

# OpenTheo

## The Transfiguration (Part 2)



### The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this piece by Steve Gregg, he discusses the Transfiguration and the appearance of Moses and Elijah. He notes that their presence is significant because they represent the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament, which makes them important to the Jewish religion. While Jesus was not at the same level as Moses and Elijah, he was still honored by God in their presence. Ultimately, the appearance of Moses and Elijah highlights the importance of Jesus' teachings and the transition from the old covenant to the new.

### Transcript

...who compared notes and said, let's all collude to tell this false story. Now, as far as that goes, it says about eight days in Luke 9, 28, about eight days after these sayings. But the other Gospels say, after six days, but do they mean after six days after the sayings? Or possibly after Jesus left Caesarea Philippi? That's six days before the Mount of Transfiguration.

Matthew and Mark make it clear that Jesus was at Caesarea Philippi when he made the statements, but it does not make it clear that they left Caesarea Philippi the moment he made the statements. If they stayed around, for example, a day or two, and then left, and six days after their departure was the Mount of Transfiguration, it could be literally six or after six days, that is, after their departure from Caesarea Philippi, but it might be, well, eight days after the sayings. So that would harmonize it without any difficulty.

But I don't even need to resort to those kinds of strategemes, because as far as I'm concerned, they both say the same thing. After six days would suggest the seventh day. I mean, if it's after six days, it's not the sixth day.

And if it was more than seven days, he might as well say after seven days. But he says after six days, which suggests the seventh day. Now, Luke says about eight days.

Now, by inserting the word about, he's making it clear he's not giving the exact number. He could just say eight days, but he doesn't say eight days. He says about eight days.

So, about eight days is either eight days or seven days or nine days. I mean, you can't

get much closer than that. You know, seven and nine are as close as you can get to about eight.

Therefore, Matthew is allowing some latitude. I mean, Luke is allowing latitude. So, he's not saying exactly how many days, but it was either seven or eight or nine days.

Well, if the other Gospels say it was after six days, that makes it seven, and that makes them in agreement. That is about eight. So, no problem.

There's no contradiction. It's one of those things people try to find fault with, but that's nitpicking. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, they are saying essentially the same thing.

You can't fault them there. Now, Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. It says the mountain, but it doesn't tell us which mountain.

The expression, the mountain, suggests that the readers probably know which mountain he's talking about, and that might be because after this event, it became sort of a Christian holy place or something. I mean, like Mount Sinai, you know, it became a holy place because God met on the mountain with Moses there. Before that, it was just an ordinary mountain.

Despite the movie *The Ten Commandments*, it makes it sound like it was sort of a mythical dwelling of the gods before Moses met God there. I mean, the movie *The Ten Commandments* reads more into it. As far as I understand, Sinai was just another mountain until God met there, and then it became God's mountain, became a holy mountain.

And no doubt, the location of this particular revelation of the glory of Christ was a sacred thing in the minds of the disciples, and no doubt they had told their readers and their hearers a great number of times where it occurred and so forth, and say, the mountain where this occurred. The average Christian knew where that was, it may be. Maybe not, but we're not told what the mountain is, probably because it was fairly common knowledge.

Or if not, then it's because they didn't want it to become common knowledge. It's possible that the gospel writers did not wish to have the church start making pilgrimages to this holy place, because the whole message of Christianity, contrary to that of Judaism, is that those who worship God worship Him in spirit and truth, not in Jerusalem, not in Samaria, and not at this particular mountain. People's religious nature is so compelling that it's almost certain that if God had not hidden the body of Moses, his grave would have become a sacred shrine.

And if God had revealed what mountain to us, Jesus had appeared in this way, it would have become, to the religious orientation of man, a sacred place, and people would begin to feel more holy when they visit that spot, like people sometimes already feel

when they go to what they call the Holy Land. Why do Christians make tours to Israel? Why don't they go to Papua New Guinea, with the same kind of interest? Because they call Israel the Holy Land. Well, there's a place where I can relate to that, and a place I can't.

I don't think Israel is particularly holy at this point, since God is not honored there by the inhabitants, and God doesn't dwell in places particularly, He's everywhere, and there aren't sacred places anymore. God's dwelling is in the heart of believers, and that's what Jesus meant when He said, in the time that's coming, they won't worship in Jerusalem or in Samaria, but in spirit and in truth. They can be anywhere and worship God.

