



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

# Jesus' Transfiguration and the Watchers' Curse

Bible Reading: Luke 9:27-43a

**Bible Reading:** *Luke 9:27-43a CSB*

## SUMMARY:

Why does Scripture—and Raphael's painting, *The Transfiguration*—place Christ's radiant glory on the mountain beside the chaos of a demon-possessed boy below? Why glory above and suffering below? The Bible hints at the answer. Genesis and Jude's Epistle recall a rebellion of fallen angels, a story developed in the Book of the Watchers. In Jesus' day, many believed evil arose not only from Adam's sin, but also from hostile demonic powers. In this light, the Transfiguration is a confrontation. On Mount Hermon—a place linked with angelic rebellion—Jesus unveils His glory and reclaims enemy ground. He will undo the Watchers' work. The mountain's glory points to the valley's healing. The decisive victory comes through Jesus' "exodus" in Jerusalem—His cross and resurrection. There, Christ defeats both sin and demonic powers, releasing forgiveness, healing, and deliverance into a broken world. Our gospel proclaims both redemption and liberation through Jesus.

## I. Glory on the Mount; Chaos in the Valley

### A. Raphael's Painting: *The Transfiguration*:

- "Among the most controversial of Raphael's paintings is his last, *The Transfiguration* [1520] ... One question ... has never been answered: Why did Raphael choose to join, *The Transfiguration* with a 2nd scene, *The Failure to Cure the Possessed Boy*? ... There exists no pictorial tradition for this conflation, and none of the interpretations... solves the problem..." —Joseph Forte

## II. God's Glory Above; Earthly Chaos Below—The Bible Background

### A. The 2nd Rebellion: "the Angels who Sinned" during Noah's time

- "Genesis 3 contains the first of three significant rebellions in Scripture... that involve both humanity and the spiritual realm... After the 'Fall' in Genesis 3, a second rebellion [occurred when] fallen angelic beings engaged in an unholy union with humanity (Gen. 6:1-4)." —Joel Muddamalle

### B. Key OT Bible Passage: **Genesis 6:1-4**

**C. Three Key NT Statements (Jude 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:4-5; 1 Pet. 19-20)** 1. "The angels who didn't keep within their

proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence, [God] has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day.” (Jude 1:6) 2. “God didn’t spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into [‘Tartarus’] & locked them up in chains in utter darkness...until the judgment...He didn’t spare the ancient world, but did protect Noah...” (2 Pet. 2:4-5) 3. Christ “went & preached to the spirits in prison, after they were disobedient long ago when God patiently waited in the days of Noah as an ark was...constructed, in [which] 8 souls, were delivered.” (1 Pet. 3:19-20)

#### **D. Angels called ‘Watchers’ in the Bible (Dan. 4:13, 17, 23)**

#### **E. ‘The Book of the Watchers’ (1 Enoch) ~200 BC**

• “The basic text for the [‘Book of the] Watchers’ is 1 Enoch 6-11, containing a story on the rebellion of a group of heavenly beings, which is the origin of further sins and serves as a basis for the [punishment] of the Flood. Scholars...generally consider the story as an interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4.” — Ida Frohlich • Among Dead Sea Scrolls: “Aramaic fragments [of] the Book of the Watchers have...been uncovered at Qumran Cave 4 and assigned...to about 200-150 BCE.” —Ariel Hessayon

#### **B. What’s the Source of the Evil & Depravity on Earth?**

• “If one...asks a modern Christian, ‘Why is the world...so thoroughly wicked?’ the chances are... an answer [is] ‘the Fall’...We...look only to Genesis 3...But if you asked a Jew [in Jesus’ era] ...the answer would be dramatically different. Yes, the entrance of sin...occurred in Eden, but the unanimous testimony of 2nd Temple Judaism is...the Watchers are to blame for the proliferation of evil on the earth.” —Michael Heiser

• “The sin of the Watchers is a major cause of human depravity & spiritual evil, not just Adam’s fall.” M. Heiser

• “The Fallen Watchers...[is the key] explanation of the origins of evil on earth’...The descent of the Watchers for union with the daughters of humans is seen as the cause of all sin & the root cause of...demons...the result of the illicit union between angels & humans ...[Humanity] under the influence of...unclean demons...can only be rescued & restored by the power & authority of Jesus the Son of Man.” —Rick Strelan

