"THE UNVEILING OF CHRIST"

(The Transfiguration)
Matthew 17:1-13
7/1/2018

INTRODUCTION:

See Christ for who He is!

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INTRODUCTION:

Read the poem: *"The Incomparable Christ"*

Who was this Jesus Christ?

When the Son of God became the Son of man, His divine glory was veiled from human view. In His incarnation He took on all the features of mortality and humanness with one exception: He did not have a sin nature (Heb. 4:15; Jn. 8:46; II Cor. 5:21).

Christ's incarnation involved a change in His position and state.

Note the humility of Christ as evident by the following changes He underwent in becoming man:

a. A change in His dwelling-place
(from the presence of the Father to the presence of men - Jn. 6:51)

b. A change in His possessions
(from riches to poverty - II Cor. 8:9)

c. A change in His reputation among men
(from glory to obscurity - Jn. 17:5; Phil. 2:6, 7)

d. A change in His position
(from equality with God [in authority] to servanthood - Mt. 20:26-28; Phil. 2:6, 7)

e. A change in His form (bodily appearance)
(from the form of God to the likeness of men - Phil. 2:6-8)

Christ only surrendered the use of certain divine attributes.

EX: the ability to do all (omnipotence; Mt. 28:19)
the ability to know all (omniscience; Mk. 13:32)
the ability to decide all (omnisapience; Lk. 2:52)
the ability to be everywhere (omnipresence; Jn. 14:28)

Christ possessed the essential elements of human nature.

a) Jesus had a body (Heb. 2:14, 16; I Jn. 4:2, 3)
b) Jesus had a soul (Mt. 26:38)
c) Jesus had a spirit (Lk. 23:46)

Jesus exercised all the attributes of human existence.

a) Birth (including pre-natal development -Lk. 2:6, 7)
b) Growth and development (Lk. 2:40, 52)
c) Physical appetites
   (1) Hunger (Mt. 4:2)
   (2) Thirst (Jn. 19:28)
   (3) Sleep (Mt. 8:24)
d) Emotions
   (1) Anger (Mk. 3:5)
   (2) Sorrow (Jn. 11:35)
   (3) Compassion (Jn. 13:23)
   (4) Anguish of soul (Jn. 12:27)
e) Human restrictions and limitations
   (1) Fatigue (weariness - Jn. 4:6)
   (2) Exhaustion (Lk. 22:43)
   (3) Time/space limitations (Mk. 11:13)
   (4) Death (Jn. 19:30)

V. 1

"After six days" - Jesus would fulfill His promise of 16:28 right after He gave it, so the prophecy would be fresh in the disciples' minds.

"After six days" - six full days (excluding this day, plus the day of the actual Transfiguration) - totally eight days - Luke 9:28).

"Peter, James, and John" - This core group of disciples formed an "inner circle" which is often singled out as having a particularly close relationship with Christ (cp. Mk. 1:29, 5:37, 13:3, 14:33; Lk. 8:51). They were all of the same trade and were close companions with each other before following Christ (Lk. 5:10).

Why three men? Three would be an adequate witness to verify or confirm this vision: *"On the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed"* (Dt. 19:15; Mt. 18:20) (cited by MacArthur, p. 62).

"An high mountain" - "The text does not name the place where this miracle took place. It was probably on Mount Hermon, which is close to Caesarea Philippi (16:13)" (Wiersbe, p. 60).

In Matthew 17:1-13, God (as it were) pulls back the curtain and unveils who Jesus really is!

As Peter previously revealed Jesus to be the Christ with words (Mt. 16:16), now God the Father reveals Jesus to be the Christ with a vision (a visual, three-dimensional, sensational appearance of who Jesus really is).

***See Christ for who He is!**

I. His Bright GLORY Was Unveiled (v. 2)

"Transfigured" - aorist passive voice - The Father transformed the incarnate Son to give the disciples a preview of the same glory Christ will display when He comes to establish His future eternal kingdom.

"Transfigured" - *metamorphoo* - to undergo a change in form, to be totally transformed

[While believers are commanded to be transformed inwardly (Rom. 12:2), Christ was transformed externally (outwardly) on this occasion.]

According to Luke 9:29, this alteration of Christ's appearance occurred *"as He prayed"*. As Jesus prayed, the disciples slept (Lk. 9:32), and when they awoke *"they saw His glory."*

"As the sun" - John saw the blazing glory of Christ in Rev. 1:13-18 and described *"His countenance"* as being *"as the sun shineth in his strength*" (at high noon) (Rev. 1:16).

This is the same bright, brilliant intense supernatural light that blinded Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:3.

Ezekiel also saw the glory of Christ, which will one day fill His temple (Ezek. 43:1-2, 4).

"Many years later, John recalled this event as the Spirit led Him to write: *"And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). (cited by Wiersbe, p. 61)*

(Jesus is called: *"the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person"* (Heb. 1:3).

"Raiment was white as the light" - Mark includes this detail - Mark 9:3 - *"And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."*

Such whiteness speaks of the absolute purity, holiness and righteousness of Christ, just as the white garments of the saints signify their righteousness in Christ (Rev. 3:4, 5; 6:11; 19:8, 14; cp. Is. 1:18).

Such a garment of brilliant white also identifies Jesus with the *"Ancient of days"* in Dan. 7:9 - *"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."*

This display of Christ is a picture of His glory (Lk. 9:32) that will be manifested at His second coming (Rapture) (Mt. 16:27, 24:30, 25:31; cp. Jn. 1:14, 12:41, 17:24; I Pet. 1:11, 4:13).

