

# OpenTheo

## The Transfiguration (Part 1)



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

In this discourse, Steve Gregg provides his interpretation of the transfiguration of Jesus as described in the Bible. He analyzes the Greek words used, identifies discrepancies and inconsistencies in the text, and offers his exegetical arguments in favor of Jesus referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as the Second Coming. He also acknowledges the mystery of the Holy Trinity and discusses the various interpretations of the symbolism and language used in the Bible.

### Transcript

It would be good if you could turn with me to Luke chapter 9 and verse 28. Today what we have to look at, at least initially, is what is usually called the transfiguration. The transfiguration is an event that is so named, actually the Bible doesn't call it the transfiguration, that's what Christians have called it, but for good reason.

It comes from the word transfigured, which is used in two of the accounts, in Matthew and in Mark, in the King James Version. Actually the expression transfiguration or transfigured is not a very modern word, we don't really use it in most modern speech. It comes from a Greek word, which is found in the original text of Matthew and of Mark, metamorpho, which sounds like our English word metamorphosis, and for good reason.

It is the root word of our English word metamorphosis, or metamorphosis as some would pronounce it. And that word means an utter complete transformation. You are perhaps familiar with the use of the English word metamorphosis with reference to the change that takes place in certain animals from their pupil stage, or pupil stage, I don't know which is the right way to say it, I think it's pupil, to their mature stage, especially certain insects.

The most familiar to us would probably be the butterfly, which in its pupil stage is a caterpillar. And after going, or actually that's prior to its pupil stage, I must confess I don't remember all the names, the correct names for the stages, but in its first stage it is a caterpillar. Then it goes into a chrysalis stage, I believe, if that's what we call the cocoon stage, and in that stage it actually undergoes a total dissolution of all of its

organs.

In the cocoon, what was once a caterpillar becomes sort of a nutrient broth of organic chemicals, and then they reshape into something entirely new, a totally different kind of animal which emerges as a butterfly. That transformation is a marvelous thing, and no matter how familiar we are or become with it, when we really think about it, it never ceases to be astonishing that such a thing could happen. And that kind of a change, or a total transformation from one kind of creature to another, is what the English word metamorphosis usually is referred to.

Now, the Greek word used in Matthew and in Mark about this story about what happened to Jesus on the mount is the root word for metamorphosis, it's metamorpho-o, and that particular word is used in describing what happened to Jesus visibly before his disciples. He was metamorphosized. The old English word transfigured isn't all that helpful, although you could imagine what transfigured would mean, since it has to do with his figure or his appearance being transformed, but we don't find the word transfiguration, even in the King James Version, in Luke's Version, which we're about to read, but that does come from Matthews and Marks, and because of that, the event that we're describing is usually just labeled the transfiguration of Christ.

Now, verse 28 says, It came to pass about eight days after these sayings that he took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the appearance of his face was altered, and his robe became white and glistening. Then, behold, two men talked with him who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his decease, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And it happened as they were parting from him that Peter said to Jesus, Master, it's good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah, not knowing what he said. 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. And when the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet and told no one in those days any of the things that they had seen.

Actually, to go on beyond this point, it would be advantageous to turn to Mark's gospel. We won't do that yet, but after I've commented on these verses, we'll pick up the story as Mark tells it in Mark chapter 9. By the way, the parallels to this begin at Mark chapter 9 verse 2 and Matthew chapter 17 verse 1. Now, one thing notable about this is, first of all, that the story is told in all three synoptic gospels and in one epistle, believe it or not. There's not very many of the stories from the gospels that are retold in the epistles or alluded to strongly.

Of course, one thing that is referred to strongly in the epistles from the gospels is the death and resurrection of Jesus. The stories of his death, resurrection, and appearances after his resurrection are told not only in the gospels, but also in some of the epistles, most notably 1 Corinthians. But beyond those significant events of Jesus' death and resurrection, there are not very many incidents in the life of Jesus that receive specific retelling notice in the epistles.

