

Transfiguration Sunday

OLD TESTAMENT – Exodus 24:8-18

⁸ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” ⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank. ¹² The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.” ¹³ Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. ¹⁴ He said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.” ¹⁵ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. ¹⁷ To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. ¹⁸ Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

24:8 *blood of the covenant.* See Mk 14:24 and note. (Some manuscripts have “the new.”) (CSB)

The writer of the book of Hebrews explains the significance of this ratification ceremony for us as NT Christians with the words: “When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.’ In the same way, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:19-22). (PBC)

Under the covenant the people were called to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6). (The priests were consecrated in this way.) Only through the cleansing of forgiveness could they become special. This is a covenant of grace, initiated by God and made possible by His willingness to transfer the people’s guilt to the animals sacrificed for forgiveness. Only after entering into this covenant are the people set apart and equipped as God’s people. The shed blood of Christ consecrates God’s people of the new covenant as a holy nation with a holy purpose (1 Peter 2:9). Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice for all sin has the power to consecrate all people to God. In a real and spiritual way His blood is applied and His forgiveness is appropriated in Holy Baptism, in Absolution, and the faithful hearing of the Word. His atoning blood is received in a real and physical way in the Lord’s Supper: “this is my blood of the new

covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

24:9 *went up*. See v. 1 and note. (The action, temporarily interrupted for the Book of the Covenant (20:22–23:33), is resumed from 20:21. Moses and his associates would ascend the mountain after the events of vv. 3–8. (CSB)

Nadab and Abihu. Aaron’s two oldest sons. Nadab would have succeeded Aaron as high priest, but he and his brother died because they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord (see Lev 10:1–2; Nu 3:4). (CSB)

seventy ... elders. Cf. Nu 11:16; perhaps representing Jacob’s 70 descendants.) (CSB)

These ministers represent the whole nation before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

24:10 *saw ... God*. But not in the fullness of his glory (see 33:20; see also notes on 3:6; Ge 16:13; Nu 12:8; Eze 1:28). (CSB)

No one could see God and live, but the elders did not die. The Lord is never described physically in this passage, but Moses describes the place where the Lord appeared. (TLSB)

Describes God’s acceptance of His people and the intimate fellowship between God and sinners (cf 33:18–20). (TLSB)

No OT passage ever describes God. God does not want Israel to make an image that looked like Him. (LL)

The Lord graciously dimmed His absolute glory in some way. (PBC)

It gives the Israelites tangible assurance that through the covenant they have become acceptable to approach God, and they can be sure of His promise to bless them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

UNDER HIS FEET – This implies that the deputation did not dare to raise their eyes to God. (Concordia Journal – April 1991)

sapphire. See NIV text note. (CSB)

(lapis lazuli) – This reminds us of the vision described by the prophet Ezekiel recorded in Ezekiel 1:25-28. Again we are reminded of those beautiful pictures in the book of Revelation, when that great multitude of the redeemed that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language will be standing before the throne of God in front of the Lamb, when “they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

They will not need the light of the lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:4-5). (PBC)

sky. Symbolized by the blue color of the “sapphire” (see Eze 1:26). (CSB)

24:11 *raise his hand against*. See 9:15.

This also appears to qualify the statements of verse 10. If, especially in view of Exodus 33:20, we might expect that a direct observation of the theophany would have meant certain death, these words may indicate the extraordinary nature of this event, marking this as a unique event in the history of Israel. (Concordia Journal – April 1991)

There’s something a little alarming about this OT passage. Usually the Scriptures are very comforting. So why, we ask, would God “raise His hand” against His people? That’s our problem, you see. It seems that we’ve lost the accurate picture of the true God of heaven and earth; we’ve substituted a god of our own making. The true God deals in categories of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood. God, in the popular mind, is an enabler who helps us do whatever our little hearts desire. That god does not exist; that god is a pure fabrication. Maybe the reason people have grown confused and complacent in the Christian faith is that we have lost sight of the reality of sin and judgment. The sobering truth is that if God kept a record of our sins, there would not be a person left alive among us. “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law” (Galatians 3:10). And we have not done them. That’s the simple truth. Only Jesus has fulfilled the whole will and law of God. Dying our death in our place, He offered us His very own life to live. As a sign of His love and as an encouragement to our faith, He gives us a feast here in the wilderness of this world. What Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu could do only once, we can do over and over again. For as long as the earth endures, every time we eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in His remembrance, we eat and drink in the presence of God. Thankfully, He does not lift His hand against us. There is pardon and peace in Jesus’ name. There is comfort for every sorrowing heart and solace for every sinner crushed by the bitter memory of shattered promises. In that meal God Himself give us forgiveness of sins in the body Jesus gave upon His cross and the blood He shed for all. Along with forgiveness comes life – life to begin again. (Where in the World is God?)

