



Peter Paul Rubens, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 1605, oil on canvas, 407x670 cm, Museum of Fine Arts of Nancy, Nancy. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

MATTHEW 15–17; MARK 7–9; LUKE 9

SIGN SEEKERS AND SIGN RECEIVERS

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Introduction

In these chapters, Jesus is still in Galilee, primarily north of the Lake or Sea of Galilee, where the Twelve have joined Him after their missions. It seems that these events take place in the autumn six months before the Lord's death, but because the events in the Synoptic Gospels were arranged by theological meaning, not necessarily by chronology, the exact timing of these events is unclear.¹

Issues of Cleanliness

Traditions of corban—Mt 15:1–20; Mt 7:1–23

Mt 15:2. “*Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition . . .*” A delegation of the scribes and Pharisees traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee to register their complaints to Jesus, starting a conflict

over cleanliness. While the Pharisees were very concerned with their outward cleanliness, Jesus was concerned with inner purity.

After the Babylonian captivity, many Jews focused on exact obedience to their laws, thinking that would save them. They added thousands of oral laws to “make a fence around the Torah,” or Law.² The oral laws were intended to safeguard or preserve the law. But rather, the extra burdens and excessive legal requirements became a distraction and obstacle from keeping the original divine laws given to Moses.

These oral laws or traditions called for many repeated washing ceremonies to maintain cleanliness. Most Jews had to keep track of first, second, and “other” waters to ensure cleanliness. There were also rules about how far up past the wrist the water had to go—sometimes the hands were immersed, and other times water was poured on. The people believed that what God wanted was clean skin. If they came into contact with something or someone that was unclean, they had to perform several washings to be considered clean again.

Mt 15:3. “*Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*” Jesus responds to the Pharisees by asking them to differentiate between God’s commandments and their own traditions.

Lk 11:39. “*Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.*” Luke places this conversation at a meal. Jesus points out the Pharisees’ need to address inner cleanliness, not just exterior washings. This was highly offensive to them, and they became defensive. They felt that they were far more pious than Jesus and thus did not receive His correction. Jesus often offended people when they refused to humble themselves and learn from Him.

Mk 7:11. “*It is Corban.*” Mark includes more details on what commandment Jesus referred to. The Lord reminded the Pharisees and scribes that the law of Moses calls for children to honor their fathers and mothers. In Jewish culture, children needed to care for their parents when they got older. This was especially the case for children of widowed women, who had had very few opportunities to earn a living at the time.³ The Mosaic law also asked the community to help provide for widows: “The widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee.”⁴

These laws were neglected at the time of the New Testament by some wealthy Jews who created a way to get out of their responsibility with corban, *krbn*. It allowed someone to commit their estate to the temple or some other religious purpose years before their death. Once they made the agreement, the corban, or future donation, immobilized the giver’s assets, and no one else could access them. People could thus ignore their family needs while keeping an air of piety. Jesus did not oppose the donation but did oppose the self-centered neglect of others’ needs it permitted.

Mt 15:8 (Mk 7:6). “*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*” The Lord cites Isa 29:13 to the Pharisees. Earlier He taught the same message a different way (Mt 7:14–20). Nearly eighteen hundred years later, He gave the same condemnation in the First Vision to Joseph Smith (JS—H 1:19).

What defiles—Mt 15:10–20; Mk 7:14–23

Mt 15:11 (Mk 7:20). “*that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*” Jesus now gives a public response to the Pharisees’ question about cleanliness: Our words will condemn us. If we have spoken unkindly, dishonestly, or profanely we need inner cleansing. Jesus elaborated with a parable, but even His disciples did not understand until He explained that our evil thoughts defile us. Jesus teaches the higher law of cleanliness.

Mt 15:19 (Mk 7:21). “*For out of the heart proceed evil.*” The Lord lists seven major sins in Matthew and thirteen in Mark. All of them are included in Moses’s Ten Commandments except wickedness, an evil eye, pride, and foolishness (Mt 7:22).

Miracles

The faith of the Canaanite/Syrophoenician woman—Mt 15:21–28; Mk 7:24–30

Mt 15:22 (Mk 7:26). “*Have mercy on me . . . ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.*” Jesus is on the west coast of Palestine in Phoenicia, near the Mediterranean Sea. We are not told why He is visiting a gentile region, but His fame as a healer has reached even that community. While neither Matthew nor Mark includes the Canaanite woman’s name, Mark does give a few more details: the woman spoke Greek and was a Syrophoenician.

Anciently, many illnesses and medical conditions were labeled possession by a devil. We do not know if the girl was possessed by a demon or if she had seizures, cerebral palsy, tremors, or some other neurological disorder. Many ancients blamed unusual behavior on the devil, and many Jews at that time mistakenly assumed that God punished sin with accidents, afflictions, birth defects, and illness: “Any illness may result from sin.”⁵ Whatever the cause of her daughter’s troubles, this desperate mother tried to help her daughter. The mother also knew where to go for healing.

Mt 15:23. “*his disciples came . . . saying, Send her away.*” Only Matthew includes the detail that the Apostles wanted this pestering woman to stop bothering them. Understanding that pious Jews avoided contact with other races as well as people of the opposite gender helps us appreciate the historical setting. Perhaps Matthew included this to contrast the Lord’s radical changes to the cultural norms. The societal baggage affected even those close to Jesus. Fortunately, the disciples learned from the Lord and mentioned His inclusion in the scriptural account to show the need for change.

In the KJV, Matthew uses *disciples* every time he refers to the Twelve Apostles except when he lists them by name in Mt 10:2. Mark also refers to them as *apostles* only once (Mt 6:30). John’s Gospel never uses the word *apostle* but refers to the group as either the “twelve” or “disciples.” In contrast, Paul and his companion Luke share similar vocabulary and reuse *apostles* fifty-four times in their books in the New Testament.