This is one of the few. It is retold in 2 Peter chapter 1. I'd like you to turn there just so we'll have that in our databank before we begin to discuss it. Peter, of course, was one of the three disciples that were with Jesus on the mount, and he later wrote in 2 Peter chapter 1 about that event.

I'm going to start reading at verse 15. Peter says, Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. Now, I want to just say the reason I started reading that verse instead of the next one where really he begins to talk about the transfiguration is that this word decease, speaking about his death, that is Peter's death in verse 15, is the Greek word exodus.

And it so happens that this is the same Greek word that Luke used in the passage we just read where it says that Moses and Elijah were speaking to Jesus about his decease that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. And there also, in the Luke 9 passage, which we'll look back at in a moment, the subject matter of the discussion between Jesus and these two Old Testament figures had to do with the exodus that Jesus was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. And, of course, it was referring to his death.

Notice Peter, just prior to talking about the mount of transfiguration, mentions his own death and uses the same expression, his exodus. And that, by the way, is the only two times that death is spoken of by that figure of speech, which seems to make it more than a coincidence. Now, he goes on in verse 16.

And we heard this voice, which came from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain. We have also the prophetic word made more sure. The King James says we have also a more sure word of prophecy, but modern translations usually are like this.

We have a prophetic word made more sure. Which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Now, clearly Peter is talking about his experience on the mount when he says we saw his glory, we heard this voice when we were with him on the holy mountain.

By the way, those liberals who do not believe that Peter wrote this book, and in case you weren't aware, that is the position of liberal scholarship. They don't accept Peter as the author of 2 Peter. They would have to say either the author is, if he's not Peter, must have been James or John, since only Peter, James, and John were on the holy mountain when this was uttered.

Or else it's written by a total liar, a forger, who's pretending to be one of those men. And since he identifies himself in the opening verse as Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, there's no question as to which of those men he's impersonating. But if Peter is not the author of this book, then it's not just a nice little Christian book by some unknown Christian author.

It's a forgery. It's a fraud. And it shouldn't be in the Bible at all.

However, of course, I have no difficulty recognizing Peter as the author of those words. Now, I point that out because Peter appeals to this experience on the mountain. At a time that gave him reason to be able to attest to an eyewitness confirmation of the glory of Christ.

In the passage in 2 Peter we just looked at, he said, We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty, and then he tells us about the event. So he looks back on this event as being sort of his way of affirming an eyewitness testimony to the glory of Christ. Of course, he could also appeal to his having seen Christ after Christ's resurrection, which would be another way of doing it too, of affirming it.

But he appeals to this as an important and significant part of his testimony about Christ. Now, growing up and reading the Gospels as I did, I could not miss the fact that the Gospel writers apparently understood the Transfiguration as an important event. It's one of the few events that all three of the Synoptic Gospels record, with a certain amount of detail.

And obviously that means that all three saw it as significant, whereas they didn't all three include, for example, detailed accounts of the temptation of Jesus or many other important things. Its inclusion in three of the Gospels means that it was generally held to have significance. And, of course, the mention of it again by Peter later in an epistle suggests that it had more than ordinary significance to the apostles, but I never could, for the longest time, figure out what its significance was.

Now, there's no question that it does have significance and value, if in nothing else, just in the fact that we see here something of the super-naturalness of Christ. That Christ was not just a man, he was far more than that. That there was a glory that was visibly manifested upon him, which, perhaps, spoke very clearly of his deity and of his sonship of God, that he was the Son of God.

In fact, that's what the voice from heaven spoke. It said, this is my Son. Now, that is, perhaps, a good thing about the thing, and it makes it of great value.

However, we wouldn't need this story to establish any of those points. For one thing, all the same Gospels, in fact, all four of them record the resurrection of Christ, which

establish the same point, and also all of his miracles establish the point. This would be, in my mind, it never really struck me as being a better demonstration of Christ's supernatural character or his deity, than his miracle ministry, or his resurrection, or many other things in the Gospels were.

