



1 Today I read a psalm that reminded me of Jesus and His life. While reading it, I realized that Jesus was not the only one despised by powerful men because of the titles He carried: King, Messiah, Son of God. King David, in his own time, experienced a similar rejection because he loved the Law of God with all his heart.

Somehow I think that when Jesus read these psalms, He found comfort in knowing that David had gone through something similar.

Let me set aside a few verses for us. We read (Psalm 38:20–21):

**“Those who are wrongfully my enemies are strong, and many are those who hate me for no reason. They repay me evil for good; they oppose me because I pursue what is good.”**

1.1 It is difficult to imagine the weight of Jesus’ ministry. It is difficult to relate to a man who had no rest except when He withdrew to a lonely place to pray. Because when He was not praying, His ministry never stopped: He performed selfless miracles for the good of many, and when He was not performing miracles, He was teaching His people about the holiness of their Father and about His goodness. And that was the sweet burden of His ministry.

But there was also another side — the bitter side — which constantly revealed itself.

Because of His goodness, powerful men hated Him and planned day and night how to destroy Him: they gave false testimony against Him, interrupted Him while He taught the people, said that He came from the devil himself, tried to throw Him off a cliff, and persuaded others to look at Him through the same hateful eyes. They tried to turn His disciples against Him — and with some, they succeeded. They poisoned the minds of other powerful men against Him.

— Pharisees, Pharisees, dear priests, great scribes — instead of receiving Him with open arms, you placed Him in a grave. —

1.2 In the end, Jesus had to lie down every night carrying a heavy burden in His heart. A perfectly good man, who would never wish evil upon anyone, was hated precisely because He wanted what was good — just like King David.

1.3 With that said, I believe the event we are about to read is built upon the idea that Jesus needed encouragement. His ministry was slowly coming to an end, and the pressure was growing greater. He knew what He had to do. He knew who would do it to Him. Yet even so — He needed divine encouragement. He needed encouragement from His Father.

And that is why, I believe, He goes up Mount Hermon.

*Mount Hermon forms the southern peak of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range and lies along the border between Lebanon, Syria, and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, reaching an elevation of about 9,232 feet above sea level. Its southern slopes are under Israeli control, and the region contains the only ski resort in the area, with its summit reaching approximately 6,693 feet. The snow from Mount Hermon serves as one of the main water sources for the Jordan River, making it crucial to the hydrology of the entire Middle East.*



## WHO DIED

2 Before we go with Jesus to Mount Hermon, let us read the final verse connected to the event we are about to discuss. In (Luke 9:27) we read:

**“But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”**

2.1 In (Matthew 16:28) it says:

**“Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”**

2.2 Among theologians, there are two main interpretations of this passage:

1. “Seeing the kingdom of God” refers to the event that took place six days later, when Jesus was transfigured on Mount Hermon before three of His disciples, Moses, and Elijah.
2. “Seeing the kingdom of God” refers to the authority Jesus would receive as the Son of God after the cross, the resurrection, and His ascension to the Father.

2.3 Perhaps the Epistles can help us decide which interpretation holds more weight? (Romans 8:34), (Hebrews 1:3), (Hebrews 10:12; 12:2), (1 Peter 3:22), (Acts 2:33), and

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(Colossians 3:1) all say that Christ “sat down at the right hand of God” and possesses power, glory, and authority to judge humanity.

2.4 In (2 Peter 1:17), Peter states that during the transfiguration on Mount Hermon, Jesus received glory from the Father.

2.5 Let us also consider this. In previous sermons, I said that Jesus had a condition<sup>1</sup> to fulfill in order to receive what He had been sent for. He had to go to the cross in order to receive the authority and glory prepared for Him by the Father.

In other words, after the cross, Jesus became — beside the Father — the greatest authority over our reality.

Jesus also said that some among His disciples would not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. And now the question arises: did someone die during those six days before Jesus went up Mount Hermon? I do not know. We have no report of that. But what we do know is that Stephen<sup>2</sup> saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father before he was stoned to death.

2.6 I think of it this way: “Taken up into heaven.”

The apostles and many other disciples witnessed the ascension of Jesus, when He gave them His final instructions before going to the Father and sitting at His right hand. Luke describes this event in greater detail than the other authors.<sup>3</sup>

2.7 Because of everything mentioned above, I conclude the following: I believe the second interpretation (§2.2.) is the more realistic one.

Now the question becomes: who died after seeing the coming of the Son of Man in His kingly authority? If around five hundred people witnessed His ascension, then certainly some died afterward — whether from old age or other causes. We know that James<sup>4</sup> was the first apostle killed after Jesus’ departure, by the hand of Herod Agrippa. We also know that Stephen was stoned by the Sanhedrin.<sup>5</sup>

2.8 So let me answer the heading above: who died? I do not know exactly. But what matters is that we know who Jesus is. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Son of God who sat down at the right hand of the Father.