leaders. Lit. “corners,” “corner supports”; used in the sense of “leaders” only here. Cf. Gal 2:9. (CSB)

ate and drank. A covenant meal (cf. Ge 26:30; 31:54), celebrating the sealing of the covenant described in vv. 3–8. It foreshadows the Lord’s Supper, which celebrates the new covenant sealed by Christ’s death (see 1Co 11:25–26). (CSB)

The degree of fellowship is evidenced by the shared meal. (TLSB)

The Lord's Supper gives us a foretaste and guarantee of the future messianic banquet we will enjoy with the Lord (Rev. 19:7-9). Then we will see God and eat and drink as did Israel's representatives. In fact, the Lord's Supper gives us even more. In Exodus 24 the two events were separate in time. The Israelites received the blood of the covenant at the bottom of the mountain, and they saw God, ate, and drank at the top of the mountain. In the Lord's Supper these two events are brought together; the bottom and the top of the mountain events are united. Now we eat the Lord's body and drink His blood of the covenant at the same time. Even now we are privileged to see the Lord, though in hidden form behind the bread and the wine. What blessings the Lord gives us in His Supper! (LL)

24:12 *Come up.* See note on v. 1. (CSB)

It is a fitting close to this ratification of the covenant between the Lord and Israel at Mount Sinai. Moses now at the Lord's own request ascends the mountain to receive the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments, as well as detailed instruction concerning the building of the tabernacle, the place of the covenant. (PBC)

tablets of stone. See note on 31:18. (CSB)

their. The people's. (CSB)

God set the terms. He initiated the covenant with His people by rescuing them from Egypt. (TLSB)

instruction. As instruction from the covenant Lord, the laws were divine directives. (CSB)

The Hebrew root for the word law means to "point, direct, or instruct." Hence, the Law is Torah, instruction! It is not primarily a precept in legal form, but rather a revelation of God's instruction on how his people are to live. God wrote the manual on living. If people would follow the instructions, they would find life more pleasing and fulfilling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

24:13 *Joshua his aide.* See note on 17:9. (CSB)

Moses' aide and second-in-command. He would later lead the people into the Promised Land. (TLSB)

24:14 *Hur.* See note on 17:10. (CSB)

Probably the son of Caleb, one of two faithful spies. (TLSB)

24:15 CLOUD COVERED IT – Clouds for OT people meant God's presence. The transfiguration of our Lord replicates the mountain, the cloud cover, the glory of the

Lord, and the calling to Moses from within the cloud. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

24:16 Moses does not inform us about his activities during the previous six days. (TLSB)

24:17 *glory of the LORD*. See 16:10. – The glory of the Lord appearing as a consuming fire as well as a cloud is reminiscent of the experience of Israel’s wanderings in the desert, where God’s presence was indicated to them in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1) (CSB)

24:18 MOSES ENTERED THE CLOUD – Holy and majestic, yes, like a consuming fire. Yet at the same time gracious and forgiving, receiving Moses as a mediator of His covenant with His people. (PBC)

Moses and Joshua continued up the mountain to a point at which Joshua stopped and Moses ascended farther. Moses waited until the seventh day and then entered the presence of the Lord. (TLSB)

stayed on the mountain. Moses did not come down until he had received instructions concerning the tabernacle and its furnishings (see 32:15). (CSB)

forty days and forty nights. Jesus, the second Moses (see note on v. 2), fasted for the same length of time (see Mt 4:2). (CSB)

Moses stay on the mountain finds its parallel in Jesus’ fasting for the same length of time at his temptation in the wilderness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

It was a miracle that he could do this without eating and drinking. The number forty occurs here as well as in Elijah’s journey to Horeb (described in 1 Kings 19:8), Christ’s temptation in the desert, and Israel’s wandering in the wilderness. In every case it involves a time of testing as well as of strengthening by a merciful Lord. (PBC)

EPISTLE – 2 Peter 1:16-21

16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1:16 *cleverly invented stories.* Peter's message was based on his eyewitness account of the supernatural events that marked the life of Jesus. It was not made up of myths and imaginative stories as was the message of the heretics of 2:3. (CSB)

Peter defends himself against the false teachers' charge that he and the other apostles invented stories about Jesus' coming and the final judgment. (TLSB)