This would be just another one, and not a particularly more significant than most example. And I was willing to live with the fact that this is, maybe, if nothing else, just a point at which the disciples saw and could testify to the glory of Christ prior to his death and resurrection. But I wasn't sure if it held more meaning than that, and somehow, there was just sort of an instinct I had that it meant more than that, that there was a lesson in it beyond that.

Though, for many years, I couldn't quite grasp what it was, I now feel like I know the essential message of this story. And I will, of course, share it with you. But before we get to that, I want to point out something important about the context.

Because not only do all three of the Synoptic Gospels record the story, but they all three record it in a very specific context. That is, immediately after Jesus' meeting with the disciples at Caesarea Philippi, and Peter's confession there, and Jesus' announcement that anyone who comes after him must take up his cross and follow him, and possibly, most significantly of all, the prediction Jesus made about some standing there would not taste death, before a very important event took place. Now, in Luke, that event is described as simply the kingdom of God.

In Luke 9.27, it says, But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God. And, of course, Luke then says in verse 28, And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings that he went up on the mountain. As if to say nothing in eight days' time after this announcement, nothing important enough to record occurred.

There is a full week or so of Jesus' life where nothing happened that the gospel writers sought to record between this announcement that some standing there would not taste death before they'd seen the kingdom of God, and this event of the transfiguration. Now, don't lose your place in Luke, because I want to talk about it verse by verse, but look at the parallel in Mark 9. Mark 9, verses 1 and 2, presents the context in the same way. And it says in Mark 9.1, He said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.

Or, it could be translated, coming with power, the old translation. Or having come with power. So, then it says in verse 2, Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up on a high mountain, and so forth.

We have the story of the transfiguration. So, once again, the gospel record announces Jesus making this statement about some of you standing here will not taste death until

something happens. And then it says, and about a week later, essentially, Jesus took them up on the mountain.

Nothing is recorded between the announcement and the event that we now are considering. Now, you will notice that the announcement of what would take place within the lifetime of those people, some of them, is similar to what Luke said, because Luke said, till they see the kingdom of God. Here, it's amplified a little bit, till they see the kingdom of God having come with power or present with power.

So, there's that modification, the kingdom of God in power. They will have seen it come with power. Now, all of that would be fairly easy to live with.

If not for Matthew's version. In Matthew chapter 17, the wording of that statement kind of throws us for a loop. Actually, in Matthew, the statement is at the end of chapter 16, and the transfiguration story begins in chapter 17, verse 1. But looking at Matthew 16, 28, a verse that should be familiar by now, or having seen it many times before, apparently still at Caesarea Philippi when this was uttered, Matthew 16, 28, Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

And verse 1 of the next chapter, now after six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John on a high mountain. So, we see the story of the transfiguration again here. So, all three Gospels tell the transfiguration story, and all three of them make it the next event of significance after this announcement.

Now, the announcement itself has been the occasion of much interest and discussion. We've discussed it already before, so we won't go in great detail into it now. But I would say this, that if not for Matthew's version of it, we would have fewer problems.

Because Luke just says, Until they see the kingdom of God. Mark says, Until they see the kingdom of God coming with power, or having come with power. And we could interpret that a number of ways.

We could say, for example, well that's a reference to the day of Pentecost. Certainly, Jesus said you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And then that happened the day of Pentecost, and some of them didn't taste death before then.

In fact, none of them did except Judas, between the announcement and the event of the day of Pentecost. And that would make a very easy understanding of the words. A problem is introduced by Matthew's wording of the same statement.

He also mentions the kingdom of God coming. And in that he says the same thing Mark and Luke do on this. But he throws in the phrase, Until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

And here we have, in the wording that was chosen, we have what appears to be a prediction of the second coming. Or at least that's how most people take it initially. And yet, of course, if Jesus was predicting the second coming, then we've got problems.

