



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

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 *The Transfiguration*: the 'Greatest Painting'?

- "The Transfiguration of Raphael has...been voted to be...the greatest picture in the world painted in oil." ["Petronius Arbiter," "A Great Work of Art: Raphael's Transfiguration: The Greatest Picture in the World," *Art World*, Vol. 1, #1 (Oct. 1916) p. 56] • Raphael "produced a painting which, for coherence & complexity, for unity of whole & individuality of part, has never been surpassed." [Raffaello Sanzio, *Drawings of Raphael*, p. 27]
- "Raphael did not paint the standard interpretation of...the transfiguration...Instead, he created a work of extraordinary complexity & strangeness, combining in it two closely related, yet distinct, episodes from the Gospel, the Transfiguration of Christ (...in the upper part...) & the 'Healing of the Lunatic Child' (...in the lower part...)." [Ilya Vinitsky, "Seeing Backwards," M. Maguire (ed.) *Reading Backwards*, p.]

- “Unlike traditional depictions that isolate the Transfiguration narrative, Raphael fused two scenes into one striking composition. The result is a theological meditation on how glory & suffering coexist, not just in Scripture, but in the human experience...Raphael's *The Transfiguration* is a masterful two-part composition showing Christ glorified above & human suffering below. At the top, Jesus hovers in radiant light between Moses & Elijah, as three disciples react in awe. Below, a chaotic scene unfolds as a desperate father seeks healing for his possessed son. The contrast between divine glory and earthly struggle captures the tension of the gospel—revelation breaking into real-life need.” [Jason Elder, “The Transfiguration by Raphael: Divine Glory & Earthly Struggle in 1 Frame,” *Faith in Art*]

B. The Upper Scene: Christ in Radiant Glory

- “At the top of the canvas, Jesus hovers in radiant, otherworldly light—his arms stretched wide in a cruciform pose that quietly echoes the shape of the cross. On either side stand Moses & Elijah, anchoring the scene in the full sweep of Israel's story: the Law & the Prophets bearing witness to the Son. Below them, Peter, James, & John crouch in stunned bewilderment, shielding their eyes as if they can't quite take it all in.

- “This upper section feels spacious and still. There's a calm, sacred symmetry here—the clouds part, the robes billow, the gestures rise—all drawing our eyes toward the transfigured Christ. Everything opens up toward heaven. The light is golden. The air feels thin. It's a rare and fleeting glimpse into divine glory, a moment where heaven touches earth...This moment of dazzling revelation stands in stark contrast to the chaos & desperation happening just below. [Jason Elder, *Op. cit.*, p.]

C. The Lower Scene: Human Desperation & Demonic Oppression

- “In the bottom half of the painting, chaos reigns. A boy thrashes in the throes of a violent seizure, his limbs twisted, his eyes wide and vacant. His father restrains him while gesturing upward for help. The apostles who remained below are depicted in confusion. Some point upward; others argue among themselves...The crowd presses in, eyes wide with need & frustration. It's a world without clarity or healing—until Jesus comes down. This lower scene...represents a world...waiting desperately for Jesus...” [Jason Elder, *Op. cit.*, p.]

D. What Links the Two Episodes?

- “The 2nd story follows directly upon... the Transfiguration in all 3...Synoptic Gospels; the failed effort of the disciples to heal the boy clearly takes place while Jesus is on the mountaintop, but it is not normally considered a part of the Transfiguration itself & had never been represented as such in art.” [Robert Williams, *Raphael & the Redefinition of Art...*, p. 149]

- “Among the most controversial of Raphael's paintings is his last, *The Transfiguration* [1520] ...One question about this work has never been answered: Why did Raphael choose to join, *The Transfiguration* with a 2nd scene, *The Failure to Cure the Possessed Boy*? In the biblical accounts – Matt. 17, Mark 9, & Luke 9 – the failure to cure the boy follows the revelation of Christ's divinity [in the transfiguration] to James, Peter, & John, precedes the [boy's] actual cure... There exists no pictorial tradition for this conflation, & none of the interpretations...solves the problem...” [Joseph C. Forte, “Fictive Truths & Absent Presence in Raphael's Transfiguration,” *Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 3, #4, (1984) p.]

- “Even to his contemporaries, Raphael's *Transfiguration* must have seemed both beautiful and strange. Combining two distinct narrative subjects...in a single setting...it had few equivalents...No definitive interpretation has emerged that convincingly explains its unusual features...” [Christian K. Kleinbub, “Raphael's *Transfiguration* as Visio-Devotional Program,” *Art Bulletin*, Vol. XC, #1 (Sept. 2008) p. 367] > Juxtaposed for Mutual Interpretation

- The painting sets “the two stories against each other—making each event reflect upon the other... Raphael may have wanted to reveal a deeper truth through simultaneous juxtaposition ...Most modern... interpreters ...emphasize the dramatic contrast between ...divine power & the powerlessness of human efforts; since Christ will eventually heal the boy.” [Robert Williams, *Op. cit.*, p. 151]

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

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

1. The First Rebellion –The Fall (Genesis 3)

- "Genesis 3 contains the first of three significant rebellions in Scripture (which continue in Genesis 6 and Genesis 11) that involve both humanity & the spiritual realm. This is spiritual warfare: The enemy wants to entice us into thinking, feeling, & doing things that are contrary to the ways of God. The enemy wants us to see, desire, and take [Eve's sequence in Gen. 3], but God wants us to enjoy freedom and the goodness of His creation." [Joel Muddamalle, Peace in the Battle of Wanting, Dec. 15, 2025]

2. A Second Rebellion –The Sons of God & Nephilim (Genesis 6)

- After the 'Fall' in Genesis 3, "a second rebellion [occurred when] fallen angelic beings engaged in an unholy union with humanity. In the first rebellion of Genesis 3, we find humanity seeking to become like God, rising to the level of Yahweh in determining what they think is good and evil. Adam and Eve attempt to secure something for themselves they were not given. Now, in this second rebellion, we find dynamic movement in the other direction—divine beings lowering themselves to the level of humanity...trying to secure for themselves something they were never given. The result of this second rebellion is the rampant spread of evil." [Joel Muddamalle, Unseen Battle: Spiritual Warfare, 3 Rebellions, & Christ's Victory..., p.]

3. The Third Rebellion — The Tower of Babel & Global Division (Genesis 11)

- "Deuteronomy 32:8–9 frames the conflict between Israel & the nations as a byproduct of God's judgment of humanity at Babel, where the nations were allotted to lesser gods, members of the heavenly host (cf. Dt. 4:19–20; 17:1–3; 29:23–26; 32:17). Daniel's notion of cosmic powers ['princes' (Dan. 10:13, 20-21)] behind geopolitical empires presumes this worldview (Dan 10). Paul's description of cosmic powers of darkness in geopolitical dominion terms (e.g., 'principalities, powers' [Eph. 6:12]) also presumes this worldview." [Joel Muddamalle, "Paul's Οἰκός Terminology..." Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (2021) p.]

