

The Transfiguration



WALKING WITH MATTHEW IN THE LAND OF JESUS

**DOWN AND CONNOR
2019**

WELCOME

- BEFORE WE GO: INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW
- DAY 1: THE BIRTH NARRATIVES (MT 1-2 / Exodus 1-2)
- DAY 2: THE TEMPLE ACTION (MT 21)
- DAY 3: THE LORD'S PRAYER (MT 6)
- DAY 4: THE RESURRECTION (MT 28)
- DAY 5: THE TRANSFIGURATION (MT 17 / Exodus 24 and 34)
- DAY 6: CAESAREA PHILIPPI (MT 18)
- DAY 7: THE BEATITUDES (MT 5-7 / Pentateuch)

Sequence

- Reading for questions / observations
- Place in Matthew
- Genre: what kind of writing is this?
- Background: what is the background in the Bible?
- Place: how the story “fits” into Matthew’s Gospel
- A word of life: Does the passage speak to us today?

Reading

Matt 16:28 “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Matt 17:1 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. **3** Suddenly (*kai idou*) there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” **5** While he was still speaking, suddenly (*idou*) a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud (*kai idou*) a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” **8** And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

Matt 17:9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

10 And the disciples asked him, “Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” **11** He replied, “Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things; **12** but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands.” **13** Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.

Place in Matthew

The confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-20)

A Passion Prediction (16:21)

B Critiquing Peter, instruction disciples (16:22-28)

C Up the mountain with 3 disciples for Transfiguration (16:1-8)

C* Down the mountain with 3 disciples, plus echo of prediction (17:9-13)

B* Critiquing and instructing the disciples (17:14-21)

A* Passion prediction (17:22-23)

Matthew

Matt. 17:1 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. **3** Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **5** While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." **8** And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

Mark

Mark 9:2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, **3** and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. **4** And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. **5** Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **6** He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. **7** Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" **8** Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

Luke

Luke 9:28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. **29** And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. **30** Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. **31** They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. **32** Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. **33** Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. **34** While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. **35** Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" **36** When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

Background

- **Exod 24:1** Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance. 2 Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."
- **Exod 24:9** Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.
- **Exod 24:15** Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Background

- Exod. 34:29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them.

Background

- Dan 12:3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.
- 2 Esd 7:97 The sixth order, when it is shown them how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on.
- 2 Apoc Barch 51:1 And it shall come to pass, when that appointed day has gone by, that then shall the aspect of those who are condemned be afterwards changed, and the glory of those who are justified. 2 For the aspect of those who now act wickedly shall become worse than it is, as they shall suffer torment. 3 Also (as for) the glory of those who have now been justified in My law, who have had understanding in their life, and who have planted in their heart the root of wisdom, then their splendour shall be glorified in changes, and the form of their face shall be turned into the light of their beauty, that they may be able to acquire and receive the world which does not die, which is then promised to them.

Background

- Deut 18:15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. [= LXX: you shall listen to him]
- Mal 4:5 Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.
- 1 Kgs 19:8 He [= Elijah] got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb [= Sinai] the mount of God.

Background

- 2 Kgs 2:11 As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. 12 Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.
- Deut 34:6 He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. cf. The Assumption of Moses

Background

- Lev 23:39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the Lord, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a festival to the Lord seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. 42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.
- Lev 23:44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed festivals of the Lord.

Background

Isa 42:1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Genre

- **Theophany: a vision of the future glorious Risen One**
- **Resurrection story**
- **Vision of the end**
- **Moses typology (next slide)**

Genre

Moses typology from Exodus 24 and 34 (plus Deuteronomy 18)

- **Six days later (24:16)**
- **A mountain (24:12, 15-18; 34:3)**
- **A select group (24:1)**
- **The shining face/skin (34:29-35)**
- **Bright cloud (24:15-18; 34:5)**
- **Voice from the cloud (24:16)**
- **Fear of the bystanders (34:29-30).**
- **Listen to him (17:5), is from Deut. 18:15**

Genre

- Matthew: "horama" (v.9) i.e. dream-like visionary experience
- Only other use: Acts 7:31; 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 12:9; 16:9–10; 18:9
- A horama sometimes pre-enacts a future event (cf. Acts 10:9-10; 19)

Genre

x. Prelude (16:28)

a. Narrative introduction (v.1)

b. Jesus is transfigured (vv.2-3)

c. Peter's response (v.4)

d. The divine voice (v.5)

c*. The disciples' response (v.6)

b*. Jesus speaks (v.7)

a*. Narrative conclusion (v.8)

x. Postlude (v.9)

Genre

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the same basic story, which is one of transformation in prayer, a mystical moment, in which some of the disciples are involved. It bridges the time between the Baptism and the Resurrection.

After that basic account, each writer shapes the story for his own particular goals. In Mark, it is to encourage the disciples on the way of the Cross. In Luke, it is a moment of prayer, marking the departure of Moses and Elijah.

Genre

Our Gospel, Matthew, invests the story with apocalyptic language (transfigured, face shone like the sun, dazzling white, touched), thus letting the reader know that Jesus is of ultimate significance in God's plan for human history and so also for us.

Matthew recounts the Transfiguration as an apocalyptic vision, one of those "moments" of transcendence and transformation, never to be forgotten. The concentric pattern tells us that the centre is v. 5, that the divine voice is given a central role.

Place: immediate context

- Matt 16:28 "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."
- Matt 17:10 And the disciples asked him, "Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 11 He replied, "Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things; 12 but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.

Place: baptism, temptation, call

- And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)
- Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain (**horon upsēlon lian**) and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; (Matthew 4:8)
- As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. (Matthew 4:18–21)

Place: Gethsemane, the cross

- He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. (Matthew 26:37) And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." (Matthew 26:39) Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." (Matthew 26:42)
- Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Matthew 27:54)

Place: Resurrection

- After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (Matthew 28:1–10)
- Limited number; mountain chosen by Jesus; seeing Jesus; Jesus coming to them; Jesus commanding them; ties to Daniel; ties to the resurrection; special use of "kai idou")
- Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16–20)

And so...

- The story of itself is “of manifold meanings”
- Already, there are rich OT associations
- Matthew has edited the text carefully
- Matthew has integrated it into his macro text
- So, at his hands, new meanings
- Chief changes: vv. 6-7 and the vv. 10-13

A word of life

- “The whole history of Christian ethics could be written as a commentary on the Transfiguration.” (G.B. Caird)
- Jesus is in continuity with OT revelation; but, his words have a final and incomparable authority.
- The cross is the path to the resurrection: vv. 10-13.
- Special religious experience and the everyday
- This final conversation really points to Mt 28:16-20

Re-reading

Matt 17:1 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. **3** Suddenly (*kai idou*) there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **5** While he was still speaking, suddenly (*idou*) a bright cloud overshadowed them, and

from the cloud (*kai idou*) a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." **8** And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

Matt 17:9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

A word of life

- Role of religious experience
- Encountering Jesus
- Listening to him
- Engaging with Jesus in the everyday

Conversation

