

John's Mission and Message

- 003 The Announcement and Birth of John the Baptist Lk 1.5-25
- 016 John the Baptist appears Mt 3.1-6, Mk 1.2-6, Lk 3.1-6, Jn 1.6,23
- 017 John's Public Preaching and Repentance Mtt 3.7-10, Lk 3.7-9
- 018 John's Reply to the Questioners Lk 3.10-14, Jn 1.19-23
- 019 John's testimony: his relationship to Christ Mt 3.11-12, Mk 1.7-8, Lk 3.15-17, Jn 1.24-28
- 079 Jesus' testimony about John Mt 11.2-19, Lk 7.18-35,16.16
- 103 Herod's opinion on Jesus: the Death of John the Baptist Mt 14.1-12, Mk 6.14-29, Lk9.10-17
- 119 John and the coming of Elijah Mt 17.9-13, Mk 9.9-13
- 116 1st Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection Mt 16.21-23, Mk 8.31-33, Lk 9.22
- 117 The cost and gracious rewards of Discipleship Mt 16.24-28, Mk 8.34-9.1, Lk 9.23-27
- 118 The Transfiguration Mt 17.1-8, Mk 9.2-8, Lk 9.28-36
- 119 The Question about the coming of Elijah Mt 17.9-13, Mk 9.9-13
- 121 2nd Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection Mt 17.22-23, Mk 9.30-32, Lk 9.43b-5
- 201 3rd Prediction Jesus' Death and Resurrection Mt 20.17-18, Mk 10.32-34, Lk 18.31-34
- Hebrews 1.1-4; 1 Peter

From the Old Testament:

- 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2 - for Elijah's ministry
- Malachi 3.1ff and 4.5ff - for the prophecy concerning Elijah's part in Messiah's work.
- Exodus 33.12-23;34,29-35

**Preamble:**

*Come from the Sermon on the Mount where we see Jesus teaching about hearing his words and obeying them – leads to security in this life.*

**1. Relating the Transfiguration to Peter's confession and the Lord's subsequent teaching about suffering.**

1.1 Matthew 16.13-28 records

[a] the declaration of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah, after which Jesus declares He will build his church [13-20]

[b] He began to teach them about the fact that He was a Messiah who would suffer and lose His life, coming to life again.[21]

[c] Peter challenges this, is rebuked and then there is teaching about the cost of discipleship. [22-26]

[d] Finally, there is the promise of the Son of Man coming in the glory of His father with the heavenly angels [27].

[e] The promise that there are some standing present there and then, who would not die until they had seen the "Son of Man coming in his kingdom." [28]

1.2 Mark 8.27-38, 9.1 records similarly,

[a] Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, and his warning to keep it a secret [27-30]

[b] The teaching about suffering, rejected Messiah [31-32a]

[c] Peter's challenge and rebuke [32a-33]

[d] Teaching on the cost of discipleship [34-37]

follow me

[a] external act of obedience, leave nets, tax office, follow

[b] follow – there is a destiny to be found in following which is entered upon at the cost of all other engagements and commitments. There is a call in the form of a summons.

*It is a claim upon a man. And it will sanctify us – in the sense of it will set us apart in a holy, exclusive way for Jesus Christ. Here, grace takes the form of command. "Faith is not obedience, but obedience is not obedience without faith; so faith is not faith without obedience" KB CD IV/2. 538*

**The Readings**

**1 - Transfiguration, Peter's confession, teaching on suffering**

Deny himself

A denial of a person is a renunciation, a withdrawal, an annulment of an existing relationship of obedience and loyalty. And this is the occasion to have this way of dealing with oneself.

It has the implication that "I am not myself" outside of Christ.

Its opposite is to confess.

[e] The awesome promise that if we are ashamed of Him now, He will be ashamed of us at the second coming when He comes in glory [38].

The awesome consequence of disobeying Jesus Christ is His denial of us at a time when we need him to confess us before others as his. [Notice that this is not expressed as penalty [which would require the law as its reference], or hell [which emphasizes pain or loss]; rather, we have the absence, or the presence, of shared glory as the issue here.

Confession takes place at a given time and in a particular context. It is always a truth but it is particularly so in certain momentous times and revelations which are taking place. These momentous times are distinguished when the knowing, or the being known, by someone has the implication of conveying glory and honor, or dishonoring of persons by pulling back from them out of fear of others.

Denial or confession of someone is always in respect of others who are either pressing us to side with them about the Person, or we shall have to side with Him against them. [Commits us to a minority position in this life.]

[f] Then the promise that some present would see the kingdom" of God after it has come with power" [9.1]

1.3 Luke 9.18-27 records similarly, yet has the last statement [8.27] as "not taste death until they see the kingdom of God".

