

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

JOURNEY CLASS

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WHY THIS STORY ?

- It confirms Christ's divine nature
- It ties the Old and New Testaments together
 - from the Passover and exodus from Egypt
 - to Christ's life, death and resurrection
 - and also to the Second Coming and Final Judgment
- It provides an opportunity to reflect on these events from the perspective of the three eyewitnesses

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STORY

- It is recounted in three of the gospels
 - Matthew 17:1-16
 - Mark 9:2-13
 - Luke 9:27-36
- Matthew focused primarily on Jesus as the Messiah promised to the Jewish people
- Mark focused on the nature of Christ as both human and divine
- Luke focused on Christ's roles as Messiah and Savior





THE BASIC STORY

- Jesus takes Peter, James and John up with Him to a high mountaintop
- There Jesus' appearance is transformed: His face shines like the sun and His clothes become as white as the light
- Moses and Elijah appear and talk to Jesus
- Peter suggests that he build three shelters, one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah

THE BASIC STORY--continued

- A bright cloud envelops them and a voice in the cloud says: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him."
- Moses and Elijah disappear
- As they come down the mountain, Jesus orders the three disciples to tell no one about this story until after He has risen from the dead
- The three disciples remain confused by Jesus' references to His death and resurrection

PLACING THIS STORY IN CONTEXT

- All three accounts immediately follow a statement by Jesus similar to the following: “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming into His kingdom.” (Matt. 16:28)
- The Transfiguration fulfills this promise
- The Transfiguration provides us with a glimpse of Christ’s post-resurrection body as we will see it at His Second Coming and the Final Judgment

CONTEXT--continued

- The story takes place in the last few months of Jesus' ministry, as Jesus focuses the disciples on His coming suffering and death
- The disciples had previously witnessed Jesus' many, many miracles including walking on water, feeding the multitudes, healings of all types and many others
- But how do they reconcile Jesus' great power with His talk about dying?

THEIR LIKELY QUESTIONS AS THEY CLIMBED THE MOUNTAIN...

- Why not use His power to save Himself?
- If He dies what will happen to them?
- How can His ministry be over so soon?
- How can He know that He will be resurrected and what will that mean exactly?
- If Jesus dies soon does that mean He isn't the Messiah?

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

- Jesus is God
- Jesus and the Father are one
- The true role of the Messiah
- Jesus will suffer, die and rise again
- This answers many of their ongoing questions
- But they will only put it all together after the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost

DID THE THREE DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RIGHT AWAY?

- Probably not....
 - They seemed confused when Peter suggested building three shelters
 - On the way down the mountain they started an off-topic debate about the resurrection and Elijah

JOHN AND PETER'S LATER ACCOUNTS

- 2 Peter 1:16-18:
 - “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain.”

PETER AND JOHN'S ACCOUNTS--continued

- John 1:14:
 - “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

WHY DO MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEAR?

- They represent the two principal components of the Old Testament
 - Moses represents the Law, which God gave to the nation of Israel through him
 - Elijah represents the Prophets of God, who spoke God's words to a rebellious nation and stood up for God despite great personal hardship

MOSES AND ELIJAH --continued

- They spoke with Jesus about “His departure, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem” (see Luke’s account)
- Their presence and conversation with Jesus illustrate that the Law and the Prophets both point to Jesus as the Messiah and what the role of the Messiah really means--to suffer and die to save the people from their sins

THE FORESHADOWING OF CHRIST IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

- Moses freed the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt
 - Jesus freed us from the bondage of sin through His suffering, death and resurrection
 - The Passover seder foreshadows the Last Supper and Communion

THE FORESHADOWING OF CHRIST IN THE LIFE OF MOSES --continued

- Moses was born after Pharaoh's decree that all Hebrew baby boys be killed to stifle the population growth of the Israelites (Exodus 1)
 - When King Herod learned that the prophesized King of the Jews had been born, he ordered the death of all Jewish baby boys in Bethlehem (Matthew 2)

MOSES FORESHADOWING CHRIST--continued

- Moses was adopted from a slave family into a royal family while Jesus is the eternal Son of God--King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16)
- Moses and Jesus both left their royal positions to pursue their earthly ministries--Moses to deliver the Israelites and Jesus to be the Savior of the world

MOSES FORESHADOWING CHRIST--continued

- Before beginning their ministries, each had divine experiences to prepare them to proceed
 - God met Moses at the burning bush and Moses was filled with God's Word and the power to perform miracles (Exodus 3 and 4)
 - When Jesus was baptized, the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and The Father said "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17)

MOSES FORESHADOWING CHRIST--continued

- Moses received God's law and sacrificial system in God's covenant with the Israelites on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20, 34:1-28)
 - Jesus refined the law as focusing on one's heart (rather than just on a series of do's and don'ts) on the Mt. of Beatitudes (Matt 5)
 - Jesus implemented God's new covenant with all people through His suffering, death and resurrection

WHAT ABOUT ELIJAH?

- Like Moses, Elijah was a pivotal O.T. figure who faithfully and courageously stood up for God in the face of severe opposition
- Elijah's ministry foreshadows the ministry of John the Baptist
 - He worked zealously to defend against idol worship
 - He performed many miracles

SIMILARITIES OF THE MINISTRIES OF ELIJAH AND MOSES--YAHWEH IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD

- The central theme in both of their ministries is that Yahweh is the only God
 - Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal in a contest to see whether God or Baal would send fire down from above to consume their respective sacrifices and prove which is the true god of Israel (1 Kings 18)

YAHWEH IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD--continued

- The prophets of Baal did not succeed
- God sends the fire and consumes Elijah's sacrifice
- The Israelites kill all 450 prophets of Baal under Elijah's direction
- The drought ends
- God confirms that He is the only true God

ELIJAH FORESHADOWS JOHN THE BAPTIST

- As they are coming down the mountain after the Transfiguration, the three disciples ask Jesus: "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" (Matt. 17:10)
- This is a reference back to Malachi 4:5-6, the last two verses in the O.T.

ELIJAH/JOHN THE BAPTIST--continued

- Malachi 4:5-6--
 - “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

ELIJAH/JOHN THE BAPTIST --continued

- Jesus answers the disciples:
 - “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” (Matt.17:11)
- The next verse confirms that the three disciples understood that Jesus was talking to them about John the Baptist

ELIJAH/JOHN THE BAPTIST--continued

- When the Angel Gabriel announced the coming birth of John the Baptist to his father Zechariah, we read:
 - “Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

ELIJAH/JOHN THE BAPTIST--continued

- John even dressed the same as Elijah
 - Matt. 3:4--"John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey."
 - 2 Kings 1:8--" They replied, 'he was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist.'"

ELIJAH/JOHN THE BAPTIST--continued

- Bold were very bold
 - Elijah boldly denounced King Ahab on several occasions
 - John boldly denounced the religious leaders, calling them “a brood of vipers” (Matt. 3:7-10) as well as King Herod for marrying his brother’s wife (Mark 6:18)
 - In both cases, their boldness led to an extremely angry response from the king’s spouse (Jezebel in 1 Kings 19 and Herodias, who engineered John’s death in Mark 6:24-26)

THE ESSENCE OF JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

- Jesus demonstrates His divine nature and the glory Jesus possessed prior to coming to earth in His human body
- Jesus provides a glimpse of His post-resurrection body
- Jesus also provides a glimpse of how He will appear at His Second Coming
- Jesus shows that He truly is the promised Messiah and what that really means