

# The touch, the 12 & the transfiguration – pt 2

## a. Confessing Christ – and the cross (9:18-26)

### 9:18-20 What is the point of this controversial episode? (Matt.16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30)

[1] [9:18] "And it came to pass, as He was praying." Matthew does not tell us that. Neither does Mark. Luke alone draws attention, and evidently with intention, to the fact that this occasion was introduced in the life and ministry of our Lord, by His own praying. This revelation of our Lord is peculiar to Luke. There are seven points where Luke shows Him praying, and the others do not record the fact. Luke tells us that before His baptism, He was praying. He tells us that when His fame was growing abroad, He retired to pray. He tells us that before He chose the twelve He was praying. Here, again, at Caesarea Philippi, He is seen first praying. We find again in connection with the transfiguration, that Luke says He was praying. And He was praying before He gave His disciples instruction on prayer. Finally, in Gethsemane, we find He was praying. Thus Luke ever shows the Son of man, the Word incarnate, the Human, living the life of prayer. **G. Campbell Morgan** Luke p.122

[2] Let it be remembered, that talk and speculation about Christ and His Gospel, are one of Satan's great traps for ruining souls. Many a man cloaks his indolence and laziness about religion, under a pretence of the variety of opinions, and the difficulty of knowing who is right. **J. C. Ryle** p. 309

[3] [9:18-20] The Jews of our Lord's time might have found out, if they had been honest inquirers, that Jesus of Nazareth was neither John the Baptist, nor Elias, nor an old prophet, but the Christ of God. The speculative Christian of our own day, might easily satisfy himself on every point which is needful to salvation, if he would really, candidly, and humbly seek the teaching of the Spirit. The words of our Lord are

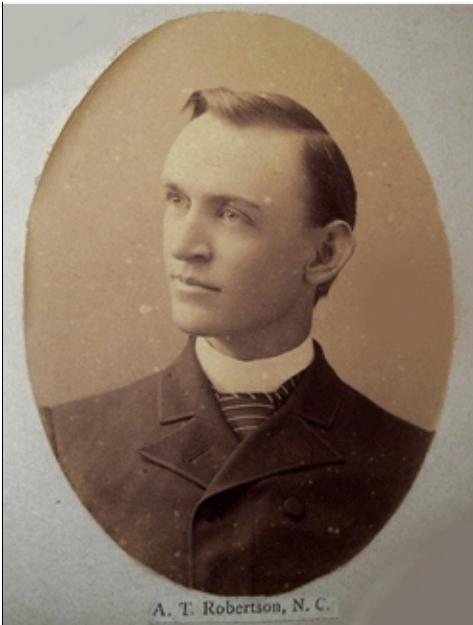
weighty and solemn, "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." (John 7:17.) Honest, practical obedience, is one of the keys of the gate of knowledge. **J. C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 1 p. 306

### 9:21,22 Can we discern a reason why the Lord chooses to designate Himself 'Son of Man' in this context?

[4] [9:21] It had been necessary for Jesus to cease using the word *Messiah* (*Christos*) about himself because of the political meaning to the Jews. Its use by the disciples would lead to revolution as was plain after the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:15). **A. T. Robertson** *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol. 2 p.128

[5] [9:21,22] But this threatening prohibition had a more special nature, which appears from John's narrative. It refers to the recent attempt of the people, after the multiplication of the loaves (John 6:14,15), to proclaim Him king, and the efforts which Jesus was then obliged to make to preserve His disciples from this mistaken enthusiasm, which might have seriously compromised His work. It is the recollection of this critical moment which induces Jesus to use this severe language. It was only after the idol of the carnal Christ had been forever nailed to the cross, that the apostolic preaching could safely connect this title Christ with the name of Jesus. **Frederic Godet** Luke p.271

[6] [9:21] Why did He tell them not to tell that to any man? I think there were two reasons. First, because, even though the confession was complete, they did not then understand it, they did not know all that it meant. They had no full apprehension of how that Prophet would reveal the truth, of how that Priest would become Redeemer;



**A.T. Robertson**

Best known for his massive *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, Baptist scholar tells us why the Lord avoided the title "Messiah"