## 2. The facts of the Transfiguration.

2.1 Mark and Matthew have the departure of Jesus and Peter and James and John to go up the mountain as happening "six days later"; Luke has "eight days after these sayings".

*A fulfillment of a sabbath time – a waiting to go up on the mountain.*

2.2 Luke also says that they went to pray, and that it was while praying that Jesus was transfigured before them. [9.28-29]. Neither Matt or Mk mention this.

*This points us to the communication between earth and heaven under which this wonderful God Man lived. There is going to be a communication between Him and also some other men who were witnesses of what God has done in their meekness as well. The same two who as we saw were the example of "fasting" in the sense of so engaged with God that they did not eat.*

2.3 The transfiguration is described as,

[a] "his garments becoming white and glistening" [Lk];

[b] "his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them" [Mk];

[c] "his face shone as the sun and his garments became as white as light" [Mtt].

*This opens to us the former shiny, and wonderful light of God which was attending the tent of meeting and the presence of God which was with the people of God: yet, a presence of God not known nor approachable then.*

*Here we have the man they know in normal life, and have now, through the revelation of the Father, come to confess as the Son of God just six days before. In this sense he is very knowable, very accessible and suddenly he is endued with the shekinah glory of the God of Abraham Isaac and Joseph.*

2.4 The presence of Elijah and Moses is common,

**2 - What happened at the transfiguration?**

[a] "Elijah and Moses appeared to them along with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus" [Mk]

[b] "Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him" [Mtt]

[c] "two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure [exodus] which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. [Lk].

*We have already noticed that a major and dominant theme of reference to the Old Covenant is found throughout the Gospels as the constant reference to Moses and Elijah.*

*Moses as the prophetic figure from a priestly line, who led them out of slavery and into a shared life with God in the wilderness on the way to the promised land. His work is summarized as an exodus, a Greek word meaning a "road out", or a "way out".*

*Her was the meekest man upon the earth, who was constantly attended with the glorious deliverances and honorings from God when challenged by rebellious members of the people of God. If ever there was a man who denied himself it was Moses. He learned to lead from a place of meekness, was servant of the people of God all the time, and God attended him so as to honour him when he stood against the majority of the rebellious.*

*Elijah is the restorer of all things. His ministry was typified as the man who stood for Israel as it chariots and horsemen when it was under the domination of occult forces, arising from a weak king and the powerful woman in the centre of power in Israel.*

*Elijah restored things then, he lifted up the honour of the living God and found, at a time when he thought he was alone, that there were 7000 still faithful to God who were calling upon Him.*

*Elijah acted out of the closeness to the heart of God which he understood as the God before whom I stand, the obedience of the man was the secret of his witness to the living God. God also attended this humble and weak man as well – granting mighty victories and a powerful witness to the real issues taking place in regard to the hidden kingdom of God.*

*It will be Elijah's disciple Elisha, who will receive the spirit of the man Elijah and find that he has received the spirit of God and so enters into the knowledge of God which his master had. A parallel which we have yet to study in the giving of the Spirit of Christ to us as the way we shall enter into the knowledge of the God Man in regard to the shared life of the Spirit.*

2.5 Luke has the disciples at prayer [9,28] and falling asleep, they awake to see the two men standing with Him and his glory [9.32].

2.6 Peter offers to make booths for them all;

[a] Luke has the two [Moses and Elijah] departing from Jesus as the setting in which Peter offers to make booths for them all [9.33]. This strengthens the implication that Peter wanted to prolong the event.

*Peter, who has found himself admitted to an august company feels honoured and thinks it is good for us to be here. He wishes to prolong the exchange and the moment.*

[b] Mark adds that they were not sure what to answer because they were afraid.

[c] Mtt has this after the speaking from the cloud.

2.7 A cloud overshadows them and the Father speaks concerning His Son.

*Previously, we have seen the use of the Shekinah glory and the cloud as a statement of the presence of God whilst the inaccessibility of God is stressed. Here the issue will have to be reflected through the prism of the knowledge we have of the Father*

as through the Son. Except that here, we are learning, and finding confirmed what the question of Jesus to the disciples had brought forth on the mount of Caesarea Philippi had spoken, we are seeing the learning about the Son through the express statement of the Father.

[a] Mtt has a "bright cloud overshadowing them as Peter is speaking. "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!"

