

# Transfiguration Scripture Readings with Notes

## Vespers

### Exodus 24 (*italics read in service*)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>And he said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they will worship the Lord from a distance. <sup>2</sup>And Moses alone will draw near to God, but they will not draw near, and the people will not come up with them.”

<sup>3</sup>And Moses went and reported in detail to the people all the words of God and the ordinances. All the people answered with one voice, saying, “We will do all the words that the Lord said, and we will obey!” <sup>4</sup>And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And Moses, rising early in the morning, constructed an altar at the bottom of the mountain and twelve stones into the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup>And he sent young men out from among the sons of Israel, and they brought whole burnt offerings and slaughtered little calves as sacrifices of well-being to God. <sup>6</sup>And Moses, taking half of the blood, poured it into basins, and he poured half of the blood out against the altar. <sup>7</sup>And then, taking the book of the covenant, he read in the hearing of the people, [Literally: into the ears of the people] and they said, “We will do everything that the Lord has said, and we will obey!” <sup>8</sup>And Moses, taking the blood, sprinkled it over the people and said, “Look, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord established with you concerning all these matters.”

<sup>9</sup>And Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up. <sup>10</sup>And they saw the place where the God of Israel stood and what was under his feet just like brickwork of lapis lazuli, and like the appearance of the firmament of the heavens in purity. <sup>11</sup>And not even one of the chosen leaders of Israel was missing, and they appeared in the place of God, and they ate and drank.

[Or from Hebrew: <sup>9</sup>And Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy from the elders of Israel went up. <sup>10</sup>And they saw the God of Israel, and what was under his feet was like sapphire tile work and like the very heavens for clearness. <sup>11</sup>And toward the leaders of the children of Israel he did not stretch out his hand, and they beheld God, and they ate, and they drank.]

<sup>12</sup>*And the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me into the mountain and be there, and I will give you the stone tablets, the law, and the commandments that I wrote to instruct them.”* <sup>13</sup>*And, arising, Moses and Joshua his assistant went up into the mountain of God.* <sup>14</sup>*And they said to the elders, “Stay right here until we return to you. And look, Aaron and Hur are with you, and if a pressing*

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<sup>1</sup>Notes: Scripture throughout this handout is mostly taken from the Lexham English Septuagint (LES) and Lexham English Bible (LEB) with some influence from the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) and the English Standard Version (ESV). The Lexham and NETS Bibles are very word-for-word style and produce some awkwardness in reading aloud but are good for understanding the words used in the original languages.

*matter happens to someone, let them go on to them.”<sup>15</sup> And Moses [Greek adds: and Joshua/Jesus] went up into the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.<sup>16</sup> And the glory of God came down on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days, and on the seventh day the Lord called Moses from the middle of the cloud.<sup>17</sup> And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was just like flaming fire on the top of the mountain, before the sons of Israel.*

*<sup>18</sup> And Moses entered the middle of the cloud and went up into the mountain and was there in the mountain for forty days and forty nights.*

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Exodus repeatedly describes Moses’ ascents onto the mountain of the Lord to meet with God. This is in the context of God giving the Teaching (Torah, traditionally translated “Law”). We see in the first half of this chapter that the people pledge to do all the words of the Lord (which they already fail to do by chapter 32). When Moses ascends alone into the mountain we see it covered with “fire, the gloom, thick darkness, and storm” (Deuteronomy 5.22) and trembled greatly (Exodus 20.18, Hebrews 12.18). Some of this imagery is repeated, but transformed in the Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration.

### **Exodus 33.7–34.10 (italics read in service)**

<sup>7</sup> And Moses, taking his tent, pitched it outside the camp, a long distance from the camp, and it was called “tent of testimony [Hebrew: assembly].” And it happened anyone seeking the Lord would go out to the tent, which was outside the camp.<sup>8</sup> And whenever Moses went out to the tent outside the camp, all the people would stand watching, each one beside the doors of his tent, and observe intently from the time Moses departed until he entered into the tent.<sup>9</sup> And whenever Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud came down and stood at the door of the tent, and it spoke with Moses.<sup>10</sup> And all the people were watching the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent. And after standing, all the people bowed down, each one from the door of his tent.<sup>11</sup> *And the Lord spoke with Moses face to face, just as when a person talks with his own friend. And he would return to the encampment, but the attendant, Joshua, son of Nun, a young man, did not go out of the tent.*