Because it didn't happen. Some of you standing here will not taste death until you see it. Now, some who do believe Jesus is referring to the second coming, hoping to vindicate him and say he didn't make a false prediction, they say, well, the fact of the matter is anyone who's a believer never sees death but lives forever.

Jesus said, whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. And in that respect, the disciples, who although they're dead now, have not really tasted death. They're really alive with God.

And even though Jesus' coming has not been yet, his prediction is true. These people have not tasted death. But the problem with that interpretation is twofold.

One, it would suggest that they will taste death, but not before seeing the Son of Man coming in his power, in his kingdom. I mean, he says they won't taste death until they see this. Suggesting that after that, they yet may die like all men do.

It's not saying that because you have eternal life, you won't die before this occurs. After all, if that was his meaning, he could say, you know, you won't taste death before everything happens that's going to happen. And maybe some would have him saying that.

The second problem with that interpretation is that he seems to be giving some kind of a time marker. What is the point of saying some of you here won't taste death before such and such happens, if not to give some kind of sense of time frame. Some sense of, you know, the kind of weight that they're looking at.

And if he's referring to the fact that they'll never die and they're going to live in heaven and so forth, then of course his statement in no sense gives any kind of reference to time, and that appears to be what he is doing. So, of course, we need to ask ourselves, what did he mean when he said the Son of Man coming in his kingdom? And once again, Pentecost presents itself as a possible answer to that question. The fact that Mark said, until you see the kingdom coming in power, and the coming of power from on high is what Pentecost was about.

In Luke 24, Jesus told the disciples, tarry in Jerusalem until you're being due with power from on high. And in Acts 1.8, he says, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And then that happened in Acts 2.4. And therefore, one could say, well, Pentecost is the time.

And even this, even Matthew's version says, until you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, that could conceivably still apply to Pentecost for the following reason. If you

look at John 14. John 14 verses 16 through 18.

Jesus clearly is referring to Pentecost here. John 14 verses 16 through 18. Jesus said, and I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper, that he may abide with you forever.

Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.

Now, although this passage does allow of more than one possible understanding of it, I think that most would agree that it sounds like he's saying that in sending the Spirit, he himself is returning to them. I will come to you. I won't leave you orphans.

I'm going to send the Spirit. I'm going to send you another comforter. I will be here with you.

After all, elsewhere, when he told them that he gave them the Great Commission, he says, I am with you always, even until the end of the age. But he didn't let them go until the Spirit came. He said, tarry in Jerusalem until then.

Then you go to under earth, and I'll be with you. And so there's a sense in which the coming of the Spirit, being as he is, the Spirit of Christ, which is what the Holy Spirit is called in Romans 8, at least once, and in 1 Peter chapter 1, he's also called the Spirit of Christ. That is, in a sense, Jesus did come to them in the form of his Spirit.

In fact, when you and I say that Jesus lives in me, what we really mean is that the Spirit lives in me. Because Jesus, who walked on the earth, is sitting at the right hand of God with holes in his hands and feet, waiting until the right time to come back. Jesus, the man of Galilee, does not live inside of me in the sense that sometimes people think of it.

He lives inside of me in that his Spirit, the same Spirit that was in him. If the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, Paul says, then you are in Christ. Well, let me show you that, just so we'll get this theological basis established.

Romans chapter 8, real quickly here. Notice how this goes. Romans chapter 8, verses 9 and 10, and maybe 11 as well.

But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Now, notice this. You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. So here's two things that are synonymous.

You are in the Spirit if the Spirit is in you. So if the Spirit is in you, you are therefore in



the Spirit. What is the Spirit called here? Well, in the first part of verse 9, he's called the Spirit of God.

But in the second part of the same verse, he's called the Spirit of Christ. Those terms are certainly used synonymously. Now, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of his.

