



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 17

"The Life of Christ: The Transfiguration of Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading this morning is found in the 17th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew; Matthew chapter 17. We have been studying, "Highlights of the Greatest Life" and we are now to take a look at the Matthean account of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus. Matthew chapter 17, verses 1 through 8,

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.' While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' And when the disciples heard, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, 'Arise, and be not afraid.' And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

Now I would like to read one verse, because it is very important for an understanding of this account, and it's the last verse of the preceding chapter and I want you to be thinking about it as we look at this great event in our Lord's life. Now this, of course, occurred some few days before it. Jesus had just heard the testimony from Peter that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God and he had begun to show to them that he must go to Jerusalem and die. And at the conclusion of some words that he spoke to them he said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." May God bless this reading of his inspired word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this inestimable privilege, the privilege of reading from the word of God. We thank Thee that we are able to have it in a book, in a book small enough to put in our coat pockets. And we thank Thee, Lord, for the fact that Thou hast preserved it and made it so available to us.

We thank Thee for eyesight to read it and we thank Thee that Thou hast opened our ears to hear its message and Thou hast opened our hearts to receive him of who it speaks, Jesus Christ our Savior, our Lord, and our God. And so, we want to express to Thee thanksgiving and praise for that which Thou hast done for us individually and as a group of believers in Jesus Christ.

And so, Father, as we think of the ministry of the word, we think in gratitude of the salvation which Thou hast provided. And we think also, Lord, of those who do not have the privileges and do not have the possessions that we have and pray that Thou wilt deliver us from a sense of self-sufficiency, spiritual laziness, so that we never have upon our hearts the burdens of those who are without Jesus Christ.

And we pray, O God, that Thou will touch this group of Christians so that their hearts go out in sympathy and in service and ministry to those who do not know Jesus

Christ yet. And we pray, O God, that Thou wilt so work in our group of believers, our church, our assembly, that in this place many may come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and from this place many may go forth strengthened to witness for him. And so, Lord, enable us to see our place in Thy plan in the light of Thy word. And, O God, help us always to be useable in the hands of our God.

We thank Thee for the privilege, for the opportunity and, Lord, we pray for others too who belong to Thee. We pray especially for this ministry next month in the city of Dallas and pray that it may accomplish the purpose that those who are offering it to the city of Dallas have in mind and that many may come to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

We thank Thee for the many other agencies which have been raised up by Thee to reach those outside of Christ and we pray that the church may learn as well as respond to the challenge that faces us. We thank Thee for those who are proclaiming Thy word to the uttermost parts of the earth and pray Thy blessing upon them today.

And as we think, Lord, of this group of Christians who are in this auditorium and we know the burdens and some of the disappointments and some of the perplexities of life that face them, may, O God, our hearts through Thy word be turned to the provision of our Almighty God through Jesus Christ. And may the ministry of the word strengthen us and console us and build us up in our most holy faith. We ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is, "The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ." This is one of the most astonishing of the experiences of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the one occasion in which the bright beams of his glory blazed through the sackcloth covering. It's strange then that commentators and preachers usually gushing blathers have become like Peter here who wist not what to say.

A few years back, I was preaching in Western Pennsylvania in a little church and was giving a series of messages on some of the events in our Lord's life. At the time, I

was studying the account of the transfiguration and since the pastor of the church was a man who was a graduate of the seminary and had a fair theological library, I asked permission one day to go in and study in his library from the systematic theologies, the subject of the transfiguration. And in the course of going into his library, I went over and I can still remember looking up on the first shelf and seeing the theology of Charles Hodge, one of the great Presbyterian theologians, and I took it down and looked in the index for the transfiguration account. And I don't remember all of the things that I found in the three volume set, but I remember there was practically nothing on the significance of the transfiguration.