And if we know this and believe it, then even though we die, one day we will see His glory — the glory of the King who will rule the earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon 61. §§5.-5.5.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen is presented in the Book of Acts as the first Christian martyr — a deacon from Jerusalem, one of the “seven” appointed by the apostles to care for the poor and the widows. He was described as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), and he performed great wonders and signs among the people (Acts 6:8).

<sup>3</sup> Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:6-11

<sup>4</sup> James the Great, also known as James the son of Zebedee (the brother of the apostle John), was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus and the first among them to suffer martyrdom (Acts 12:1-2).

<sup>5</sup> Acts 7:54-60

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## THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

3 Let us read together the text from (Luke 9:28–31):

“Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

3.1 Before we continue toward Mount Hermon, I want to share with you my personal views which I also believe are biblical. Here we come to the moment where Jesus slowly shifts His focus toward what is about to happen to Him. He knows what is coming, He knows what He must do, and because of that He needs encouragement.

3.2 Jesus does not go up the mountain to give instructions to Moses and Elijah, nor does He go there to encourage them. He goes up because He Himself needs encouragement. And here we arrive at the question that personally troubles me: why would Moses and Elijah encourage their own Creator? The One who, according to the traditional understanding, created them and appointed their roles in history? In other words, if Moses and Elijah are encouraging an all-powerful God, do we not see a certain irony in all of this?

3.3 Someone may respond: “Well Daniel, your questions are understandable, but Jesus was 100% God and 100% man. In this moment we are seeing His human side, and that is why He is afraid.”

Fair enough. But this is where my struggle began. Because no matter how much I tried to understand that idea, I kept returning to the same question: how can someone who is eternal, all-powerful, and fully aware of who He truly is experience fear in the same way that we do?

The problem is not that Jesus knows the cross is coming. If I knew suffering awaited me tomorrow, that alone would not remove my fear. The issue goes much deeper than that. The real question is: who is He in His very being? Because if He is an all-powerful God who existed from eternity, then He carries within Himself a certainty I have never possessed — certainty about who He is, where He came from, and where He is returning. And that *awareness* changes the very weight of the temptation itself.

I do not possess that kind of certainty. I did not exist before my birth, I am not all-powerful, and I do not carry within myself the *awareness* that I will return to a glory from which I once came. And because of that, my struggle, my fear, and my anguish are not the same. If Jesus, in His very nature, is an all-powerful God who merely “became” man, then there remains a difference between His experience and mine that I cannot cross, because His fear would not be experienced from the same position from which I experience mine.

3.4 I tried accepting the explanation we often hear: that Jesus simply did not use His divine power. But then another problem appears. If He did not use divine power, that means He had it. And if He had it, then He knew He had it. That *awareness* does not disappear. I cannot “choose not to use” something I never possessed. I cannot lay aside a certainty I never had. I learn, He

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knows. I search, He knows. I doubt, He knows. And once again I arrive at the same conclusion: it is not the same.

3.5 This is where I began looking differently at the temptations of Jesus, His fear, and His struggle. Because if Christ is truly my path, then I must be able to follow Him. And if I am to follow Him, I must be able to understand Him. There must be a real point of contact between His experience and mine. A man can understand another man precisely because he shares the same nature, the same limits, and the same weaknesses.

And because of that, I believe the event on Mount Hermon only becomes deeply meaningful when we view Jesus through His real humanity. Not as someone merely “pretending” to fear, but as a man who knows He is walking toward the cross, a man who feels the weight of what is coming and who needs encouragement.

3.6 Texts like these, and many others similar to them, are proof to me that Jesus was a man just like you and me. He did not exist before His birth, nor was He an all-powerful God, but a man born at a specific moment in history to fulfill the role that God the Father appointed for Him — a special role, a unique role, a role for which the entire reality itself was created — yet still a role that the Father gave to Him, just as He has given each of us our own place within His plan.

3.7 And that is precisely why Moses and Elijah are there. Not to receive comfort from Jesus, but to give comfort to Him. And in the end, the Father Himself speaks from heaven and encourages His Son before the road that leads to Golgotha. And honestly, it is only then that this event becomes real to me, because then I no longer see an untouchable God moving through a pre-written scenario, but a perfectly obedient man who, despite fear, chooses to completely submit himself to the will of his God.

### **THE SAME THREE**

4 Jesus takes with Him the same three disciples He took when He raised Jairus’ daughter,<sup>6</sup> and later again in the Garden of Gethsemane before going to the cross.<sup>7</sup> Why those three specifically? Were they closer to Him than the others? Maybe they were. From this, one could conclude that they formed a special smaller group within the larger group of the twelve apostles.