And I can appreciate the fact that many wonderful things happened in Israel, and I'm sure that if I ever went there, I would feel the awe, of which Christians often testify when they go and say, wow, Jesus actually stood right here, wow, this is where, it may be where Jesus was buried. But at the same time, it might be good that we don't have ready access to those places, because then we'd fall into the same religiosity that the Jews did, and think that if you're in this holy place, that's where to go to get close to God, and that's just the message that Jesus was trying to overthrow. It's not places now, it's what's in the heart, it's in the spirit and in truth.

Well, that might be why the mountain is not identified. For whatever reasons, I think Mount Tabor, in the mountain range of Hermon, is the traditional site of the Mount of Transfiguration, but since the Bible neglects to tell us, and that may be a willful neglect, we needn't bother ourselves about its exact location. So He went up to the mountain to pray, and as He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.

Now, Luke is the only one of the gospel writers that focus on the fact that Jesus prayed there. The other gospels tell us that He was changed in this manner, but they don't mention His prayer life. Luke mentions the prayer life of Jesus far more often than the other gospel writers do.

Some, I think, some preachers have called it the gospel of prayer because of this. But Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. It does not say He went up there to meet Moses and Elijah.

It's hard to know whether He even knew He was going to meet them there. He might have, but you see, what had happened just prior to this was His announcement to His disciples that He was going to die. It was His first clear announcement of it.

Now, some might speculate whether Jesus knew very much before this that He was going to die, or whether this was revealed to Him somewhat in the course of His ministry, maybe even late in His ministry, that the Father showed Him that He was going to die. I personally think that Jesus knew from the beginning, at least of His ministry, that

He was going to die, because very early on He said, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. And He was referring to the temple of Zion.

That was even before His public ministry began. So He certainly had the awareness of His death and resurrection from the beginning, but the disciples didn't. And He began to speak openly about it.

We have Him saying something about it here, but actually the scripture says He began from that time, not here in Luke, but I think it's in Matthew's version, Matthew 16, which we studied. Let me get it here. Verse 21, from that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day.

The wording there, Matthew 16, 21, is He began to talk to His disciples about this at this point. In other words, it became a focal point of His private talks with the disciples. No doubt that depressed the disciples, and no doubt it kind of brought the reality in a more depressing way on Jesus Himself.

Now, it's not that Jesus wasn't willing to do it, but nobody looks forward to trials, and especially torture. You know, Jesus was willing to do it, but we know that He even prayed and sweat great drops of blood in anticipation of the thing, and even said, if there's any other way, can we get out of this? But He surrendered His will to His Father. He was willing to obey, but in no sense eager.

In no sense did He relish the idea of going to the cross, and I'm sure that beginning to contemplate it in the manner that He needed to as He now began to try to prepare His disciples for it, He had to keep His thoughts on it more. And their own reaction would be one of sadness, which would not particularly encourage Him. I mean, they wouldn't be lifting His spirits that much, nor would it be right for them to.

But Peter tried, and Jesus said, get behind me, Satan, you're an offense to me. But it was right for Jesus to be a man of sorrows according with grief. His response to His impending crucifixion was one of sadness and heaviness.

And it's possible that He just went on this mountain to just pray and do nothing more, just to pray. And that the coming of Moses and Elijah was something that was unanticipated by Jesus, and something that the Father did to encourage Him at this time. Here, Jesus was in the presence of dull disciples who didn't even understand what He meant when He made the prediction about His death and resurrection, and were not supportive of the suggestion at all.

I mean, no one understood Him. Certainly the scribes and Pharisees and the multitudes that wanted to forcibly make Him king didn't understand what He was about. And even His disciples whom He would have hoped, no doubt, to have the closest intimate

knowledge of Him, even they were dull.

He felt very lonely, no doubt, in His understanding of what He was about to go through. And even if He had a lot of moral support from His friends, it wouldn't be an easy thing to face. But without the moral support of His friends, I think He just sought the solace of a fellowship with His Father in the mountain.

And His Father honored His need at that time and His commitment to not listen to suggestions that He not go through the cross, and even to react to them the way He did when Peter made the suggestion. Jesus was loyally determined to do the thing that made Him so unhappy at the moment to contemplate. And the Father honored Him and gave Him this encouragement.

