

H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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Mount of Transfiguration

The event Peter, James and John witnessed whereby Jesus talked with Moses and Elijah is recorded in Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36. Each account varies in some of the details, so all will be examined. To better understand the reason this event is recorded, look at those things leading up to it. Jesus questioned his disciples as to who they thought he was, and who the people believed him to be. Their response was, *Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.* Peter, answering for the others said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:14, 16). As best that I can determine, this point in time is about a year before Jesus is crucified and the majority of the people are doubtful as to who he is, and there had not been a prophet in Israel for 400 years. Now, the twelve believed that Jesus was the anointed One (Christ), but they did not believe that he would die (Mt 16:21, 22), nor did they grasp the full meaning of that for which Jesus was preparing them (Lk 9:44-45).

After the discussion of Jesus' identity, he stated: **Mt 16:19:** *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* "Keys" are a symbol of "knowledge & understanding" (Lk 11:52). The terms 'kingdom of heaven' and 'kingdom of God' are used interchangeably (cp Mk 4:11 & Mt 13:11); They are spiritual terms indicating God's righteousness, His understanding, or, His way of thinking which dwells in a person who receives the truth (Lk 17:20-21). **1 Cor 3:16:** *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* The spirit of God is His thoughts carried by His breath (spirit) when He speaks to your conscience. The keys are the things Jesus gives to unlock the hidden things (mysteries - KJV) of God. **Mt 13:10-11, 15: 10.** *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speak thou unto them in parables? 11. He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.... Why? 15. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...* The parables contain symbols to help us understand them, and to discern the spiritual lessons contained in Bible stories and events, when viewed allegorically (cf Gal 4:22-26). In effect, when a person understands and receives truth this way, they are receiving the thoughts of God through His only begotten Son (Phil 2:5).

Earlier, Jesus told the disciples, in figurative language, to beware of the doctrine of the religious leaders (Mt 16:12). It is no different in our day. The truth of God is leavened with man's understanding and many have closed their eyes to it. If it were not so, the moral condition of this country and the world would not be so decayed. Any professed Christian today will have to study the Bible for themselves, and seek the Lord to know truth, and then bind the truth in your heaven (the way you perceive God) and let loose the error you carry. Have you closed your spiritual eyes? Are you putting your trust in the religious leaders of your organization? Or, are you sensing the impressions of the heart? There are two principles that apply to everyone in order to guide them in determining the voice to follow - love God with all your heart, mind and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself - on these two hang all the law (Mt 22:37-40).

After Jesus told the disciples of his forthcoming death, he stated: **Mt 16:24:** *...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* He went on to say: **Verse 28.** *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.* THIS

is, in type, what Peter, James and John experienced on the Mount in a vision when Jesus was transfigured. **Lk 9:28-29:** 28. *And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.* 29. *And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.* The place where Jesus went often to pray, alone, or with his disciples, was the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Lk 21:37). Jesus was in prayer when Peter, James and John witnessed a transforming of his appearance.

White raiment: Christ's raiment was described by Mark as *exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them*. In ancient times cloth was woven on a loom. The thread on the length of the loom is called 'warp' and the filler thread is called 'woof.' In one of my older studies, I discovered that leprosy, a symbol for sin, could be in the warp or woof (Lev 13:49), which I have taken to represent a person's faith and works, which, when practiced, over time forms their character (clothing). The Lord says: **Isa 1:18:** *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow...* **Rev 19:7-8:** 7. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* 8. *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* It is the perfect character of Christ we obtain when we receive his understanding (faith) and practice it (works).

Countenance altered: Matthew states that *his face did shine as the sun*. **Eccl 8:1:** *... a man's wisdom makes his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.* In this vision, God is showing the disciples, and everyone, that Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24). **2 Cor 4:6:** *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* It is the face which reflects the heart (Pr 27:19; 21:29), and it is Jesus who shows us the glory of the Father, and in the process cleanses us from sin by the words we receive from him (Jn 15:3).

Transfigured: Only Matthew and Mark say that Jesus was *transfigured* ⁽³³⁹⁹⁾ *before them*. The Greek word *metamorphoo* ⁽³³⁹⁹⁾ is the source for which is the English word 'metamorphosis,' the process of transforming a worm into a butterfly. The night Jesus was taken, he prayed for the glory that would transform himself - **Jn 17:5:** *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* The glory of God is His thoughts, ideas and opinions, as revealed in the cross of Christ. To take up the cross daily is to seek to understand it, and by which knowledge we are transformed. It is truth that transforms the mind (Rom 12:2) and develops the character. **2 Cor 3:18:** *But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed* ⁽³³⁹⁹⁾ *into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.* (ASV) Do not veil your heart with man's wisdom, but with that which comes from Jesus Christ.