Then next to Charles Hodge theology, there was the one volume set of the Baptist theologian, A. H. Strong. And so, I took down Strong's theology, turned to the index, looked in it and again, discovered nothing on the theology of the transfiguration. Well, next to that was the theology of Louis Berkhof, a one volume Reformed Theologian's theology and so, I took it down and looked for the theological significance of the transfiguration in that theology and found nothing again.

Well, right next to these were eight volumes bound in red and I thought as I looked at them that surely in this systematic theology there will be something on the transfiguration. And so, I took the index volume, the eighth volume down from Dr. Chafer's theology and looked for the transfiguration account and sure enough there were several references to the transfiguration in the index. And so, I hastily, I can still remember turning to them expecting to find something worthwhile, and to my horror and dismay, I discovered that while Dr. Chafer had several references to the transfiguration, there was no treatment of the theological significance of it in any of the eight volumes.

A few years ago after this, I was speaking in a home Bible class and I made reference to this fact in the little city of Richardson to the north of us, familiar to some of you in the audience. And one couple sitting in the audience had been members of a very well known Baptist church in this city all of their life, but had recently joined one of the

independent churches of the city. And when I made this statement about the fact that the transfiguration had been neglected, after the class, they came up to me and said to me, "You know, we've been in church all our life, but we thought that the transfiguration, that term, was a reference to the ascension of Jesus Christ. And, furthermore, we want to say that we have never in our experience heard a message on the transfiguration of Jesus Christ."

Now I've spoken on the transfiguration probably fifteen or twenty times and inevitably and invariably after I've spoken on it, somebody has come up and said to me, "Well, I never have heard a sermon on the transfiguration. You're absolutely right. It has been neglected." Why this silence about the transfiguration? Could we trace this silence to one of these things? Perhaps it is thought to be not so vital an event as the other events in our Lord's life. After all, the birth of Jesus Christ is very significant for this is the event in which our Lord Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, took to himself human nature to which he will be wedded throughout all eternity. It is the beginning of the movement of God toward the salvation of men and we would not hesitate to say that the incarnation is tremendously significant.

But perhaps it is thought that the transfiguration account is not so significant. The temptation account is surely significant and not only is it significant; it has a very large place in the theology of the Christian church. And I'm not suggesting that the transfiguration account is necessarily more significant than these events: the birth, the baptism, the temptation. I am suggesting, however, that it is just as significant. And I, of course, want to hasten to say that I do not think it is as significant as the death of Jesus Christ, which is tremendously significant and perhaps, the most significant event of his life and ministry. But if we say this account is not so vital as the other events, I think that we have already judged its significance wrongly.

Well, perhaps we're not taking that attitude to it, perhaps we are saying, "This account doesn't seem to be very practical. I can understand the practicality of the death

of Christ for it's the basis for my salvation. And I can understand the practicality of the resurrection of Christ for it reminds me of the fact that he, the living Savior, is my life. And that is very practical for me in my daily life to know that I can rely upon a risen Savior. And even the temptation of the Lord Jesus is tremendously significant because I learn from this the importance of God's word. I see that Jesus was able to overcome Satan by the use of holy Scripture and, hence, I know that the word of God is very important for me from the temptation account. But the transfiguration account, what is practical about this amazing and astonishing experience?"

Well, I'm not going to say that that really has much to be said for it. I do not think it does. I think it is a very practical event as we shall see. I don't want to debate the relative practicalities of these events; these are the opinions of men. But I think that probably the chief reason the transfiguration account has been neglected is because it is thought to be so mysterious that it is beyond our understanding.

After all, if we think for one moment of Jesus upon Mount Hermon and we think of the garments which became white as the light and the face which became as the sun, perhaps we can understand that. We can appreciate that in some measure. We know that some tremendous experience was undergone by him at this time. But when it comes to these two men, these visitors from the life beyond, Moses and Elijah, and that they come and they speak with our Lord Jesus upon the mount; it's too mysterious and it is beyond us. And, hence, I think that when we come to the transfiguration account, we read it, but we really do not pay much attention to it, because it is thought to be too mysterious, too secret for us to ever understand.