4.1 Still, I am more inclined to believe that they were set apart because of the roles awaiting them in the future. We know that Peter became the leading figure among the apostles after Jesus departed to the Father. We know that John, in his old age, wrote the book of Revelation. Likewise, we know that James became one of the first martyrs after he stood against King Herod Agrippa and was killed because of it.

4.2 At the end of the event, in verse 36, we read that they remained silent and told no one what had happened on Mount Hermon. Most likely, Jesus told them that it had to remain that way for the time being, just as He had told them not to speak about the raising of Jairus’ daughter,

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<sup>6</sup> Mark 5:37

<sup>7</sup> Mark 14:33

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because the time had not yet come for people to fully understand who He was and what He was capable of doing.

4.3 Somehow, all of this reminds me of Jesus' words: "To whom much is given, much will be required."<sup>8</sup> And that is exactly what we see here. The same three men were invited to witness what others had not seen, because in the end, more would also be required from them.

## **TWO EXODUSES**

5 As I said at the beginning of the sermon, the only way Jesus could escape the glory and the crowds was by withdrawing into prayer. This time He did not go alone — three disciples were with Him — but even that was almost like being alone considering the crowds that waited for Him every single day.

5.1 During the prayer, which most likely lasted a long time — we can see from the text that the disciples fell asleep from exhaustion — Moses and Elijah joined Him. Out of all the Old Testament figures, God the Father chose to encourage His Son with these two men specifically. Why? Of course, the reason is not that Moses knew what it was like to climb a mountain to meet God — though I am joking a little. The reason was the subject they were discussing. The text tells us they were speaking about "His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

5.2 And it is precisely when we understand the meaning of the word "departure" or "exodus" that we understand why Moses and Elijah are there. In this event we are witnessing the story of two exoduses that are deeply connected to one another. The first exodus was a shadow of the second, and the second exodus was the fulfillment of the first.

5.3 The first exodus took place in the days of Moses, when God decided to deliver His chosen people from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites were enslaved to Pharaoh, his values, his desires, and his will. They did not live freely, but under his authority and under his hand. It was at that moment that God raised up Moses as a mediator between Himself and the people in order to lead Israel out of Egypt toward the Promised Land. Moses began the deliverance that Joshua would later complete by bringing the people into the land God had promised to Abraham.

5.4 And that is precisely why I believe Moses is so important here, because if anyone understood God's plan of deliverance, promise, and redemption, it was Moses. He now stands before Jesus speaking with Him about the second "exodus" — the one that would take place in Jerusalem. Just as the first exodus freed the people from Pharaoh's slavery, so Jesus through His exodus would free people from a far deeper slavery — slavery to sin.

5.5 And this is where the beautiful parallel between Pharaoh and sin appears. Just as the Israelites were forced to serve Pharaoh's desires, values, and commands, so man — ever since Adam — has lived in slavery to the sin dwelling within him. Sin constantly seeks to rule over

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 12:48

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man, shaping his desires, thoughts, and decisions. That is why the apostle Paul says: “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”<sup>9</sup>

5.6 And that is why Christ had to come. Just as Moses led the people out of Egyptian slavery, so Jesus leads His people out of slavery to sin. But there is one major difference: Moses could bring the people out of Egypt, but he could not change the human heart. Throughout their history, Israel continued to demonstrate the same rebellion against God. That is why the perfect Lamb of God now comes, the One who, as John the Baptist said, “takes away the sin of the world.”<sup>10</sup> In Jerusalem, Jesus takes the condemnation of sin upon Himself so that those who believe in Him may be set free and one day inherit the kingdom of God.

5.7 And that is precisely why I believe Moses is encouraging Jesus here. It is as though he is saying: “Everything God began through me is now being fulfilled in you.” Moses was only a small part of a much greater story that reaches its climax in Christ. What was once only a shadow in his time now becomes reality.

5.8 And Elijah? I believe his presence is just as important. Elijah was a prophet who lived during a time of great apostasy in Israel. He stood against false prophets, corrupt kings, and a people who outwardly worshiped God while their hearts remained far from Him. He was a prophet calling the nation to repentance and back to Yahweh. And this is exactly why the prophet Malachi says that before the coming of the Lord, Elijah would come to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, God would once again gather and restore His people through the coming Messiah.

Now imagine that moment. Standing before Jesus are Moses and Elijah — the Law and the Prophets — men He had heard about and read about His entire life. If we view Jesus as a real man who grew up within these promises, learning the Scriptures, learning about Moses, Elijah, Abraham, and God’s plan throughout history, then this moment becomes incredibly powerful. For the first time, He stands face to face with two men who represent the entire story of Israel and all the promises of His Father.