Now, I say that, among other reasons, for this reason. Because people have raised the question, well, doesn't the Old Testament law forbid communication with the dead? Certainly we tell people that seances are wrong and sinful and occultic because the Bible says that a person shall not communicate with the dead. And yet, here we have Jesus talking and listening to two guys, at least one of whom was dead, Moses.

Elijah, as far as we know, didn't die, but he was all... Frankly, I don't think the Bible says he didn't die. The Bible just doesn't say that he did. The Bible says he was taken up in a flaming chariot, and the implication would seem to be that he didn't die.

Although it doesn't say for sure that he didn't die, I suspect that he didn't. But the point is, even if Elijah didn't die, Moses did, and therefore there was communication with the dead going on here. Now, someone will say, but they weren't the dead, they were still alive, obviously.

Well, true, but so are all the dead by that measure. Then you should be able to talk to Aunt Gertrude who died because she's not dead either. I mean, if they're alive somewhere else, and that means that it's okay to talk to them because they aren't really dead, then nobody's really dead.

And you can talk to anyone who's been here before, and therefore it just drains of all teeth the command to not communicate with the dead. By the way, the Roman Catholics... It may seem like in the last few days I've been making more references to the Roman Catholics than I used to. It's because, I'll tell you why, it's because in the last few weeks I listened to these tapes that someone gave me arguing for certain Roman Catholic positions, and so they're fresh in my mind, and I've been... When I heard the tapes I thought, I wish I could debate this guy, but since I probably won't be able to, I'll just answer him here.

Anyway, the Roman Catholic position is that it is okay to talk to the dead, to talk to the saints. And the argument that this gentleman gave on the tape was, you know, it's not

wrong to talk to the dead because they're not dead. The saints are alive in God.

And I don't remember whether he even mentioned this particular case, but it seems like he should have as a bolster for his position. Jesus talked to these guys, these saints. Jesus talked to the saints.

Of course he didn't pray to them, but he communicated with them. And therefore, when Protestants criticize Catholics for praying to the saints because prayer to the dead or speaking to the dead is forbidden in Scripture, they say, wait a minute, these people aren't really dead. And that is, as I said, true in one sense, but in the sense that that is true, it is also true that no one's dead.

Because in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus was still alive in Abram's bosom after he died, and the rich man who was in hell was also still alive, in a sense. Both of them could communicate with each other, at least. Therefore, we'd have to say they were alive enough to communicate.

And therefore, on the grounds that Moses and Elijah, spiritually speaking, were not dead, or that the saints to whom we might pray today, spiritually they're not dead, would be to say nothing that couldn't also be said about any dead person. They're still alive somewhere, and therefore, if it's okay to talk to people because they're not really dead, then it drains of all meaning, the forbidding of talking to the dead. Who then are we forbidden to talk to? And how do we determine who they are? If someone says, well, you're only allowed to talk to the saved dead, because they're not really dead, but the unsaved dead, of course, we shouldn't talk to them.

But since we don't know for sure who really is saved and who isn't, only God knows that for sure, then on what criteria can we determine whether it's okay to talk to the spirit that's appearing to us in the room? Or should we go summon a spirit? You see, their argument, the argument that the saints aren't really dead, would justify a seance. As long as at the seance you are calling up somebody that you know to be a Christian, because they're not really dead. And yet it's that very thing that's forbidden.

So I think that the Catholic argument on this basis falls on very hard times and doesn't make much sense. But it still leaves it necessary for us to answer the question, what about this? Jesus was talking to people, at least one of whom was dead, and the Bible does forbid spirit communication with the dead. Now, the answer to this is not an easy one.

I would say at the very least, however, that what the Bible forbids is making contact with the dead through spiritists and through mediums and so forth. It does not say that if Moses or Elijah came to you unbidden, that you would be forbidden to listen to him. I don't know how often this kind of thing happens, but I suspect it never happens, except in this case.

I have a feeling this is a unique situation. There was one case where, of course, Saul called up Samuel through a medium. And although one might say, well, Samuel was as much a saint as Moses and as Elijah were, why should Saul be rebuked for talking to Samuel? It wasn't for talking to Samuel, it was for calling him up with a medium.

It was for desiring to speak to the dead. It was for seeking contact with the dead. It was clear that Saul's sin was not that he listened to what Samuel had to say.

When Samuel got there, as a matter of fact, Samuel spoke for God to him. And there's a reason why Saul should have listened to him. But he should have never called for him.