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

❖ "When humankind began to multiply on the face of the earth, & daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful. Thus, they took wives for themselves from any they chose. 3 So the Lord said, "My Spirit will not remain in humankind indefinitely, since they are mortal. They will remain for 120 more years." 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days (& also after this) when the sons of God would sleep with the daughters of humankind, who gave birth to their children. They were the mighty heroes of old, the famous men." (Gen. 6:1-4 NET)

- Note #1: "sons of God": In...Job the phrase clearly refers to angelic beings. In Genesis 6 the "sons of God" are distinct from "humankind," suggesting they were not human. This is consistent with... Job...These beings cohabit with women, [so,] they must have taken physical form...An early Jewish tradition preserved in 1 Enoch 6-7 ['Book of the Watchers'] elaborates on this angelic revolt & even names the ringleaders. [NET]

- Note #2: "Nephilim": According to the text, the Nephilim became mighty warriors & gained great fame in the [pre-Flood] world. The text may imply they were the offspring of the sexual union of the "sons of God" & the "daughters of humankind" (6:2) ... The Nephilim are mentioned in the OT only here & in Num. 13:33, where they were "giants." The Anakim/Anakites of Canaan were descendants of the Nephilim." [NET]
- Note #3: Israel's Spies Report: "We even saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak came from the Nephilim), and we seemed like grasshoppers...to them." (Num. 13:33 NET). The Greek OT uses gigantes, "giants" to translate "the Nephilim" ...[They] are the legendary giants of antiquity." [NET]

- "An influential interpretation of Genesis 6...represented in...1 Enoch identifies the 'sons of God' as

fallen angels, also called 'Watchers,' who bear children with human women ('the daughters of humans'). The children they bear are the Nephilim, also called 'Giants,' who...oppress the earth. This depiction, based on a radical interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4, of fallen angels bearing hybrid children has strongly influenced many conceptions of angels in modern culture." [Gregory Stevenson, "Monstrous Angels in Modern Culture," in BR. Grafius (ed.) Oxford Handbook of Biblical Monsters, pp. 372-373]

4. Three Key NT Statements

a. "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)

• Note: "Greek 'angels who did not keep their own domain.' The idea is that certain angels acted improperly, going outside the bounds prescribed by God (their proper domain). [NET] b. "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) c. 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)

C. Angels called 'Watchers' in the Bible (Dan. 4:13, 17, 23)

• "As I was lying in my bed, I also saw in the visions of my mind a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven." (Daniel 4:13 CSB)

• "This word is by decree of the watchers, & the decision is by command from the holy ones. This is so that the living will know that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms. He gives them to anyone he wants & sets the lowliest of people over them." (Daniel 4:17 CSB)

• "The king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven & saying, 'Cut down the tree & destroy it, but leave the stump ...with a band of iron & bronze around it in the tender grass of the field. Let him be drenched with dew from the sky & share food with the wild animals for 7 periods of time.'" (Daniel 4:23 CSB)

• "The Hebrew word translated 'watcher' is used in the Bible only in these 3 verses. Most commentators think it refers to angels, which is how it is translated in the Septuagint (Greek OT)." [Kingdom Life Bible, p. 1161]

• "Watcher": "No doubt a supernatural being is meant (cf. the word's apposition with 'holy one'), which reminds us of ...'watchers' for angels in intertestamental literature." [T. Longman, Daniel: NIV App., p. 119]

D. 'The Book of the Watchers' (1 Enoch) ~200 BC

1. 1 Enoch & The Book of the Watchers • "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 & 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 2. 1 Enoch & Daniel**

• "The Book of the Watchers has a remarkably close relationship with the Book of Daniel. The term 'watcher' ...is used for an angel in no other book of the OT except Daniel (4:13, 17, 23), but it is common in the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch...) where, as in Daniel, it is linked with the term 'holy one'...Daniel is also the only OT book to give angels individual names...'Gabriel' & 'Michael': the same names...given to angels in the Book of the Watchers." [Roger Beckwith, "Early Traces of... Daniel," Tyndale Bull., V. 53.1 ('02) p. 78]

3. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls

• Watchers & the Dead Sea Scrolls: "Aramaic fragments [of] the Book of the Watchers have...been uncovered at Qumran Cave 4 & assigned...to about 200-150 BCE." Ariel Hessayon, Scripture & Scholarship, '06, p 9]

4. What's the Origin of Evil Spirits (Demons)? • ~1 AD "Autonomous evil spirits [were] regarded as a

reality [as seen] in the ministry of Jesus described in the Synoptic Gospels... This raises the question of how... evil spirits could have emerged... The Book of the Watchers... offers the oldest [surviving] record of the origin of evil spirits in Judaism." –Archie Wright

5. Not Canonical, But Influential

- "The Book of the Watchers was extraordinarily influential in Second Temple Judaism." –Nicholas Elder

- "The Story of the Watchers may not have made it to the Hebrew canon [OT], but it remained with the 'Hebrews.' ...and continues in other Jewish writings." –Stephen Mahn, "Popularity & Rejection of the Story of the Watchers (1 Enoch 6-11)," Concordia University, Montreal, PQ., Canada (Aug. 2008) p. 93]

- "The use of 1 Enoch in the letter of Jude extends to more than a single explicit citation... Jude also contains a series of allusions to 1 Enoch, including several important ones..." –James M. Scott

6. Jude quotes 1 Enoch 1:9

- "Enoch... prophesied of them, saying, "Look! The Lord is coming with thousands & thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment on all, & to convict every person of all their thoroughly ungodly deeds that they've committed, &... all the harsh words that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 1:14-15)

- "The longest and only unambiguous quotation in... Jude is... from 1 Enoch." –DA Carson

- Jude "quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 to emphasize his point." –Michael Green • Scholars agree that Jude cites 1 Enoch in vv. 14-15." –Jerome Neyrey

- Its possible "Jude himself... with others in the ancient world, considered 1 Enoch Scripture."—S. McKnight

7. Jude relies on 1 Enoch

- "Jude[']s reliance on... 1 Enoch: Jude includes an explicit quotation of [1 Enoch 9 in Jude 1:14-15] ... Jude seems to trace the origin of the evil... intruders [into his church (Jude 1:4)] to the fall of the Watchers as recorded in The Book of the Watchers. For Jude, this represents the first and paradigmatic rebellion against God by the angels who forsook their natural dominion for that which is unnatural." [Joel Beckham, "...How 1 Enoch Shaped Jude's Christology..." SE Baptist Theological Seminary (April 2015) pp. 69-70]

8. The Book of the Watchers belongs to the NT Context

- "Judaism [at Jesus' time] saw in Gen. 6:1-4, not only the story of a supernatural rebellion, but one of the central passages in... God's plan in history. [For] the NT writers... the Watchers being responsible for the spread of evil on earth, and... reversing the effects... had to be part of their theology.

'Consequently, it should be no surprise that the sin of the Watchers was in the back of their minds as they wrote about what the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth must, did, & would reverse at His coming & return' (Heiser)." [Julia Blum, "SACRED REVERSAL (2)," Israel Institute of Biblical Studies (Oct. 29, 2020) p.]