STORIES – *muthos* – This word stood for mythical stories about gods, the creation of the world, miraculous happenings, etc. – All attacks of Satan on the church sooner or later come around to this – an attack on the apostles and prophets of the Lord as true and authoritative sources of information about the Lord. That attack is as old as Eden: "Did God really say...?" The new breed of teachers who were demanding attention in the Asia Minor churches were disparaging the reliability of Peter, the other apostles, and the written message of the OT prophets. (PBC)

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ's transfiguration the disciples received a foretaste of what his coming will be like when he returns to establish his eternal kingdom (Mt 16:28). (CSB)

Refers to the Lord's glorious return when, with great power, He will subdue all His enemies and consummate His kingdom. (TLSB)

A better translation than "coming" is the real meaning of the word *parousia* which in the NT refers exclusively to Christ's Second Advent, when He will come "on the clouds of the sky [heaven], with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Peter recognized the deadly peril. They were denying the power and coming of Jesus Christ. They were leading to doubt that Jesus really does possess and exercise God's power, that He truly does enter people's lives and work on their behalf. They were leading people to think that Jesus would never come back, that they were not accountable to Him for their beliefs and lives. (Sound familiar? "You will not surely die...") The bitter irony is that the very people who were making up cleverly invented stories (2:3) were accusing Peter of making up cleverly invented stories. As Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels rediscovered many centuries later, if you tell lies long enough and loudly enough, people will start to believe them, not matter how shocking or outrageous. (PBC)

eyewitnesses of his majesty. A reference to Christ's transfiguration (see vv. 17–18; Mt 16:28–17:8). (CSB)

Peter, along with the other apostles, was an eyewitness to Jesus, the Son of God, who came in the flesh. (TLSB)

His glorification is a surety to Christians that they some time later shall be partakers of His glory. – With these statements Peter is establishing himself as a credible, trustworthy witness, in contrast to the others who were circulating myths and fables. Peter, James, and John also fulfilled the OT requirement of having three witnesses to verify truth (Deut 17:6; 19:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Jesus' divine glory was revealed at His transfiguration, which anticipated His second coming. (TLSB)

1:17 *received honor and glory.* The Son received both the honor of being publicly declared the Father's Son and the glory of revealing His divine majesty on the Mount of Transfiguration. (TLSB)

the voice. That of God the Father. (TLSB)

MY SON WHOM I LOVE – Literally, “My Son, my Beloved, is this One. It means a relationship of never abandoning Him. Jesus is my Substitute. I am not God's son as is Jesus, but God says of me, through Christ: “You are My child, My beloved.” – When the glory-cloud blazed around Jesus on the very high mountain, the Father was demonstrating His approval of His Son's person and work. He also showed that through Christ He was present on earth among His people. (PBC)

the Majestic Glory. Hbr manner of referring to God the Father indirectly; a tradition among the Jews, who tended to speak indirectly of Him. (TLSB)

1:18 SACRED MOUNTAIN – It is called “holy” not because of what it was but because of what happened there.

Mount of Transfiguration. Cf Lk 9:28–32. (TLSB)

1:19–21 Peter's message rests on two solid foundations: (1) the voice from God at the transfiguration (vv. 16–18) and (2) the still more significant testimony of Scripture (vv. 19–21). An alternative, but less probable, view is that the apostles' testimony to the transfiguration fulfills and thus confirms the Scriptures that predicted such things. (CSB)

1:19 WORD OF THE PROPHETS – *prophatikon* – Peter is saying that the Scriptures are more certain than experience. The word “prophets” embraces the OT as a whole. Peter is saying that the Gospel as taught by him and his fellow apostles was not only confirmed by the testimony of God from heaven, but by all the prophecies of old.

OT Scriptures, which confirm the entire apostolic witness of Christ. Thus, Peter's personal eyewitness account of the transfiguration is trustworthy because it rests on this authority. (TLSB)

more certain. Or “very certain.” (CSB)

Bebaioteron – More firm. After seeing Christ’s majesty, the OT prophecies were surer than ever to the apostles. – When they became witnesses of His majesty, this their own experience with Christ made the entire prophetic Word more sure to them. They experienced a revelation that fulfilled and confirmed the OT prophecies of the Messiah’s glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

LIGHT SHINING IN DARK PLACE – auchmaros – A dry and parched, dirty, dark and murky place. Since it is a human heart it needs to be constantly enlightened. – Satan is the prince of darkness and everybody who works for him knowingly or unknowingly spreads his darkness. In Satan’s darkness some people are proud of their own goodness, hostile to the idea of needing a Savior, and satisfied that they can figure out right and wrong by themselves. (PBC)

Until the Lord returns, the prophetic Word guides and directs God’s people like a light shining in the darkness. (TLSB)

the day dawns. Day of Christ’s return. (TLSB)