#### **C. Fallen Angels (Watchers), Giants (Nephilim), & Demons (disembodied spirits of Giants)**

• “The Watchers [were] bound in Tartarus in order to halt their activity, while the spirits of the [dead] giants were allowed to freely roam the earth...[&] as evil spirits [or demons, they] are able to invade the human body... inflicting harm...[& they] lead humanity astray.” —Archie Wright

### **III. Mount Hermon, Jesus’ Transfigured, & the Fall of the Watchers (Gen. 6:1-4)**

#### **A. Landmarks—Caesarea Philippi, & Mount Hermon**

• “The famous scenes of Peter’s confession (Mt. 16) & the transfiguration (Mk. 9) occur, respectively, at the foot of & on Mount Hermon, the place where the Watchers vowed to corrupt humanity.” —Michael Heiser

• “Key events in Jesus’ ministry...the Transfiguration & exorcisms, occur near Mount Hermon, symbolizing His confrontation with the Watchers’ influence.” — Michael Heiser

#### **B. Mt. Hermon – “Hermon [is] a more likely site for the Transfiguration” —Allison Trites**

#### **C. Mt. Hermon’s Dark Background in the Book of the Watchers**

• “In the transfiguration story, the Watcher motif is...implicit...It’s likely that Mark’s audience understood the mountain to be the Mount Hermon of the Watcher legend.” —Rick Strelan • “Mount Hermon...was the place where, in...the sons of God of Genesis 6 chose to launch their rebellion against Yahweh... Now... the transfiguration of Jesus takes place on the same location...” —Michael Heiser

#### **D. Mt. Hermon linked to the ‘Fall of the Watchers’ (Gen. 6:1-4)**

• “The Book of the Watchers is...filling out key details...that are not fully explained in Genesis. Genesis 6:1-4 ... never specifies how many angels descended...or where they arrived when they descended to earth. Watchers... fills in all these narrative gaps —it states...there were 200 angels...& asserts that when they arrived to the earth from heaven, they first reached Mount Hermon.” —Matthew Goff

• “Mount Hermon is...the place where the Watchers descended & swore to corrupt humanity, making it a symbol of their rebellion.” —Michael Heiser

#### **E. Demons are Not Fallen Angels**

• “According to...Christian myth...demons are...fallen angels. Satan was an angel who rebelled...Other angels rebelled along with him &...became demons...Contrary to...common assumptions, this myth...wasn’t shared by most ancient Jews, including [writers & translators of] the Hebrew Bible [OT]...That myth in its complete form isn’t found in the NT...The Christian myth...equat[ing] fallen angels with demons arose in the 2nd & 3rd centuries CE., we shouldn’t retroject...[it] back into the minds of NT writers.” —Dale Martin

#### **F. Demons are the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim (Giants)**

• “Demons are Satan’s ‘ground troops’...” —Tom Brown • “Demons are Not Fallen Angels, but the dispossessed spirits of the Nephilim...[who] were the offspring of the fallen angels & the ‘daughters of men’ [Gen. 6:4]...When the Nephilim died their spirits became disembodied [demons] & roam the earth, harassing mankind & seeking

embodiment.” –Darryl Weinberg

### **G. Jesus' Mission: Reverse the Watchers' Curse**

- “The mission of Jesus is...a direct response to the Watchers' rebellion, aiming to undo their cosmic damage.”
- “Jesus' mission was to reverse the...corruption introduced by the Watchers, restoring the original divine order.”

–Michael Heiser H. Jesus Reclaims Mount Hermon in Bashan for YAHWEH

- “The Transfiguration on Mt. Hermon was a symbolic act of claiming the mountain for the kingdom of God ...

Jesus demonstrated His power to overcome the influence of the Watchers & establish His rule.” – M. Heiser

- “Jesus picks Mt. Hermon to reveal...exactly who he is... The meaning is... transparent: ‘I’m putting the hostile powers of the unseen world on notice: I’ve come to earth to take back what is mine’.” –Michael Heiser

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## **II. God's Glory Above; Earthly Chaos Below—The Bible Background**

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### **B. Key OT Bible Pas**

## **IV. Chaos in the Valley: Boy's Exorcism –Disciples Fail; Jesus Succeeds**

### **A. From the Mountain of Glory to the Valley of Deliverance**

- “This passage follows...the transfiguration...It represents...the challenges awaiting Jesus & the disciples in the valley after they have been on the mountain...The glory of...transfiguration will not be without suffering ...This [valley] encounter is in radical contrast to the mountaintop glory of the transfiguration.” –C. Jarvis