malachi 4:5 (KJV)

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

3 John the Baptist came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, but Elijah himself is yet to come in person, Matthew 17:11-13;

Luke 1:17 (KJV)

¹⁷ And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.

Notes:

This great and marvelous scene on the Mount of Transfiguration took place only six days after the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living Gad." And there is no account that Jesus and His disciples had yet returned from their retirement at Caesarea Philippi. It is possible, therefore, that the height which Jesus and the three disciples ascended was Mount Hermon, a beautiful peak in the vicinity of the city and higher than any of the mountains of Palestine.

It is significant that, the question of Jesus' Deity having been settled among the twelve, He was about ready to reveal to certain of His disciples the greater and deeper things concerning Himself and His Kingdom, for He said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). Therefore what Peter, James, and John saw, heard, and felt on the Mount of Transfiguration was a foreshadow (or shall we say a pre-illumination) of that great day "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him" (Matthew 25:31). And what these disciples saw was not a vision. It was a literal and glorious presentation of the coming of the Lord.

The Transfiguration

In Luke's account we are told that Jesus "took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening" (Luke 9:28, 29). Here is revealed that mysterious change which Jesus passed through when He rose from the grave and for forty days walked and talked with His disciples. A heavenly glory shone about Him after His resurrection, yet His body was tangible. To His frightened disciples in the room which He entered, "the doors being shut," He said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Even doubting Thomas had but to see Him, and the scars in His hands and feet and side, and he cried, "My Lord and my God."

And there is a beautiful promise in the Word for all true believers, concerning the mysterious change to take place some day in these mortal bodies: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). And again the Apostle reminds us, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20, 21). The faithful in these last days can look up and lift up their heads, for their redemption

draweth nigh. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (**I Thessalonians 4:16, 17**).

Moses and Elijah

At this point Moses and Elijah, those two great men of God whose earthly pilgrimage had drawn to a close centuries before, suddenly appeared in glory upon the Mount and talked with Jesus. They spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. They were not spirits, but men, whom the disciples saw and recognized. Elijah, like Enoch, was translated, and appeared in his glorified body. Moses died and, unattended by any of his brethren, was buried by God Himself. Now in the Epistle of Jude we read, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9), and this verse implies that the archangel was contending with the devil over the resurrection of Moses' body. And he, too, no doubt, appeared with Elijah upon the Mount in his glorified body. Thus Moses was the representative of the sleeping saints, awaiting the resurrection; and Elijah was the representative of the living saints, awaiting their translation.

Moses, moreover, is also known as the representative of the Law, while Elijah is the representative of the prophets. And it was significant that these two men should appear on the Mount, for they were vitally related to Jesus' mission to this world who came to fulfill the "law and the prophets." And they all point to Him. Thus Moses and Elijah appeared as Jesus' witnesses, substantiating His Deity, His mission, His teachings, His good works, His sacrifice, His sufferings, His death and resurrection; His victory over death, hell, and the grave; and His millennial reign; for of all these things the prophets wrote. Jesus once said to the Jews, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Moses, in his final address to the Israelites, confirmed Jesus' authority with these words: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15). In fact, all the writings of Moses and the prophets concerning the coming Prophet, Priest, and King were sealed as pointing to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, when Moses and Elijah appeared upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

About this time impetuous Peter spoke up and said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." The Jews believed in the Law and the prophets. They also believed in a coming Messiah, but One who would immediately set up His Kingdom, and deliver them out of the hand of their enemies, never comprehending that unless a man repent of his sins and be born again, he would not even see the Kingdom of God, to say nothing of being delivered out of the hands of his enemies. Jesus taught them that His Kingdom was not of this world. But strange to say, even His disciples were looking for an immediate Kingdom. And Peter thought it would be good to have Moses and Elijah, in whom the Jews believed, tarry with Jesus.

The Voice Out of the Cloud

But while Peter yet spoke, a bright cloud — a cloud of heavenly glory — overshadowed them. "And: behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." It need scarcely be explained that this was the Voice of God the Father, which also confirmed Jesus' divine Sonship when He was baptized at the River Jordan (Matthew 3:17). And when the disciples heard the Voice, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid, even as were the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai

What a poor comprehension we poor mortals have of the Most High God! Of

the two million or more whom He led out of Egypt, Moses was the only man who could venture "unto the thick darkness where God was." And even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." No wonder the disciples fell on their faces! For God the Father had drawn very nigh to this sublime scene on the Mount, and enveloped its heights with His eternal glory. And oh, the words that were heard! "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," ascribing to Jesus the divine sanction of the Father above all other prophets, priests, or kings. This is the thought expressed in the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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; 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" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

**"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.**

**"Crown Him, ye morning stars of light,
Who fixed this earthly ball;
Now hail the strength of Israel's might,
And crown Him Lord of all.**

**"Let every kindred, every tribe On
this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe, And
crown Him Lord of all."**

Moses and Elijah's Retirement from the Scene

While the disciples still lay prostrate upon their faces, Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Arise, and be not afraid." "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." Moses and Elijah had vanished, revealing, as the disciples would later learn, that the Law and the prophets had fulfilled their mission, and soon the whole Mosaic Law would no longer be in force. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). John the Baptist, the last representative of the prophets, said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29, 30). The ministry of this mighty prophet who came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, only lasted about six months, and he died a martyr to his cause. He had faithfully fulfilled his mission as the forerunner of the Prophet, Priest, and King. With the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Old Covenant, made at Mount Sinai, passed away, and the New Covenant, sealed on Mount Calvary, was ushered in (Hebrews 8:10-13). "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Corinthians 1:30). And may He have the pre-eminence always in our lives.

QUESTIONS

- 1 It is stated, "After six days" Jesus and the disciples went up into the mountain. After what event were these six days?
- 2 Why did Jesus choose Peter, James, and John for this scene in the Mount?
- 3 Of what great event was Jesus' transfiguration on this Mount a prophecy?

- 4 What did Moses and Elijah represent, and why did they appear on the Mount? And why did they also disappear?
- 5 What was it which the disciples heard which caused them in fear to fall upon their faces? And who was speaking?