E. What's the Source of the Evil & Depravity on Earth?

- "If one... asks a modern Christian, 'Why is the world & all humanity so thoroughly wicked?' the chances are... an answer of 'the Fall' would be forthcoming. We've been conditioned ...to look only to Genesis 3... But if you asked a Jew living in the 2nd Temple Period... the answer would be dramatically different. Yes, the entrance of sin into God's good world 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 S. Heiser, Reversing Hermon, p.]

- "The sin of the Watchers is a major cause of human depravity & spiritual evil, not just Adam's fall." M. Heiser

- "Divine rebels —supernatural intelligences— are... blamed for humanity's descent into self-destruction and idolatry." [Michael S. Heiser, Demons, p. 136]

- "The sins of the Watchers are their transgression of the cosmic order & mixing with earthly women, & their teaching of magic." [Angela K. Harkins, Watchers in Jewish & Christian Traditions, p. 16]

- “Contrary to popular Christian tradition, the NT writers recognized 2 primary sources of human depravity: Adam’s Fall & the transgression of the Watchers. While Adam’s sin brought death & separation from God, the Watchers’ actions introduced a spiritual contagion that further corrupted humanity.” — Michael Heiser
- M. Heiser argues, based on Gen. 6:1-4, that human depravity is not based entirely on ‘the Fall’ in Genesis 3. Instead, it is argued that the sin of ‘the Watchers’ [the demons’ source] was thought to be the major contributor to mankind’s depraved state by ancient Israelites.” [Michael Heiser, Op. cit., chap 7]
- “The Fallen Watchers [angels]...has been called ‘a locus classicus for the explanation of the origins of evil on earth’...[In 1 Enoch] 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 ...[In Mark’s Gospel, humanity] under the influence of...unclean demons...can only be rescued & restored by the power & authority of Jesus the Son of Man.” [Rick Strelan, “Fallen Watchers and the Disciples in Mark,” Journal for Study of Pseudepigrapha, V. 20 (1999) pp. 73, 77, 79]
- “For the NT writers, the Messiah was not just about reversing sin & death brought by Adam [Gen. 3], but it also concerned undoing the transgressions of the Watchers.” — Michael Heiser F. Church Fathers’ View on Genesis 6
- “The earliest Christian writers & interpreters of Scripture affirmed this view. For example, while commenting on Genesis 6, Justin Martyr says: ‘God, when He had made the whole world, & subjected things earthly to man, ...committed the care of men & of all things under heaven to angels whom He appointed over them. But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, & begat children who are those that are called demons.’ Justin goes on to talk about how the human race was ultimately subdued & deceived when these rebellious angelic beings enticed humanity into false worship & introduced them to things like magic that Yahweh forbade. Justin seems to be drawing on other literature for this interpretation, as several of these details aren’t explicitly mentioned in Genesis 6...The point here is...that Justin isn’t the only early Christian writer to hold this view...We find it in Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.” [Joel Muddamalle, Unseen Battle: Spiritual Warfare, 3 Rebellions, & Christ’s Victory..., p.]

G. Fallen Angels (Watchers), Giants (Nephilim), & Demons (disembodied spirits of Giants)

- In 1 Enoch, “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 T. Wright, “Demonology of 1 Enoch,” in LT. Stuckenbruck (ed.) Enoch & the Synoptic Gospels, pp. 225-230]
- When the giants were “destroyed, whether through violence...or through the Flood, [their] spirits... emerged from their dead bodies...It is in this disembodied form [i.e., demons] that the giants continue to exist until the final judgment. Since these spirits... are inherently evil...they continue to engage in destructive activities ...wishing to bring affliction to human beings...[This explains] why demons were...especially intent on entering the bodies of human beings.” [Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Myth of Rebellious Angels, pp. 15-16]

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

A. Landmarks—Caesarea Philippi, & Mount Hermon

- Caesarea Philippi: an area at the base of Mt. Hermon where Jesus announced plans to build His church...
- Mount of Transfiguration: most probably Mount Hermon upon which Jesus was transfigured
- “The famous scenes of Peter’s confession (Mt. 16:13-20) & the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-8) occur, respectively, at the foot of & on Mount Hermon, the place where the Watchers vowed to corrupt humanity [in 1 Enoch].” [Michael Heiser, Demons: What the Bible Really Says..., pp. 216-7]
- “Key events in Jesus’ ministry...the Transfiguration & exorcisms, occur near Mount Hermon, symbolizing His confrontation with the Watchers’ influence.” — Michael Heiser

• “The Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch) ...& the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 16:13-19) present [their protagonists] in the environs of Mount Hermon & Caesarea Philippi where they are... commissioned...” [Kelley C. Bautch, “Peter & the Patriarch: Confluence of Traditions?” in DV. Arbel (ed.) With Letters of Light, p. 14]

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

• Where did the Transfiguration take place? As for Tabor and Hermon, while each mountain is frequently mentioned in Scripture...there are several considerations which favor Hermon as a more likely site for the Transfiguration: (1) Hermon fits the topographical description more accurately as the “high mountain” described by Matthew & Mark...Hermon is over 9000 feet, while Tabor is only 1843 feet. (2) The northern site harmonizes better with the geographical data...Caesarea Philippi is at the foot of Hermon while Tabor is a considerable distance away. Tabor is not impossible geographically, but certainly it is not probable... (3) Hermon was isolated & suitably remote for prayer (Lk. 9: 29), but there was a walled fortress on the top of Tabor at the time of Christ as we know from Josephus... AT. Robertson [asserts] ‘The tradition which places the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor is beyond question false’.” [Allison A. Trites, “Transfiguration of Jesus,” Evangelical Quarterly, Vol. 51.2 (1979) p. 72]

• Scholars suggest Mount “Hermon, as the Transfiguration happens in Caesarea-Philippi near Galilee, since Mount Tabor which is located in Lower Galilee is not very high (588 m.) and Caesarea-Philippi is located at the southern base of Mount Hermon.” [Simon S. Lee, Jesus' Transfiguration..., pp. 19, 97]

• “The Gospels...give no name [for the mountain] ...Mt Hermon is...much higher than Tabor (9,000' vs. 1,843'), which would better fit ...the description of a ‘high mountain’ (Mark [9:2] & Mt. 17:1) ... Many [scholars]...agree that the close proximity of Caesarea Philippi to Mt. Hermon & the symbolic-religious associations...make Mt. Hermon the logical choice for the transfiguration.” [Michael S. Heiser, Unseen Realm, p. 32]

• On “what mountain did the Transfiguration occur? (Mt. 17:1) Mount Tabor is the traditional location for the Transfiguration. However, Mount Hermon is a higher mountain in the Galilee region... Since the belief was the closer one was to the ‘firmament’ (the sky), the closer one was to God. Mt Hermon seems like a better fit ...In the book of Enoch, the Watchers came to Mount Hermon before coming to Earth.” [Michael H. Koplitz, Understanding Matthew, p. 352]

• “Mount Hermon is important in...Jesus' ministry. Many scholars believe that it is the place of Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36). The transfiguration was a powerful demonstration of Jesus' divine nature & manifestation of His glory, which he possessed prior to coming to earth in a human body. Therefore, Jesus is saying, in effect, that ‘this is my power that I will use to defeat all the evil which associated with this mountain’.” [Dennis Linscomb, Spiritual Forces of Evil in the Bible, p.]