And that's what Samuel rebuked him for. Why have you called me up? Why have you done this? I think we would have to qualify what it is that is forbidden in these scriptures about communication with the dead. People are forbidden from trying to make contact with the dead.

But God has not forbidden himself, if he wishes, to send somebody who once lived and is now with him in heaven or whatever, back to talk to somebody, including Jesus. And if that somebody receives such a visit, there's nothing wrong with talking to them. But I would add this, I don't think any such visits have occurred, apart from this one.

I think this is a unique case. And therefore, we do not read that Jesus went up to contact Moses and Elijah, because he said, My disciples don't understand, but I know Moses would understand, because he's been through something like this before. And Elijah, yeah, these guys, these are my cronies.

I'd feel a lot better if these guys would come and talk with me. So he goes up there and conducts a seance and calls these guys back. That's not what happened.

He went up there to pray. Not to Moses and Elijah. He went up there to pray to his father.

It's very likely that the visit of Moses and Elijah took Jesus, by surprise, as much as the disciples. That might not have. He might have known this was going to happen, but we have no clue that he went up there with any intention of talking to these guys.

It says specifically, he went up on the mountain to pray. And that was not an unusual thing for Jesus to do. It's just that something unusual happened on this particular occasion.

We know that when Jesus was deeply grieved, he always sought solace in prayer to his father. And this is not really very different from his prayer in Gethsemane. Interestingly, the same three men were invited to be present with him, to pray with him, in that isolated place.

Interestingly, he was contemplating his own suffering and death at the time. And

needed, no doubt, the comfort that comes from communion with his father in prayer. Furthermore, we are told that in Gethsemane, when Jesus wept, that angels came and comforted him.

No doubt, he didn't ask for them, but they were sent. Here, it was Moses and Elijah who came. I'm sure Jesus didn't ask for them, they were no doubt sent.

There are many parallels there. So, if anybody says, well, I'm sure I go to saluces, but Jesus talked to the dead too. Be sure that you can point out what the differences are.

There is no parallel. There is no parallel between what happened here and what happens when a person goes seeking contact with the dead. Jesus was just seeking contact with his father.

And his father is certainly at liberty to respond in any way he wants. And in this case, he sent Moses and Elijah. Now, Moses and Elijah, another question is raised, but this one I'm afraid I can't answer for you in any satisfying sense.

But the question is often asked, so I'll let you know I'm aware of it. Were these men in their glorified bodies, or were they spirits? And if they were spirits, were they sent from heaven, or where? Now, the answer to this cannot be made dogmatically. But I would like to suggest they were not in glorified bodies.

Although it does say they appeared with him in glory. In verse 31, speaking of Moses and Elijah, it says they appeared in glory and spoke of his decease. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean they were in glorified bodies.

And I suspect that they could not have been in glorified bodies because Jesus is spoken of throughout the scripture as being the one who was first to be glorified. The firstborn from the dead, the firstfruits of those who slept. And Jesus was not the first human being to rise from the dead.

In fact, he raised three people from the dead during his mystery before his own resurrection. And Elijah and Elisha both raised people from the dead as well. Jesus was not the first person to rise from the dead.

Therefore, to say he was the firstborn from the dead must mean that he was the first to be raised in the manner in which he was. Namely, in his glorified body. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, each one in his own order.

Christ, the firstfruits, then we who are Christ's that is coming. We also will be raised in glorified bodies. Now, if Christ was indeed the firstfruits in that sense, the first person to receive his glorified body, it would follow that Moses and Elijah had not yet received theirs or else they'd be the firstfruits.



It can be said that they appeared in glory without assuming that they were in glorified, immortal bodies. Glory simply means radiance. I mean, at least that's one of its meanings.

Brightness and radiance. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of the glory of the sun and the glory of the moon and the glory of the stars. And the stars differ from one another in glory.

He means radiance. It's not uncommon at all for the word glory to stand in for the word light or brightness or radiance or something like that. In fact, in Hebrews 1.3, Jesus is described as the brightness of God's glory and the expressed image of his person.

Hebrews 1.3. The brightness of his glory. Glory is always a bright kind of thing. Moses, when he saw a portion of the glory of God, had the visible evidence of a glowing face as a result.

So, there's always been in the Bible this kind of connection between the glory of God, whatever that is, that's a supernatural phenomenon, and this kind of idea of light and radiance and brilliance. And even here it's true because when Jesus was transfigured, when he was transformed here, what was the visible sign of it but glory, brightness. His face shone like the sun.