So here's how it goes. These things are synonymous. You have the Spirit of Christ, which means the Spirit of God is in you, which means you are in the Spirit.

Because you are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God is in you. And if you don't have the Spirit of Christ, you are not a Christian. And then he says, and if Christ is in you, which is apparently synonymous to the condition he's been describing already in the previous verse.

Then the body is dead because of sin and so forth. Notice, having the Spirit of Christ is the same as Christ is in you. And it's the same as the Spirit of God is in you.

And it's the same as being in the Spirit. And no doubt, although it's not mentioned here, it's the same as being in Christ. So all these terms would apparently be synonymous.

That I'm in Christ, I'm in the Holy Spirit. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is in me. And he is the Spirit of Christ.

Therefore Christ is in me. Why? Because the Spirit of Christ is in me. That's why.

Because the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Lord in my life. Look at 2 Corinthians 3, 17 real quick here, and then we'll get back to our gospel text. But in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 17.

Now the Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Lord.

And the Lord in the New Testament almost always means Christ. Except in cases where there is a quotation from the Old Testament quoting the word Jehovah. And then the English word Lord is used there too.

But virtually everywhere in the New Testament where you find the word Lord, it's very clear in the context. It's not as clear in this context, but in most contexts it is. That Lord to the apostles means Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Christ. So here the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Lord. But he also in the same verse says the Lord is the Spirit.

In other words, there is some identification of the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit as we might call him, with Christ himself. The exact nature of that

identification is a mystery. And I have never attempted to explain it because I don't think I can.

And I think it's all part of the whole greater mystery of what we call the Trinity. How God can be three and one at the same time is frankly a mystery that eludes me, that defies my capabilities of explanation. That doesn't bother me.

As long as I'm content not to be able to explain it, I can accept it. But it is one of those things that must be affirmed if we're going to be biblical. That the Holy Spirit and Christ are identified so much.

And God and Christ are so identified that the same Spirit can be called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Lord, or even he can be called the Lord. Now the Lord is the Spirit. And for Jesus to say, I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit, I won't leave you orphans, I'm coming to you, in the upper room, almost certainly referring to Pentecost and referring to the coming of the Spirit and yet saying, I will come to you.

How is that substantially different than him saying, you'll see the Son of Man coming in power. Certainly the power came in Pentecost. Now, for this reason, these arguments have led many to conclude that when Jesus made his comment about some of you standing here will not taste death until you see such and such, whether it's the kingdom of God or the kingdom coming in power or the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, whichever version you read, that all of those are just different ways of talking about Pentecost.

And that, of course, removes any difficulty of Jesus having made a false prediction. He was not, in fact, talking about his second coming at all. He was talking about something that was short range and was fulfilled within the lifetime of most of those people.

Now, there are a couple of reasons to question this as the correct interpretation. Now, let me just say this, I believe the interpretation of Pentecost here is not a bad one. And I can live with it.

But there are a few things that might make it not the best interpretation. And, of course, I think you already know what my interpretation is because we've talked about it in the past. But I'll tell you a couple of things that make me not 100% comfortable with making this a reference to Pentecost.

One is that his statement, some of you standing here will not taste of death, without being too picky and so forth, it does have the wing of saying that many of you will have tasted death. In fact, maybe most. There will be some of you who will not yet be dead when this happens.

It doesn't at all sound to me like he's saying almost all of you will still be alive. But some of you will still be alive when this prediction comes true. As, I mean, it's just one of those

things, it sounds like probably most of them will be dead by this time, or a fair number of them anyway, but that there will be some survivors.

It'll be within this generation. And if he was talking about Pentecost, then he was talking about an event that was scarcely a year away at the time of his uttering it, and which only one disciple died between the utterance and the fulfillment. Therefore, to say some of you standing here will not taste death before you see it would be a tremendous understatement.

Not only did some of them not taste death, only one of them did, one out of twelve. So the overwhelming majority of them were still alive. In fact, since it was only a year off, it was a great understatement to say some of you are going to survive this long.