C. Mt. Hermon's Dark Background in the Book of the Watchers

• Israel felt both a literal & spiritual dread from the region of Bashan—the most northerly region of Canaan

• The north represented something sinister to ancient Israelites (Bashan, Mt. Hermon, & Ba'al) –M. Heiser

• “In the transfiguration story (Mk. 9:2-8 [Lk. 9:28-36]), the Watcher motif is...implicit...It's likely that Mark's audience understood the mountain to be the Mt. Hermon of the Watcher legend.” [R. Strelan, Op. cit., p. 85] • “We learn in 1 Enoch 6 that the descent of the rebel angels took place on Mount Hermon ...In this connection we should note the account of the transfiguration, which Mark places after [Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ in Caesarea Philippi, near Mt. Hermon (Mk. 8:31)].” [George WE. Nickelsburg, “Enoch, Levi, & Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee,” Journal of Biblical Literature (1981) p. 575]

• Michael Heiser suggests “events in the Gospels surrounding Jesus'...defiance against the Watchers, such as the Gates of Hell (Matt. 16), the transfiguration (Mark 9), and Jesus' exorcism

(Mark 5) all...took place near Mount Hermon.” [Douglas

E. Potter, Review of Michael S. Heiser, Reversing Hermon, p.]

- “Mount Hermon...was the place where, in... 1 Enoch, the sons of God of Genesis 6:1-4 chose to launch their rebellion against Yahweh... (Genesis 6:1-4 informed the [NT] writings of Peter and Jude). Now... the transfiguration of Jesus takes place on the same location...Jesus picks Mt. Hermon to reveal to Peter, James, & John exactly who he is...” [Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, pp. 32-33] D. Mt. Hermon linked to the ‘Fall of the Watchers’ (Gen. 6:1-4)

- “Visionary texts feature mountains...sometimes explicitly identified...Some...appear in narratives which are otherwise sparse in geographical information. The latter include Mount Herman (1 Enoch 6:6; 13:7).” [Coblentz Bautch, “Visionary’s View,” in DM. Burns, *Dead Sea Scrolls & Nag Hammadi Codices*, p. 395]

- “The Book of the Watchers is often...understood as...filling out key details from the Flood story that are not fully explained in Genesis. Gen. 6:1-4, for example, 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 Herman.” [Matthew Goff, “Warriors, Cannibals, & Teachers of Evil,” *Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok*, #80, pp. 83-84]

- The Book of the Watchers...begins with a rewriting of Gen. 6:1-2 ...The leader of these angelic sons of heaven, labels what they intend to do as a ‘great sin,’ but all of them swore an oath to carry it out. They reach earth via Mount Hermon in the days of Enoch’s father, Jared & then they do as planned... [Their human wives] conceived from them & bore to them great giants & the giants begot Nephilim...” [JC. VanderKam, “Gen. 6:1-4 &...Book of the Watchers,” in AK Harkins (ed.) *Fallen Angels Traditions*, p. 5]

- A cohort “of angels...descend onto Mount Hermon & swear an oath to take the daughters of humanity for their wives. Their wives give birth to cannibalistic & carnivorous giants who bring destruction upon all the earth...This story blames the necessity for the Flood on two events: (1.) the birth of giants, who are the product of illicit sex between humans & angels and (2.) the teaching of esoteric [forbidden] knowledge.” [David A. Skelton, “Angels Among Us?” *Journal for Study of Pseudepigrapha*, v. 29(1) (2019) p. 13]

- “The angels are... expected to dwell in the [non-physical] domain of their celestial homeland. Instead, the Watchers ‘descended from the throne of the Lord’ down to ‘the crest of Mount Herman,’ where they broke their Covenant with Him & engaged in carnal relationships with ‘the daughters of men’ ...In both 1 Enoch & 2 Enoch the summit of Mount Hermon is designated as a special mark of iniquity ...According to 1 Enoch 6:6 this is the spot where the Watchers came down & swore their oath. In 2 Enoch 18:4 the crest of Mount Herman is...the place where the Watchers descended from the throne of the Lord.” [B. Geller, “Celestial Landscapes & Heavenly Ascents,” in DM. Burns, *Op. cit.*, p. 223] • “The offense of the heavenly watchers [is that they] decided to take for themselves human women as wives with whom they defiled themselves...they produced offspring of enormous size & extraordinary appetite.” [Claudia Losekam, “Enochic Literature in the Nag Hammadi Texts,” in DM. Burns, *Op. cit.*, p. 263]

- “The account of angelic descent in 1 Enoch 6-11 had begun with the Watchers’ oath on Mt. Hermon (6:6)...” [Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Heavenly Ascent, Angelic Descent...in 1 Enoch 6-16,” in *Heavenly Realms & Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (2004) p. 64]

- “The Book of the Watchers [1 Enoch, chapters 1-36] identifies the ‘sons of God’ as 200 angels, called watchers...who swore a mutual oath to take human women as wives after they had see their beauty (1 Enoch 6). They descend to Mount Hermon took wives with whom they defiled themselves, taught them illicit arts, and begot gigantic offspring [giants, Nephilim].” [Christian H. Bull, “Women, Angels, and Dangerous Knowledge,” in U. Tervahauta (ed.) *Women & Knowledge in Early Christianity*, p. 78] • “The Chronicle of Michael Syrus preserves a short passage from the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 6) ...in which the leader of the [Watchers]...came down from his home on Mt. Hermon to seek wives...” [Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels & the History Judaism & Christianity*,

p. 225]

- At Mount Hermon... Jesus was coming to pick up a fight, a spiritual battle. He told his disciples that He would overcome the forces of darkness associated with the underworld [the 'Gates of Hades']. This idea of picking up a fight in the enemy's territory is analogous to OT spiritual warfare... Paul later picks up on this point when he states, "disarming the rulers & authorities, He has made a public disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col 2:15 NET Bible), & "when He ascended on high, He captured captives; He gave gifts to men" (Eph 4:8 NET Bible). Dr. Heiser commented that "the line from Ephesians 4:8 is made even more powerful with the knowledge that Paul is quoting Psalm 68:18; ... Jesus here is announcing a remarkable reversal in cosmic geography & in so doing announces that the days of Satan & the other Elohim [nation-gods], who had inherited the other nations, are coming to the end." [Vincent Nkwambi & Gregory Richardson, "Cosmic Geography... Watershed Moment in Jesus' Ministry," pp.]