Moses and Elijah: I was taught the same tradition that other Christians are taught - that Moses and Elijah are in heaven, and they came down and talked with Jesus. However, Jesus said that what the disciples saw was a vision (Mt 17:9). (The word vision will be discussed in more detail below.) Remember, Jesus was praying when Moses and Elijah appeared to the disciples as speaking with Jesus (Mk 9:4). Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets, which we call Old Testament. Moses, as a type of Christ, literally led Israel out of Egypt, and Christ will lead the believer out of spiritual Egypt (the world's way of thinking and perceiving). Elijah was a prophet at the time Ahab, the king of Israel, was married to Jezebel, a Baal priestess, and a type which fits this generation perfectly (cf Rev 2:20). There was no rain in Israel for 3 ½ years, until Elijah prayed for it (Lk 4:25; Jam 5:17-18). The time of Jesus' ministry on earth was about 3 ½ years (see # of Passover's in John), which was terminated by the cross, the event which will bring rain from heaven (Isa 55:7-11) for all seeking to understand the love of God. Elijah received the 'still small voice' (1 Ki 19:12-13), shortly after which he was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot. Elijah,

whose spirit was promised to come (Mal 4:5-6) is a type fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mk 9:11-13), who was preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Mt 3:1-2; Lk 16:16). We now know that the kingdom of heaven is inward, and it is the still small voice, the spirit of God in our conscience, that guides us into God's understanding. John was the last prophet of old covenant (testament) sent to transition Israel from keeping the letter of the law to entering of the Kingdom of God as revealed in the cross. We enter the Kingdom by keeping the spirit fo the law. Another way of saying it is that with the advent of Christ, a literal Jew or a Gentile were to view the law through the eyes of God in order to become spiritual Jews. (cf 2 Cor 3:5-6; Rom 2:28-29; Gal 3:24-25).

Notice what Luke says about Moses and Elijah: **Lk 9:30-31:** 30. *And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah:* 31. *Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease* ⁽¹⁸⁴¹⁾ *which he should accomplish in Jerusalem.* Moses & Elijah appeared in the glory of God to Jesus, i.e. God's understanding. The disciples would not understand this vision until later.

The Greek word for 'decease' should look familiar - it is *exodos* ⁽¹⁸⁴¹⁾, the name of the second book of the Bible. While the word is translated 'decease' (also in 2 Pet 1:15) and 'departure' (Heb 11:22 - speaking of Israel's exit from Egypt), the proper meaning of it is 'a way out.' God was revealing to Jesus via Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets, about his death AND the way out of sin he is making for the whole human race. God gave the disciples a vision in a figure of what was to happen, but it could not be understood until after the cross. This is one reason Jesus told them to *tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.* 10. *And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* (Mk 9:9-10)

Three tabernacles: As Peter, James and John observed the scene, Peter spoke and said to Jesus: **Mt 17:4-6:** 4. *... Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.* 5. *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* 6. *And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.* Regarding what Peter said, Luke adds: *not knowing what he said - i.e. not understanding what he said.*

Jesus told the Jews: **Jn 5:39-40:** 39. *You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me;* 40. *yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* (RSV) In the minds of the Jews, they had already made shrines to Moses (Jn 5:45-47) and Elijah (Jn 1:21, 25). There are several incidents recorded in the Law and the Prophets when the people of Israel were also led to worship false gods. Stephen mentions one such incident, Acts 7:43. The brass serpent God had Moses make is another. The people did not understand and they worshiped the image of it for years, until Hezekiah destroyed it (2 Ki 18:4).

The disciples misunderstood what they saw, and wanted to add a shrine to Jesus. Before Jesus could answer, the voice God of interrupted Peter and caused all of them to fall on their faces in fear, and He said: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* (Mt 17:5) This concept is valid today, but many put their trust in religious leaders instead of God, mostly because they do not understand. The disciples and the people of their day did the same thing.

Only Jesus: **Mk 9:8:** *And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.* It is the life of Jesus, especially the cross, which reveals the way, the truth and life everlasting. **Isa 30:21:** *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.* (RSV) *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is*

he to be accounted of? (Isa 2:22) It is this relationship that we need to maintain daily.