Mt 15:26 (Mk 7:27). “*It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.*” In Greek culture, little dogs were often household favorites and were fed the household’s crumbs. The word

dog was also used by rabbis to refer to Gentiles. This raises the interesting point that Jesus’s mission was first to only those of Abrahamic descent. Ironically, we learn in Jn 4:42 that Jesus’s first community of followers were Samaritans. This suggests that Jesus considered the Samaritans part of Israel (which they were centuries earlier). His response to the imploring mother, “Let the children be fed first,” foretells of another time in the future when God’s kingdom will expand to all. If you feel offended by this, remember our scriptural accounts are not transcribed sermons but memories of what Jesus said.

Mt 15:27 (Mk 7:28). *“yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”*

This quick-witted woman expresses much about herself with this statement:

- She has great love for her daughter
- She selflessly sacrifices for her
- She has a strong and deep faith in the Savior’s power to heal
- She has a humble understanding of the Lord’s mission to Israel
- She has the courage to speak up and do what she believes to be right
- She is a wordsmith and can think quickly even in the face of stress
- She has tenacity
- She is motivated by the Spirit of God to seek Jesus

Mt 15:28. *“O woman, great is thy faith.”* The Lord lifts the woman and honors her great faith with the requested healing. Mark records Jesus’s response differently: “For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone” (Mk 7:29). Jesus often tries our faith, yet He never refuses great faith. This experience taught and prepared Jesus’s disciples to receive the revelation to take the gospel to the world (Act 10:9–20).

Mt 15:29. *“Jesus . . . went up into a mountain.”*

The New Testament has the Lord retreating to a mountain to pray or have time alone on several occasions. Mountains are meeting places of heaven and earth and often refer to a place to meet God or perform sacred activities. Mark shares details with Matthew but begins with more geographical information. The Lord traveled east from the Mediterranean in upper Galilee to southeast of the Sea of Galilee into the Decapolis (Mk 7:31). We learn later that the multitude stayed with the Lord for three days (Mt 15:32).



Palestine under Roman rule. Image via biblemapper.com.

Jesus heals a deaf and mute man—Mt 7:31–37; Mt 15:30–31

Mk 7:32. “one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.” Mark includes more than twice as many details than the other Gospel writers regarding the healing of the deaf and mute man, one of the Lord’s more curious miracles. The Lord healed in many ways—sometimes from a distance, sometimes by the laying on of hands, and as in this case, with a personal, unique interaction. Jesus stepped away from the crowd with the deaf man (who also had a speech impediment). The Lord then put His fingers into the man’s “ears, and [He] spit, and touched his tongue” (Mk 7:33). Next Jesus prayed and the man was healed. This miracle becomes part of the fulfilment of Isa 35:5–6: “The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped . . . and the tongue of the dumb sing” (also see Mt 15:31).

Mk 7:36. “he charged them that they should tell no man: but . . . they published it.” The more the Lord asked for silence, the more zealously the news spread. With the people repeating this toddler-like behavior, one wonders if the Lord sought this outcome or if He truly did want secrecy at times.

Jesus feeds four thousand—Mt 15:29–39; Mk 8:1–10

Mt 15:32 (Mk 8:2). “I have compassion on the multitude.” Matthew and Mark include a second occasion of Jesus miraculously providing food for thousands, similar to the well-known account of feeding the five thousand (the only miracle that all four Gospels include).

Mt 15:34, 36. “a few little fishes . . . seven loaves.” Many scholars have questioned whether this story was just a different telling of the same earlier miracle. However, I observe the details of the miracles differently. Below are a few parallels. Some show similarities between the accounts, and others, differences.

Table 1. Parallels in the accounts of feeding the four and five thousand

Feeding the 4,000		Feeding the 5,000	
<i>Mt 15:29–39</i>	<i>Mk 8:1–10</i>	<i>Mt 14:13–21</i> <i>(cf. Lk 9:10–17)</i>	<i>Mk 6:30–44</i> <i>(cf. Jn 6:1–15)</i>
Crowd’s third day with Jesus	Crowd’s third day with Jesus	Evening	Day far spent
Men, women, and children present	Men present (JST “multitude”)	Men, women, and children present	Men present
Multitude sit down	People sit down	People sit on grass	People sit on green grass
Jesus gave thanks and broke bread, and disciples served	Jesus gave thanks and broke bread, and disciples served	Looked to heaven, blessed, broke, and served	Looked to heaven, blessed, broke, and served
Seven loaves and little fish	Seven loaves	Five loaves and two fish	Five loaves and two fish
Seven full baskets left over	Seven baskets left over	Twelve baskets left over	Twelve baskets left over

In addition, Mark carefully records his account in chiasmic parallels, emphasizing the miraculous center.⁶

- 8:1** Large crowd present
- 8:2–3** Nothing to eat
- 8:4** Disciples question how to feed the multitudes
- 8:5–6** Multiplication of the loaves
- 8:6b** Disciples distribute the bread
- 8:7** Multitude fed the loaves
- 8:8** After eating the crowd is satisfied
- 8:9** Quantity of leftovers noted
- 8:9** Four thousand in crowd

The repetition of the number seven appears most often in Old Testament Creation and temple ritual, but symbolic numbers dominate the New Testament as well.⁷

Mt 15:38. “women and children.” The fact that Matthew mentioned the women and children present tells us that Jesus allowed and probably encouraged them to leave their homes and stay to learn from Him over the three days. This was a radical change among pious Jewish households.⁸ We also see that women and children were often not counted by those that recorded events. This gives us a feel for the cultural practices that did not include women in other tallies either.

Sign Seekers

Pharisees and Sadducees seek another sign—Mt 16:1–4; Mk 8:11–13; Lk 12:54–56

Mt 16:1 (Mk 8:11; Lk 11:16). “Pharisees also with the Sadducees.” The Synoptic Gospels repeat stories of people similarly requesting Jesus show “a sign from heaven” four times—each ending with mention of the sign of Jonah. Each time, the account has a

The numbers five, seven, and twelve are consistent symbols in the Bible.

