



THE LIFE AND TIMES

of

JESUS OF NAZARETH

A Rock & Revelation

Peter's Confession and the Mount of Transfiguration

Matthew 16:13-27

Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-36

#	Class Title	Phase of Ministry	Estimated Year
1	<i>The Word Before Worlds</i>	Pre-incarnate	NA
2	<i>Carpenter's Son in a Cradle</i>	Birth & Infancy	4 BC
3	<i>Baptism & Temptation</i>	Inauguration	Autumn 29 AD
4	<i>Two Temple Cleansings</i>	Early Judean & Passion Week	Spring 30 & Spring 33 AD
5	<i>Nicodemus & New Birth</i>	Early Judean	Spring 30 AD
6	<i>Call of the Twelve</i>	Early to Middle Galilean	Spring 31 AD
7	<i>Sermon on the Mount</i>	Middle Galilean	Summer 31 AD

#	Class Title	Phase of Ministry	Estimated Year
8	<i>Signs & Wonders</i>	Spans Ministry	Various
9	<i>Kingdom Parables - Matt 13</i>	Middle Galilean	Summer 31 AD
10	<i>Legion & the Swine</i>	Middle Galilean	Summer 31 AD
11	<i>Arc of Conflict - Part 1</i>	Early Galilean & Passion	AD 31–33 AD
12	<i>Peter's Confession & Transfiguration</i>	Later Galilean	Fall 32 AD
13	<i>Good Samaritan & Prodigal Son</i>	Later Judean	Winter 33 AD



#	Class Title	Phase of Ministry	Estimated Year
14	<i>Triumphal Entry</i>	Passion Week	Spring 33 AD
15	<i>Arc of Conflict - Part 2</i>	Tuesday of Passion Week	Spring 33 AD
16	<i>Teach Us to Pray</i>	Spans Ministry	Various
17	<i>Upper Room</i>	Passion Week	Spring 33 AD
18	<i>Trials & Crucifixion</i>	Passion Week	Spring 33 AD
19	<i>Resurrection & Great Commission</i>	Post-Resurrection	Spring 33 AD
20	<i>Seven Letters & Final Trumpet</i>	Future	NA



He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Matthew 16:15

Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:16

We now turn to Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi and the Transfiguration of Jesus. These are not two unrelated high points in the Gospel story but they form one continuous revelation in two movements. At Caesarea Philippi, the Father reveals the identity of the Son to Peter. On the mountain, the Father declares the identity of the Son with His own voice. And between those two revelations stands Jesus' first plain announcement of the cross.

The order is essential. Peter can say the right words about who Jesus is while still resisting what Jesus says He came to do. He recognizes the Messiah, but he does not yet understand the mission of the Messiah. The Transfiguration therefore does more than display Christ's majesty. It confirms that the One who is going to suffer and die is truly the beloved Son of God, and it commands the disciples to listen when He speaks about the necessity of the cross.

These passages confront us with two inseparable questions. First, who is Jesus? Second, will we receive and trust Jesus as He actually reveals Himself, or only as the kind of Messiah we would prefer Him to be?

Jesus first asks, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” His second question removes every safe distance: “But who do you say that I am?” The opinions of the crowd may be interesting, but they cannot answer for us. No one enters the kingdom through the faith of their parents, the traditions of their culture, the reputation of their church. Eventually every person must face Christ’s question personally.

Matthew tells us that Jesus came “into the region of Caesarea Philippi.” Mark says that Jesus and His disciples went to the surrounding villages and that this conversation occurred “on the road.” Luke adds that Jesus had been praying privately before He questioned them. We therefore picture neither a public discussion in the city center nor Jesus necessarily standing directly in front of a pagan shrine. The Gospel writers place Him in the broader district, withdrawn from the great Galilean crowds and giving concentrated attention to His disciples.

Caesarea Philippi lay roughly twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, near the southern foot of Mount Hermon. It was a lush region, watered by abundant springs arising from the Hermon watershed and associated with the headwaters of the Jordan River. But its significance was not merely geographical. It was a place where (as was often the case in Roman society) pagan religion and political power stood side by side.