E. The Nephilim (Giants, offspring of the Watchers & Humans) linked with Bashan Region

- "The Nephilim were [sired by the Watchers & humans] ... Genesis 6:4 calls them "mighty men" and "men of renown," & the Nephilim certainly had a reputation of large size & great strength... There's a Biblical reference to the Nephilim... in Canaan after the flood... (Num. 13:32-33)... Other Biblical references to tall & belligerent men, such as Goliath of Gath, Sihon the king of the Amorites, & Og the king of Bashan – these were Nephilim, especially Og who was "of the Rephaim." Bashan was the area... he ruled & includes the Mount Hermon region where the ['invasion'] of the sons of God was said to have occurred." [Richard B. Sorensen, "Were the Nephilim Genetically Psychopathic?" (May 27, 2024) p. 12]

- "Mount Hermon is... the place where the Watchers descended & swore to corrupt humanity, making it a symbol of their rebellion." –Michael Heiser

F. "Mount Hermon is the Anti-Eden" – JL. Pearl, JD. Smith

- In "the Enoch telling... the 'sons of god'... rebellion is launched from Mt. Hermon... In biblical history, Moses and the Israelites defeat ... Og [king] of Bashan, who ruled over Mt. Hermon (Dt. 4:48). King Og is... the last of the Rephaim—a clan of watcher- descended giants..." [JL. Pearl, JD. Smith, Cosmic Mountain, p. 19]

- "At that time, [Israel] took the land... as far as Mt Hermon... 10 all the cities of the plateau, Gilead, & Bashan ... cities of Og's kingdom in Bashan. 11 (Only King Og of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. His bed was made of iron... It's 13½ feet X 6 feet [~4m x 2m] by a standard measure.)" (Deut. 3:8-11 CSB)

- "If Eden is... the place where the heavens & earth are brought together... then Hermon is the anti-Eden. It's the symbol of... coercive power... [For] the Psalmist, Hermon... envy's the mountain of Yahweh (Ps. 68:15-16) ... There are two... temple-mountains: we can dwell on Eden, the mountain of YHWH's peace, or on Hermon, the mountain of the Watchers' violence..." [JL. Pearl, JD. Smith, Cosmic Mountain, pp. 19-20, 23]

G. Demons are Not Fallen Angels; contra. "fallen angelic beings (demons)" –Sam Storms

- "Demons are Satan's 'ground troops'..." [Tom Brown, Devil, Demons, & Spiritual Warfare, p.]
- "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." [DB. Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?" Journal of Biblical Literature, V. 129. #4 (2010) p. 657] H. Demons are the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim (Giants)

- "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, Red Mark, p. 41]

I. 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 spiritual & moral corruption introduced by the Watchers, restoring the original divine order.” [Michael Heiser, *Reversing Hermon*, p.] J. Jesus Reclaims Mount Hermon for YAHWEH
- “Mount Hermon is ground zero for the announcement of the ‘great reversal’.” –Michael Heiser
- “The Transfiguration on Mount Hermon was a symbolic act of claiming the mountain for the kingdom of God. By revealing His divine glory in this location, Jesus demonstrated His power to overcome the influence of the Watchers & establish His rule over all creation.” — Michael Heiser
- Jesus' transfiguration on Mount Hermon “represents the inversion & overcoming of those other ‘sons of god’ [Gen. 6] who forged a diabolical plot on Mount Hermon. Where they represent the powers of violence, greed, & corruption, this Son of God incarnates...love, generosity, & justice. Here, on the peak of Mount [Hermon], YHWH declares war on the destructive spirit[s].” [JL. Pearl, JD. Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 74]
- “Mount Hermon...was the place where, in...1 Enoch, the sons of God of Genesis 6:1-4 chose to launch their rebellion against Yahweh... (Gen. 6:1-4 informed the [NT] writings of Peter and Jude). Now... the transfiguration of Jesus takes place on the same location...Jesus picks Mount Hermon to reveal to Peter, James, & John exactly who he is... The meaning is...transparent [as if He declared]: ‘I’m putting the hostile powers of the unseen world on notice: I’ve come to earth to take back what is mine. The kingdom of God is at hand.’ ...Peter’s confession at the foot of Mt. Hermon &...the transfiguration on its unholy slopes marked a key transition point in Jesus’ life ...After [Jesus] ‘throws down the gauntlet’ at the transfiguration, he began to move toward Jerusalem to his death.” [Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, pp. 32-33]
- Mount Hermon & the ‘gates of hell.’ Jesus’ ministry in the region of Caesarea Philippi, at the foot of Mount Hermon, was a direct confrontation with the powers of darkness. This location [–Mt. Hermon–], associated with the Watchers’ oath & the domain of Baal, symbolized the gates of hell... The location [Mt. Hermon in Bashan] which previously was associated with demons [is being] reclaimed by Christ for Yahweh.” [Michael Heiser, *Op. cit.*, pp. 285-6] IV. Glory on the Mount: Jesus’ Transfigured

A. Fulfilling Jesus’ Promise (Lk. 9:27)

- “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”
- “In the Synoptic [Gospels] the transfiguration is plainly seen as a fulfillment of the solemn prediction of Jesus, ‘There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come in power. (Mk. 9:1 //). ‘As both the description of Jesus’ doxa [‘glory’] & the details of the incident make clear, this is just what they do see: Jesus in his exalted state, in glory, with Elijah & Moses.” [Trites, *Op. cit.*, p. 69]
- In Mk. 9:1, Jesus predicts that ‘some who are standing here...’ It is clear that ‘some’ in this story refers to the three disciples Peter, James, & John...These three constitute the inner core of the already special ...twelve for Jesus’ ministry.” [Simon S. Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 15]

B. What Do Skeptics Allege? They assert the transfiguration was an Ecstatic Vision?

- “To put it bluntly, a large number of historical-critical scholars quite simply don’t believe the transfiguration happened & [they] study...it as a fictive literary construct ...A majority of modern critics bring to their study of the Transfiguration a critical presupposition that the event as recounted simply cannot have happened... A majority of modern NT scholarship dismisses outright the possibility that the Transfiguration is rooted in any historically verifiable visionary event” [Anthony, ...*Perspectives on Luke’s Transfiguration*, pp. 4, 47, 98]
- “The modern world’s ‘ocular-centric’ [objective] understanding of vision excludes ecstatic vision.” [Peter Anthony, *Perspectives...*, *Op. cit.*, p. 9]
- To modernists “The transfiguration of Christ was not real, but an ecstatic vision on his part & that of the disciples (Rau, [etc.]) or it was a dream (Kuinol, [etc.]) of Peter [& Co.] in their sleep on the mount, aided by a flash of lightning on their waking...” [Benjamin Wills Newton, *Works of B. W. Newton*,

(1878) p. 166]

- “Many ancient writers... understand the disciples as experiencing ecstatic vision [at the transfiguration].” [Peter Anthony, *Interpreting Vision... Transfiguration... Luke*, University of Oxford, UK. (2014) p. 7] > “As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Do not tell anyone about the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” (Mt. 17:9 NET)

C. Skeptics assert an ‘Alternative State of Consciousness’?

- “Only Matthew refers to this experience as a ‘vision’ (Mt. 17:9), but this is a most important piece of information. Modern psychological anthropology points out the alternative states of consciousness, like visions & dreams are normal human experiences common to the majority of the world’s cultures. Cultures in which these are not so common, like the...US, are the ones to be explained. In Matthew’s version of the transfiguration, Jesus is obviously experiencing an alternative state of consciousness. Peter, James, & John are participants in this experience.” [John J. Pilch, *Cultural World of Jesus*, p. 53]

