

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry
J. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #130

Jesus' Transfiguration
MT 17.1-8 (Parallel Texts: MK 9.2-8; LK 9.28-36A)

¹ ^{MT}After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves ^Lto pray. ² As he continued in prayer, ^{MT}He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun--like a bolt of lightning--and his clothes turned ^Mglistening ^{MT}white as the light, ^Mas no launderer on earth could bleach them.

³ Just then Moses and Elijah appeared before them, ^Lappearing in glory, and were ^{MT}talking with Jesus ^Labout his death and resurrection which he was going to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and the men with him were sound asleep, but when they awoke they saw Jesus in his glory, and the two men standing with him.

As Moses and ELijah were starting to leave, ⁴ ^{MT}Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

^MHe was so scared that he did not really know what he was saying. ⁵ ^{MT}While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said,

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased, ^Lmy Chosen One. ^{MT}I command you all to continually listen to him!"

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, scared out of their wits.

⁷ But Jesus came and touched them as he commanded: *"Get up. I command you to stop being afraid."*

⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one any more, except Jesus himself...alone.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are in red italics*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Caesarea Philippi
Timeline	July (Month 30)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	J. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Areas Surrounding Galilee
Title	10. Jesus' Transfiguration

COMMENT:

In today's reading we see another instance of Jesus taking his three most intimate associates aside for a special encounter with him. Peter, James, and John formed the inner core leadership group among the twelve. Jesus gave them special attention and training to prepare them for their future role in the early church.

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We also see the significance of prayer in Jesus' life here. He climbed the mountain with the core group of three to pray. It was as he prayed that he was suddenly transfigured, and his fellowship with the Father was expanded to include Moses and Elijah. This connection between prayer and the most supernatural event of Jesus' earthly life to this point was no coincidence. This was Luke's point in including this information in his account.

One week earlier, when Jesus taught his disciples about his cross for the first time (after Peter's "great confession"), he ended the session by predicting that some of his disciples would see his kingdom coming in power before they died. The next event in the gospels is "the Transfiguration." It fulfilled Jesus' prediction. It was also intimately related to Jesus' death and resurrection.

This mind-boggling scene--the most supernatural of Jesus' ministry to this point--was extremely important to Jesus, and for his disciples. We will consider two aspects of the transfiguration--what it meant for Jesus, and for us.

For Jesus, the transfiguration infused him with pure encouragement. He had just begun to open up his most important work as Messiah to his disciples, but they could not receive it, nor comprehend it yet. Peter had rebuked his Lord for believing that he would die! Jesus had no encouragement on earth in facing the cross, so it came to him from heaven in a startling way.

In the transfiguration Jesus discussed his upcoming death and resurrection with Moses and Elijah, who represented the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Reviewing the prophetic revelation from His Father in the Scriptures with these two giants of faith in their glorified state was just what Jesus needed. It reminded Jesus of the eternal state of glory that he reentered after his resurrection and ascension. His suffering would be temporary; his glory eternal.

But more than these truths, Jesus' Father spoke for the second time in his ministry with an audible voice on the Mount. He reconfirmed Jesus calling to die and rise again, and that his disciples needed to listen to him regarding it. This was the most powerful and precious encouragement in the universe for Jesus--the voice of his Father!

The importance of the transfiguration for Jesus' disciples is also profound. As great as the appearance of Moses and Elijah in glory was, or the transformation of the physical appearance of Jesus, the key to this text was the voice of the Father, and his direct command to all of them (and us): **"Continue to listen to him!"**

As fiercely monotheistic Jews, the disciples revered Moses and Elijah as individual prophets, and the Law and Prophets in Scripture. Peter's proposal to make three shelters placed Jesus on an equal status with Moses and Elijah. But the Father would have none of that! While Peter was speaking those words God instantly formed the "glory cloud" of the Old Testament that remained upon the Tabernacle in the wilderness, covered them in it, and cut Peter off mid-sentence with his own voice. This was the most terrifying thing that Peter, James and John had ever experienced.

The Father's message confirmed the uniqueness of His Son in his unity with the Father--a Trinitarian oneness that Moses and Elijah could never attain to. They were saved sinners. Jesus was the Eternal Son. Then the Father commanded the disciples to continue listening to Jesus as the Master and LORD--as the very Word of God to them. The words of Jesus were Divine in the same way that the Father's voice speaking to them was Divine. HIS Word was like no other word ever spoken on earth through men.

The ending scene of the Transfiguration brought the Father's point home to the disciples. Jesus came and touched them to comfort them in their terror. He spoke to them to assure them that they need not continue to fear. When they looked up, Moses and Elijah and the Cloud were instantly gone. Jesus alone remained to fill their vision.

Jesus alone.

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There is nothing or no one in all his creation that can compare with him! In him dwells all the fulness of God. Yet he is more fully human than any person that has ever lived. There is none like him. We need to see and listen to him alone. That is the essence of discipleship--following Jesus alone.

I have attached a much fuller explanation of the Transfiguration. Please open it if you would like to delve deeper into this magnificent revelation of Jesus' glory.

APPLICATION:

What rivals Jesus' importance in your life?

The Father's message to each of us through the Transfiguration is to listen to Jesus alone. Always. Exclusively. With reverence.

Are you doing that every day? What do you need to adjust in your life so that you can focus on Jesus alone?