The region had long been associated with the worship of Pan, the Greek deity of wilderness, shepherds, flocks, and fertility. A sanctuary dedicated to Pan stood near the great spring. And pagan religion was joined there by Roman imperial power. Augustus had granted the territory to Herod the Great, who constructed a white-stone temple in the emperor's honor. Philip the Tetrarch later enlarged the city and named it Caesarea in honor of Caesar, adding Philippi to associate it with himself and distinguish it from Caesarea Maritima.

The setting therefore combined the power of pagan religion, Herodian government, and Roman imperial authority. Pan claimed the reverence of worshipers. Caesar claimed the allegiance of subjects and received honors that crossed the boundary between political loyalty and worship. In a region filled with temples, pagan gods, local rulers, and imperial claims, Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?"

The contrast is powerful. Pan was supposedly a god of shepherds, but Jesus is the true Shepherd. Caesar claimed earthly lordship, but Jesus is the eternal King. The idols surrounding Caesarea Philippi were lifeless products of human imagination, while Peter confesses Jesus as “the Son of the living God.”

Caesarea Philippi also gave Jesus a measure of withdrawal from the constant pressure of the crowds and the growing hostility of the religious establishment. He was moving increasingly toward the concentrated training of the Twelve. The crowds wanted healing, bread, miracles, and perhaps a revolutionary king, but they did not understand the nature of His kingdom.

A person can preach to thousands and attract widespread attention while producing only shallow commitment. Jesus certainly taught the crowds, healed the sick, and showed compassion to multitudes. But He also withdrew with twelve men, explained the truth to them, corrected their misunderstandings, and prepared them to carry the gospel into the world. Crowds can be impressive, but Christ would use a small group of trained, faithful witnesses to change the course of history.

But before Jesus began the journey toward Jerusalem, those disciples needed to face the question of His identity. Jesus begins by asking what others are saying about Him. He is not conducting a popularity survey or adjusting His message to public opinion. He already knows what is in the heart of man. The first question prepares the disciples for the second, moving them from the uncertainty of the crowd to the necessity of personal confession.

The answers are respectful. The people place Jesus among the most distinguished prophetic figures in Israel's history. Yet every answer remains inadequate. Some said that He was John the Baptist. Herod Antipas had already expressed this fear after John's execution, saying: "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him" (Matt. 14:2). The theory was chronologically confused because Jesus and John had ministered during the same period, but popular superstition does not always concern itself with careful chronology. People recognized in Jesus something of John's moral courage, prophetic authority, and fearless proclamation of God's kingdom. Yet Jesus was not John restored to life. John was the voice preparing the way; Jesus was the Lord whose way John prepared.

Others said that Jesus was Elijah. This identification arose naturally from the closing prophecy of Malachi, the final prophetic book in the Christian arrangement of the Old Testament before the long period traditionally described as the four hundred silent years:

“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” (Mal. 4:5–6).

Jewish expectation associated Elijah with the work of restoration preceding the day of the Lord. Jesus was not Elijah, the promised forerunner. John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), fulfilling that preparatory role at Christ’s first coming. Some interpreters also understand Scripture to allow for Elijah’s personal return before Christ’s second coming. In either case, Jesus is not the forerunner, He is the Lord whose coming the forerunner prepares.

Matthew alone records that some thought Jesus was Jeremiah. Unlike Elijah, Jeremiah is not identified in Scripture as a promised forerunner of the Messiah. The association may instead reflect recognizable similarities between Jeremiah’s ministry and the ministry of Jesus.

Jeremiah preached judgment against a sinful nation, confronted corrupt religious leadership, warned of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, suffered rejection, and wept over the condition of God's people. Jesus would do all of these things on an even greater scale. Such parallels may help explain why some placed Him in Jeremiah's prophetic line. But once again the crowd saw only a great prophet. They had not grasped that Jesus was the One to whom Jeremiah and all the prophets pointed.

Luke summarizes the remaining speculation: some thought that "one of the old prophets has risen again." The crowds knew that Jesus belonged in a category beyond ordinary teachers. His words carried authority, His miracles displayed supernatural power, and His ministry demanded explanation. Yet they tried to explain Him by fitting Him into categories they already possessed.

