

Message #60**Matthew 17:1-13**

As we come to Matthew 17, we come to one of the most significant moments in the life of Jesus Christ and certainly in the lives of the disciples who witnessed this—Christ’s transfiguration. In fact, the Apostle Peter never forgot this episode and actually specifically referred to this event some 35 years later (II Pet. 1:16-18). It is interesting and important to observe that the transfiguration of Jesus Christ is recorded in all of the Gospels but one. This event shows up in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but not John. The question is why? Why doesn’t this event show up in John? Well the answer to this question is significant. John is focused on presenting Jesus Christ as Savior of the world that whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Matthew, Mark, and Luke present Jesus Christ as the King who was prepared to establish a kingdom for Israel and this transfiguration is about Christ being seen as King, who can establish a kingdom on earth.

JESUS CHRIST WAS TRANSFORMED BEFORE THE EYES OF THREE DISCIPLES TO SHOW THAT HE IS THE KING WHO WILL, IN THE FUTURE, ESTABLISH HIS GLORIOUS KINGDOM ON EARTH.

Now the Greek word “transfigure” is the word from which we get our English “metamorphosis.” The word actually means to transform in the sense of changing the appearance (Smith, p. 287). So in front of these disciples, Christ’s normal Jewish appearance was changed into a glorious, kingly appearance.

PART #1 – The time of the transfiguration. 17:1a

Matthew brings out that this event occurred six days after Jesus said that some of these disciples would not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Six is the number of man and the number of days of work. God worked six days then rested. The point of this is after the work of God has been completed, there will come a kingdom time of millennial rest and peace. We must assume that Matthew’s Gospel has this in mind because Luke’s statement is that it was about eight days.

PART #2 – The disciples at the transfiguration. 17:1b

Peter, James, and John, obviously were His closest disciples.

PART #3 – The place of the transfiguration. 17:1c

Effort is always a prelude to a mountaintop experience with God.

PART #4 – The actual events of the transfiguration. 17:2-3**(Event #1) - Jesus was transfigured before the disciples. 17:2a**

The preposition “before” is unique in Greek. It stresses the fact that it took place in front of and in the very presence of these disciples.

(Event #2) - Jesus' face shone like the sun. **17:2b**

The verb “shone” is a verb that means to shine brightly like a torch or lantern. So bright you can hardly look at it (Smith, p. 264). The aorist tense of the verb indicates this was a specific moment of time, a specific point of time and not a continual event.

(Event #3) - Jesus' clothing became white as light. **17:2c**

The Greek noun “white” means His clothes were a brilliant white.

(Event #4) - Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah. **17:3**

First of all, Moses wrote the O.T. Law and Elijah was an O.T. prophet. The Law showed Israel their need for Christ and the prophets specifically predicted news about Christ. Luke tells us they were discussing Christ’s death (Luke 9:31), something both the Law and the prophets clearly pointed to and predicted. The appearance of these two clearly proves that when the kingdom is established, it will feature O.T. saints reigning on earth with Jesus Christ, who will be appearing in all of His glory. There is another thing clearly demonstrated by the appearance of these two—Moses died and Elijah was taken up in the clouds. When Christ comes to establish His kingdom, there will be those in it who died and those who were raptured and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The kingdom will not only feature O.T. saints, but the Church as well.

PART #5 – Peter responds of the transfiguration. **17:4**

The Feast of the Tabernacles was a feast that specifically looked back to the 40 years of wilderness experience and forward to the future blessings of the Millennium.

PART #6 – God the Father responds to Peter. **17:5**

While Peter was still running his mouth, a bright cloud overshadows them and a voice from heaven, which was the voice of God the Father, said to them, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him.” Basically God the Father says Peter, shut up. You don’t do the talking here; you are to listen to My Son.

PART #7 – The disciples respond to God the Father. **17:6**

The Greek indicates these disciples were at the exceeding and ultimate level of being terrified (Smith, p. 435). This is real and true fear at an ultimate, rewarded level.

PART #8 – Jesus responds to His disciples. **17:7-9**

Jesus came to His disciples and said three things: 1) Get up; 2) Do not be afraid; 3) Do not tell anyone about this until after I am raised from the dead (**17:9**). Since many wanted to make Jesus King by force, if news of this leaked out it would stimulate that concept further. Also, the kingdom had been rejected by Israel and it was not going to happen immediately.

PART #9 – The disciples ask Jesus a kingdom question. **17:10**

As I understand it, this question contextually is related to the fact that Jesus must die and Elijah didn't die.

PART #10 – Jesus answers the disciple's question. **17:11-13**

The answer Jesus gives is basically this—Elijah will come, but had Israel responded now, John could have been the forerunner to the kingdom; but because they rejected John, they will also kill Me. So the kingdom will be in the future and not now.