MORNING STAR – The whole world may then see Him in His majesty and glory. However, this glory will then shine into the hearts of Christians so that they are glad and will lift up their hearts with joy, because their own glorification is now at hand. When one this Day has come, the prophetic Word is no longer needed. But until then Christians are to heed this word. – This comparison agrees with Psalm 119:105. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1) – God’s written Scripture will never lie; it is absolutely dependable; we can lean our lives on it. The best way for Christians to grow in their certainty of what they believe is go back to God’s written Word. (PBC)

Cf Rv 22:16. Luther: “We must have the light [of the Word] and cling to it until the Last Day. Then we shall no longer need the Word, just as artificial light is extinguished when the day dawns” (AE 30:166). Luther: “He bids us fix our eyes and keenness of mind on the Word alone, on Baptism, on the Lord’s Supper, and on absolution, and to regard everything else as darkness. I do not understand, or care about, what is done in this world by the sons of this age; for they crucify me. I cannot escape or draw away that horrible mask which hides the face of God, but I must stay in darkness and in exceedingly dark mist until a new light shines forth” (AE 8:33). (TLSB)

1:20 Two major views of this verse are: 1. No prophecy is to be privately or independently interpreted (cf. the false teachers in 3:16). The Holy Spirit, Scripture itself and the church should be included in the interpretative process. 2. No prophecy originated through the prophet’s own interpretation (the sense of the NIV). The preceding and following contexts indicate that this view is probably to be preferred. In vv. 16–19 the subject discussed is the origin of the apostolic message. Did it come from human imaginings, or was it from God? In v. 21 again the subject is origin. No prophecy of Scripture arose from a merely human interpretation of things. This understanding of v. 20 is further supported by the explanatory “For” with which v. 21 begins. Verse 21 explains v. 20 by restating its content and then affirming God as the origin of prophecy.

– No Scripture passage is to be interpreted on the basis of one’s own subjective ideas.
– Man-made laws and teachings have caused tremendous damage to people’s faith and lives over the years. Human imagination is endlessly rich with self-invented notions to foist on the gullible and immature. Joseph Smith dreamed up a weird mythology in New York in the early 19th century, and the multi-million member Mormon organization of today is the result. Man-made notions such as purgatory, prayer for the saints in heaven, and legitimization of a homosexual lifestyle only lead people away from Christ. (PBC)

Biblical authors wrote not what they thought or interpreted of the times but what God inspired them to write for their time and all of time. (TLSB)

1:21 PROPHECY NEVER HAD ITS ORIGIN IN THE WILL OF MAN – Verse 20 and 21 seem to confirm the interpretation that Peter is pointing to Scripture as even more sure than the experiences of eyewitnesses. However, for us his eyewitness testimony is now part of that same inspired, sure Scripture. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

In contrast to false teachings (cf 2:1), genuine prophecy is never of human design, desire, or origin. (TLSB)

carried along by the Holy Spirit. See note on 2Ti 3:16. In the production of Scripture both God and man were active participants. God was the source of the content of Scripture, so that what it says is what God has said. But the human author also actively spoke; he was more than a recorder. Yet what he said came from God. Although actively speaking, he was carried along by the Holy Spirit. – Prophecy did not originate with the will of man but was given to man and through men under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

The Scriptures are of divine origin as the Holy Spirit personally inspired each of the authors, in accord with their own style, to write only the words that God had given them. “They were holy, says he, since the Holy Spirit spoke through them” (SA III VIII 13). Luther: “We do not let ourselves be troubled by the blasphemies which the devil, through the mouths of his lying servants, speaks against Christ the Lord—now against His divinity, now against His humanity—and by the attacks which he then makes against Christ’s office and work. But we cling to the Scriptures of the prophets and apostles, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Their testimony about Christ is clear. He is our Brother; we are members of His body, flesh and bone of His flesh and bone” (AE 22:23). (TLSB)

The process is called inspiration; that is, the third person of the Holy Trinity makes it His task to bring information from God to a chosen human being (the prophet), moving the person to write and supervising the content so that the finished product may be called the very words of God Himself. Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), making a wordplay on the Greek word *pneuma*, which mean both “Spirit” and “breath.” God’s breath, as though He were speaking out loud to us, comes

from each page of sacred Scripture. We can depend on it for our lives! We must pay attention to it! (PBC)

1:16–21 Peter had seen a glimpse of our Lord’s glory on the holy Mount of Transfiguration. We have the prophetic Word of God, on which the faith and hope of our Lord’s triumphant return in glory depends. By God’s grace in Christ, we are now “a holy nation, a people for His own possession” (1Pt 2:9). • O Lord, thank You for calling us out of darkness into Your marvelous light. Help us to proclaim Your excellencies through word and deed. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 17:1-9

