

# The Gospel of Matthew #46

## Preview of the Second Coming

Matt 17:1-13

Introduction:

1. Vs 1

a. **The place of the transfiguration - "An high mountain"**

1. The "high mountain" is generally believed to be Mount Hermon.
2. It was just north of Caesarea Philippi where Christ was ministering prior to the transfiguration.
3. The mount is some 35 miles north of the Sea of Galilee in Syria.
4. Mount Hermon's highest peak is nearly 9,200 feet above the Mediterranean sea level.
5. The snow capped peaks of the mount can be seen from much of Palestine, even from the Dead Sea area.
6. The melting snow and springs of the mount form the Jordan River.

b. **The people seeing the transfiguration**

1. These three disciples were a select group.
2. They were superior in devotion and dedication to Christ.
3. Christ took these three with Him when He healed Jairus' daughter ([Mark 5:37](#)), and He also took these three with Him in the Garden the night of His betrayal ([Mark 14:33](#)).
4. These three were also prominent in the early days of the church (James was the first martyr of the church ([Acts 12:2](#)); Peter was a dominant leader of the early church; and John, the last of the disciples to die, was exiled for his faith to Patmos and wrote the last book of the Bible there).

c. **The period of time of the transfiguration - "After six days"**

1. The time of the transfiguration was six days after the great confession of Peter about Christ's identity.
2. This was during the last year of Christ's public ministry—a period when Christ's popularity was waning and His enemies were getting ready to crucify Him.
3. The transfiguration would be a great encouragement to the faith of these devoted disciples.

## I. Transformation of the Son – vs 2

### A. Place of the Changes

- The changes were most notable in two areas
  1. His Countenance – "face did shine as the sun"
    - a) *The glory came from within*
    - b) *Christ's face did not reflect the glory*
    - c) *This glory was extremely bright as "sun" indicates*
  2. His Clothes – "His raiment was white as the light"
    - a) *The extreme whiteness is emphasized*

### B. Purpose of the Changes

1. The transfiguration was done intentionally before these 3 disciples
2. This was to encourage them at a time when hostility towards Christ was increasing
3. Peter and John both mention the transfiguration in their own writings – Jn 1:14; 2Pet 1:16-18
4. That awesome experience was but a foretaste of the day in which "the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels" ([Matt. 16:27](#)).
5. On that day "all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" ([Matt. 24:30](#)).
6. And "when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with

1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

<sup>BYZ</sup> **Matthew 17:1** Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ἕξ

παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν.

Taketh with him (paralambanei). Literally, takes along. Note historical present. These three disciples form an inner group who have shown more understanding of Jesus. So at Gethsemane.

Apart (kat' idian) means "by themselves" (alone, monous, Mark has it) up (anapherei) into a high mountain, probably Mount Hermon again, though we do not really know. "The Mount of Transfiguration does not concern geography" (Holtzmann).

2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

**2** Καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένοντο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς.

He was transfigured before them (metemorphōthē emprosthen autōn). The word is the same as the metamorphoses (cf. Ovid) of pagan mythology. Luke does not use it. The idea is change (meta-) of form (morphē). It really presents the essence of a thing as separate from the schēma (fashion), the outward accident. So in Romans 12:2 Paul uses both verbs, sunschematizesthe (be ye fashioned) and metamorphousthe (be ye transformed in your inner life). So in 1 Cor. 7:31 schēma is used for the fashion of the world while in Mark 16:12 morphē is used of the form of Jesus after his resurrection. The false apostles are described by metaschēmatismoi in 2 Cor. 11:13-15. In Phil. 2:6 we have en morphēi used of the Preincarnate state of Christ and morphēn doulou of the Incarnate state (Phil. 2:7), while schēmati hōs anthrōpos emphasizes his being found "in fashion as a man." But it will not do in Matthew 17:2 to use the English transliteration metamorphōsis because of its pagan associations. So the Latin transfigured (Vulgate transfiguratus est) is better. "The deeper force of metamorphousthai is seen in 2 Cor. 3:18 (with reference to the shining on Moses' face), Romans 12:2" (McNeile). The word occurs in a second-century papyrus of the pagan gods who are invisible. Matthew guards against the pagan idea by adding and explaining about the face of Christ "as the sun" and his garments "as the light."

Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne" (25:31).

## II. Testimony of the Saints – vs 3-4

### A. The Characters – vs 3

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

1. Moses and Elijah appeared
  - a) They were the greatest OT heroes of Israel
  - b) Moses is synonymous with the Old Covenant
  - c) Moses was the great lawgiver
  - d) Elijah was the great law defender
  - e) He was a godly man of unmatched courage, boldness and fearlessness
  - f) He had a heart for God, walked with God and was the instrument of God's miracle-working power
2. This is the first time that Moses had set foot in Palestine
3. Disobedience prevented him from entering some 1400 yrs earlier

### B. The Conversing – vs 3

1. Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus
2. Luke tells us that they were talking of his death
3. That the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah says that we do not lose our identity in eternity

### C. The Comments – vs 4

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, 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 Elias.

1. Perspective in the Comments – “it is good for us to be here”
  - a) This was the good part of Peter's comments
  - b) He should have stopped here
  - c) It is always good to be in the presence of Christ and his people
  - d) It is good to be in the place where spiritual blessings come
  - e) It was good to hear the conversation about Christ's death
2. Proposal in the Comments
  - a) The proposal was a bad one
  - b) A tabernacle here is a tent or a booth
  - c) Peter here puts Christ on the same level as Moses and Elijah
  - d) This would keep Moses and Elijah from their better abode and it would end the work of Christ
  - e) It was a worthless suggestion

## III. Terror of the Father – vs 5-6

### A. Splendor of the Cloud

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.

1. It was a bright cloud that overshadowed them
2. This emphasized the transfiguration brightness and spoke of the deity of Christ
3. In the wilderness wanderings God led the children of Israel by a pillar of cloud by day – Ex 13:21; Num 9:17; Deut 1:33

### B. Speaking from the Cloud

1. The appearance of the cloud interrupted Peter's comments
2. The message from the cloud was similar to the message on the day of Christ's baptism
3. Person of Christ – “this is my beloved Son”
  - a) This enforces the deity of Christ
  - b) The Father declared Him to be of identical nature and essence

BYZ **Matthew 17:3** Καὶ ἰδοὺ, ὄφθησαν αὐτοῖς Μωσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας, μετ' αὐτοῦ συλλαλοῦντες.

There appeared (ōphthē). Singular aorist passive verb with Moses (to be understood also with Elijah), but the participle sunlalountes is plural agreeing with both. "Sufficient objectivity is guaranteed by the vision being enjoyed by all three" (Bruce). The Jewish apocalypses reveal popular expectations that Moses and Elijah would reappear. Both had mystery connected with their deaths. One represented law, the other prophecy, while Jesus represented the gospel (grace). They spoke of his decease (Luke 9:31), the cross, the theme uppermost in the mind of Christ and which the disciples did not comprehend. Jesus needed comfort and he gets it from fellowship with Moses and Elijah.

BYZ **Matthew 17:4** Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ, κύριε, καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι· εἰ θέλεις, ποιήσωμεν ὧδε τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν, καὶ Μωσῆ μίαν, καὶ μίαν Ἠλία.

BYZ **Matthew 17:5** Ἐτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος, ἰδοὺ, νεφέλη φωτεινὴ ἐπεσκίασεν αὐτούς· καὶ ἰδοὺ, φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης, λέγουσα, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε.

Overshadowed (epeskiasen). They were up in cloud-land that swept round and over them. See this verb used of Mary (Luke 1:35) and of Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15).

with Himself

4. Passion for Christ – “beloved”
  - a) *There was not only a relationship of divine nature, but also one of divine love*
  - b) *The love of the Father for the Son is beyond human measurement*
  - c) *Yet God gave His Son to die for us*
5. Pleasure in Christ – “in whom I am well pleased”
  - a) *God said this at His baptism*
  - b) *Now he says it here*
  - c) *The world was not pleased with Christ’s ministry, but God was*
6. Precept about Christ – “hear ye Him”
  - a) *“If he tells you that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die, believe him.”*
  - b) *“If he tells you that he will be raised up on the third day believe him”*
  - c) *“If he tells you to take up your cross and follow Him, then do it.”*
  - d) *Folks listen to many different people*
  - e) *We need to start listening to Christ more*

### C. Scare from the Cloud – vs 6

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

1. The comments caused the fear
2. Sinful men in the presence of God always want to hide

## IV. Tapestry of the Scene – vs 7-9

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. 8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. 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.