<sup>12</sup> *And Moses said to the Lord, “Look, you yourself say to me, ‘Lead this people up,’ but you yourself have not made known to me whom you will send along with me! Yet you said to me, ‘I know you more than any other, and indeed you have favor before me.’<sup>13</sup> If, therefore, I have found favor before you, show yourself to me, that I may see you clearly, so that I might find favor before you, and that I might know that this great nation is your people.”<sup>14</sup> And he responded, “I myself will go along with you, and I will put you at ease.”<sup>15</sup> And he responded to him, “If you yourself do not go along, do not lead me up from here.<sup>16</sup> And how will it really be known that I have found grace before you, both I and your people, except if you go along together with us? And I will be honored, both I and your people, from all the peoples that are upon the earth.”*

<sup>17</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “Indeed, I will do this thing for you, which you have said, for you have found grace before me, and I know you more than any other person.” <sup>18</sup> And Moses said, “Show me your glory!” <sup>19</sup> And God said, “I myself will pass by in front of you in my glory, and I will speak on my name, the Lord [Hebrew: YHWH], before you, and I will have mercy upon whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whomever I will have compassion.” <sup>20</sup> And he said, “You cannot see my face, for a human cannot see my face and live.” <sup>21</sup> And the Lord said, “Look, a place beside me! Stand on this rock. <sup>22</sup> And when my glory passes by, then I will put you into a cleft of the rock, and I will shelter you with my hand over you until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> And then I will take my hand away, and then you will see my back parts, but my face will not appear to you.”

<sup>34.1</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “Carve out for yourself two tablets of stone just like the first ones and come up to me on the mountain, and I will engrave on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you shattered. <sup>2</sup> And get ready for the morning and ascend Mount Sinai and stand there with me on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup> And no one should come up with you or appear in all the mountain. And flocks and oxen should not graze next to that mountain.” <sup>4</sup> And he hewed out two tablets of stone just like the first set. And rising early, Moses went up to Mount Sinai, just as the Lord had charged him. And Moses took the two stone tablets along. <sup>5</sup> And the Lord descended in a cloud and stood near him there, and he called out in the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And the Lord passed by right before him, and he called out, “The Lord God, compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and full of mercy and trustworthy, <sup>7</sup> and maintaining righteousness and mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity and injustices and sin, and he does not acquit the guilty, bringing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children of the children, down to the third and fourth generation.” <sup>8</sup> And acting quickly, Moses, bending down to the earth, worshipped. <sup>9</sup> And he said, “If I have found favor before you, may my Lord go along with us! For the people is stiff-necked, and you yourself take away our sins and our iniquity, and we will be yours!” And the Lord announced to Moses, “Look, I am setting a covenant in place for you. I will perform wonders in the presence of all your people, which have not occurred anywhere in the earth or among any nations. And all the people among whom you yourself live will see the actions of the Lord, because the things that I myself will perform on your behalf are marvelous.

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This passage comes after the children of Israel worshipping the Golden Calf in the desert (Exodus 32), thus immediately breaking the Second Commandment (Exodus 20.4–6, 31.18, 32.19). Moses goes to intercede for the children of Israel, petitioning for the Lord to come with them into the Promised Land. As a sign of this, he asks the Lord to show him his glory. Interestingly, God says no one can see his face and live (v. 20) whereas a few verses earlier, the text states Moses spoke to the Lord “face to face” as one speaks to a friend. The Evangelist John sheds some light on this passage, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son [or: God]<sup>2</sup>, the one who is in the bosom of the Father,

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<sup>2</sup>A fascinating and lengthy digression could be explored here on the textual history and commentary of this verse, but it’s outside the scope of this series. In summary, both readings are correct; there is an emphasis in the Orthodox Church on the reception of Scripture, finding the “original text” to the exclusion of all variants is an unproductive pursuit, inspired by certain versions of the Protestant doctrine of “Scripture Alone”.

he has made him known.” (1.17–18) What is the glory of God? It is his name (33.18) which is intimately connected with his mercy and compassion. He is the friend/lover of humanity as we say in the services, long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. In 33.15 and 34.9–10 we see Moses desires the Lord himself to go with the people, for the Lord is mighty to save. “Who is so great as our God, he is the God who does wonders.” Psalm 76.14–15 (77.13–14)

### 3 Kingdoms (1 Kings) 19.1–16

<sup>1</sup>Ahab told Jezebel his wife all that Elijah had done and how he killed the prophets [of Baal] with the sword. <sup>2</sup>Jezebel sent to Elijah and said, “If you are Elijah and I am Jezebel, may God do this to me, and may he do more than this if at this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of these.” <sup>3</sup>Elijah was afraid. He arose and departed after his life. *He came to Beersheba in the land of Judah and left his servant there.* <sup>4</sup>*Elijah went into the desert on the road for a day, and he came and sat under a juniper tree.* Then he asked for his life to die and said, “It is enough. Now take my life from me, O Lord, because I am not better than my fathers.” <sup>5</sup>*And he fell asleep and slept there under the tree; and look, someone touched him and said to him, “Rise and eat!”* <sup>6</sup>*And Elijah looked and look, by his head was a loaf of barley and a flask of water. He arose and ate and drank and returned to sleep.* <sup>7</sup>*The angel of the Lord returned for a second time and touched him and said to him, “Arise, eat, because the way is difficult for you.”* <sup>8</sup>*He arose and ate and drank. He went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights until he arrived at Mount Horeb [Hebrew adds: the mountain of God].*

<sup>9</sup>*He entered there into the cave and lodged there. Look, the word of the Lord came to him and said, “Why are you here, Elijah?”* <sup>10</sup>Elijah said, “Being zealous, I am zealous for the Lord Almighty because the sons of Israel have rejected you; they have broken down your altars; they have killed your prophets with a sword; and I alone remain. And they seek my life to take it.” <sup>11</sup>He said, “Go out tomorrow and stand before the Lord on the mountain. Look, the Lord will pass by.” *A very mighty wind broke up the mountains and crushed rocks before the Lord but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.* <sup>12</sup>*After the earthquake was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire was a sound of a small breeze; and the Lord was there.* <sup>13</sup>*It happened when Elijah heard, he covered his face with his own goatskin, and he went out and stood at the cave.* Look, a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” <sup>14</sup>Elijah said, “Being zealous, I am zealous for the Lord Almighty because the sons of Israel have rejected you; your covenant and your altar they have broken down, and they have killed your prophets with a sword. I alone remain, and they seek my life to take it.” <sup>15</sup>*The Lord said to him, “Go! Return on your way. You will come on the way of the desert of Damascus, and you shall come, and you shall anoint Hazael as king of Aram.* <sup>16</sup>*You shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah as prophet in place of you.* <sup>17</sup>It will be that the one who is saved from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and the one who is saved from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. <sup>18</sup>You [Hebrew: I] will leave in Israel seven thousand men, all the knees who have not kneeled a knee to Baal and every mouth that has not worshiped [Hebrew: kissed] him.”

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After the confrontation with the prophets of Baal (chapter 18), Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah who departs to preserve his life. Just as the Law/Teaching was given by angels (Acts 7.53), so we see angels ministering to Elijah here, to prepare him to meet the Lord on his holy mountain. Again forty days is mentioned as in the first passage. Forty is a number of preparation (40 days of Christ fasting, 40 years of the children of Israel in the wilderness, 40 days of Lent, etc.), and the Church calendar, Transfiguration is 40 days before the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross.

To comfort Elijah, the Lord appears to him not in the dramatic displays of the wind, earthquake, and the fire, but in the gentle breeze. For indeed, he is compassionate, and this prefigures Christ who is meek and lowly and gives rest. (Matthew 11.28-30)

## Orthros

### Luke 9.18–48

<sup>18</sup>And it happened that while he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” <sup>19</sup>And they answered and said, “John the Baptist, but others, Elijah, and others, that one of the ancient prophets has risen.” <sup>20</sup>And he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”

<sup>21</sup>But he warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, <sup>22</sup>saying, “It is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised on the third day.”

<sup>23</sup>And he said to them all, “If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life on account of me, this person will save it. <sup>25</sup>For what is a person benefited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself? <sup>26</sup>For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of this person when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. <sup>27</sup>But I tell you truly, there are some of those standing here who will never experience death until they see the kingdom of God.”

<sup>28</sup>*Now it happened that about eight days after these words, he took along Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became white, gleaming like lightning [or: dazzling white]. <sup>30</sup>And behold, two men were talking with him, who were Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>who appeared in glory and were speaking about his departure [literally: exodus] which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.*

<sup>32</sup>*Now Peter and those with him were burdened with sleep but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men who were standing with him. <sup>33</sup>And it happened that as they were going away from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here. And let us make three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,” not knowing what he was*

saying. <sup>34</sup> And while he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered into the cloud. <sup>35</sup> And a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him!" <sup>36</sup> And after the voice had occurred, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

<sup>37</sup> Now it happened that on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. <sup>38</sup> And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, saying, "Teacher, I beg you to look with concern on my son, because he is my only son!" <sup>39</sup> And behold, a spirit seizes him and suddenly he screams, and it convulses him with foam and rarely withdraws from him, battering him severely. <sup>40</sup> And I begged your disciples that they would expel it, and they were not able to do so." <sup>41</sup> So Jesus answered and said, "O unbelieving and perverted generation! How long will I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here!" <sup>42</sup> And while he was still approaching, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. <sup>43</sup> And they were all astounded at the mighty power of God.

But while they were all marveling at all the things that he was doing, he said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup> "Let these words sink into your ears: the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." <sup>45</sup> But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they could not understand it. And they were afraid to ask him about this statement.

<sup>46</sup> And an argument developed among them as to who of them might be greatest. <sup>47</sup> But Jesus, because he knew the thoughts of their hearts, took hold of a child and had him stand beside him <sup>48</sup> and said to them, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For the one who is least among you all — this one is great."

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We include such long passages to give context for the Transfiguration. St Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the awaited Messiah. Jesus subverts the disciples' expectation by saying he must suffer and be killed; moreover his disciples too must take up their own crosses. Christ was crucified and died, not so we wouldn't have to suffer, but so that we could endure it; in Christ we are enabled to take up our crosses, following the Crucified one, and we find now that death is no longer a curse, but a transformation, and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Christ concludes this discourse by stating some of those listening to him will see the Kingdom of God before their deaths, and St Luke immediately relates the account of the Transfiguration. The Transfiguration occurred eight days after this discourse. While the whole episode prefigures Christ's Resurrection, a detail which speaks to this is the eight day. For in six days God created the heavens and the earth, and rested upon the seventh. But transcending the pattern of creation, Christ rises on the eighth day and inaugurated a new creation (2 Corinthians 5.17).

The disciples who ascended the mountain with Christ and engaged in prayer are shown his glory in as far as they were able to receive it, as our hymns say. He becomes dazzling white as lightning and outshines the sun. Moses and Elijah appear with Christ signifying that he is the Lord of the Law and

the Prophets, and the Living and the Dead. (For Moses died outside of the Promised Land and God buried him, while Elijah was taken up into heaven alive into heaven on a fiery chariot.) Additionally, while Moses saw the back parts of God and Elijah heard only the small whisper, in Christ the fullness of Divinity was revealed (Colossians 2.9, John 1.14–18, Hebrews 1.1–3).

The two Old Testament figures discuss Christ's exodus, where by departing this life he would free the dead from the tyranny of Death and Devil; a new exodus and Passover. The line that the three "were burdened with sleep" brings to mind to the Garden of Gethsemane where the disciples are asleep as Jesus is praying before his crucifixion. Not knowing that Jesus is to die for the sins of world is to be asleep, yet when one is fully awake he sees the glory of the Lord. Upon seeing Moses and Elijah with Christ, St Peter exclaims "It is good to be here," yet St Luke states he did not know what he was saying. While indeed it is good to behold the glory of the Lord, the Transfiguration on Mt Tabor was intended to be a comfort for the disciples when they saw Christ lifted upon the Cross on Mt Golgotha, which he did voluntarily for our sakes. The revelation on Mt Tabor was a preview of the glory of the Resurrected Christ who suffered the Passion and Crucifixion first. By wishing to dwell on Mt Tabor in booths, Peter would prevent Christ's passion. Yet God graciously corrects the three disciples by proclaiming Jesus as his beloved Son, and to listen to him. Jesus alone appeared after this declaration, leaving no doubt as to who God the Father was speaking about.

After the transfiguration, Jesus and the disciples come down the mountain and find a boy oppressed by demons. Christ heals the boy with only a word, rebuking the unclean spirit. He who was transfigured upon the mountain shows forth the power of God in healing the boy.

After this, Jesus again foretells his death. He who was transfigured and healed the demon possessed underwent his Passion willingly. He was not carried along by events, but was the Master of them. This he did for our salvation, freeing us from demonic slavery. Yet the disciples still do not understand, as indicated by the next paragraph where they are arguing about who is the greatest in the Kingdom.

## **Divine Liturgy**

### **2 Peter 1.1–21**

<sup>1</sup>Simeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith equal in value to ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, <sup>3</sup>because his divine power has bestowed on us all things that are necessary for life and godliness, through the knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence of character, <sup>4</sup>through which things he has bestowed on us his precious and very great promises, so that through these you may become sharers of the divine nature after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire, <sup>5</sup>and for this same reason, and by applying all diligence, supply with your faith excellence of character, and with excellence of character, knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and with knowledge, self-control, and with self-control, patient endurance, and with patient endurance, godliness, <sup>7</sup>and with godliness, brotherly affection, and with brotherly affection, love.

<sup>8</sup>For if these things are yours and are increasing, this does not make you useless or unproductive in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For the one for whom these things are not present is blind, being nearsighted, having forgotten the cleansing of his former sins. <sup>10</sup>*Therefore, brothers, be zealous even more to make your calling and election secure, because if you do these things, you will never ever stumble.* <sup>11</sup>*For in this way entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied for you.*

<sup>12</sup>*Therefore I intend to remind you continually concerning these things, although you know them and are established in the truth that you have.* <sup>13</sup>*But I consider it right, for as long as I am in this habitation, to stir you up by a reminder,* <sup>14</sup>*because I know that the removal of my habitation is imminent, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.* <sup>15</sup>*And I will also make every effort that you are able at any time, after my departure, to recall these things to mind.*

<sup>16</sup>*For we did not make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ by following ingeniously concocted myths, but by being eyewitnesses of that one's majesty.* <sup>17</sup>*For he received honor and glory from God the Father when a voice such as this was brought to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* <sup>18</sup>*And we ourselves heard this voice brought from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain,* <sup>19</sup>*and we possess as more reliable the prophetic word, to which you do well if you pay attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,* <sup>20</sup>*recognizing this above all, that every prophecy of scripture does not come about from one's own interpretation,* <sup>21</sup>*for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

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To tie this passage into the Gospel reading in the Divine Liturgy: The confession of St Peter before the Transfiguration — that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God — was revealed by God the Father. It is not human knowledge, indeed all we know about Christ is revealed to us; we did not devise clever myths or sublime reasoning. Truth was revealed, not as propositions, but as a Person desiring a relationship with us, seeking communion with us and to free us from the ancient delusion. How should we respond to the bedrock revelation that Jesus is the Christ? By ascending with the virtues so that the glory of God would be revealed to us. Let us keep watch with the small lamp we have until the Day dawns, for through our faithfulness to the promises of God, we may become partakers of the divine nature.

### **Matthew 16.13–17.23**

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he began asking his disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because



flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it! <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven.”

<sup>20</sup>Then he commanded the disciples that they should tell no one that he was the Christ.

<sup>21</sup>From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid, Lord! This will never happen to you!” <sup>23</sup>But he turned around and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a cause for stumbling to me, because you are not intent on the things of God, but the things of people!”

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life on account of me will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will a person be benefited if he gains the whole world but forfeits his life? Or what will a person give in exchange for his life? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and at that time he will reward each one according to what he has done. <sup>28</sup>Truly I say to you, that there are some of those standing here who will never experience death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

*<sup>17.1</sup> And after six days Jesus took along Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothing became bright as the light. <sup>3</sup>And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him. <sup>4</sup>So Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here! If you want, I will make here three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” <sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!” <sup>6</sup>And when the disciples heard this, they fell down on their faces and were extremely frightened. <sup>7</sup>And Jesus came and touched them and said, “Get up and do not be afraid.” <sup>8</sup>And when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one except him — Jesus alone.*

*<sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them saying, “Tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” <sup>10</sup>And the disciples asked him, saying, “Then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” <sup>11</sup>And he answered and said, “Elijah indeed is coming, and will restore all things. <sup>12</sup>But I say to you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did with him whatever they wanted. In the same way also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” <sup>13</sup>Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.*

*<sup>14</sup>And when they came to the crowd, a man approached him, kneeling down before him <sup>15</sup>and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, because he has seizures and suffers severely, for often he falls into the fire and often into the water. <sup>16</sup>And I brought him to your disciples, and they were*

not able to heal him.” <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered and said, “O unbelieving and perverse generation! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me!”

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him and the boy was healed from that hour.

<sup>19</sup> Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and said, “Why were we not able to expel it?”

<sup>20</sup> And he said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you. [<sup>21</sup> But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”]

<sup>22</sup> Now as they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men, <sup>23</sup> and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.” And they were extremely distressed.

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As we covered much of this in the Lukan passage, let’s focus on some of the different emphases found in St Matthew’s account. St Peter opposes Christ going to Jerusalem, in his mind for the Christ to die would mean his mission has failed. But Christ rebukes him, calling him Satan, for it opposes the things of God. In order for the world to be renewed, the Christ must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things.

St Matthew states the Transfiguration occurred six days after this conversation, but St Luke gives eight. Both the six and the eight reference the same thing, on the literal level St Luke was using inclusive counting and St Matthew and Mark exclusive counting (where the first and last days are not counted), moreover both evoke the creation week and our need to ascend above the things of this world to see the revelation of God.

In several passages (16.20, 17.9) in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus forbids his disciples to tell others that he is the Christ. Likewise he commands his disciples to not tell of the Transfiguration until after the Resurrection. As the people had an idea that the Christ would overthrow the Roman government and politically liberate Judah. Jesus is revealed as Christ in the Resurrection from the dead, shown forth by miracles and the breaking of Satan’s rule over humanity.

## **Other passages that are not read in Church**

### **Mark 8.27–9.32**

<sup>27</sup> And Jesus and his disciples went out to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” <sup>28</sup> And they told him, saying, “John the Baptist, and others Elijah, and others that you are one of the prophets.” <sup>29</sup> And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to him, “You are the Christ!” <sup>30</sup> And he warned them that they should tell no one about him.

<sup>31</sup>And he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be killed, and after three days to rise. <sup>32</sup>And he was speaking openly about the subject, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning around and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan, because you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of people!"

<sup>34</sup>And summoning the crowd together with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life on account of me and of the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what does it benefit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? <sup>37</sup>For what can a person give in exchange for his life? <sup>38</sup>For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." <sup>9.1</sup> And he said to them, "Truly I say to you, that there are some of those standing here who will never experience death until they see the kingdom of God having come with power."

<sup>2</sup>And after six days, Jesus took along Peter and James and John, and led them to a high mountain by themselves alone. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothing became radiant — extremely white, like no cloth refiner on earth can make so white. <sup>4</sup>And Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! And let us make three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>(For he did not know what he should answer, because they were terrified.) <sup>7</sup>And a cloud came, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him!" <sup>8</sup>And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus alone.

<sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down from the mountain, he ordered them that they should tell no one the things that they had seen, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup>And they kept the matter to themselves, discussing what this rising from the dead meant. <sup>11</sup>And they asked him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" <sup>12</sup>And he said to them, "Elijah indeed does come first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup>But I tell you that indeed Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they wanted, just as it is written about him."

<sup>14</sup>And when they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup>And immediately the whole crowd, when they saw him, were amazed, and ran up to him and greeted him. <sup>16</sup>And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" <sup>17</sup>And one individual from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought to you my son who has a spirit that makes him mute. <sup>18</sup>And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes paralyzed. And I told your disciples that they should expel it, and they were not able to do so." <sup>19</sup>And he answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring

him to me!” <sup>20</sup> And they brought him to him. And when he saw him, the spirit immediately convulsed him, and falling on the ground, he began to roll around, foaming at the mouth. <sup>21</sup> And he asked his father how long it was since this had been happening to him. And he said, “From childhood. <sup>22</sup> And often it has thrown him both into fire and into water, in order that it could destroy him. But if you are able to do anything, have compassion on us and help us!” <sup>23</sup> But Jesus said to him, “If you are able! All things are possible for the one who believes!” <sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe! Help my unbelief!” <sup>25</sup> Now when Jesus saw that a crowd was running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and enter into him no more!” <sup>26</sup> And it came out, screaming and convulsing him greatly, and he became as if he were dead, so that most of them said, “He has died!” <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took hold of his hand and raised him up, and he stood up. <sup>28</sup> And after he had entered into the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why were we not able to expel it?” <sup>29</sup> And he said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing except by prayer.”

<sup>30</sup> And from there they went out and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, <sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples and was telling them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand the statement, and they were afraid to ask him.

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St Mark gives the detail that Christ’s garments became white, as “no cloth refiner on earth make so white”. By this phrase, let us understand that of our own efforts we cannot approach the kingdom of God and will not see Christ in his glory. The ascent of virtues is undertaken only by grace, by working with God, “faith working through love” (Galatians 5.6).

### John 1.19–51

<sup>19</sup> And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem so that they could ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup> And he confessed — and he did not deny, and confessed — “I am not the Christ!” <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not!” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No!” <sup>22</sup> Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

<sup>23</sup> He said,  
     “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
     ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’”  
 just as Isaiah the prophet said.” <sup>24</sup> (And they had been sent from the Pharisees.) <sup>25</sup> And they asked him and said to him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

<sup>26</sup>John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water. In your midst stands one whom you do not know — <sup>27</sup>the one who comes after me, of whom I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal!” <sup>28</sup>These things took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup>On the next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This one is the one about whom I said, ‘After me is coming a man who is ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ <sup>31</sup>And I did not know him, but in order that he could be revealed to Israel, because of this I came baptizing with water.”

<sup>32</sup>And John testified, saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and remaining upon him. <sup>33</sup>And I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water, that one said to me, ‘The one upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him — this one is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup>And I have seen and testify that this one is the Chosen One of God.

<sup>35</sup>On the next day again John was standing there, and two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and looking at Jesus as he was walking by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” <sup>37</sup>And the two disciples heard him speaking, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>And Jesus, turning around and seeing them following him, said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means when translated “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” <sup>39</sup>He said to them, “Come and you will see!” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day (it was about the tenth hour).

<sup>40</sup>Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed him.

<sup>41</sup>This one first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “Christ”). <sup>42</sup>He brought him to Jesus. Looking at him, Jesus said, “You are Simon the son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which is interpreted “Peter”).

<sup>43</sup>On the next day he wanted to depart for Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow me!” <sup>44</sup>(Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.) <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found the one whom Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets wrote about — Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth!” <sup>46</sup>And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see!”

<sup>47</sup>Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Look! A true Israelite in whom is no deceit!” <sup>48</sup>Nathanael said to him, “From where do you know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” <sup>49</sup>Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!” <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these!” <sup>51</sup>And he said to him, “Truly, truly I say to all of you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Whereas the three Synoptic Gospels all include the account of the transfiguration, St John's Gospel omits it, for in his Gospel Jesus is always transfigured. This is shown in his first chapter which begins with the declaration, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1.1) Later on in the chapter St John the Baptist introduces Christ as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". St Philip proclaims to St Nathaniel that Jesus is he whom Moses and the prophets wrote about. Nathaniel proclaims upon meeting Christ that he is the Son of God. Jesus responds that he shall see the heavens opened and the angels ascending and descending upon him.