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. ⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

Jesus has just begun to show his disciples that God’s plan for him as the Christ (16:16) will take him to Jerusalem to suffer and die and rise to eternal life (16:21). Peter’s rebuke of Jesus (16:22) is likely representative of all the Twelve, as is almost everything else Peter says or does in Matthew’s Gospel. After rebuking Peter (16:23), Jesus has taught his disciples that their way will be a cruciform existence as well (16:24-28). He has grounded this teaching in the promise that he, the Son of Man, is about to come in power and glory to judge everyone (16:27). In fact, before they taste death, some of the disciples will see with their own eyes the reign of Jesus, the Son of Man (16:28). This man who goes to the cross will also be raised and will appear in unthinkable glory. (CC p. 851)

Now God vouchsafes to some of those disciples the privilege of seeing the glory of Jesus, so that they might continue to learn that “cross” and “glory” are not mutually exclusive categories, but are the divinely ordained sequence of salvation, both for the one who accomplishes it and for those who receive it in him. The chief purpose of the transfiguration in Matthew’s Gospel is to proclaim the true identity and glory of Jesus, so as to undergird and support Jesus’ difficult teaching about the cross. This glorious Jesus is one of who has begun to teach about God’s unexpected way of salvation. His teaching is true, and the Father’s voice from the cloud emphatically commands Jesus’ disciples both then and now, “Listen to him!” (17:5). One day, this glorious One will return, and judgment will be given. Until then, “listen to him!” (CC pp. 851-852)

17:1-8 The unit moves, in a sense, from glory to glory. Perhaps not surprisingly, what propels the story forward is the way that Peter interrupts and speaks foolishly (17:4) when he should be silent and “listen” (17:5). Matthew quickly narrates how Jesus ascends a high mountain with three disciples in tow and how his appearance is radically changed before their very eyes (17:1-2). In a style that seems somewhat uncharacteristic, in 17:1-2 the evangelist employs kai, “and,” as he lays independent clause next to independent clause with no predicate position participles. The final declaration, headed with de, perhaps marks the end of the introduction: “Jesus did take,... and he did bring up, ... and he was transformed,... and his face shone,... and (de) his clothes became...” Jesus and the three disciples are on the mountain, and he is radiating glory and majesty. (CC p. 852)

If this were not impressive enough, Matthew now employs his well-beloved imperative idou, “look,” to mark a new development to which Peter feels the need to respond (17:3-4). Now Moses and Elijah appear to the disciples, who perceive that the two mysterious figures are “speaking together with” Jesus. Incredibly, Peter interrupts the glorious conversation with his own impetuous words. It is not clear whom Peter includes in “for us to be here is good.” Most likely he refers to himself along with James and John. Then he offers to make three shelters, one for each of the three great ones who are there on the mountain. (CC p. 852)

In the next part of the unit (17:5), Matthew’s narrative offers no explicit evaluation of Peter’s words. Implicitly, however, the noteworthy twofold use of idou, “look,” underscores the further revelation and silences Peter. While Peter is still speaking, “look,” a bright cloud overshadows the group. With a second rapid “look,” Matthew tells us that the Father’s voice speaks from the cloud. Peter had grouped Jesus together with Moses and Elijah, offering to build a booth for each of them. The Father’s word contravenes Peter and focuses attention solely on Jesus, whom the Father names again (as in 3:17) as his “beloved Son, in whom” he is “well-pleased.” The emphatic command “listen to him” reveals the folly of Peter’s rash decision to speak and elevates Jesus over both Moses and Elijah. (CC pp. 852-853)

In 17:6-8, the amazing incident draws quickly to a close. For the first time in this passage, the disciples are said to be terrified (17:6), and they fall on their faces and stop looking. Jesus approaches and touches them and speaks patient and forgiving words: “get up and stop being afraid” (17:7). The disciples look up, and Matthew emphatically states that “they saw no one except Jesus himself, alone” (17:8). He is the Son of God. They are to listen to him and to him alone. (CC p. 853)

17:1 *six days*. Mark also says “six days”(Mk 9:2), counting just the days between Peter’s confession and the transfiguration, whereas Luke, counting all the days involved, says, “About eight days” (Lk 9:28). (CSB)

Indication that Peter’s confession of faith and the transfiguration are closely connected. (TLSB)

This time reference is quite remarkable in Matthew's narrative. It is the first specific reference as to the passage of time in the entire Gospel. Since Matthew rarely employs such references and shows no interest in overtly assigning symbolic or theological meanings to them, there is likely no more significance to this notation other than to reflect the historical and chronological reality. (CC p. 849)

TOOK – *paralambanei* – A tender word used frequently by Matthew. It occurs six times in Mt 1 and 2 with reference to Joseph taking Mary or the Child.

As elsewhere, I have given a somewhat archaic translation for the historical present tense verbs: "Jesus did take along... and he did bring them up." Perhaps the two historical presents are intended to the reader imaginatively involved in a new dramatic development. (CC p. 849)

Peter, James and John. These three disciples had an especially close relationship to Jesus (see 26:37; Mk 5:37). (CSB)

Three of the first disciples called (4:18–22). Jesus selected them several times to be with Him at key moments (26:37; Mk 5:37). (TLSB)

It is not clear why Matthew has put the article in front of "Peter" but no article before the other two names. In Matthew "Peter" is almost always arthrous, whereas there is more variety with other proper names. (CC p. 849)

These three were intimates of Jesus. They were witnesses to His greatest glory on earth but also His deepest degradation. Both required the fuller faith. (Ylvisaker)

high mountain. Its identity is unknown. However, the reference to Caesarea Philippi (16:13) may suggest that it was Mount Hermon, which was just northeast of Caesarea Philippi (see note on Lk 9:28). (CSB)

Possibly Mount Tabor or Hermon. Mountains were common sites for significant events: temptation (Mt 4:8), sermon (5:1), prayer (14:23), feeding of 4,000 (15:29); God revealed Himself to both Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai (Horeb; Ex 19:3; 1Ki 19:8). (TLSB)

The location, however, is not as important as the event. So, too, the place where we hear the Word is not nearly so important as the fact that we do hear it, and in faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

by themselves. Luke adds "to pray" (Lk 9:28). (CSB)

This prepositional phrase is adverbial meaning "privately." (CC p. 850)

The night on the mountain was spent in prayer and thus Jesus renewed His strength for His arduous work... upcoming death which He had just spoken to the disciples about. (Ylvisaker)

17:2 *he was transfigured.* His appearance changed. The three disciples saw Jesus in his glorified state (see Jn 17:5; 2Pe 1:17). (CSB)

Gk *metamorphoomai*, “to change into a wholly different form or appearance” (Eng “metamorphosis”). Christ’s human appearance became dazzlingly bright as He displayed His divine glory. (TLSB)

The passive of *metamorpho* literally means “to be changed in form.” The Greek enters English as “be metamorphosed.” The same meaning, but derived from the Latin equivalent, is “be transfigured.” The twofold change is described as “his face shone like the sun” and “his clothes became white as the light.” This was a clear demonstration of His deity. Contrast Jesus’ “form” here (-morph in the verb) with the usual appearance of Jesus during His ministry in “form (morpha) of a slave in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

It was for Jesus to give Him comfort and strength for His suffering and death. It was a sign of what glory that the Father would give after the perfection of His redemption work. It was also for the disciples. This should fortify them against the offense which lay in His humiliation and a sign and pledge of what they, in common with all believers, were to experience in the kingdom of glory (2 Peter 1:15 ff). (Ylvisaker)

Jesus has already taught that, when he comes again at judgment to separate out the weeds from the wheat, the righteous will “shine forth like the sun. The glory of the righteous will be reflected glory that comes from their relationship with the father through the Son. (CC p. 853)

Romans 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

17:3 *Moses and Elijah.*† Moses is the representative of the old covenant and the promise of salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Elijah is the appointed restorer of all things (Mal 4:5–6; Mk 9:11–13). The disciples here witness the confirmation of Jesus’ claim (5:17) that he fulfills the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Lk 9:31 says that they talked about Christ’s death. See note on Lk 9:30. (CSB)

The great lawgiver and the outstanding prophet were representative of the OT Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets (5:17; 11:13). (TLSB)

Even a relatively uninformed disciple of Jesus can recall the times when the great mediator and Law-giver (Exodus 24 and 34) and the great prophet (1 Kings 19) went up

into the mountain and spoke with the Lord God. As with the account of Jesus walking on the sea with power over the troubled creation (Mt 14:22-33), here it is difficult to avoid the implication that Matthew wants his hearers/readers to see in Jesus the embodiment of Israel's God, now visible to them. (CC p. 855)