*As we should expect, the direction of the Father's commendation for their attention is the Son. And just as He has given it to them in their own spirit and internal knowledge, so He now confirms it to them as a seeing of the kingdom of God as come in power.*

*For, what is the coming of the kingdom of God in power? It is the time when the Father acknowledges the Son for who He is to those who love Him and all long for his appearing.*

*In this way the transfiguration is understood as standing in relation to the resurrection and the second coming. It foreshadows them both, for at both of them there is a vindication of the humble servant of the Son by the Father, before those who have not been ashamed of him in the days of his humiliation and hiddenness.*

*The resurrection of Jesus is a testimony of the Father to the apostles that they had trusted in One who was righteous even though He had been judged and executed as a malefactor. The resurrection of Jesus by the Father was the justification of Him before his disciples.*

*Just as we learn in Romans 6 that our justification will follow from His resurrection. We too shall find that if Christ died for our sins he was raised for our justification. Small wonder then that the NT speaks of that being baptized into his death so that we shall also be raised to a new life.*

[b] Mk has a cloud overshadowing them and a voice speaking "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him!"

[c] Luke has the cloud forming over them, and they were frightened as this happened, and then the voice said, "This is my Son, My chosen One, listen to Him!"

2.8 Jesus was found alone after the voice. Although Mtt 17.7-8 has Jesus touching them and encouraging them not to be afraid before they became aware that the others had vanished.

### 3. The Second Coming [parousia] related to the Transfiguration.

3.1 Jesus' promise that the Son of Man would come in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels, must refer to the parousia. This is clear; for Mtt makes it clear that it is a time of recompense of all deeds, so it is the judgement.

3.2 Mark has obviously seen the Transfiguration as the sequel to this promise of Jesus. It is an anticipation of the glory which is to come. This is even clearer when we take 2 Peter 1.16-18 into account. For Peter there is making known to the churches he is writing to that the power that was to be revealed in Jesus' coming was understood by him to be in terms of the glory which had been revealed at the transfiguration.

*The transfiguration was a momentary, yet real [because witnessed], manifestation of Jesus' sovereign power. This power pointed beyond the transfiguration to the time when He would come in "power and glory."*

### 4. Moses and Elijah.

4.1 Jesus ministry was begun in the wilderness at his baptism, and he had been directed by the Spirit through the wilderness in which He was tempted [Mark 1.9-13]. He is attested by these two prophets at His side and they testify to the mission He is on.

4.2 Moses is the representative of the Old covenant and the promise, now about to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus.

3 - Parousia and the Transfiguration

4 - Moses and Elijah

4.3 Elijah is the restorer of all things [Mark 1.2ff, 9.11] and the stress on Elijah indicates that the fulfilment of "all things" has arrived in Jesus [Mark 9.12].

4.4 The presence of both of these two personages indicate that they are proclaiming the coming of the end. In this way Moses and Elijah are participants in the unveiling of Jesus' parousia glory. Whereas the disciples are the witnesses to the glory which they are seeing a taste, ahead of time.

*In the same way, the church is understood as also doing what these two men have done in their day. The church of Jesus Christ is given by Jesus to understand that we are his witnesses, "even to the uttermost parts of the earth". See Revelation 11*

## 5. "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!"

5.1 This is the real meaning of the event; and is like the Baptism of Jesus. In his submission to the program of God, and in His submission to baptism, we saw then that the testimony of the Father was given in obedience to the identification of Jesus with the sinners He came to save.

So here, the clarity with which He is seeing the suffering work which lies before Him [ and this will be the true wilderness encounter; Gethsemane and afterwards], and the power with which He is resisting the implication of Peter that He should not suffer all find their powerful affirmation in this statement from heaven.

The first part of the statement, "this is my beloved Son.." provides the basis for the exhortation of the second part. The filial relation of Jesus to the Father is the reason why they must listen to Him [Hebrews 1.1-4].

It is in the places where the humiliation of the Son of God is most transparently before men, that God the Father chooses to express that Jesus is the Son of God, and calls people to obey Him, thus asserting His authority. It is because He is so much the Son of Man, that He has been given the authority.

These humiliated places are the peaks of the manifestation of His obedience to the Father; and so provide occasions when the Father, in the face of the glory the world is interested in, speaks out His favour upon this One.

5.2 The "...listen to Him!" is the Father's

[a] rebuke to Peter, who immediately, is proposing a feast of booths type celebration of the exodus, which presumes that the work is done; and before that had suggested to the Saviour that He avoid the suffering. Father is making it clear that Jesus has that part of it right.

[b] proclamation in the presence of Moses and Elijah who are talking with Jesus about the "exodus" which He is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. So the focus is upon:

[1] the upcoming journey to Jerusalem and therefore the death and suffering of Jesus

[2] the statement of Jesus concerning the predicted suffering therefore is correct and confirmed by Elijah and Moses' discussion of it as the real "exodus", His people's salvation.