- “Of great significance is Matthew’s interpretation...of the transfiguration as [‘horama’], a ‘vision’ [17:9]... The precise meaning of this word is debated by many modern commentators: [1.] some point to Matthew’s use of it as implying nothing more than a concrete terrestrial [earthly] sight, or spectacle, whereas others [2.] see it as interpreting the Transfiguration as an ecstatic revelation pointing forward to the Resurrection... Luke uses the word [‘horama’] extensively...in Acts, yet does not use it to describe [the] Transfiguration.” [Peter Anthony, *Patristic Perspectives on Luke’s Transfiguration* p. 25]

- Matthew’s “narrative claims to be an account of a subjective visionary experience” [Anthony Op. cit., p. 3-4] • “No unreality is implied in the word horama, [‘vision’]” [Henry Alford, *Greek NT*, p. 180]) • “Matthew heightens the apocalyptic favor of...the transfiguration by calling it [‘horama’], a vision.’ The word, [‘horama’] is missing in Mark & appears only once in Matthew, here at the transfiguration... [This] place[s] the disciples’ experience of the transfiguration in continuity with [the] visionary experiences of Jewish apocalyptists [e.g. Daniel].” [S. S. Lee, Op. cit., pp. 103-4]

- “From a Mediterranean cultural perspective, it makes plausible sense to interpret the Synoptic account of the transfiguration of Jesus as the report of altered or alternative states of consciousness [ASC] experienced by Jesus & 3 disciples. Jesus had his vision & the three disciples had theirs... The Gospels report chiefly what the disciples experienced, saw, & heard. They witnessed Jesus experiencing an altered state of consciousness. In their own ecstatic visions, they saw Jesus conversing with two figures from the tradition (Moses & Elijah), saw an indication of God’s presence (the cloud) & heard a voice from the cloud proclaiming Jesus’ identity (‘My beloved or chosen son’) & issue a command (‘Listen to him’).” [John J. Pilch, “Transfiguration of Jesus,” in P. Esler (ed.) *Modelling Early Christianity*, p. 60]

- “The transfiguration of Jesus in Mark 9:2ff & parallels is not to be regarded as an ecstatic experience of Jesus himself...If so, the participation of the disciples would have to be very different from that recorded, or, in fact, non-existent. Account must be taken of the appearance of Moses & Elijah & the voice from the cloud when we try to decide whether the whole event was a real experience of Jesus or a visionary experience of the disciples. (Michaelis, p. 354)” [John J. Pilch, Op. cit., p. 60]

- “The transfiguration story reports Jesus & three select disciples (Peter, James, & John) experiencing an ASC [Altered State of Consciousness] of trance or waking vision. Jesus was probably focussed on an internal... communion with the Father, the disciples were focussed on him (face, garments...).” [J. Pilch, Op. cit., p. 56]

D. Skeptics Allege “Jesus initiates Select Disciples into ASC”

- The transfiguration accounts “describe an altered state of consciousness...in the context of the initiation process...[At the] transfiguration...Jesus initiates his disciples into a religious practice...The narrative highlights the stages of the initiation process. [1.] First, Jesus chooses a small group among his disciples. [2.] Then, he climbs a high mountain with them, where they are alone. [3.] In the next step, before the vision occurs, Jesus’ appearance changes in their presence, to show them how to access the altered state of consciousness [ASC]. Only after these 3 steps are the disciples ready to

[4.] experience the vision. In it, the appearance of Moses & Elijah offers them the clue...of what's happening: they are having a vision like...[that of] Moses & Elijah, but [it's]...not the vision of God, but the revelation of Jesus' identity." [Santiago Guijarro, "Transfiguration of Jesus and the Easter Visions," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, V. 47, #2 (2017) pp. 97-98] E. What Do Bible-Believing Scholars Affirm? • At "Jesus' transfiguration...the light is not God's glory reflected in Moses' face...[but,] God's glory emanating from Christ's face. The glory of God that Moses saw...is the glory that comes forth from Christ's face that Peter, James, & John see. The Eastern Church...emphasizes that Jesus did not change at the transfiguration. He has always been God...always possessed the radiance of divine glory. After the incarnation, that glory was veiled...but Peter [& Co.]...see it... What enabled them to see the divine glory, the Orthodox assert, was the transformation they underwent[!]." [Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodox through Western Eyes*, p. 70] • "Jesus' ascent with only Peter, James, & John... [has a] connection to Ex. 24:9 where Moses takes only three companions (Aaron, Nadab, & Abihu) to ascend the mountain [Sinai] with him." [Peter J.L. Winch, *Exodus Motif in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 56] F. Jesus' Face Changed in Glory (Lk. 9:29) • "In contrast to Mark, who describes Jesus' transfiguration through the term [metamorphomai (transform)], Luke explains the transfiguration by saying that 'the appearance of his face changed' (Lk. 9:29) ...Luke simply replaces Mark's term [metamorphomai] with Jesus' altered face...In Luke's writings...only the transformed faces of Jesus (9:29) and Stephen (Acts 6:15) ...carry a literal connotation of 'face' or 'countenance.' The change of face physically reveals something about Jesus' identity...At the transfiguration ...a glimpse of the true nature of Jesus' divine status is seen alongside his humanity." [S.S. Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 111] • "In Lk. 9:32, through the term 'glory' Luke recapitulates the implications of Jesus' altered face...Luke introduces the word 'glory' at the Transfiguration, which Mark & Matthew only mention [at] the Son of Man's coming...[in] 'the glory of his Father' ...Luke calls Jesus' transfigured glory, 'his glory' ['they saw his glory' (9:32)]. Luke indicates that Jesus' glory is his own permanent possession." [Simon S. Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 111] • "Luke's version [of the Transfiguration] is distinct in that it uses language of glory, mentions the disciples feeling sleepy, & describes the content of the conversation with Moses & Elijah." [P. Anthony, *Op. cit.*, p. 65] G. Disciples' Unaltered Physical Sight • "The Latin West departs from the traditions of Greek interpretation...Whereas much Greek comment emphasised the transformation of the eyes of the mind, Latin commentators...see the Transfiguration as a vision apprehended by the mortal faculty of sight in an unaltered state." [Anthony, *Interpreting...*, p. 265] • 'Church fathers', "especially Latin writers, insist that vision of the Transfiguration required no alteration of physical sight in order for it to be witnessed...[Disciples] witnessing of the Transfiguration needing no alteration of their faculties of sight. Broadly speaking, [Western] Latin commentators tend to insist any human subject present on the mountain could see the Transfiguration" [Anthony, *Interpreting...*, pp. 334-5] H. Peter: an 'Eyewitness' of Jesus' Transfiguration • "We did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power & coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor & glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased!" 18 We ourselves heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain." (2 Peter 1:16-18 CSB) • R. "Bauckham asserts that [Peter's] eyewitness claim [makes] theological assertions about the character of the Transfiguration & the Parousia [Christ's Return] as sure events which could be apprehended by human sight...The claim by Peter to have seen the Transfiguration [is made] in order to argue that the reader's seeing of the Parousia is just as likely... Many NT commentators have been suspicious of seeing [an] ecstatic sense [of vision] present in 2 Peter 1:16." [Peter Anthony, *Interpreting Vision...Luke's Transfiguration*, p. 51] • "The [Gospel] narrative suggests that the whole event was objective, though many modern scholars have sought to describe it simply in terms of a subjective experience of Peter or Jesus." [Trites, *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-9] • Robert Marshall "suggests[s] that the source recorded by the ...author of 2 Peter [1:16-18] may well be the apostolic eyewitness account of the transfiguration...which formed the basis of the Synoptic accounts." [Robert P. Marshall, *Transfiguration of Jesus & the Early Church*, Durham University, UK