Most of them survived many decades after this. Now, one could say, well, Jesus himself didn't know the day or the hour or whatever, but he did know when Pentecost would be. At least he had a fair idea about that.

It's true he didn't know the day or the hour of his second coming, but if he's talking about Pentecost, it seems like he would know it wasn't all that far off. He's already been predicting his death. He's on his way down to Jerusalem to be crucified, and he knows that when he goes to heaven, he's going to send back the Spirit.

So he couldn't have thought that this was decades removed. And his statement again, this may be a subjective judgment on my part, but I think most would have the same subjective feeling about it. It sounds like something a little more far removed than a year off, and that there will be fewer survivors at the time of its fulfillment than eleven out of twelve.

Now, that may not be a perfect, strong argument, and in fact, that argument could be no serious objection, but it strikes me as one consideration that weakens the identification of Pentecost with the fulfillment of this. The other consideration would be that the expression, the Son of Man coming, especially the expression, seeing the Son of Man coming, is used a couple of other places in Matthew. Now, Matthew is the only one in this context who uses the expression, they shall see the Son of Man coming.

But in two other places in Matthew, Matthew records Jesus making references to people seeing the Son of Man coming. And they are in contexts that are almost certainly not referring to Pentecost. One of them is in Matthew 24, and it has been our previous treatment of Matthew 24 that occasioned our previous discussion of Matthew 16-28, so you know where we're going with this.

But in Matthew 24, it says in verse 30, Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth, or land, will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming. Now, it's the same expression, see the Son of Man coming. That's the

expression we saw in Matthew 16-28.

In the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And then down in verse 34, a few verses later, it says, Surely I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled. Now, taking those two statements together, they will see the Son of Man coming, and this generation will not pass before that happens, sounds an awful lot like an identical statement.

In only slightly different words, but almost exactly the same thought as we have in Matthew 16-28. Some of you standing here will not taste death. Sounds an awful lot like this generation will not pass away.

Till they see what? The Son of Man coming. That's the subject of both places. And yet, no one could suggest credibly that Matthew 24 is talking about Pentecost.

Because Matthew 24 was a sermon that Jesus gave because the disciples asked him about the destruction of Jerusalem. He predicted the destruction of the temple, not one stone would be standing on another, and he said, well, when? When will this be? And he answers them with this discourse. So, of course, by hindsight, we know that that happened in 70 A.D. and probably it's a fair inference that he is referring to 70 A.D. It may not be the only possible answer, and there are certainly other possibilities, but I say to my mind, and this is my judgment, everyone must be free to make his own on this matter, in my judgment, this is a fair interpretation.

He is referring to 70 A.D. and if here, then probably in the other passage, which sounds fairly identical also. There's one other place in Matthew where Jesus is quoted as speaking about people seeing the Son of Man coming, and that's in Matthew 26, when he's standing before this anhedron in Caiaphas. In verse 23, Matthew 26, 63, Jesus kept silent, and the high priest answered and said to him, I adjure you by the living God that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus said to him, it is as you have said, nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Now, here we have combinations of the two statements we've looked at previously. There's reference to power, because Jesus said some of you standing here will not taste death before you see the kingdom coming in power.

So here he says, you will see the Son of Man, there it is, sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Matthew 24 talked about seeing the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. Now, of course the problem, the serious problem that most people have with identifying these statements with 70 A.D. is that they would say Jesus didn't come in the clouds of heaven in 70 A.D. And this may be true, or it may not be true.

It depends on whether we take Jesus' prediction as being fulfilled there, and if we do, then we'd have to say it did come true, not in the sense of his final coming. Elsewhere in Scripture, there are references to his final coming which will be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead, the rapture of the church, the destruction of the man of sin, the remaking of the heavens and earth. That didn't happen in 70 A.D., and that is yet to be expected.