5.3 The fact that they are left with Jesus alone, indicates that he is the sole bearer of the new revelation which God is bringing through Him. Moses and Elijah, as two prophets who have travelled the road of obedience, can bear witness to Jesus, but they can be of no more help than that. [See the same function of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, where a Moses and Elijah figures perform the same function in Jerusalem]. Jesus deeds and words transcend all the past revelation.

## 6. Elijah has come already.

6.1 The discussion about Elijah [Mark 9.9-13] was triggered by the statement that they

5 - The Father speaks and confesses His Son

6 - Elijah has already come

should tell no one until after the Resurrection. This implies that there is to be a time of concealment and then, after the resurrection a time of clear and open proclamation.

6.2 They are not certain what the rising from among the dead might mean; what does it have to do with the Son of Man?

They knew about the parousia and its glory. But the death and suffering of Jesus was the factor they didn't understand.

They had just seen Elijah - and so they knew, from the scribes teaching, that the end was therefore at hand. But if that is true, where is the Elijah who the Old Testament said would prepare the people for the searching judgment of God [See Malachi 3.1ff, 4.5ff]? The appearance of Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration with Jesus indicates the end is near, what room is there for sufferings?

6.3 Jesus makes clear that the coming of Elijah is already achieved and that he has restored all things. [9.12-13]. However, He shows that the disciples must understand that the Son of Man must suffer and be counted for nothing. The reality of Him being the transfigured Son cannot be grasped until the significance of his sufferings has been grasped. The dullness of the disciples [verse 10] indicates that this will dawn on them after the resurrection.

6.4 We have already seen that in affirming that Elijah must come [Mark 9.12a] Jesus however posed a question with that [12b] - it was that how was it written of the Son of Man? And He is obviously making an allusion to the suffering servant.

The implication is this - if you could understand how it is written of the Son of Man that he is known and recognised in his humiliation, then so you would see that it is possible to recognise Elijah in the same way. And this leads us to Jesus' exposition of John the Baptist as the Elijah who has already come, and they did to him as they would. He came, leading the people to repentance with a clear anticipation of forgiveness, and yet the amazing thing was that he also suffered. His sufferings took place [Mark 6.14-29] at the hands of Herod Antipas and his wife, Herodias [just as Elijah of old, in his own ministry, suffered at the hands of a wicked woman, Jezebel, and a weak king, Ahab 1 Kings 19.2,10].

What is expressed here by Jesus is that this heavenly Elijah should be identified with this captive, murdered prophet: a dead Elijah. This statement is just as offensive to the Jewish mind as a dead suffering, shamed and crucified Jesus is the Messiah - for it operates on the same assumptions.

Mark, in chapter 1.2-8 had drawn a parallel with the Baptist's ministry [on the understanding of Malachi 3.1; not 4.5ff].

That the disciples failed to understand Jesus' teaching about his own sufferings [Mark 8.23ff, 9.6,10-11] extended to their failure to understand John the Baptist's as well. John's identity in the scheme of things, is hidden until after the resurrection. Like Jesus, John participates in God's sovereign purpose which for him ends in apparent defeat - he suffered death and violation of every human right.

In this sense John's ministry and Jesus' ministry is a type and pattern of all the obscurity and suffering of Christian ministry until the second coming. For what they [Herod Antipas and Herodias] did to John, "they", the men who are hostile to God, will also do [Mk 13.9-13] to men and women whose allegiance to Jesus and the gospel's is unwavering.

John suffered as Elijah, and his ministry demonstrated that the end of all things was at hand. The ambiguity between his true dignity and his hiddenness in the world will be known only at the Parousia - for then the people of God will be vindicated by the Son of Man who shared their sufferings and rejection. This is the point of Mark 9.9 - glory comes only after humiliation.

*There has come to us to see who the Son of God is – we know his identity and we worship because we do – He is no other than the eternal Son of God. And we have come to know his identity in the time of his hidden reign upon the earth.*

## Point 13 - The Transfiguration

*Major points in the Life of Jesus*

---

*What is clear to us is that, we live at a time when there is a broad way manifesting across the earth, and a narrow way in which we few have entered. But there shall come a day, fixed only by the Father, when the Son of Man will appear in the glory of the Father and his holy angels. Then, and only then, will it appear on the earth the resurrection of the faithful dead, the rising to meet with Him in the air, and the manifestation of the majority of this great cloud of witnesses shall be seen for what it is. Then the decisive issue is that Jesus is the Lord of time. He has brought forth in his Person the meaning of the presence of the future and the past. Then shall be the time for the judgment of the earth as the witnesses how were faithful in their time on the earth call for as the avenging of their blood spilt upon the earth.*