(1984) p. 60]

• “For the three disciples, the Transfiguration was both spiritually & literally a mountaintop experience... The apostolic trio saw Jesus divinely endorsed as the promised Deliverer of His people: “They saw his glory” (Lk. 9:32). Matthew follows Mark in stressing the great meaning this experience had for the privileged witnesses: “He was transfigured before them.” “There appeared to them Moses and Elijah.” “A (bright) cloud overshadowed them.” In other words, they “were with Him on the holy mountain,” when “He received honor & glory from God the Father” (2 Pet. 1: 17); they were, in fact, “eyewitnesses (epoptai) of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16).” [Allison A. Trites, Op. cit., pp. 77-78]

I. Moses & Elijah appear with Jesus

• “The appearance of Moses & Elijah on the mountain [of transfiguration] ... suggests a link [back] to Sinai. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah meets with God on mount Horeb (Sinai)... the ‘mountain of God’... an intentional reminder that Elijah is about to experience [what] was heretofore granted only to Moses. It is fitting that Moses & Elijah, the only two figures to have met with God on Sinai, would... join Jesus atop this ‘second Sinai.’ [Peter J.L. Winch, Exodus Motif in the Gospel of Mark, p. 57] • At the transfiguration, “the prophets [Moses & Elijah] rejoiced because they had seen Christ’s humanity, which they had not known [in OT era]. And the apostles [Peter, James, & John] rejoiced because they had seen the glory of His Divinity, which they had not known.” –Saint Ephrem the Syrian [died June 9, 373 AD.]

• Luke 9:31 “They [Moses & Elijah] were speaking of his departure (Gk. exodus).” “Luke distinctively adds the remark that Moses & Elija ‘were discussing his exodus, which he was going to fulfill in Jerusalem’ (9:31) ... [This is] Luke’s subtle hint of a correspondence between Jesus’ passion/resurrection & Israel’s exodus from bondage in Egypt.” [Richard B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, p. 202]

J. God’s Unique Declaration to the 3 Apostles

• Luke 9:35 “Then a voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him!’” “Here on the mountain, & only here, does God speak to [the disciples] (or rather their 3 representatives) directly, & they, like their OT counterparts, find the experience terrifying.” [RT. France, Matthew, p. 650]

V. 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 wonder and mystery of the transfiguration. Thus, it represents a return to the challenges awaiting Jesus and the disciples in the valley after they have been on the mountain. The confrontation with the reality of suffering in the form of the epileptic boy reinforces the subtext... that the glory of the transfiguration will not be without suffering... This [valley] encounter is in radical contrast to the mountaintop glory of the transfiguration.” [C. Jarvis (ed.) Feasting on the Gospels, Vol. 2, pp. 68, 70]

• “Jesus walks down the mountain of transfiguration to the reality of demonic possession & this reinforces the theme that ‘Jesus enters into his glory only through confrontation with the demonic & the suffering this entails’ (Lane).” [Andreas Hauw, Function of Exorcism Stories..., p. 171]

B. In all the Synoptics Jesus’ Exorcism follows the Transfiguration

• The “story of Jesus in Matt. 17:14-20 (healing of the epileptic boy) ... all 3 Synoptic Gospels have the same immediate context... the incident appears after the episode of Jesus’ transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-13; Mk. 9:2-7; Lk. 9:28-36).” [J.H. Lee, “...Redaction Criticism,” SE. Porter (ed.) Pillars in... Biblical Interpretation, p. 327]

• “Luke’s story of the exorcism... of the epileptic boy is taken from Mark 9:14-27. Luke has abbreviated & refined the story.... [so] that it ties more closely with the transfiguration episode.” [Craig A. Evans, Luke, p. 19]

C. From Glory on the Mountaintop to Chaos on Descent – Like Moses at Sinai

• There’s a “connection [between Jesus’ transfiguration and Moses’] Sinai theophany in the chaotic scene awaiting Jesus on his descent from the mountain. After receiving the instructions for the

tabernacle from God on the mountain, Moses comes down from Sinai in Ex. 32 to find 'a stiff-necked people' (Ex. 32:9) dancing around the golden calf. Jesus similarly descends from the mountain in [Lk. 9:37-38] to find a tumultuous crowd arguing over the disciples' inability to heal a demon-possessed boy. [The] description of them as a ["unbelieving...generation" & his exasperated cry, "how long will I...put up with you?" (Lk. 9:41)] seems to be a composite of the various groans (of God) [on] the discovery of Israel's faithlessness at Moses' descent from the mountain (Ex. 32:9)." [Peter JL. Winch, Exodus Motif in the Gospel of Mark, pp. 57-58]

D. Jesus' Exorcism of the demon-possessed 'epileptic' boy (Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-42)

- "In light of the reported failure of the disciples to heal the boy...Matthew says 'Then the disciples approached Jesus privately & said, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 "Because of your little faith," he told them. "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' & it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Mt. 17:19-21) ...The saying 'O faithless & perverse generation...' remains directed to the disciples & the phrase 'they were not able' concerning them occurs twice...so that...their failure...loom[s] large...[In] Matthew... the failure of the exorcism is attributed entirely to the disciples." [Graham Twelftree, In the Name of Jesus, pp. 170-1]

- "In contrast to...other exorcism stories only hinting at the presence of the disciples [or] not mentioning them, in this story the disciples play a significant role. They are not only specifically mentioned at the beginning of the story (Mk. 9:14) & play an important role in the body of the narrative (Mk. 9:18), but they are prominent in being portrayed as unsuccessful in performing an exorcism (Mk. 9:18, 28-29)." [Twelftree, Op. cit., p. 119]

- A Difficult Exorcism. This episode recounts "a significantly difficult case of exorcism...indict[ed] by the inability of the disciples [Lk. 9:40].. The demon that the disciples were dealing with is very powerful." [Andreas Hauw, Function of Exorcisms, p. 177]

E. Luke emphasizes Jesus' compassion (without using the term)

- "Matthew & Luke...in their redaction of Mark 9:14-29 (Matt 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-43a)—the healing of the boy with the unclean spirit, tell...the exorcism story with an emphasis on healing." [Meghan Henning, "Healing & Exorcism," SP. Ahearne-Kroll (ed.) Oxford Handbook of the Synoptic Gospels, p.]