That coming of the Lord is yet future. But the question is, is there exegetical reason, not necessarily common sense reason, but is there exegetical reason to identify what Jesus is talking about with what happened in Jerusalem in 70 A.D.? I would say, by considerations of Matthew 24, which we carefully looked at on another occasion, that there is reason to see that expression as referring to 70 A.D. And his reference to that generation not passing is perfect for that date, because a generation, if we understand it to be 40 years, is exactly how long it was. From 30 A.D., when Jesus made the statement, to 70 A.D. is exactly one generation, that generation.

No doubt many of the disciples were dead by this time, but some were still alive, and some of them had not tasted death. So, I mean, it works well. Also, when it said to the Sanhedrin, you will see the Son of Man coming, although he doesn't say anything about generation or taste death, but he suggests that they will be living, at least some of their representatives will be living, at the time that this happens.

So all these three times in Matthew that speak of the Son of Man coming, all of them are accompanied with the suggestion that it will happen before some there taste death, in this generation, or that the Sanhedrin themselves would see it happen, which presumes that they would not die prior to it happening. Now, I would remind you, though I said it before in another session, that there are two ways of understanding this as actually being fulfilled in 70 A.D. One of those ways is that Josephus, who was a witness and a recorder, probably the only reliable recorder that has survived, tells us that during the siege of Jerusalem, that among the many signs that occurred both on earth and in heaven, there were interesting phenomena, miracles happening in Jerusalem on earth, if we can trust the record, and the only reason we wouldn't trust it is if we didn't believe in miracles. I'm not in that place, so I do trust the record.

But in heaven also, he said, there was a star in the shape of a sword that appeared over Jerusalem for a year prior to its fall. And he said, for a period of time also, it was common phenomenon for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to look up in the clouds and see soldiers running in the clouds, in armor. Now, if this is to be taken at face value, Christians, informed by a biblical worldview, would say those are most likely angels, the armies of God.

And, you know, who is to say that this is not the sign of the Son of Man coming, seen in the heavens? And who is to say that Jesus wasn't there with his troops, coming to judge

Jerusalem? Now, the other argument favorable to it is, of course, the fact that the language could be quite symbolic. To say the Son of Man would be coming with the clouds might not in any sense need to be taken literally, since, as I pointed out previously, but I do so for the sake of those who may hear this tape and haven't heard the other lectures on the subject, in Isaiah 19.1, we have the exact language, or almost exact language, which applied to a situation where God did not literally come to earth, but where he visited a corrupt nation with judgment, even as he visited Jerusalem with judgment in 7 AD. In the case of Isaiah 19, the nation was Egypt.

And the judgment of Egypt, which actually took place by Assyrian and Babylonian armies, is described in symbolic terms in Isaiah 19.1 this way, the burden against Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt. Now, if we do not allow for symbolism in the language, we'd have to say that God himself, riding on a cloud, came to Egypt.

But, of course, what really happened was God sent armies to destroy Egypt. And that was symbolically God's visitation upon them of judgment. Now, of course, it seems to me a reasonable man or woman would say, well, if the prophet can speak that way, speaking about a judgment that was really accomplished by earthly armies, not by supernatural intervention, but by armies that were sent by God to judge a nation, if a prophet can speak of such a phenomenon as God coming to Egypt on a cloud, then what objection could be raised to Jesus using the exact same language of a parallel type situation? If God sent in the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem, would you say, well, that's the Son of Man coming on a cloud? So, while, again, I don't wish to press for everybody to believe my view, obviously I have strongly considered reasons for my view, I do believe it likely that when Jesus spoke about some of you standing here won't taste death until you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, that he was probably referring to 70 A.D. Now, I make all of this commentary in this particular place in our discussion of transfiguration only as preparatory to say this, that people who do not see the prediction that some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the Son of Man coming and so forth, those who do not see that prediction as fulfilled either in Pentecost or in 70 A.D. or a reference to the second coming of Christ, have a fourth option, and that is that he was predicting the transfiguration.

