

1. Goal of the Transfiguration Series:

- Provide you with the broadest foundation for understanding the cultural context of this event.
- The Transfiguration is, by its very nature, a mystical event.
 - Eastern Christianity (including the Egyptian Coptic church) is much more comfortable with the mystical than Western Christianity.
 - Westerners have to resist the urge to solve exactly what is going on and how it is happening and just allow the text to transform you.

2. Transfiguration:

- The Greek word is *metamorphoo*, where we derive the English – metamorphosis.
- *Metamorphoo* means to be transfigured, transformed, or changed.
- *Metamorphoo* is used for both Jesus and Christians -
 - See 2 Corinthians 3:18

3. Cultural Context:

- **Hebrew Bible** (Old Testament) – as first-century Jews, the Hebrew Bible is central to the life of Jesus – as a Rabbi – and his disciples.
- **Second Temple Period** – the Second Temple period extends from approximately 450 BCE to 70 AD. The Hellenization of the Mediterranean world marks this period. The devout religious of Israel fiercely resisted the Hellenistic influences and attempted to maintain their Jewish identity and traditions.
 - A large body of writings from this period helps us understand the development of thought between the Old Testament and the New Testaments.
 - Writings include the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha.
- **Rabbinic Thought** – the corpus of Rabbinic writings helps us understand Jewish religious thinking about the Hebrew Bible and God's creation.

4. Area of Understanding – Spiritual Mind Map:

- **Psalm 42 and 43** – it will be essential to become familiar with these two Psalms throughout this study.
- **Midrash on Psalm 43** – a Midrash is a Rabbinical method of searching out a deeper meaning in a biblical text. A parable is a form of Midrash.
- **Exodus 24:9-18** – Moses ascends Mount Sinai – with three named disciples – where they see God.
- **Exodus 34:29-35** – Moses’ face reflects the glory of God.
- **Isaiah 42** – a Messianic text quoted by God during the transfiguration event (see Luke 9:35).
- **Mount Hermon** – Church tradition has held that the Transfiguration occurred at Mount Tabor (SW of Sea of Galilee). Modern scholars place the Transfiguration at Mount Hermon.
- **Second Temple Period Writings** – The Apocalypse of Baruch 51:3^{1 2}

Also, as for the glory of those who proved to be righteous on account of my law, those who possessed intelligence in their life, and those who planted the root of wisdom in their heart—their splendor will then be glorified by transformations, and the shape of their face will be changed into the light of their beauty so that they may acquire and receive the undying world which is promised to them...³

- **Heavenly Man** – The idea of a “heavenly man” derives from Jewish mysticism based on Genesis 1:26 – that man is made in the ‘image’ of God – yet God has no image.
 - See 1 Corinthians 15:48
- **Rabbinic Thought** –
 - See Deuteronomy Rabbah on the appearance of Moses as “the sun.”
- **Progression of Mark** – the gospel of Mark has a progression leading up to the Transfiguration having to do with “seeing and hearing.” The disciples (and the reader) are on a journey of discovering the reality of who Jesus is – the Messiah.

¹ <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/the-book-of-the-apocalypse-of-baruch-the-son-of-neriah-or-2-baruch/>

² Early Jewish Writings - <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/2baruch.html>

³ John Paul Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus: Narrative Meaning and Function of Mark 9:2–8, Matt 17:1–8 and Luke 9:28–36*, vol. 144, Analecta Biblica (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2000), 79–80.

5. Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) – is an ancient technique of engaging the biblical text through reading and contemplation.

- Set aside an agenda of trying to figure everything out and simply allow the spirit of God to give you insight into the text.
- Read aloud – Pray/Meditate – Read aloud.

6. Example from Psalm 42/43:

- Psalm 42/43 are linked –
 - They share a common refrain and a similar theme.
 - The psalmist feels God has abandoned him, and his soul cries out to be reunited.
- The geographical location of Psalm 42/43 is Mount Hermon and the land of Jordan.
 - The name Hermon is derived from a word that means “sacred.”
 - See 2 Peter 1:18.
- Mount Tabor – Church tradition says that Mount Tabor is the site of the Transfiguration
 - The location for Mount Tabor is based on the timeline of “after six days,” which is found in Matthew 17:1 and Mark 9:2.
 - In Jesus’ day, there was a Roman military garrison atop Mount Tabor, making it an unlikely site for Jesus to go to be transfigured.
- Read Psalm 42:6-7