- Seven is synonymous with something complete or perfect in the sense of being whole. This symbolism stems from the Creation motifs found throughout the Bible.
- Five represents the number of the Torah, the five books of Moses, also known as the Law or Pentateuch
- Twelve often references the organization of God’s kingdom—twelve new moons in a year, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve Apostles, and twelve baskets of leftover food in the feeding of the five thousand.

slightly different audience (“scribes and Pharisees” in Mt 12:38; “Pharisees” in Mk 8:11; and “others testing him” in Lk 11:16), suggesting that people repeatedly asked Jesus for a sign of His messiahship. Their testing sounds similar to Satan’s temptations in the episode in the desert as they ask “him to show them a sign from heaven” (Mt 16:1 NIV).

- **Pharisees** were one of the four popular divisions within Judaism at the time of the New Testament. Their name means “separatists.” According to Josephus, there were six thousand Pharisees, and they were “the most accurate interpreters of the laws.”⁹ They emphasized purity, supported the oral laws, tithed money and food, believed in the resurrection, and strictly observed the Sabbath.¹⁰ They were the longest lasting group and even survived the destruction of the second temple (AD 68–70). Their records and rabbinic interpretation of the law are recorded in the Mishnah.
- **Sadducees** were a smaller group within the four divisions of Judaism. They filled the seats of the chief priests and high priest in the late second temple era. Sadducees usually stayed close to the temple. Mt 16 is the only place in the New Testament that we find Sadducees traveling from Jerusalem up to Galilee. They came to inquire after the amazing things they heard about Jesus (we also read of them traveling to hear John the Baptist in Bethabara, but that was closer to Jerusalem). They focused their belief on the temple and Torah (the first five books of Moses). They did not believe in a resurrection.¹¹

Mt 16:3 (Lk 12:56). “*O ye hypocrites . . . can ye not discern the signs of the times?*” Jesus essentially asked His questioners, “If you are observant enough to forecast the weather, why not be aware of what’s going on around you?”¹² Jews immersed themselves in studying their laws. Jesus asserts that this should have prepared them to recognize their Messiah, but they were blinded by false traditions and misguided expectations.

Mk 8:12 (JST; also Mt 12:39; 16:4; Lk 11:29). “**sign of the prophet Jonah.**” Jonas in Greek is a change from the *-ah* ending in Hebrew names. Jesus’s audience included verbal sign seekers. The Lord had already offered many signs of His divine nature, but the unbelievers continued to ask for more. He repeated the answer He gave earlier in Mt 12:39, offering the “sign of Jonas.”

This sign of Jonah was fulfilled after Jesus’s Crucifixion and Resurrection.¹³ Jonah may not have known that his miserable experience had a far higher purpose than merely teaching him a lesson. Jesus’s typological interpretation of Jonah’s experience is mentioned over seven hundred years after it happened. The prophet Hosea taught that God used the ministry of the prophets as symbols to testify of Him (Hosea 12:10).

Other scriptures explain that *heavenly signs* will follow those that believe: “I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name.”¹⁴ This includes the signs associated with gifts of the Spirit (healings, faith, discernment, and so on). Also, “they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or

Table 2. Comparison of Jesus’s answers to those seeking a sign

Mt 12:39	Mt 16:4	JST, Mk 8:12	Lk 11:29
An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.	A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.	There shall no sign be given unto this generation, <i>save the sign of the prophet Jonah; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so likewise shall the Son of Man be buried in the bowels of the earth.</i> ¹⁵	This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

that ask of me, that ask and not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts” (D&C 46:9). First Corinthians 14:22 adds that some signs, like the gift of tongues, are for missionary work. Later in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we find how those who believed were given grand heavenly signs on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The leaven of the Pharisees—Mt 16:5–12; Mk 8:14–21

Mt 16:11 (Mk 8:15). “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.”¹⁶ The disciples traveled in a boat to a secluded place. It appears that they were again in an area without a place to buy food—or at least sanctioned or “clean” food. The law of Moses outlined which foods were clean for human use. By the time of the New Testament, hundreds of oral laws were added to that list (including a prohibition against eating food prepared or grown on gentile lands).

Jesus is a wordsmith who often plays with double meanings of words. (We see it in Jn 3:8, when He talked with Nicodemus about the wind and Spirit, which share the same word, *pneuma*. In Mt 16:18, He plays with the name Peter and the word *rock*.) Jesus used *leaven* to describe an emotional puffing up, not the process of fermentation in bread. In the Old Testament, over ten references to leaven discuss the domestic practice of cleaning out all leaven in a home in preparation for the Passover feast and accompanying Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex 13:7; Deu 16:3). The children of Israel anciently removed leaven from their homes as a symbol of removing corruption or evil. This was a common image during New Testament times.

Leavened bread does not last as long as unleavened crackers do. Something in the leavening agent makes the bread grow mildew or become inedible faster. Symbolically, the leaven of the Pharisees is whatever puffed them up with pride and made them corrupt. In our dispensation the Lord warned Joseph Smith that when people hold positions of power or have periods of fame, they often tend to become corrupt (D&C 121:36–39).

Mk 8:15. “the leaven of Herod.” Mark adds an unusual reference to the tetrarch Herod. Most biblical scholars assume it is original. Perhaps it fits into the same meaning as an explanation of Esther 3:8 in the Jewish Targum: “Just as we remove leaven, so may the evil ruler be removed from us and may we be freed from this foolish king.”¹⁷ Just as corrupt rulers held power at the time of Esther, at the time of Jesus, the tetrarch Herod was an evil and corrupt ruler. Herod would likely have been on the disciples’ minds with the recent news that he had just killed John the Baptist.

Mt 16:9 (Mk 8:17, 21). “Do ye not yet understand . . . ?” Jesus is exasperated to find that even His disciples cannot see the spiritual innuendos in His message. They do not trust that He can provide for them. He recalled the miracles of feeding the groups of four and five thousand. This is the third time the Gospel of Matthew brings our attention to the miraculous feedings. I presume it is cited again to reinforce the prophetic fulfillment of the return of manna or bread. We know it was very important because it is the only miracle that all four Gospels include. Matthew’s three references ensure we do not miss the sign.

