

Messiah Calls Out the Enemy The Mount of Transfiguration

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As we have been traveling through some of the highlights of Jesus' ministry, we have seen that He was constantly and consistently on the offense in spiritual warfare. If reclaiming lost souls from the gates of hell was His primary business, what should ours be?

John 15:18–27

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; if they followed My word, they will follow yours also. But all these things they will do to you on account of My name, because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But this has happened so that the word that is written in their Law will be fulfilled: ‘THEY HATED ME FOR NO REASON.’ “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, namely, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you are testifying as well, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (NASB 2020)

Ephesians 6:11

“Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Our job is to stand firm. Jesus has equipped us to do this by providing the Holy Spirit to dwell inside/ Each of us are now sacred space. There is no longer a need for a temple, each of us are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (NET 2nd ed.)

There are times, however, when we must move beyond standing firm and engage the enemy in actual combat:

1. when we're taking significant steps of faith for spiritual growth,
2. when we're invading enemy territory (through evangelism, for example),
3. when we're exposing him for who he really is,
4. when we repent and make a clean break with the world, a long-held sin pattern, or an unholy relationship,
5. when God is preparing us, individually or corporately, for a great work for his glory. (Ingram 2015, 109)

Again, Jesus is the one who called us to this mission and He is the one who has equipped us, each one of us, to be “more than conquerors.”

Romans 8:31–39

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring charges against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or trouble, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Just as it is written: “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE REGARDED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NASB 2020)

Last week we covered the event that took place at Caesarea Philippi also known to the Jews as the gates of hell. Jesus took His disciples to Bashan, to demon central, to the very place that was under control of the enemy and said in front of the enemy – it is on.

Matthew 16:18

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (ESV)

Jesus tells His disciples and announces to the enemy that His community, His congregation, His church (ἐκκλησίαν) will be built from people who had been on the path to hell.

ἐκκλησία, ας, ἡ (1) in a general sense, as a gathering of citizens assembly, meeting (AC 19.32); (2) as the assembled people of Israel congregation (HE 2.12); (3) as the assembled Christian community church, congregation, meeting (RO 16.5); (4) as the totality of Christians living in one place church (AC 8.1); (5) as the universal body of believers church (EP 1.22) (Friberg, Friberg and Miller 2000, 137)

Hell has no claim on those who align themselves with Jesus. He will reverse the curse of death and His own will rise on account of Him. (Heiser 2017, 96)

Once again, Jesus is on the offensive and He just made it crystal clear to the enemy that contrary to the past, they will now be under constant assault from those who are following Jesus. Remember, fallen divine beings as well as faithful divine beings are not all knowing, they do not have a clue as to what the entire plan is.

Up to this point, the information regarding the incarnation has been placed all around the scriptures, the entire story is not in only one place.

Why?

1 Corinthians 2:6–9

“Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—” (ESV)

The scriptures were designed to deliver truth in a manner to prevent hostile jamming. Just as in electronic warfare where the signal is spread out across the available bandwidth, YAHWEH did the same with His word.

So, view what just happened at Caesarea Philippi from the view of the enemy, they are being told by the Second Power in Heaven, the Angel of YAHWEH, the Captain of the YAHWEH's Host, the Word, that they are only experiencing the first wave of assault.

In other words, the church is to be involved in the very same warfare work that Jesus himself was involved in throughout his ministry. Based squarely on the “rock,” ministering in his authority and his accomplished victory, the church is to storm the fortress of Hades and bash down its gates. (Boyd 1997, 217)

What are they going to do about it? They do not have perfect information. They have free will and they are corrupt. They are also under siege and are beginning to get desperate.

Jesus' conduct will follow up actions less than a week after He issues His offensive war edict on the enemy. They really should not be surprised; this is what Genesis 3: 14 & 15 was all about.



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

In Mark, we see that Jesus provided a teaser that I am sure not only got the disciples talking expectantly, but also struck serious worry in the enemy.

Mark 9:1

And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.” (ESV)

Is Jesus talking about the events we are about to study?