Even his clothes glistened and were white, which apparently means they weren't white before. They became white. He apparently had clothing of other colors, but on this occasion they supernaturally turned white.

And in Matthew's verse it says they became white as the light. So, the brightness of light and so forth often stands for a symbol and a visible one of God's glory. Now, to say Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, that may well simply mean they appeared in this manifestation of great brightness.

They were there. After all, when Peter talks about this in 2 Peter, he says this voice we heard coming from the excellent glory probably just means from the brightness there. This voice came out of the... it was the middle of the night, by the way.

The disciples were asleep and they woke up to see this. But apparently the whole mountaintop was illuminated with brilliant light. And in that light, in that glory, the voice was heard.

These men were seen there and so forth. But the question is, if they didn't have their glorified bodies, particularly in the case of Elijah, what form were they in? If Elijah never died, then his spirit, we presume, never separated from his body. Because that's what happens at death.

Your spirit and your body go different directions. And yet, Elijah, if he never died, was he

coming in his mortal body? That could hardly be the case. He would have aged and died by this time.

He would either have to have an immortal body or else he must have been sometimes separated from his body. And this is, as I say, where I can give no satisfying answer. The same question arises over Enoch.

Enoch, we are told, never died. But does that mean he's in his mortal body in heaven? Or did he receive a glorified body? And if he did, isn't he the firstfruits of glorification? These problems do not have an answer that can be given from Scripture as near as I can tell. We just have to wait until we go to heaven to find out what that's all about.

Not that we need to know. But it's a matter of curiosity. Yeah, Jalene? Well, that's another question.

How did the disciples know that this was Moses or Elijah? After all, they'd never seen them before. No one in that generation had. And probably all Jewish men look about alike, especially once you cover their face with a long white beard, which most of them probably had.

How were they able to recognize these men? The answer would have to be one of two possible answers. And we're not told which is the right one. One is they knew it by direct revelation.

I mean, this was a revelatory experience. Their eyes were seeing things that natural eyes can't see. God was clearly revealing something about Jesus that others had never seen in him.

And they wouldn't see in him again, possibly until his resurrection. And even then, they might not have seen him that way. So, I mean, this was a revelatory experience and part of that whole experience.

Where they heard the voice of God speak. Where they saw the glory of Christ. I mean, every bit of it was supernatural.

They may well have received at the same moment the supernatural awareness that this was Moses and Elijah. It's also possible that the conversation, in the conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah, that the names of the participants came up. We don't know this to be the case because we're only told in the vaguest terms, really, what the contents of that conversation were.

But it's a good question, but we don't know the answer. But there's no difficulty coming up with a possible answer that makes sense. Either they overheard Jesus call these men by name in conversation, or else it was revealed to them, which is not unreasonable to assume either.

Good question, though. Now, they talked to Jesus in verse 31 about his deceased. And as I pointed out a moment ago, the word in the Greek here is Exodus.

The same word, of course, that is used of the release of the children of Israel from their captivity in Egypt. I could go a long time on this because there's a lot on it in the Old Testament. Suffice it to say, maybe I'll give you a scripture or two to illustrate what I'm saying, but suffice it to say, there's a lot of places in the prophets.

This will become very evident when we get into the book of Isaiah, but it's not confined to that. You'll find it in Jeremiah, you'll find it in the minor prophets, where the prophets predict a second Exodus. They predict something, I should say, which is likened to the Exodus.

In Isaiah, it says that when God does what he's going to do, ultimately, that people will no longer remember him as the Lord who brought us out of Egypt, that is, the God of the Exodus where the nation of Israel and the first covenant were established, but the God who brought us out of every nation he'll be remembered as, which I take to be the church. That is, there will be a transition from people's thinking, from identifying God with the old covenant and the Exodus from Egypt, on the one hand, to some new covenant thing which eclipses what he did in the past. And there's a number of places where what God is going to do in that time is likened to what he did in bringing the Jews out of Egypt.

Now, let me show you an example. Though in Isaiah there are a great number, one of the ones where it's, I think, fairly clear is in Isaiah chapter 11. I don't want to read all the verses because I'm mindful that I need to rush here a little bit, but at least verses 15 and 16 really has the close of a longer passage beginning at verse 11.

