

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

The Transfiguration

Matthew 16:28-17:27 Lesson 32

Ministry of Jesus Timeline

According to Harold Willmington's Guide to the Bible – "His Seventy-Two Steps from Glory To Glory" the timeline of chapter 17 covers steps" 45-46.

45 From Caesarea Phillipi to Mt. Hermon (Matt. 17:1-23; Mark 9:2-32; Luke 9:28-45)

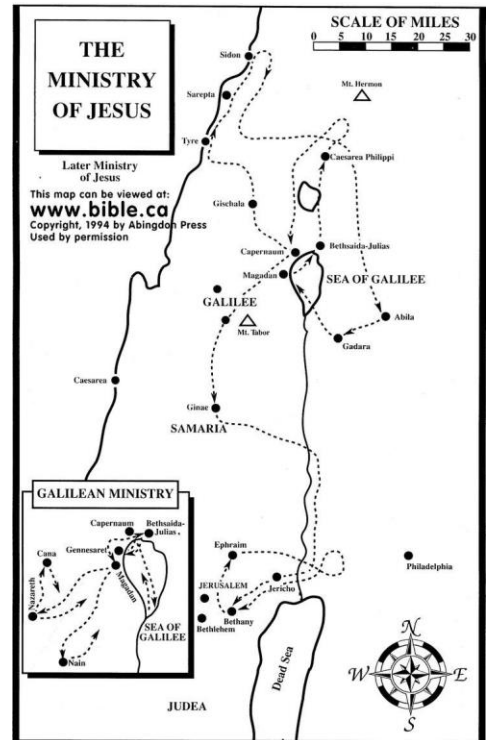
#46(a) From Mt. Hermon to Capernaum (Matt. 17:24-28)

Two optional sites

Harold Wilmington chose Mt Hermon in his timeline. "The Mount of Transfiguration is never clearly identified in Scripture. Both Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon have been identified as the Mount of Transfiguration by various traditions. Mount Tabor is a little less than 2,000 feet, but it stands alone in the area. The earliest tradition identifies Mount Tabor as the Mount of Transfiguration, and it is the location of the Church of the Transfiguration, which is built on the ruins of a fourth-century church. Mount Hermon is a much higher mountain, almost 10,000 feet, and it is closer to Caesarea Philippi where the previous events in Matthew 16 took place. For these reasons, some scholars feel that Mount Hermon is a more likely candidate to be the Mount of Transfiguration. In the final analysis, we simply do not know what mountain is the Mount of Transfiguration. It could be Tabor or Hermon or another mountain that no one has suggested."ⁱ

"Mount Tabor is closer to the center of Jesus's activities, and therefore the Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the year 348 that he preferred Mount Tabor to Mount Hermon. Thus, Mount Tabor was accepted as the site of the transfiguration of Christ.^[1] The current church, part of a Franciscan monastery complex, was completed in 1924. The architect was Antonio Barluzzi.^[2] It was built on the ruins of an ancient (4th–6th-century) Byzantine church and a 12th-century church of the Crusader Kingdom period."ⁱⁱ

The timing as indicated within the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke places the Transfiguration 6 days after the declaration of Peter at Caesarea Phillipi in the north (thou are the Christ). Luke says "about an eight days after" (Luke 9:28). Luke's "about" certainly leads some to conclude that he was just being approximate. This is no contradiction for "about 8 days" is certainly after 6 days. Holding to the literal interpretation, of all three synoptic accounts, the insistence on plenary (word-for-word) inspiration only allows the timing to be on day 7, 8, or later. Those who choose Mt Hermon based on the distinction "high mountain" found in Matthew and Mark, as the location, must defend why Jesus would stall for 8 days of unrecorded downtime in the north at Caesarea Philippi when Mt. Hermon was less than one day's walk away. A strong point for the choice of Mt. Tabor for the Transfiguration was that it was a 5-day journey south of Caesarea Philippi and only an hour's walk from the Sea of Galilee. Why would He wait 7-8 days in the north rather than use that time to walk south to Capernaum which was His next destination (17:24). Luke says "mountain" but then qualifies it with, "the hill" (Luke 9:37). That term was never used of Mt Hermon, whereas Tabor is one of the highest in the Galilee. I lean toward Mt. Tabor as the location also because multitudes were awaiting Him in need of healing so it seems likely that they



Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

The Transfiguration

Matthew 16:28-17:27 Lesson 32

would not have made the 5-day uphill trek to Mt. Hermon but gathered at Mount Tabor due to the proximity of their towns and villages at the base of Tabor. Lest we “make a mountain out of a mole hill” the important thing is what happened in this account.

“his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”

“his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” (Mark9:3)

“the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was* white *and* glistening.” (Luke 9:29)

(17:2) “Transfigured” metamorphoō *met-am-or-fo'-o* From G3326 and G3445; to *transform* (literally or figuratively “metamorphose”): - change, transfigure, transform.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some have suggested that this was a preview of the vision that John who was present here, that he saw as he was later exiled to the Isle of Patmos. John’s description of Jesus was: “His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.” (Revelation 1:13-15)

The gospel account however was no mere subjective vision but a physical manifestation of the previously veiled divine essence of the “Son of God,” witnessed by all three disciples.

The pre-incarnate nature of Jesus in the New Testament

John 17 is the final prayer of Jesus before His arrest and trials.

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, ...I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, **O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.**” John 17:1-5

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: **Who is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And **he is before all things, and by him all things consist.**” (Colossians 1:13-17)

The pre-incarnate nature of Jesus as explained in the Tanakh/Old Testament

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

The Hebrew indicates a male child whose identity is *El* = God, Father of Eternity.