These two are the foremost agents of God's salvation in the OT. They point to Jesus as the one who fulfills the entire OT story of redemption. The ministries of both ended in a very unusual way, each pointing to the resurrection of Jesus. God himself buried Moses in a location unknown to anyone (Deut 34:5-6), and so his body could not be found. Elijah was spirited directly into the heavens in a whirlwind (2 Kg 2:11) and death had no hold on him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Moses was the founder of the Old Covenant. Elijah, the restorer, the reformer, the mightiest of the prophets. Moses was cared for in death and Elijah was taken in a fiery chariot to heaven. Jesus will be preserved in death – His body shall not see corruption (Ps. 16:8 ff; Acts 2:24 ff), and He shall return in life to heaven. (Ylvisaker)

TALKING WITH JESUS – Luke reports that they spoke about his departure (exodus, His exodus) which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem (Lk 9:31). In the preceding context of Matthew, 16:21 gives weight to the view that the three spoke about Jesus' coming death. Like the word "departure" in English exodus (Lk 9:31) is used figuratively for death (2 Peter 1:15; 2 Timothy 4:6), and in the early church of martyrdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Moses and Elijah appeared to them, speaking together with Jesus. (CC p. 850)

17:4 LORD, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE – Peter may have felt as though he and his fellow disciples were almost in heaven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Peter's proposal gives Jesus the same honor shown for Moses and Elijah, thus implying that Jesus was equal with them. (TLSB)

The infinitive "to be," is the subject of the linking verb clause "good it is" and the accusative pronoun "us," is the subjective of the infinitive. English usage requires adding "for us to be here is good," or this could be rendered more loosely as "us being here is good." Who does Peter include in "us"? Most likely he refers to the three apostles – himself, James and John – although that would be clearer if Peter went on to say "we will make three shelters" instead of "I will make three shelters." If Peter intended to include Moses and Elijah in "us," the pronoun would imply that the apostle regards himself (and perhaps James and John) to be in the same category (with the same status before God: as the towering OT figures who now appear in glory. (CC p. 850)

three shelters. See notes on Mk 9:5 (Peter may have desired to erect new tents of meeting where God could again communicate with his people (see Ex 29:42). Or he

may have been thinking of the booths used at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:42). In any case, he seemed eager to find fulfillment of the promised glory then, prior to the sufferings that Jesus had announced as necessary.); Lk 9:33 (Temporary structures to prolong the visit of the three important persons: lawgiver, prophet and Messiah. The idea was not appropriate, however, because Jesus had a work to finish in his few remaining days on earth.). (CSB)

By suggesting this he probably wanted this to continue. The announcement of Jesus death (16:21) must have staggered them. Perhaps Peter thought it would be better to stay there than to face Jesus' prediction. It indicates a desire for permanency of glory apart from the suffering of the cross. Mark and Luke tell us that Peter spoke these words because he was so frightened that he didn't know what else to say (Mk 9:6; Lk 9:28-36). It might seem that Peter, being true to his character, was reacting to this awesome sight when perhaps he should have been silent. This is a good lesson for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

17:5 God also revealed His presence on Mount Sinai with a cloud (Ex 19:9). (TLSB)

A VOICE FROM THE CLOUD – The booming witness from the Father is similar to the one He gave at Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

them. Jesus, Moses and Elijah. (CSB)

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. The same words spoken from heaven at Jesus' baptism (3:17). No mere man, but the very Son of God, was transfigured. (CSB)

The Father answers the question Jesus had asked His disciples in 16:15. What Peter, James, and John had not heard at the Baptism of Jesus (3:17), they hear now. (TLSB)

It's significant that the Father first spoke these words when His Son formally began His ministry of rescue, and now repeats them as the Savior prepared to complete His mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

"This one" is the key, not Moses or Elijah. The Son is the one who fulfills Israel's hopes and promises and brings the royal reign of God. God silences Peter, who has been speaking when he should not, giving voice to his own inadequate perspective. (CC p. 858)

LISTEN TO HIM – akouete – Keep on hearing him. We too are directed to the voice of Christ, to Christ's Word, which is God's Word, and not to wonderful visions. We have enough in his Word. That is a bright light, which gives light to us in this dark world, and shows us the way of salvation. Refusing to listen to the Prophet Moses (Deut 18:15) as he speaks to us through Scripture (Jn 5:39) and those who proclaim his

message (Lk 10:16), is a serious matter indeed, for it signifies that one is not a child of God (Jn 8:47) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Moses had foretold that God would raise up a prophet to whom the people should listen (Dt 18:15). Jesus was that prophet. He alone knows the Father, who has handed over all things to His Son (11:27). “All who want to be saved ought to listen to this preaching. For the preaching and hearing of God’s Word are the Holy Spirit’s instruments. By, with, and through these instruments the Spirit desires to work effectively, to convert people to God, and to work in them both to will and to do” (FC SD II 52). (TLSB)