People do the same today. They call Jesus a prophet, a moral teacher, an inspiring spiritual guide. They may speak of Him with deep admiration. But admiration is not confession. Respectful language can still conceal unbelief. To place Jesus among the prophets is to honor Him insufficiently because He is the Lord of the prophets. To call Him one spiritual teacher among many is not modesty; it is a denial of His identity.

Jesus now turns the question directly upon the disciples: “But who do you say that I am?” The “you” is plural. He is addressing the Twelve, although Peter answers as their representative. Simon Peter answers, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Christ is not Jesus' surname. It translates *Christos*, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah, the Anointed One. Israel's prophets, priests, and kings could be anointed for particular offices, but the Old Testament increasingly directs expectation toward the supreme Anointed One: the promised Davidic King who would rule God's people, defeat God's enemies, establish righteousness, and bring God's saving purposes to fulfillment.

Peter does not merely say that Jesus is a messianic figure. But he says: "You are the Christ." He is the promised One toward whom Israel's history has been moving.

Matthew preserves the fullest form of the confession: "the Son of the living God." The title "Son of God" has royal and messianic dimensions in the Old Testament, but within Matthew's Gospel it carries us beyond the idea of an ordinary human king. Matthew has already shown Jesus forgiving sins, receiving worship, exercising authority over creation, commanding unclean spirits, and speaking with authority that belongs to God. So Peter's confession reaches far beyond the categories proposed by the crowd.

The phrase “living God” sounds especially powerful in the region of Caesarea Philippi. The surrounding idols were dead. Pan could not hear. Caesar would die. Marble temples would eventually crumble. The God revealed in Scripture is living, sovereign, active, and the source of all life. Jesus is not the son of one more regional deity. He is the Son of the living God.

Jesus responds, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

“Bar-Jonah” means “son of Jonah.” Jesus’ use of Peter’s formal family designation gives the statement solemnity while establishing an important contrast. By natural descent, he is Simon, son of Jonah. By divine grace, he has received revelation from the Father in heaven.

Jesus is not introducing Peter as though He has forgotten who he is. Nor is this the first occasion on which Simon receives the name *Peter*. John records that Jesus had already told him, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas,” which is translated Peter (John 1:42). Cephas is the Aramaic word for rock, corresponding to the Greek name Petros. Here Jesus publicly interprets the significance of that name in relation to the confession Peter has just made.

“Flesh and blood” is a Jewish way of referring to ordinary human nature and human ability. Peter did not arrive at this truth merely because he was more intelligent, perceptive, educated, or spiritually refined than the others. The Father had opened his understanding.

That revelation was not an irrational impression disconnected from evidence. Peter had heard the words of Christ and witnessed His works. The same public evidence was available to many others, yet they concluded only that Jesus was another prophet. Peter saw the evidence and, by the grace of the Father, recognized the Son of God.

No one can truly confess Christ through human cleverness alone, yet genuine faith does not rest upon a blind leap. God reveals the truth through His Word and illuminates the heart so that we receive what He has publicly revealed in Christ.

Jesus' statement, "On this rock I will build My church," assigns Peter a genuine foundational role. He clearly held a uniquely prominent place among the apostles and in the early church.

The *rock* is probably best understood as Peter in his role as the representative apostle, inseparably joined to the truth he has just confessed. The broader New Testament confirms that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, while Jesus Christ Himself remains the indispensable chief cornerstone.

This passage later became a central text in Roman Catholic arguments for a continuing Petrine ministry and the papacy. In rejecting papal claims, however, we should not stretch the text so far that Peter disappears from it. We should represent that tradition respectfully, but we must not place into the passage what it does not say. Jesus grants Peter a foundational apostolic role, but He does not establish a continuing office of universal bishop transmitted through an unending line of successors with jurisdiction over the global church.

Jesus then says, “I will build My church.” The future tense deserves attention. God had always possessed a covenant people. There is a continuity of faith reaching back at least to Abraham, who “believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). Throughout Israel’s history, God preserved a faithful remnant according to grace. Old Testament believers were not saved by law-keeping but through faith in God’s promise, ultimately grounded in the work Christ would accomplish.

Jesus was not announcing that God had previously had no people or that faith was a new expectation. Nor does the church arise because God’s purposes for Israel had failed.

The word translated *church* is *ekklesia* and is often explained as meaning the *called-out ones*, but its ordinary usage was assembly or congregation. It was used in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of Israel and in ordinary Greek for gatherings of various kinds. Jesus is announcing His own messianic assembly, My church, which He will establish in its new-covenant form through His death, resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

There is therefore real continuity between the people of faith in Israel and the Church, but there is also redemptive-historical newness. God's promises to Israel had not failed. Quite the contrary: through Israel came the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs, and ultimately the Messiah according to the flesh.

Israel fulfilled its central purpose in God's saving plan by bringing forth the Christ through whom the nations would be blessed.

Paul insists in Romans 3 that Israel possessed great advantage because the Jews had been entrusted with the oracles of God. In Romans 9 he again names their privileges: “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.” Romans 11 then warns Gentile believers against arrogance and preserves a future hope for Israel. The church does not arise because Israel’s place in the biblical story was meaningless, nor does the church erase Israel from the story.

Jesus is announcing His messianic assembly in its new-covenant form: a people purchased by His blood, founded upon the apostolic witness to His death and resurrection, and publicly constituted and empowered by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Membership in His Church does not rest upon ethnic descent, national privilege, or works of the law - but upon faith in Jesus Christ. Through Messiah, believing Jews and Gentiles are united in one new-covenant people without denying the future hope of Israel within God’s purposes.

Every part of Christ's promise matters:

I will build My church. Christ is the builder. The church is not finally produced by marketing, celebrity pastors, managerial cleverness, or branding. God can use faithful planning, careful organization, trained leadership, and diligent labor - but only Christ gives spiritual life and adds people to His body.

I will build My church. It belongs to Him rather than to denominational hierarchies, celebrity pastors, powerful families, large donors, or even the congregation itself. Christ bought the church with His blood, and everyone entrusted with leadership remains a steward of what is entirely His.

I will build My church. Christ is gathering more than disconnected individuals. He is forming a body, creating a family, and establishing a holy people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

Jesus promises that “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against” His Church. Hades commonly corresponds to the Hebrew Sheol, the realm of the dead. It is broader than the physical grave and should not automatically be equated with the final lake of fire. Here the emphasis falls upon the power and dominion of death itself.

In the ancient world, city gates represented security, strength, and the power to hold what lay within. Gates secured a fortified city, served as places of judgment and civic administration, and prevented captives from escaping. Gates fortify and attempt to hold their territory.

Jesus’ promise is resurrection-shaped: death will not be able to hold Christ’s church. Christ Himself will enter death and break its power. Hades will not retain the Builder, and it therefore cannot finally retain the people united to Him. Christians may die, congregations may be persecuted, buildings may close, denominations may decline, and human institutions may disappear, but the Church Christ has and is building cannot be extinguished.

That promise does not call the Church into a defensive posture. Because the risen Christ has broken the power of death, His church is commissioned to advance openly and confidently with the gospel. The church does not exist merely to protect itself by retreating behind spiritual barriers and hoping the surrounding world leaves it alone. Christ sends His people into places held by idolatry, false religion, sin, and spiritual darkness.

This is a mission that is on offense, but it is not the political or cultural conquest envisioned in some postmillennial or Christian nationalist programs. The Church does not advance through cultural manipulations, the sword, or the political machinery of the state. It advances through obedience to the command of Christ: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus next says, “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Keys symbolize delegated authority to open and close. Isaiah 22 provides important Old Testament background.

Shebna had occupied the powerful position of steward over the royal household of King Hezekiah, but he had used his position for self-exaltation. God announced that Shebna would be removed and Eliakim would be appointed in his place.

Eliakim would receive the robe, the sash, and the authority of the royal steward. God then says, “The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open” (Isa. 22:22). Eliakim did not become the king. He became the trusted chief steward who exercised delegated authority over access to the king’s household.

Peter likewise receives authority as a steward, not as the owner of the kingdom. Christ remains the King and the true possessor of the key. Revelation 3:7 applies Isaiah's language directly to Jesus: "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens."