In verse 15, Isaiah 11, 15 says, The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt, and with his mighty wind he will shake his fist over the river, and strike it in its seven streams, and make men cross over it dry shod. Now, there can be little doubt that by striking the tongue of the river of Egypt and men crossing over dry shod, this is in remembrance of what God did back a long time ago when the Jews crossed over from Egypt through the Red Sea dry shod. Then he says in verse 16, There will be a highway for the remnant of his people, this is that highway through the river or through the water he talks about, who will be left from Assyria as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.

You know, it's just like the day, or at least comparable to the time when God delivered his people from Egypt. What God is now predicting will be like that. Now, what is it that is being predicted here? Many people, the dispensationalists for instance, think that this is referring to a restoration of the Jews in the last days to their real estate in the Middle East, and that what we see now is a partial fulfillment of this, that Jews are leaving nations that have been their domicile nations for many centuries, and they're going to

Palestine, and that that is like the Exodus when God brought them out of Egypt.

However, that's not what is referred to here. By the way, the desire to take this literally as they do cannot be applied in that way, because I haven't seen any rivers drying up and Jews walking from Russia, for example, to Israel on dry land through a riverbed. I mean, it's just, there isn't that.

The imagery is symbolic. Certainly what happened in Egypt literally happened the way it is, but that literal occurrence provided the imagery for something that was in principle similar. As God delivered his people out of Egypt, and of course immediately afterwards gave them the law and established the covenant with them, so he's going to do something that's the same in principle, namely deliver his people from bondage and make a new covenant with them, just as he did when he brought them out of Egypt.

What is this about? Well, if you read earlier in the same chapter, Isaiah 11, 1, There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, etc. Well, who is that? No question, that's about Jesus.

Is it about his second coming or his first coming? Well, it's at his first coming that he came forth out of the stem of Jesse. It's talking about his birth, his natural genealogy. When he comes again, he's not going to come from the stem of Jesse, he's going to come from the clouds, he's going to come from heaven, from the right hand of God.

But it's talking about the first appearance of Christ on earth through the genealogy of David. So, it's talking about the coming of Christ, which is already, of course, history to us. It talks in greatly symbolic terms about his ministry.

We'll talk about Isaiah in a few weeks, I'm looking forward, I love talking about these passages. But look at verse 10. Isaiah 11, 10 says, And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner for the people, for the Gentiles shall seek him, and his resting place shall be glorious.

And then it goes on to talk about how people come from all different countries, and then it's likened, as we saw, to the Exodus. Now, what is the prediction? The Messiah was going to come, he did. People from all nations were going to rally around him.

That's been happening for the past 2,000 years, the influx of the Gentiles into the church, into the kingdom. And this is likened to the Exodus, what God did in Egypt. Now, this is one of the places where it's obvious in the prophets, but there are many others.

I simply don't have the time to show you now, but we'll make that a focal point in our studies of the prophets in a few weeks from now. But, the prophets repeatedly told the Israelites to expect God to do some new thing that would eclipse the old thing. And the

old thing was always this, the deliverance of God's people from Egypt, the establishment of his covenant with them at Sinai, the Exodus generation, the Exodus event, the establishing of his covenant people, as a result of delivering them from bondage.

This is the foundational event in Israel's history, and the prophets said, guess what? There's going to be something else in principle like that, that God's going to do. Only, this is going to involve people from all nations, and it's also going to be better. It's going to eclipse.

To the point, he says in Isaiah elsewhere, so that they'll no longer say, blessed is Jehovah who brought his people out of Egypt, but rather, blessed is Jehovah who brought his people from all the nations of the world. So, he's talking about something that is in principle like the Exodus, only bigger, more global. So much bigger that it eclipses entirely and eliminates the need even to refer back to the Exodus.

It cancels the old and replaces it with a new covenant. And we have one of the clearest places to identify that here, in verse 31 of Luke 9, Moses and Elijah, by the way, Moses was the leader of the first Exodus, so it's interesting that he'd come and talk to Jesus in these terms. Moses was God's leader, who said, there shall arise another like me, referring to Jesus.

He predicted Jesus coming. And so, there are parallels between Moses and Jesus, and one of them is that both of them accomplished an Exodus. Moses accomplished an Exodus in the Old Testament, and he talked to Jesus about the Exodus which Jesus was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now, this language could hardly avoid being understood as the fulfillment of all those many Old Testament prophecies about a second Exodus, or a second event that is like the Exodus, that is greater than it. And we are told here that that Exodus was accomplished by Jesus at Jerusalem, and we know that it was his death and resurrection. So those prophecies of the Old Testament that talk about something great that God's going to do that will eclipse the Exodus and will replace all of it and its ramifications, it was actually fulfilled by Christ in Jerusalem when he died and rose again.