## Men who spend every day murdering their own souls!

[9] The possession of the whole world, and all that it contains would never make a man happy. Its pleasures are false and deceptive. Its riches, rank, and honours, have no power to satisfy the heart. So long as we have not got them they glitter, and sparkle, and seem desirable. The moment we have them we find that they are empty bubbles, and cannot make us feel content. And, worst of all, when we possess this world's good things, to the utmost bound of our desire, we cannot keep them. Death comes in and separates us from all our property for ever. Naked we came upon earth, and naked we go forth ... Such is the world,

which occupies the whole attention of thousands! Such is the world, for the sake of which millions are every year destroying their souls! ... What are we doing ourselves? Are we losing our souls? Are we, by wilful neglect or by open sin – by sheer carelessness and idleness, or deliberate breach of God's law – compassing our own destruction? These questions demand an answer. The plain account of many professing Christians is this, that they are daily sinning against the sixth commandment. They are murdering their own souls! **J. C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 1 p. 310

of how that King would rule. They were not ready. They had an incomplete understanding. To proclaim Him as the Messiah, Prophet, Redeemer, Ruler, apart from the Cross was to break down. They had to wait. They were not ready. I think the other reason was that the fact that he is the Messiah can never be proven by dialectics. No clever argument can bring conviction worth while.

**G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* p.124

### 9:23-26 How is this a hard lesson for a certain type of 'messianic' enthusiast?

[7] [9:23] This is the first mention of the cross in Luke and Mark. Its associations were such that this declaration must have been startling. The Jews, especially in Galilee, knew well what the cross meant. Hundreds of the followers of Judas and Simon had been

The "idol of the carnal Christ" must "forever be nailed to the cross"  
-- see Godet, quote 5

crucified (Jos[ephus]. *Ant.* 17.10,10). It represents, therefore, not so much a burden as an instrument of death, and it was mentioned because of its familiar associations. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.248

[8] Now what do we know of all this? Surely this is a question which ought to be asked. A little formal church-going, and a decent attendance at a place of worship, can never be the Christianity of which Christ speaks in this place. Where is our self-denial? Where is our daily carrying of the cross? Where is our following of Christ? Without a religion of this kind we shall never be saved. A crucified Saviour will never be content to have a self-pleasing,

self-indulging, worldly minded people. No self-denial – no real grace! No cross – no crown! "They that are Christ's," says St. Paul, "have crucified the flesh with its affection and lusts." (Gal. 5:24.) **J. C. Ryle** p.310

## b. The Transfiguration – our lost destiny? (9:27-36)

### 9:27-29 There is a gap of a week in all 3 synoptics. Speculate on its significance. (Matt.17:1-9; Mark 9:1-10)

[10] [9:27] The meaning is much disputed. The principal interpretations are: 1. *The Transfiguration*, which all three accounts closely connect with this prediction (most of the Fathers ...); 2. *The Resurrection & Ascension* (Cajetan, Calvin, Beza); 3. *Pentecost* and the great signs which followed it (Godet, Hahn); 4. *The spread of Christianity* (Nossen); 5. *The internal development of the Gospel* (Erasmus, Klostermann); 6. *The destruction of Jerusalem* (Wetstein, Alford, Morison, Plumptre, Mansel); 7. *The Second Advent* (Meyer, Weiss, Holtzmann). No interpretation can be correct that does not explain [*eisain tines*], which implies *the exceptional privilege of some, as distinct from the common experience of all*. This test seems to exclude all but the first and the sixth of these interpretations; and, if we must choose between these two, the sixth must be right. "Shall not taste of death until" cannot refer exclusively to an event to take place the next week. But both may be right. The Transfiguration, witnessed by only three of those present, was a foretaste of Christ's glory both on earth and in heaven. The destruction of Jerusalem, witnessed by St John and perhaps a few

others of those present, swept away the remains of the Old Dispensation and left the Gospel in possession of the field. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.249

### 9:30,31 Comment on the central theme of this 'Old Covenant' conversation (Heb.9:22; Gen.12:1-8, ch.15,22)

"Who is this?"  
We, like the Apostles, must learn that the cross and the crown are inseparable.  
Do we North America Christians believe the cross precedes the crown – for themselves, as well as for the Lord Himself?