The perfect tense of ἐληλυθυῖαν (come) indicates that they are not to see the ‘coming’ of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (kingdom of God,) but rather to witness the fact that it has come. The prediction thus focuses not on its arrival, but on the point at which its presence, already a reality, is (a) visible and (b) displayed ἐν δυνάμει (in power.) (France 2002, 344)

Mark 9:2–8

“Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John and led them alone up a high mountain privately. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiantly white, more so than any launderer in the world could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared before them along with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. So Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (For they were afraid, and he did not know what to say.) Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, “This is my one dear Son. Listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more except Jesus.” (NET 2nd ed.)

So less than a week after the previous events and the cryptic promise of verse one, we climb onto a high mountain and only with a few of the disciples. None of the gospels indicate that any travel took place right after the events in Caesarea Philippi, so the high mountain that would fill the bill is Mount Hermon.

So once again, let’s pause and think like a 30 AD Jew.

Where are Jesus, Peter, James and John?

Where is Mount Hermon located?

What happened in the past at Mount Hermon?

Mount Hermon, as readers will recall, was the place where, in Jewish literature such as the book of 1 Enoch, the sons of God of Genesis 6:1–4 chose to launch their rebellion against Yahweh. Jesus had one more statement to make to his unseen enemies. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 285)

We see that Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John.

Μετεμορφώθη – metamorphothe – We get the word metamorphosis from this word.

μετεμορφώθη (Root: μορφη, LN: 58.16; verb, aorist, passive, indicative, third person, singular) to be changed, to be transformed, to be transfigured. (Lukaszewski and Dubis 2009, Mk 9:2)

...”to change in a manner visible to others, be transfigured of Jesus, who took on the form of his heavenly glory Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 639)

Luke has the same event and provides some additional detail.

Luke 9:29–36

“As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And 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. Then it

happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and 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. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.” (NKJV)

In the midst of prayer, Jesus is transformed before the three disciples. Luke’s description of the change in Jesus’ face is more specific than the general reference in Mark 9:2 = Matt. 17:2 to his being transfigured (μετεμορφώθη, *metemorphōthē*). Matthew also mentions that Jesus’ face shone as the sun (ἐλαμψεν ... ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, *elampsen ... hōs ho hēlios*). Luke lacks a verbal description of what takes place, literally describing it as “the appearance of his face was other” (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἕτερον, *to eidos tou prosōpou autou heteron*, usually expressed in English as “Jesus’ face changed”). It is suggested that Luke omitted the verb μεταμορφώω to prevent confusion with an epiphany, which might have polytheistic connotations to a Hellenistic audience (Plummer 1896: 251; Creed 1930: 134; Liefeld 1984: 926). The point of these descriptions is that Jesus was physically transformed into a radiant figure whose brilliance extended to his clothes. Each of the Synoptics mentions in its own way the change in clothes: Matt. 17:2 speaks of clothes “white like light”; Mark 9:3 mentions “clothes glistening, very white as no bleacher on earth could bleach them”; Luke simply says “dazzling white” (Danker 1988: 198; Fitzmyer 1981: 799; Fitzer, TDNT 7:666) (Bock 1994, 867)

Jesus picks Mount Hermon to reveal to Peter, James, and John exactly who he is—the embodied glory-essence of God, the divine Name made visible by incarnation. The meaning is just as transparent: I’m putting the hostile powers of the unseen world on notice. I’ve come to earth to take back what is mine. The kingdom of God is at hand. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 286)

In the Transfiguration, a transformation took place and suddenly a very bright light penetrated through the body of Yeshua, lighting up and whitening His clothes. What they saw was indeed the glory that the Son of Man will have in His Kingdom; they saw the Shechinah Glory itself. Throughout eternity past, Jesus had always been characterized by this very glory. But when Jesus became a man at the incarnation, the Shechinah Glory—the glory of the Messiah—was veiled by His human body. Only at one point in His life on earth did the Shechinah Glory penetrate through the physical frame of His body, and that was at the Transfiguration. When the Transfiguration occurred, it was the out-shining of the glory of God. The veiled-glory was unveiled for a few moments before these disciples. (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 4)

Moses and Elijah

Moses and Elijah appear in heavenly glory, to speak to Him in connection with His death and all that He must suffer and endure in Jerusalem. Jesus came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, and so God specially sends Moses, through whom He had given the Law, and Elijah, the typical representative of the prophets through whom God had spoken and prepared the way for the coming of Christ. (Geldenhuys 1952, 281)