And it is attested to here by none other than Moses and Elijah, representatives of the Law and the Prophets. Now, that is important too. Moses and Elijah are important because Moses is a name whose, well, his name is synonymous with the Law.

And Elijah was regarded largely by the Jews as the Prince or Chief of the Prophets, so he could stand for the prophetic witness of the Old Testament, as Moses represents the witness of the Law in the Old Testament. The Law and the Prophets essentially were the Old Testament. And these two individuals, more than any others that could have been selected, stand in for them.

Now, that's significant as we seek to know the real significance of this event. It says in verse 32, But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were fully awake, they saw his glory. As Peter himself says in 2 Peter 1, as we read a moment ago, we saw his glory, we saw his majesty, eyewitnesses.

They saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him. So they saw Jesus glorified, and they saw Moses and Elijah. And it happened, as they were parting from him, in this case, they must mean Moses and Elijah.

As Moses and Elijah had finished their conversation with Jesus and were apparently disappearing, going away, Peter said to Jesus, Master, it's good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, or tents, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. Then it says, not knowing what he said. Now, the expression, not knowing what he said, doesn't mean that Peter didn't understand his own words, but it's rendered a little differently in the parallel in Mark 9, 6. It says, Peter did not know what to say.

He didn't know what to say, but he had to say something, he thought. Sometimes it's better not to speak if you don't know what to say. Make sure the mind is in gear before the mouth is put in motion.

And Peter spoke before he thought. He didn't know what to say, and so he said something that wasn't well thought out. Now, we know why he spoke, because it says, Moses and Elijah were departing.

And Peter no doubt thought, Whoa! We're the only people in this generation who have ever seen Moses and Elijah. What a privilege! Let's not end it so quickly. I mean, it's not every day you get to see guys like this.

Why don't we kind of prolong it? Why don't we make three tabernacles? One for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. We can spend the night up here a few days. We can learn a lot from these guys.

Now, two things that were wrong with Peter's suggestion. First, his suggestion did not seem to make the distinction that was appropriate between the relative importance of Jesus on the one hand, and Moses, Elijah, and Abraham. He wanted to give them each a tabernacle and keep them all around.

And it's possible that since Moses and Elijah were so revered, that Peter may have felt like he was really honoring Christ by putting him at their level. I mean, just think, Jesus. You know, around here, everyone just thinks of you as a carpenter gone bad.

They just see you as a peasant who's a troublemaker. But we put you right there on the level with Moses and Elijah. That was his first mistake.

Because Jesus is not on the level with Moses and Elijah. He's infinitely above them as

much as he that builds a house is superior to the house itself. The writer of Hebrews makes that very analogy in Hebrews 3, making the distinction between Jesus and Moses.

That Jesus is as much greater than Moses, as he that makes a house is greater than the house. That's Hebrews 3. Speaking of Moses and Jesus, for this one has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch as he who built the house has more honor than the house. So, to put Moses and Jesus at the same level is mistake number one.

The second mistake was that he thought it desirable to keep Moses and Elijah around with Jesus. In other words, he not only put Jesus at their level, but he didn't see that Jesus had come to replace them. And having come, it was not necessary for them to stay around.

Peter was not eager to see Moses and Elijah go. Now, if we understand Moses and Elijah to represent the Law and the Prophets, and Jesus to represent the new establishment, the new covenant, the new kingdom, the new order of things, which was replacing the Law and the Prophets, and by the way, we can hardly blame Peter. I mean, he was a Jew.

He had never read the New Testament. And therefore, we no doubt would make at least this bad a mistake, if not worse mistakes, if we were in his shoes. But, since we do have the New Testament, we can look back on his comment and see where he went wrong.

We can see where the area of his ignorance messed him up. Because it's quite clear in the New Testament that it is not God's intention to bring in the new order and keep the old one around too. Jesus having come, there is no more any need to keep the authority of the Old Testament in place.

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ. There's none left for the Old Testament Law and the Prophets. And let me show you again what the writer of Hebrews said in another place.