Some conclusions: Only three of the disciples witnessed the vision on the mount. The event is recorded by three men who obtained the story from Peter, James and John, or someone who knew them. Of the three who were on the mountain with Jesus, as far as I know, only one mentions the event: **2 Pet 1:17-18:** 16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* 17. *For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (at Jesus' baptism - Mt 3:17). 18. *And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

The vision: There are two types of visions - one with the eyes closed, as in sleep, and called most of the time, a dream, or a night vision (cf Isa 29:4). The other type is with the eyes open of which several are recorded (cf Num 24:4). I have been awoken from a dream where I knew that I was awake and I recognized my surroundings; and yet, I was still seeing the dream. This appears to be something similar to what happened to Peter, James and John, except that God sent it, and caused all three to see the same thing.

Mt 17:9: *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.* Later, when these three men would think on this vision, they would understand from the law and the prophets (Moses & Elijah figures of) and be able to explain from the Bible, the glory (shining raiment & glowing face) that Jesus Christ entered after his death and resurrection. He was telling them this before they went up the mountain, but they did not understand what it meant: **Mk 8:34:** *And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Jesus said this to the disciples and to others who were also listening. **Mk 9:1:** *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.* "Some of them" would be 11 of the disciples and some others of the people hearing him who would come to understand the purpose of the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

Am I saying that Moses and Elijah are not in heaven? No. Did they appear in a physical form? I think their appearance was a spiritual manifestation (not disembodied spirits) in a vision for the benefit of the disciple's learning after Jesus' would be resurrected. They and others would be able to see from the law and the prophets how all these things had been prophesied beforehand. There is an example where Jesus appeared to the eleven who were assembled with others who were close to Jesus, and he begin to explain from the writings of the prophets. **Lk 24:44-48:** 44. *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you (regarding his death and resurrection), while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.* 45. *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,* 46. *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:* 47. *And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* 48. *And ye are witnesses of these things.* It is a similar understanding which our heavenly Father brings to us through Jesus Christ and which will strengthen us to overcome our sin problems, and endure trials through which we will pass. Does not our countenance light up when we find a nugget of truth? This whole event, viewed allegorically, is an example for those upon whom the end of the world is come (1 Cor 10:11). *Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* (1 Cor 10:12)

The light from the face of Jesus is a figure of the truth that shines in the darkness of man's heart when

daily, the cross is considered in order to understand the purposes of God in His Son, and for allowing him to die such a horrible death at the hand of man. Paul was a man called to preach the cross: **1 Cor 2:1-5:** *1. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power: 5. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* The power of God is His kingdom, as also is it His glory (Mt 6:13).

By means of the faith of Jesus, when we listen, we can obtain the wisdom of our heavenly Father and the reason for allowing the cross, and also why He did not retaliate. THIS is how we enter into the same glory, the glory of the Father's kingdom - not a physical kingdom, but a spiritual one.

The prayer of Jesus the night before the cross is for all who will enter into the truth of the cross. **Jn 17:17-24:** *17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22. And the glory which thou gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 24. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou loved me before the foundation of the world.* Our Father is a God of love, and He loved us before the foundation of the world.

Summary: A picture is worth a thousand words, and the picture we see of what happen on the mount and the description of it, reveals an understanding of what our heavenly Father accomplished in the death of His only begotten Son, the law and the prophets (Bible) being a witness. **Rom 3:21-22:** *21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:* There is a form of righteousness in the law, but not that which we need (Gal 2:21) to overcome sin. Nor, can spiritual life be found in keeping the letter of it (Gal 3:21; 2 Cor 3:6-7), only death. **Rom 8:3-4:** *3. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

While, one purpose of the law is to restrain sin, the main purpose of it is to point you to Christ. This Paul explains: **Gal 3:22-25:** *22. But the scripture hath concluded all under (bondage of) sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23. But before faith came, we were kept (guarded) under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed (in the cross). 24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster (teacher) to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified (rendered innocent) by faith (of Christ). 25. But after the faith (of Christ) is come, we are no longer under (governed by) a schoolmaster (the law).* The law points us to the Son, and He reveals to us the righteousness of God, and His love. Paul came to understand this very clearly: **Phil 3:8-9:** *8. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

And now I to can say - *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* (Gal 2:20) Amen! Praise God.