Peter therefore uses the keys principally through the proclamation of the gospel. When he stands at Pentecost and declares that the crucified and risen Jesus is both Lord and Christ, he opens the door of the kingdom to all who repent and believe. When he preaches to Cornelius and his household, the gospel is publicly extended to the Gentiles. Peter does not create the means of entrance; he announces the means Christ has established, which is through Jesus Himself.

The keys therefore concern access to the kingdom through the true knowledge of Christ. The gospel opens the kingdom to those who receive Christ and declares it closed to those who reject Him. The preacher does not control salvation but faithfully announces the invitation and judgment of the King.

Jesus then says, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” In Jewish usage, binding and loosing referred to declaring certain conduct forbidden or permitted. In Matthew 18, the same language also carries a judicial and communal sense. The church must sometimes determine whether a person’s profession of faith should be affirmed or, because of persistent and unrepentant sin, no longer regarded as credible.

The grammar provides a guardrail. The words may be rendered, “Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” The church does not originate heaven’s decisions. Heaven does not wait for church leaders to issue commands and then ratify them. The church declares and applies what God has already determined in the gospel and in His Word.

We see this authority exercised properly when a church receives a credible profession of faith, baptizes the believer, welcomes them to the Lord’s Table, and assures the repentant sinner that everyone who trusts in Christ receives full forgiveness. The church does not manufacture that forgiveness; it confidently declares the promise Christ has already given.

Conversely, when someone persists openly and stubbornly in serious sin while refusing repentance, the church may no longer affirm that person’s profession as credible. In both cases, the church is applying Christ’s Word rather than inventing its own verdict.

After this extraordinary confession and promise, Jesus commands the disciples to tell no one that He is the Christ. Why silence the truth? The title Messiah carried powerful political expectations. Many people expected a liberator who would overthrow Rome and restore Israel's national political sovereignty. If the disciples announced that Jesus was the Messiah at this point, the crowds would hear the right title but fill it with the wrong meaning. Jesus will define His messiahship through the cross.

After the resurrection, the command changes. The disciples are no longer told to remain silent - they are sent into all nations. Once the cross has revealed the character of His kingdom and the resurrection has vindicated His identity, the church must proclaim openly what could not previously have been rightly understood.

Matthew 16:21 marks a major transition: “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”

Notice the word *must*. Jesus does not say that suffering is simply likely because opposition is increasing. His death is not merely the result of the religious leaders’ opposition, nor is it a tragic interruption of an otherwise successful ministry. He *must* go to Jerusalem because the cross stands in the sovereign redemptive purpose of God.

Peter cannot accept it. He takes Jesus aside and begins to rebuke Him: “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” Peter undoubtedly believes he is defending Jesus. Yet by attempting to separate the Messiah from the cross, he opposes the very purpose for which the Messiah came.

Jesus replies with shocking severity: “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Only moments earlier, Peter spoke by revelation from the Father. Now he gives voice to a thought process aligned with Satan’s: take the kingdom without the cross. This is the same fundamental temptation presented in the wilderness. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world without the obedience and suffering of the cross appointed by the Father.

Jesus then extends the cross-shaped pattern to every disciple: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). The cross is the means by which Jesus saves us, and it also establishes the pattern of the life to which He calls us. We do not atone for our sins, but we follow a crucified Lord through self-denial, sacrifice, and willingness to suffer for the sake of His name.

Jesus closes this teaching by speaking of the Son of Man coming “in the glory of His Father” and promising that some standing there would not taste death until they saw “the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

And just six days later, Peter, James, and John receive a preview.



Matthew and Mark both say that the Transfiguration occurred “after six days.” Luke says it happened “about eight days after these sayings.” There is no contradiction. Matthew and Mark count the six intervening days, while Luke obviously gives a inclusive count that includes the day of the saying and the day of the Transfiguration.

The six days may echo Exodus 24, where the cloud covers Mount Sinai for six days before God calls Moses from the cloud on the seventh. The Transfiguration contains a high mountain, Moses, a cloud, divine glory, and the voice of God, giving the scene the character of a new and greater Sinai.





Jesus takes Peter, James, and John and leads them up a high mountain by themselves. These three form an inner circle of witnesses at several critical moments. They are present when Jesus raises Jairus' daughter. They witness the Transfiguration. Later they will accompany Jesus farther into Gethsemane. They see His authority over death, His unveiled majesty, and His anguish before the cross.