1. Jesus' first actions and words after His mighty display of splendor were those of gentle, loving care.
2. The impressions of the experience were now indelibly inscribed in their minds.
3. They could testify with certainty and boldness that Jesus had indeed manifested Himself in glory before some of them had tasted death (16:28).
4. As they saw **Jesus... alone**, the disciples realized they had witnessed a preview of the Lord's second coming glory.
5. And once they regained their composure, they must have had a strong and understandable desire to run down and report their astounding experience to the other disciples and to anyone else who would listen.
6. But **as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."** How extremely difficult it must have been to keep **the vision** to themselves.

## V. Tie with the Forerunner – vs 10-13

### A. The Inquiry

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

1. Seeing Elijah appear and then disappear confused the apostles
2. Mal 4:5-6 said that Elijah would appear before Christ
3. On the way down the mountain they asked how the appearance of Elijah fit into that prophecy

BYZ **Matthew 17:6** Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ μαθηταὶ ἔπεσον ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα.

BYZ **Matthew 17:7** Καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἥψατο αὐτῶν καὶ εἶπεν, Ἐγέρθητε καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε. touched them (kai hapsamenos autōn). Tenderness in their time of fear.

BYZ **Matthew 17:8** Ἐπάραντες δὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, οὐδένα εἶδον, εἰ μὴ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον.

BYZ **Matthew 17:9** Καὶ καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους, ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, λέγων, Μηδενὶ εἶπητε τὸ ὄραμα, ἕως οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆ. Until (heōs hou). This conjunction is common with the subjunctive for a future event as his Resurrection (egerthēi) was. Again (Mark 9:10) they were puzzled over his meaning. Jesus evidently hopes that this vision of Moses and Elijah and his own glory might stand them in good stead at his death.

BYZ **Matthew 17:10** Καὶ ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, Τί οὖν οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγουσιν ὅτι Ἠλίαν δεῖ ἐλθεῖν πρῶτον; Elijah must first come (Eleian dei elthein prōton). So this piece of theology concerned them more than anything else. They had just seen Elijah, but Jesus the Messiah had come before Elijah. The scribes used Malachi 4:5. Jesus had also spoken again of his death (resurrection). So they are puzzled.

## B. The Instructing -

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. 12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

1. Jews expected a mighty miracle-working forerunner who would bring order out of chaos and holiness out of unholiness
2. The forerunner would prepare Israel for the return of her Messiah
3. Jesus refers to the ministry of John the Baptist he did come and set things right by his preaching
  - a) *He was not the reincarnation of Elijah*
  - b) *He did come in the spirit and power of Elijah – Lu 1:17*
4. The people did not recognize that John the Baptist was fulfillment of that prophecy
5. John was killed and Jesus will be killed

## C. The Illuminating

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

<sup>BYZ</sup> **Matthew 17:11** Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἡλίας μὲν ἔρχεται πρῶτον, καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα·

<sup>BYZ</sup> **Matthew 17:12** λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι Ἡλίας ἤδη ἦλθεν, καὶ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἠθέλησαν· οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει πάσχειν ὑπ' αὐτῶν.

Elijah is come already (Elias ēdē ēlthen). Thus Jesus identifies John the Baptist with the promise in Malachi, though not the real Elijah in person which John denied (John 1:21).

They knew him not (ouk epignōsan auton). Second aorist active indicative of epiginōskō, to recognize. Just as they do not know Jesus now (John 1:26). They killed John as they will Jesus the Son of Man.

<sup>YZ</sup> **Matthew 17:13** Τότε συνῆκαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς.

Then understood (tote sunēkan). One of the three k aorists. It was plain enough even for them. John was Elijah in spirit and had prepared the way for the Messiah.