Given the prior pericope of 16:21-28, where Jesus had to brutally reject Peter’s point of view and teach his disciples about the way of the cross, as well as the teaching that will follow in 17:9-14, the present infinitive *akouete* here probably is emphatic: “listen to him!” The next verse begins with a participle of the same verb *akousates*, “when they heard,” and shows what happens when the Three cannot help but “listen,” at least on this occasion. (CC p. 851)

The truth to which the disciples need to listen has to do with the new revelation that Jesus has now begun to show to his disciples about the way of the cross for himself and for them (16:21-28). Without this understanding of Jesus’ person and work, there can be no true understanding of Jesus at all. Without this understanding of the life of discipleship, there can be no discipleship at all. (CC p. 859)

17:6 *fell on their faces*. The disciples were overcome with awe at what they saw and heard. (TLSB)

terrified. Primarily with a sense of awe at the presence and majesty of God. (CSB)

The great fear that caused the disciples to fall face-down on the ground reminds us of the later event in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the words of Jesus, “I am He!” caused His would-be captors to fall to the ground (John 18:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

17:7 CAME AND TOUCHED THEM – He approached them and not vice versa. Because of our sins and sinfulness we are afraid to approach him. But he mercifully comes to us. This is like a parent touching a frightened child. On the last Day believers will be able to stand up in his presence, not because of their own strength, but because Jesus has come and taken hold of them by his grace. When Jesus takes hold of us, he casts out our fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

Jesus moved the disciples out of their dazed state by this human gesture. (TLSB)

DON’T BE AFRAID – The power and comfort of these words rests in the fact that Jesus is the speaker. He is the one who gave his life for our salvation. As a child’s fear is dispelled by a loving parent’s words, so our fear is dispelled by the words of Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

The aorist passive of “rise here probably has the intransitive active meaning “rise, get” rather than the truly passive sense of “be raised.” Since the prior verse explicitly say that the disciples were very frightened, here “do” plus the present imperative “not fear” means “stop being afraid.” (CC p. 851)

17:8 NO ONE EXCEPT JESUS – Earthly home, earthly ambitions fade away and die. Jesus is still with the souls that trusted in Him. He is with them as certainly when they go down into the work and the trials and the temptations of the commonplace routines of daily life, as He was when they were with Him on the mount. (PC)

Moses and Elijah had vanished; Jesus had resumed His normal appearance. (TLSB)

The focus is exclusively on Jesus, and not at all upon Moses and Elijah, who are now gone. (CC p. 851)

As sinners our feelings are very fickle. We can be ecstatic one moment, fearful the next. Christ and his Word give us a steady new spirit.

17:9 DON'T TELL ANYONE – The command to be quiet about this mountaintop experience until Jesus' death and resurrection is because those events will put the transfiguration into proper perspective. The transfiguration is not so much a saving event in itself, but the pre-figuration of Jesus' resurrection glory. The divine glory was put on display so that we could understand the death and resurrection of Jesus as the dramatization of John 3:16. In the words of Peter, the transfiguration made the Gospel “more certain” (2 Peter 1:19). – People were not prepared to receive the lesson. Had the story been told, people would have stumbled at the cross which would not have been seen as a fitting sequel. (PC)

What the three disciples had seen was obviously out of the ordinary. Until Jesus rose from the dead, the general public and the other disciples could not properly understand it. (TLSB)

The dative “madevi – to no one” of the indefinite pronoun “madeis, - no one,” is the indirect object of the aorist subjunctive “eipate – say, tell.” The indefinite pronoun with “ma – also functions as the negative particle that, together with the subjunctive, forms a negative command or prohibition. One could also translate the clause as “do not tell the sight to anyone.” (CC p. 862)

I have rendered the neuter singular noun “vision” (only here in the Gospels) as “sight.” In modern English, “vision” could refer to something that was only experienced internally by those to whom it was granted. In biblical usage, “vision” can refer to dreams and visions perceived only in the mind of the recipient. However, “visions” can also no to events in history visible to everyone present, and these kinds of things that were seen include the events of the transfiguration. Given the continuous physical presence of Jesus himself before, during, and after the “sight” on the mountain, there can be no

doubt that what happened involved objective (real, historical), publicly visible and audible realities. (CC p. 862)

The contradiction is once more right in their faces: their Master seems determined to head toward death. The glory of Jesus' appearance and the fearful divine presence and powerful voice of the Father were all incomplete. (CC)

UNTIL THE SON OF MAN HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD – This “until,” clause certainly envisions at time for the reversal of the main clause: “after the Son of Man is raised, then the disciples should “tell the sight.” (CC p. 862)