And that is why I believe this was an enormous encouragement to Jesus. We are not looking here at a God observing creatures He created long ago, but at a man standing before two prophets of God who confirm that the path He is walking truly is the path of His Father. Moses confirms the “exodus” He must accomplish in Jerusalem, while Elijah confirms that the prophecies are now being fulfilled in Him.

And honestly, when we view the event on Hermon this way, the entire scene becomes far deeper and more emotional. Jesus now sees with His own eyes that the entire history of Israel, the whole Law, all the Prophets, and all the promises of His God are meeting together in Him and in what He is about to accomplish on the cross.

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 7:19-20

<sup>10</sup> John 1:29

<sup>11</sup> Malachi 4:5-6

5.9 So this event is not merely a moment of supernatural glory on Mount Hermon. This is a conversation about the liberation of humanity — about the exodus Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem through His suffering, death, and resurrection. And that is precisely why the Father encourages His Son, because the road before Him is not easy. But that road leads toward the final deliverance of the people of God.

## THE FATHER ENCOURAGES HIS SON

6 (Luke 9:32-36)

“Peter and his companions had fallen into a deep sleep, but when they fully awoke, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He did not know what he was saying. While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him!’ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and told no one at that time what they had seen.”

6.1 The text tells us: “While Peter was speaking, a cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: ‘This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him!’”

Once again, Jesus had heard the stories of how the cloud protected the Israelites from the sun in the wilderness.<sup>12</sup> He had heard the stories of how God descended upon the Tent of Meeting in order to speak with Moses.<sup>13</sup>

6.2 But Jesus also knew that, at one point, God decided to withdraw his presence from the people because of the hardness of their hearts. His glory no longer descended upon the Temple in the form of a cloud as it once had. This was a visual sign to the people that their God was no longer pleased with them.<sup>14</sup>

After that, God chose to communicate with his people through the prophets, but until the coming of Jesus, he no longer appeared to the nation in the form of a cloud. He no longer descended among his people to remind them through his presence that God was with them.

6.3 Jesus knows this. He knows the history of his people and the complexity of the relationship between them and their God. And now God appears once again because of his Son — descending in the form of a cloud, primarily to show his Son that he is there for him. It is as though he is saying:

“My Son, I am here. Even though I have not appeared to my people in the form of a cloud for centuries, because of you I am here once again, so that you may know that you are my Beloved, the one in whom I delight. Do not be afraid. Do not worry. I love you more than anyone. It is

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 13:21-22

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 33:7-11

<sup>14</sup> Ezekiel 10:18-19; Ezekiel 11:22-23

because of you that I created all of this. And that is why I appear once again in the cloud, because unlike my rebellious people who are disobedient to me, I will never abandon you. I will never hide my cloud from you.”

6.4 But Jesus was not the only one who understood the power of what the cloud represented by its arrival. Peter, John, and James also understood the significance of the cloud. They too knew that through this act God was showing his love for his Son. And that is exactly why I believe the event on Mount Hermon is not primarily a display of Jesus’ power, but a display of the love between the Father and the Son before the hardest moment of his life.

## **PETER’S REACTION**

7 Before we finish, let us return to Peter’s reaction. Anyone who found himself in Peter’s position would most likely have reacted in a very similar way. What else could he even say except: “Do you want us to make shelters for you — one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?”

It is very possible that at some point Jesus told them who he was speaking with, because that is precisely why they were later able to write down who was with him on Mount Hermon besides themselves.

7.1 Even waking up itself must have been a massive shock for the disciples. In moments of such excitement and fear, the human mind often reacts with the very things it is used to doing every single day. In other words, the disciples lived a nomadic lifestyle with Jesus. Every day they prepared resting places, camps, and shelters for themselves and the others. That is why, in that moment, it was the only logical thing they could think of through which they might help within the situation they found themselves in.

Right before their eyes stood their rabbi, shining and clothed in heavenly garments, while beside him stood Moses and Elijah. Terrified by what they were witnessing, that was the only thing that could come out of their mouths.

7.2 When I imagine the entire event, I cannot help but smile at Peter’s reaction, because I know that I myself would very likely have reacted in a very similar spontaneous way if I had been in his place.

7.3 The text goes on to tell us that they did not speak to anyone about what had happened on Mount Hermon. In Matthew’s Gospel we read that Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone about what they had seen while they were coming down the mountain.<sup>15</sup>

It must have been incredibly difficult for them not to tell the other apostles what they had witnessed up there on the mountain, but they had to remain silent because Jesus had commanded them to do so.

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 17:9