This is the only place in the Bible where Moses and Elijah are explicitly named together. Since Moses was forbidden from entering the promised land (Num 11:10–13), the two did not minister in the same region. But there was one geographical intersection between both their ministries—another mountain, Mount Sinai (Exod 19; 1 Kgs 19:8–18). Aside from Moses (and Joshua his helper), Elijah is the only other person in all of Israel’s history who went up Mount Sinai. And significantly, both Moses and Elijah witnessed a theophany on top of the mountain. If this connection is made, then the transfiguration, like many of the other narratives of Jesus’ life, is evidence that God is once again working in a way similar to how he had in the past. Once again Moses and Elijah are the spectators of the transcendent manifestation of God, only this time on the mount of transfiguration. (Foreman 2016, Mt 17:1-Lk 9:36)

...why these two men were there was that Moses had died but Elijah had not. Moses was there to represent the saints that will be resurrected. Elijah was there to represent the saints that will be translated or changed into immortal beings at the point of the Rapture, without having to go through the process of death. These saints will change in “the twinkling of an eye” while they are still living. (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 4)

So what were Moses and Elijah discussing with Jesus?

They were discussing His departure, His exodus.

ἔξοδον – exodon

Remember how we were discussing the similarities of the first exodus with the life of Jesus how He achieved success in each area where the nation had failed?

ἔξοδος, ου, ἡ (s. ὁδός; ‘going out, going away’...movement from one geographical area to another, departure, path, course[Ⓐ] of the mass departure or exodus...departure from among the living... (Arndt, et al. 2000, 350-351)

The discussion is about the soon departure of Jesus from planet earth.

Only Luke notes the glorified condition of the OT saints and their topic of conversation: Jesus’ “exodus” (ἔξοδον, exodon), which was about to come to fulfillment in Jerusalem. Fulfillment (πληροῦν, plērōn) is the key theme of this verse; the events discussed are part of God’s plan, which will come to pass. (Bock 1994, 869)

Notice what Peter, James and John were doing up to the point that Moses and Elijah showed up – they were falling asleep.

I wonder how they knew it was Moses and Elijah? This is not a vision, this is real.

While the visual experience on the mountain is unique in the gospel records, the voice from heaven echoes the voice after Jesus’ baptism in 1:11, and the two pronouncements together offer the most direct testimony to Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, declared on the authority of God himself. (France 2002, 347)

The events taking place, in real time on Mount Hermon with real people from both domains, also points to future events. Jesus said some would see the kingdom, well guess what Peter, James and John are seeing?

Now as we turn to the Mount of Transfiguration, it would seem to me that we have a clear preview of this. One would not wish to be dogmatic, but it would seem that we have represented, or at least illustrated—depending on how strongly one feels about it—what will happen on Resurrection Day. We have Moses, who represents the Old Testament dead; and we have the apostles, who represent the New Testament dead. But we also have Elijah, who, of course, is one of the two men of the Old Testament who we are told are “the translated ones.” And the Pauline epistles make it very plain that at the coming of Jesus Christ for His people, there will be translated ones. (Schaeffer 1982, 243)

1 Corinthians 15:51–58

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of

sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (NKJV)

We see aspects of the Kingdom, already and not yet. We see clear pointing to future reality as well as present reality.

Philippians 1:21–24

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes.” (NASB 2020)

2 Corinthians 5:1–8

“For we know that if our earthly house, the tent we live in, is dismantled, we have a building from God, a house not built by human hands, that is eternal in the heavens. For in this earthly house we groan, because we desire to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed, after we have put on our heavenly house, we will not be found naked. For we groan while we are in this tent, since we are weighed down, because we do not want to be unclothed, but clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment. Therefore we are always full of courage, and we know that as long as we are alive here on earth we are absent from the Lord—for we live by faith, not by sight. Thus we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Jesus is pointing to and showing reality