Isaiah 7:14 “shall call his name **Immanuel. God with us**”

Matthew 1:23 “they shall call his name **Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**”

The later explanation of the incarnation as witnessed by John on the Mount of Transfiguration

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, And the Word **was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth. John 1: 14

The rationale for the appearance of Moses and Elijah (17:3) Both had previously experienced a special revelation of God (Exodus 33:17-23; 1 Kings 19:9-13).

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

The Transfiguration

Matthew 16:28-17:27 Lesson 32

- **Moses is the representative of the Torah/Law**
Wilmington suggests that Moses' presence allowed him to see his requests to God fulfilled post mortem.
 - ✓ To see God's glory (Exodus 33:17-23)
 - ✓ To see the promised land (Deuteronomy 3:23-25) He only had a glimpse from Mt. Nebo (Deut. 34:1).
- **Elijah is the representative of the New Testament/Prophets**
 - ✓ Jesus connects the dots in answer to the disciples question as to why Elijah must first come. (17:10-13)
 - ✓ To appear before the revelation of the Messiah (17:11; Malachi 4:5).
 - ✓ Jesus answered that John the Baptist came to fulfill the prophecy but "they knew him not" (17:12)
 - ✓ Some believe that Jesus statement "Elijah truly shall first come" is a reference to him coming along with Moses in the Tribulation which John later foresaw in Revelation 11:3-7.
- **The purpose of their appearance**
 - ✓ "Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:31)
 - ✓ Jesus forbade them telling their experience until after His resurrection (17:9)
- **Heavenly authentication**
"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (17:5-8)
- **This is the second time** – "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**" (Matthew 3:16,17)

The lack of faith of the disciples to heal a man was rebuked by Jesus. (17:14-21)

- **Father pleads for his son (17:14-15)** *lunatic* - Greek Σεληνιάζομαι *sel-ay-nee-ad'-zom-ahee* a presumed derivative of G4582; to be moon struck, that is, crazy^{iv} "the spirit cried, and rent him sore" Mark 9:26;
- **Jesus heals the son** "Jesus rebuked the devil" (17:18) "the devil threw him down, and tare *him*." (Luke 9:42)
- **Desperate partial faith of the father versus the "unbelief" of the disciples**
Father - "if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Mark 9:22-24
- **Disciples** – "Why could not we cast him out?"
- **Jesus** - "Because of your unbelief"
(17:20,21) Jesus uses the mustard seed faith principle that He later revisits in Matthew 21
He adds that power over demonic spirits requires the spiritual discipline of prayer and fasting
- This is the 8th time that Jesus has predicted either His betrayal, death and or resurrection (17:22,23)
- This is the first time that they responded with "exceeding sorrow" rather than bewilderment, or even rebuking Jesus as Peter had just done. (17:23)

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

The Transfiguration

Matthew 16:28-17:27 Lesson 32

(17:24-27) Temple Tribute Test

“They that received Tribute” were not referred to as publicans. Matthew/Levi had been a publican collecting the Roman Tax (Mark 2:14; Luke 3:24; 5:27-29). In chapter 18:17 Jesus mentions the disdain for “a publican.” There is no mention here of Roman tax as in (Luke 20:22) “tribute unto Caesar.” Therefore, it is commonly understood, as David Stern says “This is the per-capita tax of one-half shekel to support the activities of the kohanim (priests), as specified in Exodus 30:11-16; 38:26.”^v “pay tribute?” Tribute = Greek δίδραχμον - *did'-rakh-mon*, a *double drachma (didrachm)*: - tribute.^{vi} This was to be paid by every Jewish male 20 and older.

Does giving to the Synagogue or charity substitute for the blood atonement. No, Leviticus 17:11 gives the blood sacrifice requirement. However, in absence of a Temple, Rabbinic tradition goes back to the following verse to say giving to charity called *Tzedekah* is an acceptable substitute. “And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.” This verse is saying that the service of the Tabernacle/ Temple where the atonement for their souls was made, is supported by the atonement money or Temple tax. Literal interpretation does not allow for paying the tax or giving to charity as a replacement for the blood atonement.

“Does your master...” Peter answered, Yes. But, before he could say a word to Jesus, “Jesus prevented him.” This is the only use of this phrase in the New Testament. “One example is found in a papyrus dated AD 161...meaning ‘to anticipate, to get before one in doing a thing.’ Peter felt obliged to take up the matter with Jesus, But the Master had observed what was going on and spoke to Peter first. Jesus gave a brief parable to clarify the matter. “Jesus as the Son of God claims exemption from the Temple Tax as it is the temple of His Father, just as royal families do not pay taxes but get tribute from foreigners who are subjects.”^{vii} “Then are the children free.” King’s kids have great benefits.

(17:27) “Lest we should offend them” Technically he was free from it, however practically He agreed to pay it.

Peter was commanded to catch a fish which would have a coin sufficient to pay it.

“cast an hook” only use in the N. T. - Greek = ἄγκιστρον, *ang'-kis-tron* a *hook* (as *bent*) from *agkilo/angle*

“piece of money” Greek = στατήρ *stat-air'* (specifically) a *stater* or piece of money.

“give it unto them for me and thee” We do not have an explanation of what the eleven paid. Judas had “the bag” and doubtless would have had to pay it for them.

Are we waiting for an audible from heaven to say, Jesus is God’s Beloved Son?

Are we obeying the command to hear Him rather than listen to opinions about Him?

Are we doubting that He can do anything in answer to your prayers?

Jesus is waiting for us to say, I believe help my unbelief.

ⁱ [What is the Mount of Transfiguration? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ⁱⁱ [Church of the Transfiguration - Wikipedia](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Strongs Concordance

^{iv} *ibid*

^v The Complete Jewish Study Bible, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2016, P 1417

^{vi} *ibid*

^{vii} Word Pictures of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Vol. 1, Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, P 150