

### Jesus was Transfigured Before Three of His Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn by our example what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, so that they can practice those things in their own lives and help others begin to live for the things that are eternal as well. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus was changed and transformed before three of His disciples just six days later.

The last verse of Matthew 16 is actually connected to the first part of chapter 17. Matthew 16:28-17:4 says, “‘Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.’ Now, after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus promised that some of the disciples would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom before they died.

Just six days later, Jesus took Peter, James and John and the four of them went up on a high mountain. There is a high mountain just north of Caesarea Philippi that is known today as Mount Hermon. It is more than nine thousand two hundred feet in height and is covered with snow much of the year. The springs near the foot of this mountain, and the melting snow from this and the surrounding mountains, are the source of the Jordan River. This is probably the mountain where Jesus and the three disciples went. Jesus chose this place to show His glory to the three disciples. The word translated “transfigured” means *to be changed into another form*. Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention the transfiguration. The only Gospel that does not mention it, is John.

John was there that day and could have given a more detailed description than any of the three other Gospels. However, John had the privilege to see an even greater change in the appearance of Jesus. That appearance is described in Revelation 1:12-16 where we read, “Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.”

Even in this appearance, the face of Jesus shown like the sun and His clothing became as white as the light. We see that two men then appeared and talked with Jesus. Luke 9:30-31 says, “And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Here, we see that Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about His coming death, which would soon happen in Jerusalem. Moses

wrote the books of the Law, and Elijah was one of the prophets. That meant Moses wrote about the first promise of Jesus in Genesis 3:15 where we read, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” God promised that Jesus would crush the head of Satan, even though Satan would bruise the heel of Jesus. For three days, Satan thought that he had won. Then, when the resurrection came, Satan knew that He had lost and is now awaiting his eternal judgment.

Peter and the two other disciples were amazed when they saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. The word translated “tabernacle” was most commonly used in the New Testament to speak of the tabernacle in the wilderness. In the book of Revelation, it was used to speak of the dwelling place of God in heaven. It is even used once to speak of the eternal dwelling place of all unbelievers. In the Old Testament, at the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles, the Jews would make temporary shelters, usually with the green branches of trees or bushes, to remind them of their time in the wilderness. However, Matthew, Mark and Luke all use this word at the time of the transfiguration. Peter may have used this word to speak of building three temporary shelters of branches so that Moses and Elijah could spend a longer time with Jesus. However, Mark and Luke both said that Peter said this because he did not know what to say.

Matthew 17:5-8 says, “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.” Here, we see that the Father interrupted Peter by covering them with a bright cloud. Then, God spoke out of the cloud and said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” The Father did several things by this statement. First, He made it clear to the three disciples that this was His beloved Son. Second, He made it clear that He was well pleased with His Son. Third, He told them to hear what Jesus was saying. The word translated “hear” means *to pay attention or to understand what is being said*. Since Jesus, Moses and Elijah were talking about the coming death and resurrection of Jesus, the Father wanted the disciples to clearly understand that Jesus was going to die and be raised again on the third day. This was the message they were to share.

The disciples were so fearful when they heard the voice of the Father that they fell on their faces in great fear. Then, Jesus came and touched them and told them to get up and not be afraid. Then, they looked up and saw that Jesus was now the only One standing there. Matthew 17:9-13 goes on to say, “Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’ And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.” Here, we see what Jesus and the disciples talked about as they came down from the mountain to where the other disciples were.

Jesus, Moses and Elijah had been talking about the coming death of Jesus. As the four went down the mountain together, Jesus told the three disciples not to tell anyone about the vision until after the Son of Man rose from the dead. However, they did not understand that statement either, because Mark 9:10 says, “So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.” The three must have talked together later that afternoon or evening because Luke 9:37 says, “Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him.” Here, we see that it was the next day before they reached the bottom of the mountain, so the disciples had time to discuss their questions with one another later in the day or during the evening.

Jesus had told them six days earlier that He would suffer many things, be killed and be raised on the third day. Here, we see that the three did not clearly understand what Jesus had said earlier. As a result, we see that they could not have explained what Jesus meant at that time, even if they would have desired to explain the statement of Jesus to the other disciples. When people do not understand something, it is very easy for them to not talk because they are afraid people might ask them questions they cannot answer. The three disciples needed two things to be able to speak boldly about the death and resurrection of Jesus. First, they needed to have a clear understanding. Second, they needed to be able to have the power of the Holy Spirit in order to speak boldly about the death and resurrection of Jesus. They received clear understanding, in Luke 24:44-48, after Jesus rose from the dead. They received boldness to speak with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Both things must be true in order for a person to be a bold witness.

As they were coming down the mountain, the disciples asked Jesus the question of why the scribes said that Elijah must come first. The scribes made that statement because of Malachi 4:5, which says, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Jesus explained that the one bringing the message, that the Christ was coming, had come. Instead of listening to that one, the religious leaders, and the Roman government, had treated that one with contempt and did to him whatever they wished. Suddenly, the disciples understood that John the Baptist had come before Jesus, the Christ, to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. Jesus said that these same men were about to make the Son of Man suffer at their hands. This was another statement of Jesus about His coming death.

However, there is also a second part to the prophecy in Malachi. Malachi said that Elijah would come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Elijah will be one of the two witnesses that will be killed when he comes before the Great Tribulation. This is explained in Revelation 11 and fulfills the second part of the prophecy of Malachi. John brought the message of the coming of Jesus and was rejected. Elijah will experience that same rejection in the tribulation. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that John brought the message that Elijah will bring during the tribulation, which is part of the Day of the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and explain these things.