Mt 16:9–10 (Mk 8:19–20). “remember the five loaves . . . [and] seven loaves.” As mentioned previously, some scholars have questioned whether Jesus miraculously fed two multitudes or whether the disciples remembered the story of one miraculous feeding differently. However, this summary by Jesus gives evidence that two miraculous feedings occurred on separate occasions.

Mt 16:12. “Then understood they.” The Gospels of Matthew and Mark record this event in the exact same way until these verses when Matthew deviates from Mark’s record to include Jesus’s explanation of the leaven.¹⁸ Jesus warned His disciples not to follow the false “teachings” (RSV, NIV, ASV) or “doctrine” (KJV) of the Pharisees or any other puffed-up and corrupt intellect or leader. One of the major objections that Jesus had against the Pharisees is that they were so caught up in the details of their traditions that they could not appreciate the higher law or even the original law of Moses.

Witnesses, Signs, and Further Miracles

Peter testifies—Mt 16:13–20; Mk 8:27–30; Lk 9:18–21

Mt 16:13 (Mk 8:27). “Caesarea Philippi.” Matthew’s and Mark’s setting shifts and is now twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee in a beautiful, fertile area at the foot of Mount Herman (the tallest mountain and most massive formation in the country). No one other than Jesus and the disciples is mentioned. The JST of Luke tells us that Jesus “*went alone with his disciples to pray*” and then asked them the following question:

Table 3. Comparison of Mt 16:13; Mk 8:27; and Lk 9:18

Mt 16:13	Mk 8:27	Lk 9:18
Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?	Whom do men say that I am?	Whom say the people that I am?

This question adds a whole different dimension to the second question Jesus poses in this episode.

Mt 16:13. “Son of man.” Jesus used this title more than any other in the Gospels (see Mk 8:31 and Lk 9:22). As discussed in my comments on Jn 6:27, “Son of man” refers to a sacred name for God the Father that Enoch shared in Mose 6:57: “In the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man.” The title is not understood the same way by other Christians, who see it as a confession of Jesus’s mortality and future death.

Mt 16:15 (Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20). “But whom say ye that I am?” This second question is far more powerful than the first. It causes more personal reflection. It is the same question we are asked each Sunday during the sacrament and at each temple recommend interview. We Christians can answer Jesus’s question with every word, thought, and deed. It can be part of our private prayers as a witness of our faith and willingness to seek Christ.

Mt 16:16 (Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20). “Thou art the Christ.” I can just imagine Peter jumping to answer Jesus with a burning testimony—You are the promised Messiah, the Son of God! (Jesus’s Apostles likely would have been speaking in Aramaic, the colloquial language brought back from Babylon. In that language, *msheekha* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *messiah*. The Greek translation, *christ*, was not used as a title for Jesus until years after His Resurrection.) We see Peter’s enthusiasm throughout the Gospels as he was the first to jump out of the boat to walk on the water and the first to run into the empty tomb. His example encourages all disciples to likewise defend and testify of our Lord. In his first epistle, he encourages disciples to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pe 3:15 NIV). Keeping our witness burning takes daily interactions with the Spirit.

Mt 16:17. “revealed it unto thee.” Only Matthew continues with the Lord’s directions to Peter. The theme of revelation introduced here is carried on through the next few verses. The phrase “flesh and blood” is found frequently in rabbinic writings of the time. It can refer to human agency, or it can represent mortality, as in the contrast of “a king of flesh and blood” with the heavenly King.¹⁹

Mt 16:18. “I will build my church.” Jesus calls Simon Cephas, or Peter, which was not used as a name at this time. It was as if Jesus said, “I’m going to call you ‘little rock.’” Note that footnote a to verse 18 of the Church’s official KJV explains that Christ is the Rock or Stone of Israel. He was also a *tektōn*, “builder” (Mk 6:3)—which in that area probably meant that Joseph and Jesus were stonemasons (KJV “carpenters”).

This verse has different levels of meanings: first, that Christ’s Church is built upon revelation; second, that the powers of evil cannot hold onto the new community and the kingdom of God; and third, that the plan of redemption will destroy Satan’s hold on people eternally.

Mt 16:19. “I will give unto thee the keys.” The chief Apostle is the agent who holds the keys and exercises the power of God. The priesthood is the power of God, and it also brings the knowledge and authority for salvation through ordinances. We believe that the binding Jesus refers to here is the sealing power that He will give one week later as described in Mt 17:3.

Jesus foretells His own death—Mt 16:21–23; Mk 8:31–33; Lk 9:22

Mt 16:21 (Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22). “**From that time forth.**” As His Galilean mission comes to an end, Jesus focuses His teachings on preparing His Apostles for the trauma that will occur. The Gospel of Matthew includes four specific prophecies of Jesus’s Passion: that He will go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and rise on the third day (Mark and Luke repeat the last three). Jesus already knew of His future Passion—suffering and death—as well as His Resurrection, but His disciples did not understand.

Mt 16:22 (Mk 8:32). “**Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord.**” That the Messiah would suffer was not expected by the Jews nor by Jesus’s disciples. Even the Apostle Peter, who had just testified that Jesus is the promised Messiah, denounced the very thought of Jesus’s death. The Jews did not understand that messiahship included fulfilling the four Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah.²⁰ In the Jewish collection of messianic *Psalms of Solomon*, written sometime in the first or second century BC, we find the word *king* twenty-four times but never the word *suffering*. We find attributes that the Messiah will have, such as “goodness . . . mercy . . . judgement . . . peace . . . love,” but nothing about His rejection, pain, and torturous death.²¹ This is why even Peter, the chief Apostle, refuses to accept this new piece of information. It went against everything the Jews expected.