Scripture does not tell us that they were selected because they were more righteous or spiritually mature than the other apostles. The narratives repeatedly expose their weakness. They misunderstand, become afraid, fall asleep, seek prominence, and abandon Jesus with the others.

They are chosen by God's sovereign grace as a core of apostolic witnesses.

Mount Tabor is the traditional site of the Transfiguration per early Christian history, with the association becoming well established by the fourth century and churches later constructed there to commemorate the event.

Mount Hermon, or one of the high ridges in its vicinity, is geographically more plausible to many modern interpreters. Jesus had been in the district of Caesarea Philippi, Mount Hermon dominates that region, and Matthew and Mark describe a high mountain. Tabor has the weight of ancient Christian tradition; Hermon fits the immediate geography particularly well.

But the theological meaning of the event does not depend upon settling the location.





Matthew says that Jesus was transfigured before them. The Greek verb is *μεταμορφόω*. This is the word from which we receive the English term *metamorphosis*, and it describes a transformation in visible form.

Jesus did not become divine on the mountain, nor did He cease to be truly human. He was and always is the eternal Son, possessing divinity before the creation of the world. In the incarnation, He assumed a true human nature without surrendering His divine nature.

Throughout His earthly ministry, that glory was veiled beneath the form of a human servant. At the Transfiguration, the veil was briefly drawn back, and the disciples were permitted to see outwardly what had always been true of Him.

Matthew says, His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. Mark adds the memorable observation that His clothes became exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Luke tells us that this occurred as Jesus prayed. Once again, Luke allows us to see the perfect communion between the incarnate Son and His Father. The revelation takes place in the context of that communion.

This description anticipates the revelation of the exalted Christ given to John. In Revelation 1, John sees One whose head and hair are white like wool and snow, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, whose feet shine like refined brass, whose voice is like many waters, and whose countenance is “like the sun shining in its strength” (Rev. 1:14–16).





The scenes are not identical, but they reveal the same glorious Lord. The Transfiguration gives the disciples a temporary preview before the cross; Revelation presents the risen and exalted Christ in majesty.

The One who will soon be mocked, stripped, and crucified is the One whose face shines like the sun. The One whose garments will be divided among soldiers is the One whose clothing becomes supernaturally radiant. The One who will appear powerless before Pilate is the One before whose unveiled majesty His closest disciples fall to the ground.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appear and speak with Jesus. The disciples evidently recognize them, although the Gospel does not explain precisely how. They may have identified them from the conversation, or God may simply have enabled them to recognize the two men.

Moses and Elijah are two of the most significant figures in Israel's history. Moses is closely identified with the Law, while Elijah stands as one of the greatest representatives of the prophetic tradition. Together they signify the **Law** and the **Prophets** bearing witness to Christ.

Paul writes that the gospel of God had been promised beforehand through His prophets concerning His Son (Rom. 1:2–4). He also declares that the righteousness of God revealed through faith in Jesus Christ is “witnessed by the Law and the Prophets” (Rom. 3:21).

What Paul has later explained doctrinally, the Transfiguration portrays visibly.





Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah “spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” The word translated “decease” is *exodus* as in *departure*. This is one of the richest details in the account. Moses, the human leader of Israel’s first exodus, speaks with Jesus about the greater exodus Jesus is about to accomplish.

The first exodus delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb, passage through the sea, and movement toward the promised land. Yet that exodus did not finally conquer sin, death, or the hardness of the human heart.

Jesus will accomplish the ultimate deliverance; He is the true Passover Lamb. Through His death and resurrection, He will lead His people out of bondage to sin and death, and establish the new covenant in His blood.



The glory of the Transfiguration therefore does not distract Jesus from the cross as the cross is the subject being discussed in glory. Moses and Elijah are not proposing an alternative plan. The *Law* and the *Prophets* affirm the necessity of the Son's departure. Heaven is not hesitant or reluctant about the cross - Heaven has ordained it.

As Moses and Elijah begin to depart, Peter says, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Peter's first instinct is understandable: "It is good for us to be here." He has seen the glory of the kingdom. After hearing about suffering, rejection, and death, he wants to remain on the mountain.