- "In doing the work of God...Jesus becomes deeply compassionate...[emphasized by Luke, In] the healing of the epileptic boy Luke alters [Mark's] story so that the boy is the 'only' son, & so that the father 'cries out' & 'begs' Jesus & his disciples for help (Lk. 9:38). In Luke, Jesus refers to the boy not as 'he' but as 'your son' (9:41), then he adds that Jesus handed the healed boy back to the father (9:42). In this creativity Luke is focussing primarily on Jesus—that he is powerful, that the demons submitted to him, & that he was allknowing as well as compassionate...Insofar as Jesus is the pattern...[for] early Christians, their ministry was...also to be one of deep compassion." [Graham H. Twelftree, In the Name of Jesus, p. 136]

- Luke 9:42 "foregrounds the impact of Jesus' intervention...the demon is no longer 'in' but 'out,' the boy is no longer ill but well, & the...father is no longer threatened by the extinction of his family line." [Todd Klutz, Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts, p. 161]

- There's a "danger of 'medico-centrism' in contemporary western interpretation[s] of ancient accounts of religious healing...is well-illustrated every time commentators on Lk. 9:37-43a refer to the possessed boy...as an 'epileptic.'...The condition was not, in [its ancient] context...a precise diagnosis..." [T. Klutz, Op. cit., p. 12]

F. Case of Demon-Possession

- "Luke emphasizes the seriousness of the demonic action by the addition [to Mark's account] of [the spirit /demon] 'scarcely ever leaves him' (Lk. 9:39b) ...Matthew seems to focus more on the aspect of healing than on exorcism, [while] Luke follows Mark & describes this episode as a typical story of exorcism. As in Mark, Luke reports how the spirit tormented the boy (9:39), & how the demon recognized Jesus (9:42). He retains Mark's term 'drive (the demon) out' (9:40) & [says that] ...'Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit' (9:42)." [Jae Hyun Lee, "...Redaction Criticism," SE. Porter (ed.) Pillars in

the History of Biblical Interpretation, p. 328]

G. Skeptics: 'Demon-possessed ('epileptic') boy' merely had a mental disorder (not a demon)

- “The [quote] “spirits” to which the [NT] authors were referring were very possibly related to medical, & in these cases mental, illnesses [not demons as such] ...[In] many specific instances in the NT... very clearly physical illnesses are ...described in the context of [quote] “spirits” & “demons.’ For example, in Mk. 9, Matt. 17, & Lk. 9, Jesus is confronted by the father of a child who suffered from all the classic signs of a generalized seizure (e.g. foaming at the mouth, becoming unconscious, rigidity, & shaking). Matt. & Luke describe the boy’s having a demon, & even Jesus referred to [him] as having a “spirit” (Mk. 9:25), even though the father clearly said that the boy has seizures (Mt. 17:15). However, ...[Jesus] chose to explain the situation in a...culturally appropriate manner, consistent with an ancient, pre-Enlightenment narrative... Jesus could not have told [them]...he would heal the epilepsy.” [Ragy R. Girgis, On Satan, Demons, & Psychiatry, pp. 54-55]

- Fred “Dickason reports that as many as 95% of cases of demonic influence...are the result of involvement with demons by ancestors. He believes that the boy who was demonized from childhood is such a case [Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43] (C. Fred Dickason, Demon Possession & the Christian (1987) p. 219)...[But,] there’s nothing in the Gospel text to support Dickason’s claim that the boy who was demonized from childhood became that way through ancestral influence; if anything, the text points away from this conclusion...” [Roger K. Bufford, Counseling & the Demonic (1988) pp. 109-110]

- Note: Jesus rejected the notion of “generational sin.” The classic text here is John 9:1-7, the account of Jesus healing the man born blind. The disciples’ question is, “Who sinned—this man or his parents?” Jesus’ reply was “neither”... This case of the demon-possessed boy appears to parallel that case of the man born-blind.

H. Demon-Possession & Epilepsy

- “This is one of the few cases in the Gospels where the condition described so clearly fits a clinical illness as recognized by Western medicine. Although we should be cautious about assuming a direct one-to-one correlation between our Western understanding of epilepsy & the condition of the boy, in this case it is perhaps a reasonable assumption...Matthew alone has made this connection explicit... Mark’s failure to do so may reflect...[the] local Palestinian [situation], where epilepsy was not recognized as distinct from demon possession.” [Amanda Witmer, Jesus, the Galilean Exorcist, p. 188]

I. Not all ‘epileptics’ are ‘demon-possessed’

- “News about [Jesus] spread throughout Syria. So, they brought to him...those suffering from various diseases ...the demon-possessed, the epileptics, & the paralytics. And he healed them.” (Mt. 4:24 CSB) Note: Here the “demon-possessed” are distinguished for “epileptics.” Not all “epileptics” are “demon-possessed.”

- NET renders: “those who had seizures” and notes: “Greek: “those who were moonstruck,” ...now the term is generally regarded as referring to some sort of seizure disorder such as epilepsy. [NET note on Mt. 4:24]

- “‘Lord,’ [the father] said, ‘have mercy on my son, because he has seizures & suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire & often into the water.’” (Mt. 17:15 CSB) “Lit: he is moonstruck; thought to be a form of epilepsy”- CSB

- “Although the epileptic activity here is caused by a spirit (Mt. 17:8) as many people in antiquity would expect., Matthew recognizes that not all epileptic activity involves spirits, (he distinguishes the two issues in Mt. 4:24.” [Zondervan, Note on Mt. 17:15, NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, p. 1646]

J. “Moonstruck”

- “Matthew is the only NT writer to use the verb selēniazomai. Twice he used it to describe the situation of a person under the influence of demons. Literally it means ‘to be moonstruck’ ...The Greek word for moon is selēnē. Whatever the verb’s precise meaning in [Matt.], Jesus brings full recovery to people afflicted in this way. [L. Perkins, “Moonstruck” in Mt. 4:24; 17:15 (selēniazomai),”

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- “It is clear from Mt. 17:15 & Mk. 9:18-20 that the authors considered the boy demonized & his symptoms arose from this demon's activity. Note that in Mt. 17:18 Jesus commands...the demon, to leave. So, this verb describes some kind of demonization, at least as perceived by people in the 1st century. The...demonized boy in Mk. 9:18-20 has many symptoms comparable to...'epilepsy'...traced by many in antiquity to the influence of the moon. In modern Greek selēniasmos means epilepsy. However, we're not sure...selēniazomai carried this medical connotation when Matthew [wrote]. Nor should we...conclu[de] that all epileptic seizures were considered in the 1st-century Jewish context as demonically inspired. What we can say is that in some cases demonic activity manifested itself in the form of seizures that were comparable to epileptic attacks.” [Larry Perkins, “Moonstruck” in Mt. 4:24; 17:15 (selēniazomai),” Internet Moments with God's Word, #90]