Mt 16:23 (Mk 8:33). “**he turned, and said unto Peter, . . . thou savourest not the things that be of God.**” Peter is not ready to hear the Lord’s prophecies that contradict the common understanding of what the Messiah will do. He bravely speaks out as if to defend the Lord. But Peter is wrong. We, too, are misinformed and wrong when we do not accept God’s plan for our lives. (Note that Luke does not include Peter’s overzealousness and rarely portrays Jesus or His Apostles in a weakened human state. Compared to the other Gospels, Luke usually softens statements that are critical of the Apostles.)

Cost of discipleship—Mt 16:24–28; Mk 8:34–9:1; Lk 9:23–27; Jn 12:25

Mt 16:24 (Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). “**If any man will come after me . . . deny himself . . . take up his cross.**” To take up one’s cross had a specific meaning in the Roman Empire. *Cross* referred specifically to the wooden beams used in crucifixion. The word *cross* is found twenty-seven times in the New Testament, all referring to “an upright stake, a cross, the Roman instrument of crucifixion.”²² Jesus admonishes His disciples, both in ancient times and today, to follow Him by placing His direction above their personal perspective. Disciples must become less motivated by selfish interests and more directed by God. Sometimes that may include drinking a bitter cup that God has for us.

Mt 16:24 (JST). “**for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments.**” By the nineteenth century, the phrase *taking up one’s cross* was defined in English as “enduring any severe affliction or trial.” The JST builds on this nineteenth-century definition. The process of carrying what God gives us can transform us to become

Table 4. Comparison of the JST of Mt 16:25–26; Mk 8:35–36; and Lk 24–25

JST, Mt 16:25–26	JST, Mk 8:35–36	JST, Lk 9:24–25
<p><i>Break not my commandments for to save your lives;</i> For whosoever will save his life <i>in this world</i>, shall lose it <i>in the world to come</i>. And whosoever will lose his life <i>in this world</i>, for my sake shall find it <i>in the world to come</i>. <i>Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls;</i> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?</p>	<p>For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; <i>or whosoever will save his life, shall be willing to lay it down for my sake; and if he is not willing to lay it down for my sake, he shall lose it.</i> But whosoever shall <i>be willing to</i> lose his life for my sake and the <i>gospel</i>, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?</p>	<p>For whosoever will save his life, <i>must be willing to lose it for my sake: and</i> whosoever will <i>be willing to</i> lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what <i>doth it profit a man</i> if he gain the whole world, and <i>yet he receive him not whom God hath ordained, and he lose his own soul, and he himself be a castaway.</i></p>

holy, or sanctified. Often that is staying on the *strait* path (meaning “difficult, the only route through a narrow opening”)²³ without becoming distracted. He also asks us to make the sacrifices that God requires.

Lk 9:24 (JST; also Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35). “**Whosoever will save his life, must be willing to lose it for my sake.**” The Prophet Joseph Smith felt inspired to augment each of the Synoptic Gospels in this section.

This life is all about turning our will over to God. He gave us agency so that we could choose to follow Him without compulsion or force. Our discipleship requires us to forsake the world in our daily choices.

President David O. McKay spoke on these verses:

May we realize as never before that mastery of one’s personal inclinations is the heart of the Christian religion and of all religions. By nature, the individual is selfish and inclined to follow his immediate impulses. It requires religion or something higher than an individual or even a society of individuals, to overcome the selfish impulses of the natural man, which will lead him to a more successful, fuller life. Self-mastery comes through self-denial of little things. Christ in these singular words said: “. . . whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matt. 16:25).²⁴

Mt 16:27. “**For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father.**” Jesus prophesied of His Second Coming, when He will come in glory to act as King and Judge of all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. The timing of this event was very confusing and difficult for the early Christians to appreciate, in part, because they expected it in their lifetimes. Jesus did not even know at that time when it would come but said that some in the group would still be alive when He comes in glory (Mt 24:36). This perhaps is why John the Beloved asked for this gift later (Jn 21:22). We believe that the Apostle John is still building God’s kingdom on the earth (D&C 7:1).

The Transfiguration—Mt 17:1–9; Mk 9:2–10, Lk 9:28–36

The Transfiguration becomes one of the most important events in Jesus’s mission between His baptism and suffering in Gethsemane. It set in motion the establishment of Jesus’s Church.²⁵ When humans are transfigured, they are changed temporarily in a way that allows them to behold God’s glory.²⁶ It is described as being “quickened by the Spirit of God” (D&C 67:11). If the change is long-lasting rather than temporary, it is *translation*, as in Mose 7:18–23, 27. The Synoptic Gospels describe the transfigured Jesus as appearing with His glorified body in the presence of angels and the Apostles Peter, James, and his brother John. The Prophet Joseph explained that the three Apostles were also transfigured to remain in Jesus’s glorified presence.²⁷ Peter referred to the Transfiguration in 2 Pe 1:16–18. We also learn more about this event in D&C 63:21.

Mt 17:1 (Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28). “*after six days.*” One week before the Transfiguration, in Mt 16:19, Jesus promised Peter, James, and John that they would receive keys to bind on earth what can be bound in heaven. This experience fulfilled this prophecy. The first two Gospels, Matthew and Mark, record that it happened “after six days.” However, the Gospel of Luke records “about eight days.” Perhaps they all refer to about a week after the last recorded event. Possibly the number of days has symbolic meaning (especially because the Synoptic authors do not count their days as regularly as the author of John does). In both the Old Testament and New Testament, the number seven represents completion, wholeness, perfection, or being finished—stemming from the seventh period or day of Creation. The experience of Transfiguration was also a finishing touch for the three Apostles who received priesthood keys and their endowment, according to Joseph Fielding Smith.²⁸

Mt 17:1 (Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28). “*taketh Peter, James, and John his brother.*” In preparation for their special missions, the three leading Apostles, Peter, James, and John,²⁹ experienced a transfiguration to see Jesus and two angels in their glorified state (which pattern we see in 3 Ne 28:15, 17; D&C 138:45; Mose 1:14). The Prophet Joseph Smith said of this experience, “When he [Jesus] was transfigured on the mount, what could be more sure to them?”³⁰

Table 5. Comparison of timing of the Transfiguration in the Synoptic Gospels

Mt 17:1	JST, Mk 9:2	Lk 9:28
And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.	And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, <i>who asked him many questions concerning his sayings</i> ; and <i>Jesus</i> leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.	And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

Table 6. Comparison of Jesus’s transfigured appearance in the Synoptic Gospels

Mt 17:2	JST, Mk 9:3	Lk 9:29
And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.	And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so <i>white</i> as no fuller on earth <i>could whiten</i> them.	And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.