I do not think that that should deter us from the study of this event and I hope this morning as we look at this great event in our Lord's life that we shall learn the significance of it for it is practical, extremely important, and also an amazing prophecy of things to come. Matthew chapter 17 is in the context of the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus had withdrawn to the quietness of this area of the land and in

the shadow of snow crested Mount Hermon, he had heard Peter's confession that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And he knew that this confession had signaled the end of the ministry to the crowds and from now on his ministry would be primarily to the disciples.

Three intimates: Peter, James, and John, are chosen by him in order that they may see and hear the memorable things that transpired in the transfiguration experience. And apparently, this made such an impression upon them that afterwards they can hardly speak of this without a sense of awe. If John, for example, refers to the transfiguration, he may refer to it in the expression "and we beheld his glory" or Peter, who definitely does refer to it, says that "they were eyewitnesses of his glory." It seems that they never got over the awe of having been with him on the mount and heard the voice from

heaven. I would have loved to have been with Alexander when he crossed the Hellespont. I would love to have been with Caesar in his campaigns, which I read about so tediously when I was learning my second year Latin. I would love to have been with Wellington at Waterloo. Most of all, I would love to have been with Stonewall Jackson at Chancellorsville. I would like to have been with Daniel when he was in the lion's den, but I wouldn't like the lions to have known that I was there. [Laughter] I would like to have been with Paul in his missionary journeys. I would love to have been with him and heard him preach. I would like to have been with Luther and some of the experiences that he had, which were surely apostolic in the effects that they had.

But most of all, I would have liked to have been with our Lord Jesus Christ. And this, I think, would have been one of the experiences that I would have picked out, if I had an opportunity to pick out some experiences to have with our Lord, this would surely be one of them. I would like to have been here, "After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart."

Now Luke tells us that he was in an high mountain apart in order to pray and I want to stop for just a moment and make a suggestion to you. I want to suggest to you

that I know what Jesus prayed about. Now Matthew doesn't even say that he was praying, but Luke says it. And I know it's a very hazardous thing to suggest the topic of our Lord's Prayer when the Bible is silent on that point. And I want to preface my remarks by saying that I fully realize the Bible is silent on this point and, hence, I'm not claiming the authority of inspiration when I tell you that I think I know the subject of his prayer.

I believe that if you study the context and you remember that Peter has made his confession and now for the first time, Jesus has begun to teach his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and die, it is specifically stated in verse 21, "From that time forth Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem." That if this is when he really began his ministry of teaching them that he must die, going out of his way to point out this to them, I think it is the most logical thing in the world to gather that when Jesus went up on the mountain to pray, he was praying about that passion which is to come. In other words, this prayer is a prayer in view of the announcement that he must suffer.

And, hence, while he was praying, when the transfiguration experience came to him, it seems obvious to me that this is the answer of the Father to the prayer of the Son. The prayer of the Son is the prayer, which he shall have as a theme, which shall reach its climax in the agony of Gethsemane, when he look at it next week, we shall see it, in which he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

But now his heart is occupied with Calvary and he is praying with regard to it. And as he is engaged in prayer, the transfiguration experience, I say, is the Father's answer to the prayer of the Son. And the Father's answer is essentially this, "There will be no removal of the cross. The cross is a necessary step along the way, but in order to assure you of the ultimate success of the mission in which you are engaged, I give you this experience of the transfiguration, which is a foretaste of our Lord's kingdom (as we shall see), as an encouragement to the Son of God." In other words, there is no removal

of the cross, but there is a revelation of the glory of the kingdom to come to encourage our Lord in the work to which he is engaged.