We are in the seen world and there are also the Christians who have died, who are with Christ now. It is not a primitive view, a kind of three-story concept of the universe. This is the biblical view of truth: there are two streams, two strands, a space-time reality—one in the seen, and one in the unseen. With these two lines before us, two equal lines of reality, let us return to the conclusion of our previous chapter. When God tells us to live as though we had died, gone to Heaven, seen the truth there, and come back to this world, He is not asking us merely to act on some psychological motivation, but on what really is. That is the second line, the second strand, of reality, that of the unseen, in which we personally will share between the moment of death and our return with resurrected bodies to the seen world at the second coming. Thus I am to live now by faith, rooted in the things which have been, such as Christ’s death and resurrection; what is, such as the second stream of reality in the unseen now; and what will be, such as my coming bodily resurrection and return with Christ. And this is not sheer passivity, as we have seen. God deals with me in the circle in which He made me; that is, in His image—as a man, not as a stick or a stone. There are unbiblical forms of “spirituality” which put their emphasis almost entirely upon some sort of “resignation.” The Bible rejects this. You are not just a beast in the field. It is not just a case of accepting. There is to be an activeness in our passivity. We have to be creatures because that is what we are—creatures. But in Christ we are presented with an opportunity, a calling, to be a creature by choice, to be creatures glorified. Through an active passivity, we are creatures, not of necessity but by choice, here in this present space-time, historic world. When I come to this point, no matter how many times I preach or teach it, it still takes my breath away. (Schaeffer 1982, 246-247)

The unseen realm is unseen but exists in time and space and is just as real as you and I. Jesus is demonstrating the reality of the world that was understood by the Jews to exist, and it is real. Peter wanted to build booths, this was not a vision.

Jesus picks Mount Hermon to reveal to Peter, James, and John exactly who he is—the embodied glory-essence of God, the divine Name made visible by incarnation. The meaning is just as transparent: I’m putting the hostile powers of the unseen world on notice. I’ve come to earth to take back what is mine. The kingdom of God is at hand. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 286)

Jesus is the Divine Warrior, the Captain of YAHWEH's Army, the Angel of YAHWEH. He is the one who took down the Assyrian army.

2 Kings 19:32–35

“Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.” That very night the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies.” (NRSV)

Jesus is the Creator, He is the Second Power in Heaven, He is God.

As the Divine Warrior, He is there to call out the fallen ones. He is giving them a direct challenge – I AM is here, what are you going to do about it.

Notice we hear from YAHWEH again in the same manner as He communicated when Jesus was baptized.

Luke 9:35

“Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”” (NRSV)

Mark 9:7

“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”” (NRSV)

The enemy knows who Jesus is, but, as noted earlier, the forces of darkness do not know the plan. Jesus has baited them into action, and act they will. He has given them the rope, and they will eagerly hang themselves with it. Jesus will go to Jerusalem to drink from the cup that the Father has planned for him. But the instrument of death will be the catalyst that launches the kingdom of God in its full force. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 287)

The Father points out for all who would listen, and that includes the fallen as well as the faithful members of the unseen realm, that Jesus, as we discovered earlier, is the direct descendant of David, He is the Messiah, and He is there to reclaim what has been stolen.

...the heavenly voice once again affirms the Sonship of Jesus in terms reminiscent of Psalm 2:7 (Mk 9:7). From the first declaration of Jesus' Sonship at his baptism (1:11) to the use of the term by the demons (3:11) and now at his glorious manifestation, “Son of God” is closely related to Jesus' mission of divine conflict. (Longman III and Reid 2010, Kindle Locations 1373-1374)

Later, Peter recalls these events. They happened in space and time, they were real and visceral, they were life changing.

2 Peter 1:16–21

“When we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, we did not follow any clever myths. Rather, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when these words from the Majestic Glory were spoken about him: “This is my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with him.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. Therefore we regard the message of the prophets as confirmed beyond doubt, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp that is shining in a gloomy place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever originated through a human decision. Instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (ISV)

By the time of the events in the region known in Old Testament days as Bashan—Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi and the transfiguration on Mount Hermon—Jesus knew that the hour of his death was fast approaching. He had provoked a confrontation with intelligent evil in many ways over the years of his ministry, but what he did and said in those two places was especially defiant. The move was calculated. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 288)

Jesus is now all about arriving in Jerusalem on the exact day and moment predicted by Daniel.

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