Mt 17:1 (Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28). “*high mountain apart.*” Although we do not know where in Galilee the Transfiguration occurred, the highest mountain in the greater region is Mount Hermon. Jesus was just at the foothills of Mount Hermon in Caesarea Philippi just a few verses before, so I assume the Transfiguration happened there (Mt 16:13; Mk 8:27). Wherever it happened, symbolically “mountains are sanctuaries designed and fashioned by Jehovah (Ex 15:17). They are the temples of nature, where the prophets receive theophany experiences, where God descends from heaven to reveal His will unto His people. Mount Sinai, Mount Moriah, the Mount of Transfiguration, the mountains associated with Nephi, the brother of Jared, Ezekiel, and others.”³¹

Mt 17:2 (Lk 9:29). “*his face did shine as the sun.*” Two Gospels describe Jesus’s countenance beaming, and three describe His glistening and “dazzling” clothing (NIV).

Mt 17:3 (Mk 9:4; Lk 9:30). “*there appeared unto them Moses and Elias.*” In the New Testament, Elias is the Greek version of the name Elijah. Joseph Smith taught, “The Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured” or “into the cloud.”³² The name Elias is also a title for one who prepares the way—like John the Baptist—and is the name of another scriptural figure, according to the Bible Dictionary.³³

This visitation of Moses and Elijah is significant because of all the Old Testament prophets, these two were taken into heaven without death. They also came to the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:11–16). Moses held the keys of the gathering of Israel, and Elijah held the keys of the sealing powers.

Lk 9:32. “*were heavy with sleep.*” Luke alone adds two verses about the Apostles being asleep for part of the vision and then awakening to see the glorified beings. The JST of Luke adds that Moses and Elias talked to Jesus about His upcoming death “*and also his resurrection*” in Jerusalem. The Apostles’ heavy sleep may have been fueled from the arduous hike up the mountain, or perhaps God had put them in a deep sleep to keep parts of the vision from them (for other examples of the Lord employing a deep sleep, see Gen 20:21 and Mosi 24:19).

Mt 17:4 (Mk 9:5; Lk 9:33). “*let us make here three tabernacles.*” Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts make the Apostles’ experience seem frightening. Yet, even without comprehending how important it was, Peter realized this was now sacred ground and wanted to honor the place with a new or pure tabernacle

or temple. Their holy tabernacle was sanctified by a pillar of fire and cloud. The temple in Jerusalem was repeatedly defiled, but here they could start again in this holy space.

Lk 9:34 (Mt 17:6; Mk 9:6). *“they feared as they entered into the cloud.”* The experience that occurred in the cloud was overwhelming. The Apostles’ reaction to the voice of God is the same seen throughout scripture—having fear and falling to the earth. This is another great verse for understanding the separate nature of the Father and Son within the Godhead. Peter, James, and John are now eyewitnesses of the Father’s testimony of Jesus as His Son (just as John the Baptist was at Jesus’s baptism in the Jordan River). We see the same pattern in the Restoration, too, when Heavenly Father came to earth to introduce and testify of His Son (JS—H 1:17).

Mt 17:7. *“Jesus came and touched them . . . be not afraid.”* The Lord calmed the Apostles’ fears and set an example for us to reach out and comfort those in need.

Mt 17:9 (Mk 9:9; Lk 9:36). *“Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen.”* At the close of the Transfiguration, Jesus asks His three Apostles to keep their witnesses silent until after His Resurrection. Mark also mentions that they discussed what the “rising from the dead” meant. According to D&C 63:21, we do not have the full account of what occurred during Jesus’s Transfiguration. One of those missing details is the fact that the Apostles saw the earth in its glorified state: “When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount” (D&C 63:21).

The coming of Elijah—Mt 17:10–13; Mk 9:11–13

Mt 17:11 (Mk 9:12). *“Elias truly shall first come.”* This verse can be read as a future prophecy: Elias will restore or prepare all things (JST). Yet in the context of the next verse, the Lord explained that this Elias refers to the prophet John the Baptist. The JST helps with this understanding by changing the verb from “is” to “has” and adding another clarifying phrase to further emphasize the prophecy’s fulfillment: “Elias *has* come already, *concerning whom it is written, Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me*” (JST, Mt 17:12). Jesus used different definitions of Elias for two different people. Care is needed every time we come across the name Elias. The next verse adds another level of complicating figures with the same name.

Mt 17:13 (JST). *“another who should come and restore.”* While the KJV describes only one person who will “come, and restore all things” (Mt 17:11), in Mt 17:13, the JST augments this to represent two people: a preparer and a restorer.

But I say unto you, Who is Elias? Behold, this is Elias, whom I send to prepare the way before me. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist, and also of another who should come and restore all things, as it is written by the prophets.

This may refer to Jesus Himself since He is the one who restores all things. The JST includes John the Baptist teaching, “He it is *of whom I bear record. He is that prophet, even Elias*, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose” (JST, Jn 1:27).

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read more of this other Elias, a restorer: “This is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and *restore all things*” (D&C 77:9; emphasis added). The Prophet Joseph Smith is also identified in D&C 132:40 as an Elias who is a restorer: “I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things” (see also D&C 132:45).

Anytime we discuss Elias, it can be confusing. We also find a prophet Elias coming on the second day of Passover, Sunday, April 3, 1836, to the Kirtland Temple along with the translated beings Moses and Elijah. All these Eliases are mentioned in the Bible Dictionary.