Peter often speaks when silence might have served him better. Mark tells us that he did not know what to say because they were greatly afraid. Luke says that he did not know what he was saying. This does not mean that his words were irrational nonsense. It is Peter being Peter, speaking before he has fully understood what he is seeing.

Tabernacles means temporary shelters, tents, or booths. Peter's reference may echo the Feast of Tabernacles and its associations with God's provision and presence in the wilderness; although the text does not specifically establish that connection.

Peter's more immediate desire appears to be to honor the visitors and preserve the moment.





“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.”

Throughout Scripture, the cloud signifies the glorious presence of God. The cloud descended upon Sinai, led Israel through the wilderness, covered the tabernacle when the glory of the Lord filled it, and later filled Solomon’s temple so powerfully that the priests could not continue ministering. Now the cloud overshadows Jesus, Moses, Elijah, and the disciples.

The cloud is described as bright because God’s presence combines concealment and revelation. The cloud hides the fullness of divine glory while simultaneously announcing that God is present. The disciples are not merely observing it from a safe distance. Luke says that they become afraid as they enter it.

A voice comes from the cloud: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

The words recall Jesus' baptism, when the Father declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The beginning of Jesus' public ministry and the approach to His final journey toward Jerusalem are both marked by the Father's testimony.

The language draws together several Old Testament themes. "My Son" recalls the royal Messiah of Psalm 2. "In whom I am well pleased" echoes the servant in Isaiah 42, the One in whom God delights and upon whom He places His Spirit. Jesus is the royal Son and the obedient Servant.

Moses had told Israel, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deut. 18:15). Now Moses is physically present, and the voice from heaven directs the disciples beyond Moses to Jesus.





When the disciples hear the voice, they fall on their faces and become greatly afraid. This is an appropriate human response to a direct manifestation of divine glory.

Modern culture sometimes speaks casually about encountering God, as though entering His unveiled presence would be a soothing or comforting religious experience. Scripture repeatedly shows something different.

When sinful and finite human beings become conscious of divine holiness, presumption vanishes and fear takes hold.

Yet the scene does not end with the disciples trembling on the ground: “Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’” The One whose glory causes them to fall is the One whose touch raises them.

When the disciples lift their eyes, “they saw no one but Jesus only.” Moses is gone. Elijah is gone. The cloud has lifted. The voice has ceased. Jesus remains.





This does not mean that the Old Testament is discarded. Their presence demonstrates the opposite - the Law and the Prophets bear true witness, and their witness reaches its goal in Christ. As Paul writes, the gospel righteousness now revealed in Christ was “witnessed by the Law and the Prophets” (Rom. 3:21).

As they descend the mountain, Jesus commands them, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

Once again, the revelation must not be proclaimed before it can be interpreted through the cross and resurrection. Without the cross, people would use the Transfiguration to support the politically triumphant Messiah they already imagined and desired. They would point to that glory while rejecting the suffering.

After the resurrection, everything became coherent.

The glory does not belong to a different Jesus from the One who died. The One whose face shone like the sun is the One who willingly gave His face to shame. The beloved Son entered death and emerged victorious.

The Transfiguration then makes clear that the crucifixion was not the defeat of a powerless man but the voluntary sacrifice of the Lord of glory.





Jesus and the three disciples must now come down from the mountain. Below them waits the continuing misery of a fallen world. True revelation does not call us to escape human need. The glory of Christ equips His disciples to descend into the suffering world with greater confidence in who He is.

We may long for the mountain moments of clarity, worship, assurance, and spiritual strength. Those moments are gracious. But Jesus leads His people back into daily obedience.

Therefore, we are not called to build our tabernacles on the mountain and remain there gazing upon His glory.

We have heard the Father's command: "Hear Him!" And now the question of Christ presses upon every heart: "But who do you say that I am?" If He is only a teacher, admire Him; if merely a prophet, listen to Him. But if He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then worship Him and obey Him.

The King has given us His command. Let us therefore rise and be about our Father's business by making disciples of all nations!



This class was prepared through personal study of Scripture and careful engagement with trusted scholarship on the Gospels. Generative AI tools were used to assist with research, organization, and the drafting of phrasing. All final interpretations, judgments, and content reflect the author's convictions.