Now the text says in the 2nd verse, "And he was transfigured before them and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light." It is very interesting to me that this text states that not only was our Lord transfigured, but this transfiguration extended to his countenance and it extended to the garments that he was wearing. The Greek here is very strong and the word "was transfigured" is a word that refers ordinarily to the inmost being of a man. And so, I think that there was a fundamental change in our Lord Jesus that took place for a moment on that mount, an experience in the inner man that reflected in the outer man and even touched the garments that he was wearing.

Now I want to insert, at this point, just a practical word because I say sometimes it is thought that this event is not very practical. I want to suggest to you that there is a great lesson in this and the lesson it seems to me is obvious that time spent in the presence of the Lord leads to the transfiguration of the one who spends that time in his presence. In other words, we can expect from this statement and from this experience that a similar kind of experience befalls the man who gets off by himself and spends time in the presence of our Lord in prayer and in the study of God's word.

Now I don't have to guess about this because the New Testament says it very plainly. Paul says, "But we awe with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image." And by the way, he uses the same word "are changed into the same image from glory to glory even by as the Lord the Spirit." In other words, we can expect that if we spend time with the Lord, there will be a measure of transfiguration in our lives.

Not the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus, which of course, is a reflection ultimately of his essential deity. Someone has said, "God turned up the flame and Jesus Christ was able to stand all of the flame of the divine search light and stood there in all of his essential glory." If God were to turn up the flame of his holiness in our lives, a great deal

would be burned away, but Jesus was completely holy. We, however, can expect that if we spend time in the presence of the Lord, we shall be changed.

Now I don't think this is something that we just preach about and so I want to say a word to you this morning. I want to say a word to you in love and as an acting elder who is attempting to shepherd that this to me is one of the most significant things in Believers Chapel. That is, your relationship to God in the study of God's word, and in the fellowship that you have with him in prayer.

May I ask you a personal question? You don't have to answer me, how much time have you spent in God's word this past week? Has there been a time when you got off by yourself and opened up God's word and studied it, allowed him to speak to you through holy Scripture? And then has there been a time when you, in response to this, offered him some petitions, some worship, some praise, some gratitude for that which you discovered through God's word, for that which the Holy Spirit gave you as you studied the Scriptures?

Well, then if you have not spent this time with the Lord and you come this morning discouraged and defeated and somewhat disturbed and if you leave this morning and you're not helped a bit, please don't blame it this morning on me. It's not my fault. It's really your fault. It's not the fault of the elders of Believers Chapel; it's really your fault. The fault, you see, lies in the fact that we do not take advantage of the opportunity that is before us.

And something else I want to say, I think that there may be some significance in the fact that Jesus Christ's raiment was white as the light. You see, when a man spends time in the presence of the Lord, not only is he himself changed, but even his countenance is different. You know, it's the first thing that you learn when you go to lands where the gospel has never been preached that when you look at the people ordinarily they are very, very unhappy.

If you go to the lands of the east, you see the lusterless Chinese, the impassive Japanese, the sensual bromines of India, the animal like Africans of certain parts of that Dark Continent where the gospel has never come. Because you see, when a man is outside of Christ, it not only reflects in the inner man, you can see it on his face and you can see it in the United States of America, too, in the hardness that grips men and women today who do not know Jesus Christ.

But in the midst of this, go into a little meeting where believers honor Jesus Christ and what a difference there is on the faces of those who know him. That's why when they come in Believers Chapel, people ought to be able to say, "These people look a little different to me. They seem happy." And, hence, if you're here and you're sour and you're impassive looking and it looks like you really have eaten a lemon this morning instead of bacon and eggs, it may be that "Well, you know this is the reflection of the inner man."

But not only this, Jesus' garments were white and glistering. Because you see, the experience of being a Christian is not only something that touches the inner man, not only something that touches the countenance, but it even touches the habits of life and you ought to expect a Christian to be a little more courteous, for example, than the man outside of Christ. You ought to expect the Christian man to have just a little bit better manners, and I know my wife is going to say something to me after this. She's going to remind me of what I've said because she's been preaching to me recently about this. [Laughter] We ought to have better manners. We ought to be gentlemen, we who are men, more than the world if we are Christians. In other words, the time that we spend in the presence of the Lord Jesus should touch the inner man, it should touch our countenance and it should touch all of our actions.