[11] [9:31] The purpose of the Transfiguration was to strengthen the heart of Jesus as he was praying long about his approaching death and to give these chosen three disciples a glimpse of his glory for the hour of darkness coming. No one on earth understood the heart of Jesus and so Moses and Elijah came. The disciples utterly failed to grasp the significance of it all. **A. T. Robertson** *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol. 2 p.131

[12] [9:30,31] It is a grave mistake to suppose that holy men and women under the Old Testament knew nothing about the sacrifice which Christ was to offer up for the sin of the world. Their light, no doubt, was far less clear than ours. They saw things afar off and indistinctly, which we see, as it were, close at hand. But there is not the slightest proof that any Old Testament saint ever looked to any other satisfaction for sin, but that which God promised

## Luke's editing and theme – "Who is this?"

[19] At this point Luke omits the whole section Mark 6:45-8:26. Whatever the reason for this it yields an interesting sequence, as Leaney points out. Herod has asked, 'Who is this?' (9). Some answers are suggested by the feeding of the multitude (*cf.* Jn. 6:14f), the disciples cite three other answers given by the people, then Peter adds one of his own (19f). The climax comes with an awe-inspiring answer from God (35). We should also notice another sequence here: the disciples' recognition that Jesus is the Messiah is followed immediately by the teaching that this means a cross for Him, and a cross, too, for them. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 168

[20] We find here again the realization of a law which occurs throughout the life of Jesus; it is this, that every act of voluntary humiliation on the part of the Son is met by a corresponding act of glorification, of which He is the object, on the part of the Father. He goes down into the waters of the Jordan, devoting Himself to death; God addresses Him as His well-beloved Son. In John 12, in the midst of the trouble of His soul, He renews His vow to be faithful unto death; a voice from heaven answers Him with the most magnificent promise for His filial heart. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.274

to make by sending Messiah. From Abel downwards the whole company of old believers appear to have been ever resting on a promised sacrifice, and a blood of almighty efficacy yet to be revealed. From the beginning of the world there has never been but one foundation of hope and peace for sinners – the death of an Almighty Mediator between God and man. That foundation is the centre of truth of all revealed religion. It was the subject of which Moses and Elijah were seen speaking when they appeared in glory. They spoke of the atoning death of Christ. **J. C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p. 316

**[13]** [9:31] ... *exodus* (departure from earth to heaven) very much like our English word “decease” (Latin *decessus*, a going away). The glorious light graphically revealed Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about the very subject concerning which Peter had dared to rebuke Jesus for mentioning (Mark 8:32 = Matt. 16:22). This very word *exodus* (way out) in the sense of death occurs in II Pet. 1:15 and is followed by a brief description of the Transfiguration glory. Other words for death (*thanatos*) in the N.T. are *ekbasis*, going out as departure (Heb. 13:7), *aphisis*, departing (Acts 20:29), *analusis*, loosening anchor (II Tim. 4:6) and *analusai* (Phil. 1:23). *To accomplish (pleroun)*. To fulfil. Moses had led the Exodus from Egypt. Jesus will accomplish the exodus of God’s people into the Promised Land on high. **A. T. Robertson** *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol. 2 p.130

### **9:32-36 What is the profound meaning of the Transfiguration – particularly in view of the Jewish messianist expectations? (Deut.18:15)**

**[14]** His first impulse is to prevent Moses and Elijah from going away. He wishes to make present glory and rapture permanent. **A. Plummer** p.252

**[15]** [9:33] Master, this is how we want to see Thee, in Thy glory, conversing with these heavenly visitors, coming in Thy power and beauty ... It is good to be here on the mount, in the glory, not going to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Jesus had said He must go to Jerusalem. **G. C. Morgan** *Luke* p.127

**[16]** Lk. tells us that they kept silent; Mt. tells us that Jesus charged them to tell no one until the Son of Man was risen from the dead. Mk. relates both the command and their observance of it. The prohibition to speak of what they had seen is a strong confirmation of the incident as an historical fact. If the vision is an invention, how can we explain the invention of such a prohibition? **A. Plummer** p.253

**[17]** [9:28-36] It is not easy to see exactly what happened at the transfiguration or why it occurred. We may see it as a revelation of the glory of the other world and perhaps this is meant as an encouragement to the disciples after the hard words about cross-bearing. The combination of glory and the conversation about the death of Christ will also be a way of teaching the disciples that true glory and the cross are not incompatible. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 171

**[18]** From innocence to holiness, and from holiness to glory; here we have the normal development of human existence, its royal path. The transfiguration, at the culminating point of the life of Jesus, shows that once at least this ideal has been realized in the history of humanity. ... The transfiguration is the end and seal of the Galilean ministry, and at the same time the opening of the history of the passion in our three Gospels. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.275