

Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)



A. On Mt Hermon

Jesus took three of His disciples, Peter, James and John and went up to Mt Hermon. This was one week after He'd taught them about the cross that was yet to come. (C.f. Mark 9:2-10; Matt 17:1-11)

1. Mt Hermon is a snow capped mountain in northern Israel, standing 2,814m tall. Today a sky resort is built on top of the mountain. The disciples were feeling heavy and drowsy after the arduous climb. It probably took them all day to reach the top of Mt Hermon. And as the sun was setting, Jesus and the three disciples stood on the brilliant white snow-covered mountain.
2. The disciples were about to witness a very strange phenomenon. As Jesus started to pray, instead of the place getting darker it got brighter. And the bright light is coming from Jesus! Mark records Jesus' clothes became 'white like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.' (Mk 9:3) The Greek rendering shows this intense heavenly light was coming from under and through Jesus' clothes. Jesus became the piercing brilliance of blinding light. *Apostle John says, "God is light and in Him and there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)*
3. The idea of reincarnation was getting popular in Jesus' days. The crowd speculated Jesus was 'John the Baptist reincarnate' or 'Elijah reincarnate'. No, Jesus was not a reincarnate of some great man of God. He was the pre-incarnate Word of God, who took on flesh and became God Incarnate, Emmanuel. God took on flesh and dwelled among us. Peter, James and John were given a glimpse of Jesus' pre-incarnate glory before He came to earth as man.
4. Then two other men appeared in glistening light and began talking with Jesus! They were Moses and Elijah, who represent the law and the prophets, the entire Old Covenant. How did the disciples know they were Moses and Elijah? In the spirit they instantly recognised them. They just knew. This is the revelatory realm.

B. Peter's Silly Response

Peter blurted out, 'Master, it is good for us to be here... let us make three tabernacles...' (v33)

1. "Be quiet. Stop talking. You don't know what you are saying."

This is the second rebuke Peter received in just over a week, following the rebuke he received from Jesus. This time Peter managed to get rebuked by the Father Himself with the voice from heaven! It seems Peter's foot was permanently lodged in his mouth.

Peter said to Jesus, not knowing what he was saying, "*Let me build you a tabernacle here, along with one for Moses and another one for Elijah. One tabernacle each.*" But Jesus IS the 'Tabernacle of God' and He was standing right in front of them!

Just a week ago Jesus said to Peter, "I will build My church, and I will use you, Peter, to build My Church which the gates of hell cannot overcome.' After one week, Peter presumes to build for Jesus a memorial, monument and shrine, all rolled into one that would eclipse all other idolatrous shrines built at the foot of Mt. Hermon?

How men love to build shrines and monuments for God, (and also a little bit for themselves to be remembered by.) Thankfully, the voice of God from heaven stopped Peter from building a shrine that day. Nevertheless, men always manage to build shrines. *Church of the Beatitude* on Lake Galilee was built by Benito Mussolini. *Church of the Transfiguration* was built on Mt Tabor, 30 miles from Mt Hermon!

2. The voice of God said to Peter, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him."

In other words, 'Peter, get back to the confession of your faith on Christ. *You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!* All My pleasure is in My beloved Son. Don't focus on building monuments. Give your full attention to My Son and what He has to say to you, just as My attention is fully on Him. Pay attention to the voice of My Son. Listen carefully what He is saying to you.'

This is precisely what God the Father is saying to the Church today! Notice the Trinity here: The Father is speaking; Jesus Christ is praying; the Holy Spirit comes as the glory of God in the bright cloud, overshadowing the disciples. And holy fear came upon them.

3. *“When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone.” (v36) C.f. “When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.” (Matt 17: 8).*

When we suddenly enter into a very bright place, our eyes get blinded at first. Then after a while our eyes adjust, and we can see more clearly. As the powerful supernatural encounter began to fade, the disciples’ eyes began to ‘adjust’, and now they saw only Jesus.

I believe that this is the process the church is going through right now. Peter had to be first blinded by the brilliant light, so that he could truly see. So also the church.

C. Internal Beholding

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

1. The word transformed here is the word transfigured. (C.f. Matt 17:2 & Mark 9:2) The word ‘metamorphoo’ appears four times in the NT. The related English word ‘metamorphosis’ depicts the process of a larva becoming a butterfly.

This process requires (1) life and death struggle inside; (2) the external life connected to the shell eventually dies; (3) altogether different life which forms on the inside emerges.

This transition from squirming, wriggling form of life into another form of life that soars in the Spirit begins.

2. The Church is going through transformation and transfiguration right now, a process of quiet internal change.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom 12:1-3)

3. Later Peter recalls his supernatural experience with the Lord on Mt Hermon, and refers to it ‘excellent glory.’ It is a preview of Jesus’ glorious second coming. (2 Pet 1:17) The coming of the Lord is drawing near!

D. Listen to Jesus

1. What was Jesus discussing with Moses and Elijah? “The Exodus” which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. (v31) Just as Moses delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt through the Passover, so Jesus is delivering the Church out of slavery in the world by being both the Deliverer and the Passover Lamb.

2. There has never been a Passover in last 3,000 years in Israel’s history like this Passover.

- a. For the first time in 3,000 years Israel actually observed the Passover this weekend homebound! And it was accompanied by the super blood moon of 2020 on Wednesday night. God is doing unusual things in Israel and in the Church.

- b. Just as God took Israel out of Egypt, so God is taking the Church out of slavery to sin and from the systems of this world. God took Israel out of Egypt, but He couldn’t take Egypt out of Israel.

Will we cooperate with God to get the world out of the Church?

- c. Prior to the Passover event Israel was just a bunch of slaves. But after the Passover, they are called “armies”. God commissions Moses to bring Israel out from the land of Egypt ‘according to their armies.’ (Ex 6:26). Until they were delivered through the Passover, Israel was never referred to as “armies”. But on the night of the Exodus, “the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies. (Ex 12:51 C.f. 6:26; 12:17)

Are we ready to cooperate with the Captain of the Host as He transforms the Church from cruise ship into battleship?