Now this is a tremendous lesson I think. I don't think you could have a more practical lesson than this simple fact right here. Last week I had an occasion to see a man of whom I had only heard. I knew Mr. Northcote Deck who was an outstanding

missionary in the South Sea Islands. He was a tremendous man and a thorough Christian through and through and a man whose inner light expressed itself in his countenance and in all of his dealings with men. He was the kind of man that you could mark out and say; "Now there was a Christian man." In fact, it almost seems as if he's the kind of man you want to put on a pedestal and say, "He is a real example."

This past week, I had the opportunity to see his brother, 84 years of age now, but the moment that you came into his presence, you sensed that this man was a Christian. And how different it is to see an 84-year-old Christian and an 84-year-old non-Christian; it's all the difference in the world. Here is a man who is happy, joyous, fruitful in the Lord, because he's having experiences of the presence of the Lord Jesus and had had them through the years built up in the faith.

Well, I think this is tremendously important from a practical standpoint, but we must move on. We read, "And, behold, there appeared unto him Moses and Elijah talking with him." Have you ever wondered about this conversation that took place? Why were Moses and Elijah there? Well, they were two witnesses; I say nothing about Revelation chapter 11. You who are Bible students, of course, you'll catch immediately the connection. Here are two witnesses to the fact that the cross is the pathway to the kingdom. Luke tells us that, "They appeared with him in glory and they spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." His "exodus," the Greek text says for the word for "death" there is the word from which we get the word "exodus."

Now I think it's very important here to notice what they were talking about. They weren't talking about baseball and how the Jericho Juleps and the Jerusalem Jumbos were fighting for the World Series at that day. They weren't talking about football. They weren't talking about the Beersheba Bears and the Dan Donkeys and who was going to win and appear in the bowl game. They weren't talking about politics. They weren't saying, "I wonder when Herod's going to get the axe and who's going to succeed Pilate

when they get rid of him?" What were they talking about? Why they were speaking about his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now it doesn't take any intelligence at all to sense that this subject is the most important subject that heaven has to speak about. Heaven it seems is always concerned with the cross. The theme of the angels, the theme of heaven is the sufferings of our Lord upon the cross at Calvary. The theme of the prophets, the theme of the law was Jesus Christ who was to come and even now the theme of heaven is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now we move on into the New Testament period and we notice that the apostles are not interested in football and baseball; although, I do think that they attended those meetings. It is evident from Paul's writings that he was very much interested in athletics and I think if he had lived in our day, he would have definitely used professional football as an illustration of spiritual truth. That's only, by the way, an observation. It does not have any scriptural authority, I assure you.

But these men, most of all, were interested in the cross and, you know, it's an astounding thing that when you get into the Book of Revelation and you read in the Book of Revelation about the things that heaven is speaking of and you discover that they are still speaking about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It must be tremendously important if it's the theme of heaven in the past, in the present, and in the future. And so, Moses and Elijah speak of our Lord's decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now I think there is more to this than just that, because you see, I think there are some implications, which I think we may logically draw from these things. In the first place, I think we have some clear light on the nature of death. Job said many years ago, "If a man die, shall he live again?" In one sense only Jesus Christ can give us a true word regarding that for it is only in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus that we know ultimately that there is a life beyond the grave. The prophets have spoken to us of that life. They gave us revelation from God, but it is our Lord Jesus who gives us the final word.

But I think that we can sense, if we look at nature, that there is something beyond this life. We say when a man dies that he has become out of connection with his environment, if we speak scientifically. But if we look at the seed which falls into the ground and dies and out of it comes the beautiful plant and we reflect upon that fact, we should probably have some idea that there may be a life beyond the grave.