And the arguments for it are as follows. All three of the Gospel writers record the prediction and the transfiguration. All three of them skip immediately from the prediction to that event without recording any intervening things, as if to say these two are closely connected, anything else that happened in between would only distract us from the point.

That Jesus made the prediction and next thing we read about, he takes these three disciples up on the mountain and they see this. Now, furthermore, let me show you again what we already read in 2 Peter 1 and his telling of this. In 2 Peter 1, he's talking about

the transfiguration as we saw.

He said, we saw this, we heard this on the holy mountain when we were with him up there. Verse 16, 2 Peter 1 verse 16 says, For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses, we saw it with our own eyes, blah, blah, blah.

Now listen, he talks about we saw his power and his coming. Now, do you recall that in the three gospels, some of them say, till you see the kingdom coming with power, that's Mark's version, or in Matthew it says, till you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, and in all the cases it talks about seeing it, some of you will see it, and then Peter says, we saw it. We saw his coming, we saw his power, and we heard this voice when we were with him on the mountain.

Now, I would have to say, that makes a pretty good case. A pretty good case for the transfiguration being the event that Jesus referred to. And I would guess that probably 7 out of 10, if not more, 7 out of 10 evangelical pastors, if asked about this, would give this as the answer.

So I think this is, we'd have to call this probably the majority opinion among evangelicals, is that Jesus, when he made the prediction, was in fact talking about the man of transfiguration. Well, I will not deny that the arguments we just gave are reasonable, even impressive. And the only reason that I don't choose that explanation as opposed to one of the other viable ones, and there are, as you know, the Pentecost one is not altogether unviable, and the 70 AD one is not unviable, but neither is this interpretation out of the question.

But you see, this interpretation I would say falls subject to the same criticism as the one of the Pentecost. Namely, that which happened 6 or 7 or 8 days later. What's the sense of saying some of you are not going to die before this happens? Now, it was true, some of them didn't.

In fact, none of them did. In that week. But it seems like if he was trying to put some kind of time frame there, and he knew that it was going to be within the next year, or especially if he knew it was going to be within the next week, there'd be better ways of communicating that than saying some of you are not going to die before such and such happens.

I mean, it does seem that, you know, he's talking about something more long range than that. And, as I pointed out, it sounds almost identical to his statement in Matthew 24, this generation will not pass, will not fully pass away. Some people will still be living from this generation when these things happen, and clearly these things in Matthew 24 are not predicting the transfiguration, which was already passed by the time the other day.

So to me, exegetical reasons still weigh in favor of the 70 AD identification, though I can appreciate the reasons why people have come to some of these other conclusions. Now, to the transfiguration itself, I mean, you've probably noticed in our reading of the three passages a slight difference in terms of the length of time from Christ's utterance, on the one hand, to the actual event. Because Matthew and Mark both tell us, after six days, Jesus took three of his disciples up onto a mountain.

But in Luke's version it says, about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, John, and James. Now, there's a couple of ways to resolve this. I mean, it's not, it's never been a major problem to me.

As a matter of fact, the difference in the way these are related to me is a confirmation of the independence of the Gospels from each other. Because, in essence, they all say the same thing, it was about a week, in other words. After six days and about eight days are two different ways of saying about a week, you know.

Neither is necessarily being exact, but they're both saying it, they remember it to be about a week, approximately. Maybe a little more, a little less, but the exact number of days is not the issue. The interesting thing is that they do record it differently, which means they didn't copy each other.

It means there was independence of the witnesses. They weren't getting together and colluding and saying, now listen, this story is pretty fantastic, let's make sure we tell it just the same way. You said it's six days, I'll say it's six days.

You say it's eight days, I'll say it's eight days. Let's make sure we get our story straight here because we're going to have to convince people we're right. None of that went on.

They give essentially the same information.