When Christ returns He will destroy the Antichrist *"with the brightness of His coming"* (II Th. 2:8)

II. His Special <u>UNIQUENESS</u> Was Unveiled (v. 3-7)

V. 3

"Moses and Elijah" - Two men representing the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Many believe these two men will be the two witness of Rev. 11:3, who will perform the same miracles as Moses and Elijah did in the Old Testament (EX: Moses - water into blood; Elijah - draught for 3 1/2 years) (Rev. 11:6).

Elijah is sure to return (Mal. 4:5; Mt. 17:10-11).

"Talking to Him" - What was the subject of their holy conversation?

These two prophets of old (Moses and Elijah) appeared (somehow, miraculously materialized ***"in glory"*** - in glorified form) and spoke with Jesus concerning ***"His decease"*** (lit. "his exodus") from the earth by death at Mt. Calvary in the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 9:31).

(Note: The timing of this discussion is very significant because it falls upon the heels of Peter's [Satan's] denial of Christ's suffering and death (Mt. 16:22) -- What carnal Peter denied, Moses and Elijah confirmed.

V. 4

When Peter said this, he did <u>not</u> realize what he was saying (Lk. 9:33b).

Peter instantly wakes up out of his slumber and impetuously requests permission to build three tabernacles (tents, booths, or shelters, like that built in the Old Testament) - ***"one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah***".

Why does Peter ask to build such things?

Peter, being a Jew, recalled the bright, Skekinah glory that filled the O. T. tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-38). Now, seeing the splendid glory of Christ, he asks to build three tabernacles to house the glorified Christ as well as the glorified Moses and Elijah.

What is wrong with such a request? Answer: Peter gives Jesus, Moses , and Elijah "equal billing." He wrongly puts them on par with the Son of God. So now the Father comes on the scene and straightens this matter out.

V. 5

This ***"bright cloud"*** overshadowed (enveloped) them - while the words were in Peter's mouth, suddenly this extremely brilliant cloud (like a white fog) falls upon them, sending a fearful feeling through their "spines" (Lk. 9:34), and a voice (which Peter never forgot - II Pet. 1:17, 18) began to speak out of the cloud.

The voice of God the Father said: ***"This (one)*** **[not the other two - Moses and Elijah)** ***is my beloved*** (Eph. 1:6) ***Son" --*** The Father proclaims the UNIQUENESS of the Son! Jesus was not a mere prophet (like Moses and Elijah).

"In whom I am well pleased" - As Jesus testified - *"I do always those things that please Him"* (Jn. 8:29).

These are almost the identical words the Father spoke at Christ's baptism (Mt. 3:17).

"Hear ye Him" - Listen to Him! Give Him your ear! Give attention to Jesus!

The Pharisees questioned: *"Why hear ye Him?"* (Jn. 10:20). Jesus responded: *"My sheep hear my voice"* (Jn. 10:27) and *"He that hath ears, let him hear."* (Mt. 13:9, 43).

He was saying, in effect, "If my Son tells you He must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die, believe Him. If he tells you He will be raised up on the third day, believe Him. If He tells you to take up your own cross and follow Him, that is what you are to do. If He says He will come again in glory, then believe Him and live accordingly" (MacArthur, p. 68).

"The Father will not permit His beloved Son to be put on the same level as Moses and Elijah" (Wiersbe, p. 63).

Christ's glory will not be shared with another (is. 42:8). Christ alone must be honored with the same honor given only to the Father (Jn. 5:23).

Beware of detracting from Christ (beware of robbing Him of the glory He alone deserves).

V. 6

"They fell on their face" - This is always the response of a fear of God (EX: John in Rev. 1:17).

No one sees the glory of God or hears His voice and remains the same!

V. 7

"Touched them" - a touch of comfort (cp. Rev. 1:18).

"Be not afraid" - there is no need to fear when Jesus is near!

III. His Humble <u>INCARNATION</u> Was Unveiled (v. 8-13)

V. 8

The cloud now left, the voice ceased, Moses and Elijah was gone, Jesus' glory was again veiled. He was back to His incarnate human physical body.

Several things reveal the humility of Christ's incarnation:

--He was transformed back into *"flesh and blood"* (v. 8)

--He called Himself *"the Son of <u>Man</u>"* (v. 9, 12)

--He would *"suffer"* at the hands of mortals (v. 12)

V. 9

This vision was to be kept secret until after Christ's resurrection. Why? Probably because they would not believe it until then. Another reason is that Jesus wanted His Messianic glory to be confidential until after He had died to atone for man's sin.

There can be no kingdom without a cross!

V. 10

The disciples are wondering, "If you are going to die and rise again and then establish your kingdom," (cp. Mt. 16:28), "why do the Scribes say 'Elijah must come first?'" (ie. before the inauguration of Your Kingdom)

They asked in effect: How does this chronology work? Where does Elijah's coming fit into all this?

V. 11

"Elias truly (certainly, assuredly) shall (will in the future) come" **-** Before the "Day of the Lord" God promised that He would send the man who never died (II Ki. 2:1, 11) back to the earth to prepare the way for the Lord's coming (Mal. 4:5).

Jesus does not deny the promise of Mal. 4:5. He affirms it.

V. 12

However, He also says that there was a sense in which Elijah already came - He was mistreated (as Jesus would be) in the person of John the Baptist (v. 13).

V. 13

When asked "Are you Elijah?" John said, "I am not" (Jn. 1:21).

John was not literally Elijah, but as Luke 1:17 says, he prepared the way for Christ *"in the spirit and power of Elias"*

Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's first coming (Mal. 3:1; Mt. 11:10), Elijah (perhaps as one of God's two witnesses - Rev. 11:3) will prepare the way for Christ's second coming (Mal. 4:1, 5).

And this "Elijah" is not Rev. Sun Yung Moon, nor any other self-appointed prophet!

CONCLUSION: