He is the Glorified God on the mountain Code: 7/NT/6

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1. General Aims of the unit

Emphasize the Divinity of Christ as He appears in great glory on the mountain

2. Special aims of the lesson

- 1. Study in details the transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain in the three gospels
 - ➤ Matthew (16:28-17:8)
 - Mark (9:1-9)
 - ▶ Luke (9;27-36)
- 2. Highlight the facts behind the transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain:
 - \blacktriangleright the necessity of transfiguration,
 - the Divinity of Christ
 - ➢ why Moses and Elijah appeared with Him ,
 - \blacktriangleright what they were discussing,
 - ▶ what is the value of praying on the mountain ,
 - ▶ what the 3 disciples missed on the mountain and why?
 - Transfiguration and resurrection of the Lord
 - The value of transfiguration for us.
 - \succ the name of the mountain ,

3.Outcomes

By the end of this lesson the teens are able to:

- 1. List the situations where the glory of the Lord appears during His incarnation.
- 2. Reason why the church choose the transfiguration as one of the minor Lordly feast.
- 3. Distinguish why each of the witnesses (prophets and disciples) was chosen to be there on the mountain with the Lord.

4. Verses :

Luke 9:27,35; 2 Pe. 1:17-18

5. References :

The attached notes

- 1. Introduction
- 2. The Significance of Transfiguration
- 3. Witnesses of Transfiguration
- 4. Lessons from Transfiguration

1. INTRODUCTION

- The Church celebrates this joyful feast annually (13th. Of Mesra -19th. of August) and considers it as one of the Lord's Minor Feasts⁽¹⁾
- The events of Transfiguration are mentioned in detail in the three synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke ⁽²⁾. Saint John referred to it indirectly" And we beheld His glory,...." ⁽³⁾. Saint Peter referred to himself as an eyewitness to the events of the transfiguration " And we heard this voice when we were with Him on the holy mountain" ⁽⁴⁾

✤ A Summary of the Events of the Transfiguration

The Master took three of His disciples (Peter, James and John), to a high mountain to pray. (The church's tradition declared that this mountain was "Tabour") ⁽⁵⁾. After a while the disciples slept, while the Lord continued praying. The face of the Lord illuminated with great glory, His clothes became white as snow. Moreover, Moses and Elijah appeared talking to Him. Suddenly the disciples woke up to see a glimpse of the glory of the Son of Man. Moses and Elijah talked with Him about "*His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*" ⁽⁶⁾ Unfortunately, the three disciples lost a major part of these precious moments, as they were "heavily with sleep" ⁽⁷⁾. Then Peter- under the influence of sleep and astonishment- made two requests; the first to continue to reside on the mountain, the second to make three tents, one for the Lord, one for Moses and one for Elijah. The response came from heaven as a bright cloud overshadowed them and the voice of the Father declared," *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am pleased. Hear Him"* ⁽⁸⁾

(1) The Lord's minor feasts are :		
1. Circumcision feast - 6	Гооbа	
2. Feast of Canna of Galilee	-13 Tooba	
3. The Entry of Christ to the Temple	- 8 Amsheer	
4. The Maundy Thursday		
5. The Thomas Sunday		
6. The Entry of Christ to Egypt	- 24 Bashans	
7. The Transfiguration	- 13 Messra	
(2) Matthew 17:1-9 , Mark 9:2-10 , Luke 9:28-36		
(3) John 1:14	(4) 2Peter 1:18	
(5) The Western schoolers refer to mountain "Harmoon" as the mountain of Transfiguration		
- Reference 1 pp 39 , reference 3 pp 34-43		
(6) Luke 9:31	(7) Luke 9:32	
(8) Matthew 17:5		

The Lord Jesus commanded them to keep the transfiguration event to themselves until His resurrection and they obeyed.

Saint John Chrysostom comments on the difference of the timing of the transfiguration event between Saint Matthew and Saint Mark's gospels ⁽⁹⁾ and that of Saint Luke's .⁽¹⁰⁾ He deduced the following : Saint Luke recorded the day of the speech and the day of transfiguration , whereas both Saint Mathew and Saint Mark recorded only the time between the events.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

1. The transfiguration is a respond to the speech of the Lord

The Lord mentioned three points in His speech to His disciples and the multitude ^{(11):}

- a. *"That He has to go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed and on the third day resurrect "*^{(12).} The disciples did not accept the cross as it was against their aims and hopes in the "MESSIAH". They thought that he would be the king of Israel, the heir of king David who would destroy the Roman ruling over Israel and they would be his ministers in his earthly kingdom. ' CRUCIFICTION WAS AGAINST THE OLD MAN WHO DID NOT ACCEPT SUFFERING'. The only solution for the disciples' misconception, and all generations, (including us) is the "TRANSFIGURATION', which will open our eyes to the glory of the crucified Jesus Christ, as well as the glory of His followers in heaven, represented by Moses and Elijah.
- b. *"Jesus will come back in His glory and the glory of His Father with all the angels and reward each one according to his deeds"* ^{(13).} It was not clear to the disciples that the Son, Jesus Christ and the Father have the same glory. The disciples knew how simple the life of Jesus was "*He has no place to rest His head"* ⁽¹⁴⁾; they knew of His humility *"do not cry, nor shout and no one can hear His voice"* ⁽¹⁵⁾. So, the transfiguration was the ultimate answer to the disciples, who did not comprehend the real glory of the Son of Man.
- c. "And He said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." ^{(16).} The disciples knew from history how the kingdom of Israel, at some stage, was powerful and glorious, but shortly it collapsed, was conquered and ruled by other strong nations, like the Assyrians, the Greeks and the Romans. The Lord wanted to show them a glimpse of the real glory of the kingdom, which they would strive, spread, fight, and die for .So transfiguration was the answer for them and for every one of us, whose goal is the kingdom of heaven.

2. Transfiguration and prayer (17)

- 1. Transfiguration is the fruit of genuine prayers.
- 2. The only way to attain transfiguration is by prayer. Transfiguration is the sweet fruit of worshipping in spirit and truth. The Lord will then guide us, with Him, to climb the high mountain, where we see and taste His glory. The declaration of heaven, to the believers, through all the generations is either a new feature or recurrence of the transfiguration. These spiritual experiences will always be the comfort and encouragement to all believers, who are running in the spiritual race.
- 3. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is our true example in prayer, where He spent most of the nights in prayers to the Father. Even when the three disciples went with Him on the mountain, they could not persevere but slept and missed the major part of this glorious transfiguration. There was no doubt that a part of our Lord's Prayer was for 'the sleeping disciples' to wake up and witness the transfiguration before it was too late.
- 4. Prayers free the believer from his worldly ties and bonds of darkness and raise him with his beloved Christ on the mountain, to live in the glory of our Lord -and have communion with the Saints and heavenly creatures. So, our Lord rewards the 'place of prayers' with glorious lights and mighty powers.
- 5. For the Lord, Prayer is a declaration to His glory. But for us, prayer reflects the glory of God on our features.
- 6. Saint John Saba says: ' practicing prayers is the mystery of continuous grace and virtues'. Saint John Chrysostom says: ' How can a person be granted any virtue, in his spiritual path, without asking, begging and prostrating before the Owner and Giver of all the virtues?
- 7. The prayer on the mountain, with our Lord Jesus Christ, is an extraordinary type of prayer, as it is that type which engulfs the heart with the love of God and the fire of the Spirit. It is the prayer which " *the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" ⁽¹⁸⁾. This type of prayer is a miraculous gift given to us -through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ- and being within our abilities.
- 8. The eager brethren who climb the mountain with the Lord and pray His type of prayer, are "beholding...... the glory of the Lord... and are being transformed from glory to glory" ⁽¹⁹⁾. They miraculously reflect the heavenly glory. Their lives will shine, their deeds will shine and even their faces will shine. Moses the prophet "..... the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him (God)" ⁽²⁰⁾. Saint Anthony ,wasn't he an illuminated figure ? Anba Abraam wasn't his merciful deeds shining?
- 9. The most important request we should ask of God is, "Lord, teach us to pray" (21) and this petition will be the first to be granted.

(18) Romans 8:26 (20) Exodus34:29

- 10. Prayer is a virtue that is given to us through continuous practice, guidance and good example- more importantly, through persistence and continuous begging. Our Lord says " shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. ... " ⁽²²⁾. Our Lord will never send us empty-handed, when we follow Him to the mountain, and beg Him with a broken and contrite heart. This does not apply only to beginners who struggle in the spiritual path but more essentially for the spiritually mature in the way . Concerning this Saint Paul says: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature , have this mind;..." ⁽²³⁾
- 11. Our major enemy in the life of prayer is ' the weakness of the flesh'! The disciples on the mountain of transfiguration 'slept' and in Gethsemane they also 'slept'. Their flesh did not sustain the alertness and the long struggle with the Master. Saint Paul cries, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" ⁽²⁴⁾.

The flesh will have great authority and power when crucified with Christ, as it is in a continuous struggle with the spirit ⁽²⁵⁾. Through baptism "*we were buried with Him* *into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him,*" ^{(26).} In our practical life we need to listen carefully to Saint Paul when he says, "*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*" ⁽²⁷⁾. Crucifixion of the flesh –or spiritual struggle- is a continuous process during our life on earth, which leads, through the grace of God, to liberation of the spirit.

Victory over the weakness of the flesh is granted to us, through Jesus, as Saint Paul declares, *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*⁽²⁸⁾.

3. Transfiguration and the Divinity of Christ ⁽²⁹⁾

1. Jesus' incarnation was marked with great humility and meekness that covered the glory of His divinity. So, He was identified as "...*He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him...., A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. ..." (30)*. But the other image of the glory of His Divinity appeared on the mountain of Tabor. His face was shining as He is the true Light (31). The light emitted from Him as He is ' light out of Light' (32). His clothes could not sustain the light so it ".... became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them." (33).

(22) Luke 18:7-8	(23) Philippians 3:13-15
(24) Romans 7:24	(25) Galatians 5:17
(26) Romans 6:4-6	(27) Galatians 5:24
(28) 1 Corinthians 15:57	(29) Reference (2)
(30) Isaiah 53:2,3.	(31) John 8:12 ; 9:5
(32) The Creed	(33) Mark 9:3

- 2. Jesus, the Son of God, is able to call the soul of Moses, from Hades; and the soul and body of Elijah (from a place we do not know) to meet Him on the mountain. As He is the Almighty God, He is able to eliminate the penalty of Moses "though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel" (33) and allow him entry to the promised land.
- 3. On the mountain, a cloud descended and overshadowed them ⁽³⁴⁾ and the disciples, for the first time, heard the voice of the Father saying "...... This is My beloved Son. Hear Him" ^{(35).}
- 5. Our Lord Jesus Christ transfigured on two other occasions: during His Resurrection and ascension to the heavens. The next great transfiguration will be on His Second Coming, when He comes in His glory and His Father's glory with a multitude of Angels and Saints, to judge and reward each one according to his deeds. (36)

4. Transfiguration and the unity of the Body of Christ (the Church)

1. On the mountain, our Lord chose three members from the struggling church on earth, and two from the departed members of the victorious church. Thus, showing us a unique example of the Body of Christ, which united the two groups, with Jesus Christ the Head.

- 2. The perfect icon of the church is found on the mountain, where the glory of God shields everyone. The Son of God, shares, with the members of His Body, the plan of His unlimited sacrifice. Where the Father directs the church to listen carefully to the plan, and fervently obey, the instructions of the Saviour and spread His 'gospel' to the whole world. Accordingly, to witness the Salvation with the Holy Spirit^{.(37)}.
- 3. This perfect icon is experienced when the believers gather around the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in every Eucharistic Liturgy. Consequently, living in unity with Christ, surrounded by the angels, the archangels, the spirits of the departed Saints worshipping the Holy Trinity. Hence, we will be purified from our sins, abide in our Saviour, receive renewal of our lives (38) and accept the mission to witness the Gospel of Salvation (39)
- 4. Saint Luke, in his account of the events on the mountain, gives us a glimpse of the topic of discussion, between our Lord, Moses and Elijah. The disciples did not share in this manifestation because they slept. How wonderful would it have been had they been alert and shared with Jesus and His heavenly guests in His conversation about "......His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem^{.(40)}. Our Lord would have liked to share with his beloved children.

(33) Deuteronomy 32:51-52 (34) the cloud is a sign of the presence and the glory of God refer to 1 Kings 8:10-11 Mark 9:7 (36) Jude 14 ; Luke 9:26 (37) Acts 5:32 (38) John 6:55-57 (39) The congregation shout 'Amen, Amen, Amen, we preach Your death O Lord,...' (40)

Luke 9:31

(35)

what He was about to do. To Abraham He said "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing" $^{^{(41)}}$, and negotiate with him the salvation of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah

5. On the same basis, our Lord would love His Church to share with Him the spreading of the kingdom of heaven on earth .He yearns for the repentance of all sinners, the strength to the crippled in faith, the healing of the sick,.. and in brief, the salvation of all humanity for He "... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." ⁽⁴²⁾. The Lord and His church will rejoice on the return of one lost sheep, ⁽⁴³⁾

5. Transfiguration and the glory of the humanity

1. Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain "in glory" ^{(44).} Moses' face also illuminated after receiving the commandment the second time " the skin of his face shone ^{....." (45)}. Saint Stephen, during his trial, before the council ".... his face as the face of an angel" ⁽⁴⁶⁾. The reflection of the glory of our Master is obvious on the faces of His followers

2. In His intercession in prayer Jesus Christ reports to the Father saying: "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them.." ⁽⁴⁷⁾. The Son granted His followers the Glory He shares with His Father. This glory shone on the lives of Saints in every generation and reflected the glory of their Master. In the twentieth century for example, the glory of our Lord Jesus was obvious on people like: Habib Guirguis , Pope Kyrellos, Fr. Michael Ibrahim and Fr. Bishoy Kamel just to mention a few

3. Saint Paul emphasizes the glory of the Saints when he says: ".....beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory," (48)

3.WITNESSES OF TRANSFIGURATION

On the mountain of Tabor there were five, three disciples from the NT and two prophets from the OT, who witnessed the transfiguration. The three disciples Peter, James and John represented the inner circle of the twelve. They attended with the Lord many special occasions as raising Jairus' daughter ⁽⁴⁹⁾, prayed with Him in Gethsemane ^{(50).}

The Three Disciples Peter James and John:

The motive for choosing those three could be for the following reasons:

1. Saint Peter was the elder disciple, who was full of zeal, who confessed – through the revelation of the Father- that Jesus was the Son of God ^{(51).} He was the outspoken disciple, who would witness boldly for the name of Jesus. He would be counted as a pillar of the church ⁽⁵²⁾

(41) Geneses 18:17	(42) 1 Timothy 2:4
(43) Luke 15:7	(44)Luke 9:31
(45) Exodus 34:29	(46)Acts 6:15
(47) John 17:22	(48) 2 Corinthians 3:18
(49) Mark 5:35-43	(50) Mark 14:33
(51) Matthew 16:16-17	(52) Galatians 2:9
(53) Mark 3:17	

- 2. Saint James, with his brother Saint John, were very zealous among the twelve and the Lord gave them "..... the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder...." (53). He would be also, the first martyr among the twelve.
- 3. Saint John was the beloved disciple full of great love to the Master, who always was "…… leaning on Jesus' bosom ……, whom Jesus loved" ⁽⁵⁴⁾. He is the only disciple who followed the Lord to the Cross, and was given Saint Mary as his mother ⁽⁵⁵⁾ He also believed in the resurrection before seeing the Lord ⁽⁵⁶⁾ and he is the writer of the fourth gospel.

The Two Prophets Moses and Elijah:

They had eight things in common:

- 1. Both fasted forty days and forty nights. Moses on the mountain to receive the ten commandments ⁽⁵⁷⁾ Elijah when he went to meet the Lord in Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁽⁵⁸⁾
- 2. Both had the courage to rebuke the defiant kings in their era. Moses rebuked Pharaoh, because he refused to free the Israelites from the slavery in Egypt, while Elijah stood against king Ahab, who spread the idols' worship in Israel and defiled himself with wickedness. ⁽⁵⁹⁾
- 3. Both accomplished their mission successfully. Moses freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; and led them 40 years in the wilderness until they reached the promised land. Elijah demolished the altar of Baal, killed its 400 prophets; and led the people to confess and follow God⁽⁶⁰⁾. He became the thunderous voice of the Lord to the wicked king Ahab^{(61).}
- 4. Both were equipped with great power to perform miracles and wonders to accomplish their missions. Moses struck Egypt with the ten plagues, crossed with his people the Red sea ⁽⁶²⁾, extracted water from the rock ⁽⁶³⁾, gave them the Manna ⁽⁶⁴⁾, overcame Amalek by raising his hand. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ Elijah was given the power to open and close heaven to give or stop rain, ⁽⁶⁶⁾ raised the son of the widow of Zarephath ⁽⁶⁷⁾, crossed the Jordan River ⁽⁶⁸⁾.
- 5. Both suffered for the sake of the Lord and for their mission. Moses suffered from Pharaoh, who kicked him out and threatened him. ⁽⁶⁹⁾ He also suffered from his people when they rebelled against him and wanted to stone him. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ Moreover, from his sister, Miriam and his brother Aaron. ⁽⁷¹⁾ Elijah suffered from King Ahab and Isabel the queen, who vowed to kill him, and lived as an escapee for a long time. ⁽⁷²⁾

(54) John 13:23	
(55) John 19:27	
(57) Exodus 24:18 ; 34:28	
(59) 1 Kings 16:30-33	
(61) 1 Kings 21:17-25	
(63) Exodus 17:6	
(65) Exodus 17:8-13	
(67) 1 Kings 17:17-24	
(69) Exodus 10:28	
(71) Numbers 12:1	

(56) John 20: 8
(58) 1 Kings19:8
(60) 1 Kings 18:39-40
(62) Exodus 14:21-31
(64) Exodus 16:32-36
(66) James 5:17-18
(68) 2 Kings 2:8
(70) Numbers 14:10, ;16:3 ,41
(72) 1Kings 17:2-4

- 6. Both suffered fear in one stage of their lives. Moses in the beginning of his life , he "...... fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian...". ⁽⁷³⁾ Elijah also, fled from Queen Jezebel. ⁽⁷⁴⁾
- 7. Both had great faith in God and in their mission. Saint Paul records the faith in the life of Moses in the Epistle to Hebrews ⁽⁷⁵⁾. Elijah's faith was obvious when he stopped the rain and when he raised the son of the widow; as well as in all the miraculous events of his life.
- 8. Both saw a glimpse of the Lord God. Moses upon his request ⁽⁷⁶⁾ he saw Him only from His back. Whereas, Elijah when he was exhausted and in great despair, the Lord God passed by him and talked and comfort him ⁽⁷⁷⁾

On the other hand they are different in five things:

- Moses represents the married people; as he was married to two wives, the daughter of the priest of Midian ⁽⁷⁸⁾ and the Ethiopian woman ^{(79).} Whereas Elijah represents the virgins, as he was celibate.
- 2. Moses represents the dead; as he died and the Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab^{,(80)}, as for Elijah, he represents the living as he "...went up by a whirlwind to heaven in a chariot of fire..." ⁽⁸¹⁾
- 3. Moses represents the people, living in the world, as he led his people for forty years in the wilderness. As for Elijah, he represents the ascetics who live very harsh life without a permanent place to live in.
- 4. Moses represents the Law as he received it from the Lord, but Elijah represents the prophets; as he was the leader of the prophets in his time.
- 5. Moses represents the humble people, "Now the man Moses was very more humble than all men who were on the face of the earth.", ⁽⁸²⁾ as his heart was full of endless love to his people. He interceded many times for the Israelites and turned away the Lord's severe wrath. ⁽⁸³⁾ Elijah represents the 'fiery persons' who executed 400 prophets of Baal in one occasion; ⁽⁸⁴⁾ and asked for fire to consume the captain and his fifty solders ⁽⁸⁵⁾ and stopped the water on the land for three years ⁽⁸⁶⁾

4.LESSONS FROM TRANSFIGURATION

Our glorified Lord Jesus emphasises the following facts for His Church:

1. He grants His people to be glorified with Him and in Him either here on earth or in heaven.

(73)Exodus 2:14-15

(75) Hebrews 11:24-29
(77) 1 Kings 19:9-13
(79)Numbers 12:1
(81) 2Kings 2:11
(83) Exodus 32:32
(85) 2 Kings 1:10,12

(74) 1 Kings 19:2-3
(76) Exodus 33:18-23
(78) Exodus 2:21
(80) Deuteronomy 34:5-6
(82) Numbers 12:3
(84) 1 Kings 18:40
(86) 1 Kings 17:1

- 2. He "... will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, ..." ⁽⁸⁷⁾ in heaven.
- 3. Ascending the mountain of prayer with Him is essential to share in His glory of transfiguration.

All His people will share in the glory of His transfiguration; regardless of their martial status, whether virgins or married; despite their social attitudes: living in solitude or in the world; whether their natural gift is: serving the Lord in fiery spirit or in humility; whether they are departed or awaiting the second coming

- 4. On the mountain, He grants His people to live a life similar to what Saint Paul experienced, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him"⁽⁸⁸⁾ and "how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."⁽⁸⁹⁾
- 5. On the mountain, He grants us to share with Him His plans to the salvation of the world.

Dear Friend

Please come and join your Master on the mountain and share with all the Saints the inexpressible experience, which will enlighten your life.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." (90)

⁽⁸⁷⁾ Philippians 3:21 (89) 2 Corinthians 12:4

REFERANCES

1. With the Lord on the mountain of Transfiguration Late Dr. Ragib Abdelnoor Arabic

2. Transfiguration	(Pamphlet)
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H.H Pope ShenoudallI Arabic

3. The Feast of Transfiguration

Late Bishop Gregorios Arabic

Other Resources:

The Transfiguration and some meditations upon the feast of the Transfiguration by Pope Shenouda the third

Available in : <u>www.copticchurch.net</u>