Jesus heals an epileptic boy—Mt 17:14–21; Mk 9:14–29; Lk 9:37–43

Lk 9:37 (Mt 17:14; Mk 9:14). “*the next day, when they were come down.*” Once off the mountain, Jesus found the rest of His disciples and a crowd gathered. The disciples were not able to heal an epileptic boy (or as Mk 9:25 says, a boy possessed by a “foul spirit”).

Mt 17:15 (Mk 9:17–18; Lk 9:38–39). “*Lord, have mercy on my son.*” This phrase speaks of the father’s heart’s desire. It is touching to note that the father seeks the Lord’s help not for himself but rather for his son. Mk 9:16 opens the possibility for the afflicted boy to be the son of a scribe or lawyer. Lk 9:38 adds that it is the father’s only child.

Mt 17:16 (Mk 9:19; Lk 9:41). “*I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*” Jesus assumed the burden of the dispute and healing when He arrived. All three Synoptic Gospels include Jesus’s verbal criticism of faithlessness. His attack may have been directed to the lack of faith in the “perverse generation,” not toward the Apostles. Both sides of a healing require faith—the faith to be healed, and the faith to heal (D&C 46). The criticism of the multitude may have affected the spirit of the situation.

Mk 9:24. “*with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*” This part of the conversation is included only by Mark, and it becomes his main message in recounting this event. All need greater faith and reliance on God. Of all the miracles that Jesus performed, the majority were healings. Many required an expression of faith before the healing. This is also a miracle of compassion.

Mk 9:25 (Mt 17:18; Lk 9:42). “*I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.*” Most of Jesus’s healings were also immediate, yet learning often came through the process. The Lord, as our Great Teacher or Gardener, allows us to grow as He heals. It takes faith to see the Lord taking us by the hand and lifting us up (Mk 9:27).

Mt 17:19 (Mk 9:28). “*Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we . . .*” Again Matthew and Mark record a private conversation between Jesus and His disciples.

Mt 17:20. “*Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed.*” The Lord answered the disciples’ question with the same idea He introduced in a

parable earlier (see Mt 13). Jesus equated faith to a mustard seed, which has great potential. This example likely gave the disciples greater hope—like a beginning violinist who goes to the symphony and is motivated to practice harder. Seeing the potential should not be discouraging but rather, with applied faith, encouraging. I think Jesus was using exaggerated symbols to emphasize His point. Even though we only have a little faith, with more trust in our Savior, our faith will be strengthened to allow us to perform great things.

Mt 17:21 (Mk 9:29). “*this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*” Prayer and fasting are synergistic—in healing, overcoming sin and temptation, and drawing closer to our Savior, God, and the Spirit. Elder James E. Talmage suggested, “Have you some besetting weakness, some sinful indulgence that you have vainly tried to overcome? Like the malignant demon that Christ rebuked in the boy, your sin may be of a kind that goeth out only through prayer and fasting.”³⁴ Fasting is not as much about the physical effects that come from lack of food as it is about our focus and reliance on God’s mercy.

Jesus again foretells His death—Mt 17:22–23; Mk 9:30–32; Lk 9:43–45

Lk 9:44 (JST). “*Let these sayings sink down into your ears hearts.*” The group stayed privately in Galilee (according to JST, Mk 9:30).

Mt 17:22 (Mk 9:31; Lk 9:44). “*The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.*” Jesus realized that the disciples did not yet understand that he *must* die, so He gave them another clear prophecy of His suffering, or Passion.³⁵ The disciples misunderstood (or at least did not fully understand) the Lord’s direction. His prophecy can be seen as a warning to them to be cautious about their expectations, to prepare them, and to strengthen their faith to carry them through until His Resurrection. (We likewise should be careful when interpreting our promptings from the Spirit. We don’t want to incorrectly judge what God does. There is a difference between going forward in faith and thinking we know *why* we must go forward as instructed.) Even with Jesus’s multiple warnings, because of the cultural expectations His disciples did not understand that He needed to become the slaughtered Lamb of God, the Suffering Servant, in order redeem His people and become the first fruits of them that slept.³⁶

Jesus paid taxes—Mt 17:24–27

Matthew’s Gospel is the only one to record this discussion about taxes and the miraculous way Jesus pays for them. It seems appropriate that the author would not want this information to be forgotten if the historical assumption is correct that he is the Apostle Matthew, the publican or tax collector.

Mt 17:24. “*Doth not your master pay tribute?*” The group made their way back to their home base of Capernaum, on the north shores of the Sea of Galilee, where Peter and his fishing partners lived.

Taxes. Roman citizens were not required to pay Roman taxes, but the inhabitants of the places they conquered were required to pay taxes—lots of them. Since Capernaum was on a major Roman road and had a large port, it was a natural place where tax collectors could collect tribute from travelers and merchants.³⁷ In addition to paying the Roman taxes, Jews also paid an annual temple tax. Many commentaries speculate

that the requested tribute or didrachmon money in Mt 17:24 was not for a Roman tax but rather for the annual temple tax. Jews all over the Roman world were required to pay this. “In the rabbinic period the tax was payable by all who had attained twenty years, but slaves and women were explicitly excluded.”³⁸

Two didrachma was the equivalent to the half shekel coin³⁹ that was the tribute or temple tax to cover the temple building, sacrifices, and priesthood needs. The collectors may have wondered if Jesus were going to pay or not because priests and rabbis claimed exemption.