Furthermore, if you get to my age and you look at life from the standpoint of that promontory, you discover some things about life, which it seems to me, are kind of universal among those who reach this age. And that is that this life is not enough to accomplish the purposes that you sense that God has for you. You look out over your life and you think of the things that you would like to do and the things that you might have done, the things that you want to do now, and you know that it is impossible for you to do it and you sense that down underneath there must be some time in the future in which we can do these things.

We look at the savages. The savage buried his axe and his drinking cup with his friend who died, because he anticipated that he would be able to use them in the happy hunting grounds beyond. There's a kind of unanimous testimony to the fact that there is life beyond the grave and the transfiguration account testifies to this for in this vision, our Lord Jesus sees Moses and Elijah. And, furthermore, Moses and Elijah speak to him and they speak intelligently. And so, in the light of the experiences found in the Old Testament, in the light of the truth of God, in the light of the experience of our Lord Jesus and in the light of his words and Paul's words, we can unmoor our boat in cheerfulness knowing that when we pass from this earthly existence, we are going straight into the presence of the Lord Jesus. Now isn't that a wonderful hope? Isn't that wonderful? Don't bury any implements with me. Don't put my '61 Plymouth in my grave. I won't need it. I'm going to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Now there's more to this event in that too. I think we have some light on the dead too, because you see, Moses and Elijah appear and they are very conscious of what's

going on, on the earth. They're conscious of life. I don't think that you can really be conscious without having memory. And so, I think, and I may startle you and I'm saying, "I think" notice? I think that it is true that those who are in the presence of our Lord know what is going on down here on the earth. And, furthermore, they know the way things are moving too.

Now you might say immediately, "Well, how can anyone know in heaven what's going on, on the earth, if they're genuine Christians and not live in unhappiness, because if you look at what is going on, on the earth and see what's going on down here, you surely have to be unhappy?" And, of course, there is a sense in which that strikes home very logically, but just a moment. Let me ask you to remember this that God sits in heaven and he knows exactly what is going on down here on the earth and he knows exactly what is to go on in the earth and yet he sits in heaven in the bliss of eternity and in the bliss of deity.

Hence, though he knows, he's not sad and unhappy, because he knows the end to which these things move. And I think the believers who are in the presence of the Lord Jesus and who know what is going on down here on the earth are not unhappy, because they have the thoughts of God about the things that are happening here on the earth. They know that these things lead ultimately to the joy of the Lord and to the joy of the believer.

Well now, at this point, we have some advice from the fallible pope, "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'" Now you know this is not only a senseless suggestion on Peter's part, this is a positively sinful suggestion for if Peter's suggestion had been taken, then three little tabernacles would have been constructed upon Mount Hermon and there they would have sat for the remainder of their days. In the meantime, Jesus Christ's cross would not have come to pass. It is not only a senseless suggestion, it is a sinful suggestion. And so, after Peter

makes his little suggestion, "Lord, let's build us a kind of cloister existence here and forget the future," we read in verse 5, "While he still speaking."

Now I want to translate this Johnson translation, "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'Shut up, Peter!'" [Laughter] Now that's my translation. But you laugh, I'm going to suggest that there's a lot of truth in just what I've said. I grant you, it's only a paraphrase and it's a very weak one at that, but it is the spirit of the voice that came from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear him! Peter, for goodness sake, stop that babbling!"

Now the text says in other places that Peter babbled because he was afraid and he didn't know what he was saying and how true it was. But God put the finger upon him and while he was still speaking, you know, I've often said this to you and I'll say it again in case some have not heard it, I really think he had more to say. If I know Peter, and you'll remember he and I come from the same family, he's a Johnson, I'm a Johnson. His son was Barjonas, son of John, mine's Johnson. I think I know him [Laughter]. I think that what he intended to say, he wasn't through you see, while he was still speaking, and I can show you, by the way, that that text word in Acts chapter 10 does refer to the fact that he was interrupted if I had time. What he intended to say was this, "Let's make three tabernacles here: one for Thee, one for Moses, one for Elijah and three more: one for James, one for John, and one for Peter." [Laughter] He wanted to preserve the memory of this experience. And so, the voice comes and the voice says in words very, very similar to the baptism voice that came to Jesus then, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