In Hebrews chapter 8, he quotes Jeremiah, where in Jeremiah 31, he predicts that God's going to make a new covenant. And now the writer of Hebrews comments on Jeremiah's remarks. Hebrews 8.13, he's commenting on Jeremiah's remark that there's going to be a new covenant.

Hebrews 8.13, the writer says, in that he says a new covenant, that is, God says a new covenant in that passage, he has made the first one obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. The writer of Hebrews understood it, but Peter didn't.

If the new covenant has come, the old one is obsolete. And whatever is obsolete, unless you're a farmer and you just keep rusty old cars around to grace your anchorage, you know, things that are obsolete are usually disposed of, you know, or you're a pack rat or something, you know, or you live in Rio Linda, California. But, now the fact is, the writer

of Hebrews says the new covenant having come, that tells us volumes about the relevance of the old covenant.

Basically, it's obsolete and it's ready to vanish away. Of course, the moment that was written, it was about to vanish away. All the trappings of the old covenant, the temple, the sacrifice system, the priesthood was about ready to go at the time that Hebrews was written.

Of course, it had already gone as far as God was concerned. It was gone when Jesus died and rose again and put an end to it. But, it was still practiced outwardly and still given some, unfortunately, some validity even on the part of Jewish Christians until the destruction of the temple.

And, at that time, of course, it fully vanished away. And, that's what the writer of Hebrews was no doubt alluding to. But, the point is, he saw that if there's a new covenant, you don't need two.

Imagine if when I married Kristen, I said, okay Kristen, you know, I'm entering into a covenant relationship with you, but I still am interested in keeping my covenant with Fran, my first wife, you know, on the back burner. I don't think we would have ended up getting married to tell you the truth. I can't imagine anyone making that suggestion.

To have two different covenants of the same kind or, you know, one that replaces a previous one, try to keep them both around. The old is obsolete. That's the reason that it's possible to have a new one.

Now, Moses and Elijah represent the old covenant. Jesus was the bringer of the new covenant. Peter, not quite understanding what was transpiring, said, listen, we'll keep all of you around.

And there are Christians today who do the same thing. I think particularly of people like the Seventh-day Adventists who believe that you should keep the dietary laws and you should still keep, you know, Sabbath and festivals and so forth, although they acknowledge Christ. There's really not a whole lot of difference in principle between that view and the view that Paul comes against in Galatians where certain Jewish believers were trying to impose the same thing on Christians.

They were not opposed to people being Christians as long as they still circumcised and kept the law. Let's keep the old around, too. It's got some good things.

It's got some merits. Even if we acknowledge Jesus to be superior, still, we can't deny that Moses and Elijah were great guys and had a lot of good things to say and were God's prophets at one time. So, how can we ignore them? Well, we can ignore them in the sense of not giving their teachings authority over our lives because Jesus has replaced them.



And we can see that that is exactly what the message of this whole event is because it says, after Peter made his ill-fated remark, in verse 34, while he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son. Hear Him.

Now, by the way, Matthew's version adds in whom I am well pleased. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.

And apparently, Matthew gives the true complete rendering because Peter, as we saw in 2 Peter 1, said, We heard the voice say, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. So, that line, in whom I am well pleased, is not found in Luke, but it is found in Matthew and obviously, Peter remembered it as well when he talked about it later. And it's also what God said when Jesus was baptized.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Although here, he adds these words. Hear Him.

And hear Him doesn't just mean hear the sound of His voice. It means heed Him. Harken to Him.

Give attention to Him. Obey Him. And in the context of Moses and Elijah just having been there and now being gone, it suggests hear Him, not them.

Peter, you want to hear Him and them. No. They're faded.

They're gone. They've passed away. Hear Him.

This is the one. This is my beloved Son. Hear Him.

And that, of course, I keep alluding to Hebrews because it makes this point strongly. The opening verses of the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 1.1 says, God, who at sundry times in diverse matters spoken to our fathers in time past by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.

Now, the idea is that God formerly spoke to the prophets in Moses and so forth. But in these last days, He has spoken to us by a superior witness, His Son. Hear Him.

Now, a conversation took place with Jesus and the disciples coming down the mountain. I was hoping we might get into it today, but I noticed that we're out of time, so we won't. So, it's a follow-up on what happened here.

But having covered the event itself, we've probably covered as much ground as we could hope to. We will, in our next session, talk about the conversation between Jesus and the disciples on their way down the mountain and what they found there when they got to the bottom of the mountain.

