

August 30, 2009

THE TRANSFIGURATION: A TASTE OF THE COMING GLORY

MATTHEW 17.1-13

The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain before Peter, James, and John reveals not only the coming glory of Jesus after his resurrection but the fact that God's new creation has already begun in Jesus.

1. THE TRANSFIGURATION (1-8)

"after six days" (1): in reference to the events at Caesarea Philippi and foretelling of suffering, death, and resurrection.

Several possible reasons for "six days:" connection with Ex 24 (vv. 12ff). Moses called to come up and waits for 6 days before being called to go up into the cloud on the 7th day. Jesus = new, greater Moses who goes into the cloud and receives the Word, not in stone tablets, but is himself the Word that must be obeyed.

Also, b/c this is the 7th day, we know that we are still in "old creation time." Adds to the fact that this can only be anticipatory, not final. It is the 7th day and not the 8th or 1st day of the week.

7th day also = enthronement/rest day (cf. Gen 2.1-3). What is declared later alluding to Ps 2 ("this is my Son") adds credence to this

Jesus = the man created on 6th day who, unlike 1st man, will not fall on the 7th day but will be enthroned/glorified.

Ascending the mountain (1): Mountains in Mt: 4.8; 5-7; 14.23; 17; 24-25; 27; 28. The place where heaven and earth meet; where man meets with God, a place primarily of worship.

Garden on a mountain; Sinai; Sinai is in the Tabernacle (Ps 68.17).

Primarily places of worship, but from that worship a kingdom develops. So, mountains also represent kingdoms. Both images are integrated here.

Jesus takes three = Moses + Aaron, Nadab, & Abihu (Ex 24). God was est worship and a nation/kingdom with these 4 "corners." Jesus is est a new holy nation around himself.

The transformation (2): Is this simply the revelation of Jesus deity? Perhaps that is part of it, but it doesn't seem to be Mt's emphasis.

This is the glory of *the man* Jesus. The eternal Word took on flesh—something he did not have before—and glorified that flesh through death and resurrection.

A glimpse into the future to let the disciples know that death will not be the final chapter in the story for Jesus or them.

What the disciples are seeing before their eyes is the fact that this new creation promised in the Law and the Prophets, will indeed come. And, even more specifically, that new creation is centered in and will come through Jesus, the One who is being re-created, transformed, before their eyes.

God's promised future captured in the two images of light. God himself is light (1Jn 1.5). To become luminescent as Jesus does here indicates that he must be in union with *the* Source of light. B/c of this he reflects the light of God. Much like Moses (Ex 34.29ff.).

Light = purity. Emphasizes holiness and sinlessness.

Light also = maturity or something or someone coming into its fullness. Gen 1 - days move from evening to morning. To come into the light is to come into this state of fullness or maturity or glorification.

God himself being Light is that fullness. He is the mature one. He is our promised future. He is our glorification. That is, being in full union with him is to be glorified, mature. It is to be light. In Jesus this light is fully seen.

Moses and Elijah (3): Both associated with Mt. Sinai/Horeb. Moses in receiving the law after being exodused from Egypt and Elijah after being driven out by Jezebel after defeating her gods (1Kg 19.8ff.). Both bring in "new worlds."

Both men have something to do with the coming new age. Moses prophesied that a prophet would rise up after him who would be like him to whom the people were to listen (Dt 18.15-19). Elijah would return before the Day of YHWH (Mal 4.5-6).

The presence of both of these prophets of old told the disciples that the end was near. God's promised future was coming about.

Peter's response (4): When you see glory you build a house for it.

Peter seems to have wanted to stay in that place. "Here" is a good place. "Here" is a place to build tabernacles/tents. This is, after all the revelation of glory. Maybe this is the "final chapter." It *looks* like it. (He needed to remember Jesus' *word* earlier.)

Also seems that Peter is giving equal status to Moses and Elijah. That must be corrected.

The voice from the cloud (5): God revealing himself in a cloud (Ex 13.21-22; 14.24; 16.10; 19.9; 24.15-18; 40.34; Num 14.14; 1Kg 8.10-11). This is God's throne chariot.

The voice speaks from the cloud. Structurally the voice stands at the center of this incident and is thus the emphasis. Surrounded by "seeing" language. But what is seen must always be interpreted by the *word*.

Words practically identical to baptism. Taken from Ps 2 ("enthronement Psalm"), Gen 22.2 (Abraham and sacrifice of Isaac), Isa 42.1 (suffering servant), and Dt. 18.15-19 ("hear him").

Jesus, the one who is to be heard, is the One who will interpret all that they have seen so that they will understand what they have seen. They need to believe his word and not seek to interpret what they see apart from his word.

The disciples' response (6): fall on their faces when they *hear the voice*. Brings about a type of death.

Jesus touches and speaks (7): Up to this point in Mt touching is associated with healing (cf. 8.3, 15; 9.20, 21, 29; 14.36). "Arise" evokes images of resurrection. Jesus' touch and words bring about and anticipate their resurrection.

Jesus alone (8): Jesus is not co-equal with Moses and Elijah. He is greater than both of them b/c he fulfills what they only anticipated. They don't deserve equal standing with him. Jesus fulfills all of the Law and the Prophets.

2. THE QUESTIONS CONCERNING ELIJAH (9-13)

"Don't tell anyone" (9): it will only be after the death and resurrection of Jesus that they will have the full story and be able to tell it with the right perspective. They must understand how suffering and death figure into this glorification.

Elijah and the restoration of all things (10-13): Mal 4.5-6 - Elijah must come and that will mark the time of the end and the restoration of all things.

The restoration of all things according to Malachi's prophecy involves turning the hearts of children to their fathers and the hearts of fathers to their children. It involves remaking the family. Where sin broke up the family in the beginning and was the beginning of the sin and death in the world, God will restore the family as he brings in new creation.

John and Jesus' lives and ministries parallel to a great degree. John is the culmination of the OC prophets and, thus, embodies all that they were *and* Israel's response to them.

Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets, takes up John's ministry and carries it even further. He must go through what John went through to an even greater measure.

1. *When we come to the mountain of the Lord we are transformed/transfigured from glory to glory.*

2. *The story is not over until our final resurrection.*