If I read the baptism account correctly, the words that came from heaven are, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". And remember, I pointed out to you that that meant, "You are the King of Psalm 2 who will engage in the work of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah of Isaiah chapter 40, verse 42 through 53. In other words, you are the King who will suffer." Now that was a word given directly to our Lord. But

in the transfiguration account, in the presence of the disciples, we have the same statement made. And so, I gather that the primary point of this transfiguration account is to stress the Messiahship of our Lord Jesus. Not to our Lord, he has already received that assurance at his baptism, but now to the disciples themselves, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him. He's the Prophet who brings you the word from God." For he's the Prophet symbolized in those words "hear ye him", which come from the great passage in Deuteronomy chapter 18. He's the Messianic King of Psalm 2 and he's the Suffering Servant who shall suffer. He is the anointed King then who shall suffer, pay attention to him. And we read, "And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and they were sore afraid."

Now I have just a few moments and I want to kind of very quickly sum up the significance of the transfiguration account. The significance of this account I can state in seven points and I'm not going to try to expound them all. First of all, it is the authentication of the Son as Messiah by virtue of the glory of that transfiguration experience. He is rejected by men, but he is not rejected by God. Death is the way to life and the way to the kingdom. If we want to know him and to know life, our faith must be in this one who knows the way to that life.

I heard a sermon preached by a great Southern preacher. In the course of it, he told a simple little story. He said he once went out hunting with a friend of his who had a little boy and they hunted all day long and when night came, they began to make their way home. And the little boy had been out for the first time that day and he was a little frightened out in the woods in the darkness. And the little boy looked up to his father and said, "Pop, you know the way outta here?" And the father said, "Yes, son, I've been here before." And because Jesus has entered into the experience of death and entered into the experience of resurrection, we know that when we put our trust in him we can be sure that we have someone who can guide us out of the darkness of human existence

into the bright light into the presence of God. He is the Son of God and the transfiguration account authenticates him as that Messianic King and Son.

But it is also the anticipation of the earthly kingdom to come. I read the 28th verse because this is the key to the interpretation of the transfiguration experience, "Verily, I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Interpreters have wrestled with this through the years because they didn't want to see the obvious interpretation of the passage, which the early expositors and the early fathers clearly saw and which the apostles themselves give us. They try to say this is a reference to our Lord's Second Coming, but all are dead by that time. Or they try to see this as a reference to the resurrection or the coming of the Holy Spirit, but all are alive at that point. He says here, "There are some standing here, which shall not taste of death."

What does he mean? Why the some, you see, implies the special privilege of a few as over against the remainder. And in the light of the fact that after this statement in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have the transfiguration account in which Jesus says, "Peter, James, and John, some of the ones standing there, come up with me in the mountain." It's obvious that our Lord intends for us to understand the interpretation of "the some" to be the three: Peter, James, and John and if that is true, then we read, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." In other words, the transfiguration account is a fore view of our Lord's kingdom upon the earth. It is then an eschatological event. It is a kind of foreshadowing of what is to come.

Now I understand why Mr. Strong says nothing about the transfiguration. Now I understand why Professor Hodge says nothing about the transfiguration. I still don't understand why Chafer doesn't say something about it, but I understand Mr. Hodge and I understand Mr. Berkhof and I understand Mr. Strong, because not a one of them believe

that our Lord Jesus was going to have a kingdom upon this earth. And so, it is obvious why they pass by this account.

Now I want to show you that this is apostolic interpretation and not just Johnson's interpretation. Though, of course, I usually think my interpretations are apostolic, you understand? But 2 Peter chapter 1, and I want you to notice these words very carefully, and this time, I want to appeal to this man as a man who knows. Not because he's the first pope, but because he was one of the apostles and he was on the mount with our Lord Jesus.

Now notice verse 16, 2 Peter 1, that's page thirteen seventeen in the Approved Edition of the King James Version: 2 Peter 1:16. That's the New Testament. It's after 1 Peter, some of you are still turning, that's good keep turning, keep on turning, and we're gonna wait for you. Have you got it? Look in your index. Look on the person next to you if you can't find it. Don't pay any attention to those that are sitting there so smug and self-satisfied, they are the Pharisees [Laughter]. Verse 16 now, Peter is speaking and he says,

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming (Now notice it, "When we made known unto you the power and coming" that is a kind of hendiadys in Greek, you all understand this, but for the sake of the seminary fellows, it means it's the use of two words to express one idea. And so, I'm just going to translate it "the coming") in power of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his glory. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

In other words, he says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we told you about the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why we were in the

mount with him and we heard his voice. We were eyewitnesses of the kingdom, the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, the transfiguration then is a fore view of the kingdom.

But, let's don't miss the point of the application Peter makes in verse 19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." In other words, "We have seen the word of God fulfilled, hence, you better take heed to the word of God. It will all be fulfilled." What a tremendous warning this is to us. All of the things in holy Scripture shall be fulfilled. We may laugh at them, we may be indifferent to them, we may care nothing about them, but the time is coming when they shall be fulfilled. How much better it is for us in the presence of God to acknowledge the authority of his word and to act in accordance with it.

Well, very rapidly now, thirdly, this is the illustration of the inhabitants of the kingdom as well. The Messiah is on the mount, Israel is there represented by Peter, James, and John, the dead saints represented by Moses, the raptured saints represented by Elijah and the Gentiles, the multitude about the mountain to which they will come down in just a few moments.

It is the illustration of personal resurrection too for as we see our Lord Jesus transfigured, we have some indication of what it means to have a resurrection body and Moses and Elijah are the pledge, too, of light beyond the grave. It is the confirmation of Old Testament prophecy. It all shall be fulfilled. It is also the proclamation of the costliness of our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

We often say, "Jesus came from the glory of heaven to die for men." I would suggest to you that he came twice. Not only did he come and not only was he born in the manger in Bethlehem, but he was the only individual who by right of his own inherent nature could have stepped into heaven and stayed there on the Mount of Transfiguration; he could have. He's the only person who ever lived a perfect life. He

did not have to die except as it was God's plan. And so, when the second time on the mount, he came down from the glory of that mount, and we hear him in a few moments saying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" we know that Jesus came from the glory twice in order to die for men. If Moses should have had his experience and Elijah should not have died, much more the Son of God.

And so, lastly, it is the evaluation of the strength of our Lord's passion for the souls of men. If you want to know that Jesus Christ really cares, I ask you to look at the mount and watch him as he leaves the mount and the glory and heads with steadfast assurance to the cross at Calvary. This is a measure of what it cost him to die.

But the converse is also true; it's a measure of how much he loves us. "When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain, I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small, love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all." This to me is the message of the transfiguration account. May it come home to your heart not only its prophecy of the kingdom, not only of its exhortation that we spend time in the presence of the Lord, but the assurance of the love of Jesus Christ for us and the costliness of his infinite salvation. If you're out of Christ this morning, I appeal to you too. This is a measure of how much he loved you and this is a measure of how much he wants you to be his. Won't you come to him, put your trust in him, believe on him in your heart and pass from death into life? Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was transfigured on the mount, the love of God the Father, who has attested the glory of the Son, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, who makes all of these things personal to our hearts, be in abide with all who know him. Father, we pray for those who do not know him, that in their hearts they may turn to Thee and say, "I thank Thee, O God, for

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Jesus Christ. I take him as my personal Savior." May Thy presence go with us. For Jesus'
sake. Amen.