Peter is singled out again in the story, as if Jesus hopes to teach him more during this short time before His death. President David O. McKay spoke on this experience:

Between the Transfiguration and the last eventful week of the Savior’s life on earth, there are only a few recorded instances in scripture with which Peter is personally mentioned. It is significant, however, that nearly every one of these, bears either directly or indirectly upon the molding of Peter’s character as an Apostolic leader. Peter knows that Jesus is the Christ that should come, but has he strength to defend him in word and deed? Does he comprehend the divine principles of the Gospel sufficiently to manifest them in his daily life and conversation and in all his associations with his fellowmen?⁴⁰

Mt 17:26. “Then are the children free.” Jesus’s explanation about the king’s son makes more sense if the tribute were for the temple tax, not the monthly Roman tribute. Since the time of Moses’s tabernacle and forty-year Exodus in the wilderness, the children of Israel were asked to pay “atonement money” (Ex 30:16). Jesus knew it was inconsistent for Him to pay for what He alone will give. Perhaps Peter understood that the Messiah should not be expected to pay for the house of God because as the Son of God, it was *His* house. In the Jewish world, the temple tax was used to cover the priests’ cost of living—and Jesus is the Great High Priest. He alone should be exempt from the atonement tax considering His role in the ultimate Atonement. From all sides, it was ironic that Jesus was asked to pay this tax.

Mt 17:27. “when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money.” The money was enough to pay for both Peter’s and Jesus’s temple tax. Why did Jesus use this means to miraculously supply the money? That it dealt with Peter and fish suggests that Jesus tailored this miracle for Peter. Certainly, Peter could have “simply gone fishing and sold a few for the same price. We find no miracle of Jesus [for] his personal gain.”⁴¹ Instead Jesus taught Peter about the temple as the house of God and what that really meant. He taught Peter about His resources and that Jesus did not need money, but if He wanted it, He could get it. Jesus also taught about His omniscience, His role as the Creator, and His kingship.

Notes

1 Luke 3:1 gives the one clear historical date in the Gospels: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.” Other than that grounding reference, we have few chronological details in the Synoptic Gospels. They only reference one Passover. Also, because the Synoptic Gospels are not arranged chronologically, we find the same

stories in different settings. Only John includes a chronological background of three Passovers to place Jesus's three-year ministry. See my earlier discussion of Jn 1 for a chart showing the shared information between the four Gospels.

2 Mishnah, *Pirkei Avoth* 1:1.

3 See Pro 23:22; Ex 20:12; Deu 5:16.

4 Deu 14:29; see also Deu 24:17–22; 26:12–13; Isa 1:17; Jer 22:3.

5 Avraham Steinberg, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jewish Medical Ethics* (Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim, 2003), 34.

6 Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 492.

7 For example, Noah's account uses the number seven (Gen 7:10; 8:10, 12), and every seventh day was sanctified (Ex 20:8–11). Seven is used regularly in the temple ritual (for example, "And the priest shall . . . sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord" [Lev 4:6, 16; 16:14, 19; 25:8]). Also see Gen 29; 41; Deu 15:1; 16:9; 31:10; 1 Kng 6:38; and 2 Kng 8:1.

8 Judaeus Philo, *Special Laws III*, 7 vols. (London, UK: William Heinemann, 1967), 3:169, 171: "Women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house. . . . A woman then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion." Ben Sira, *Ecclesiasticus*, 42:12; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, 3.169.

9 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.297–298.

10 Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper Collins' Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1996), 842.

11 David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 5:892. When the temple was destroyed, few Sadducees and their writings survived. One Sadducean author's writings were preserved in the Apocrypha as *Ecclesiasticus* or *Sirach* (14:16–19). Sadducees did not believe in life after death; instead they believed that "one is survived by one's good reputation and by one's children." Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45.

12 The phrase "O ye hypocrites" in Mt 16:3 is not included in the oldest Greek manuscripts of Matthew or other modern English translations. But it is included in the parallel account in Lk 12:56.

13 While Jesus's body lay in the tomb for three days and nights, His spirit went to the spirit world to organize missionary work there (D&C 138:30–36).

14 D&C 35:8; see also D&C 45:16, 39–40.

15 The sign of Jonah includes three days *and* nights in the tomb. We can understand how Jesus spent three days in the tomb with the way Jews counted even part of a day in the total. But three nights in the tomb as well is problematic if we use Good Friday as the day of Jesus's Crucifixion and burial. For the Lord to spend three nights in the tomb, He had to die and be placed in the tomb on Thursday, not the traditional Good Friday. The scriptures refer to getting Jesus off the cross before the Sabbath, but that may have referred to a holy day instead of a Friday night to Saturday night. Certainly, the Passover feast fell into the category of a holy day. On the years that Passover falls on a Thursday, the Jews celebrate two Sabbaths back-to-back. So, we can achieve the three nights in the tomb if we

count Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Sunday would not count as a day since He was risen when the women came before sunrise on Sunday morning.

16 Lk 12:1 includes a similar phrase but in a different context.

17 Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 507.

18 David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, eds., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 859. The majority of biblical textual scholars assume that Mark is the oldest Gospel of the four.

19 W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 195.

20 See Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–7; and 52:13–53:12.

21 The *Psalms of Solomon* has been made available online by Wesley University at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/the-psalms-of-solomon/>.

22 “*Stauros*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/4716.htm>.

23 I have investigated the use of *strait* and *straight* in modern revelation. It appears that the scribes and editors were not careful about their usage, even though the two words have very different meanings

24 David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1967, 133.

25 Kent Jackson and Robert Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures*, vol. 5, *The Gospels* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 305.

26 See Mose 1:10–11; D&C 76:11–12, 113–119; 110:1–4.

27 “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842] [addenda],” p. 11 [addenda], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/546>.

28 Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1965), 1:400.

29 Peter, James, and John are referred to as “the pillars” and are repeatedly given given special opportunities by the Lord (for example, at the raising of Jairus’s daughter, at the Mount of Transfiguration, and in Gethsemane).

30 “History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843],” p. 1556, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/199>. The answer the Prophet Joseph gave to his question was receiving the personal revelation that one is sealed up unto eternal life.

31 Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990), 84.

32 “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 4 August 1839–A, as Reported by William Clayton,” p. 14, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-4-august-1839-a-as-reported-by-william-clayton/4>.

33 Bible Dictionary, “Elias,” online at churchofjesuschrist.org. See the Topical Guide and the JST of Mk 9:4: “Elias with Moses, or in other words, John the Baptist and Moses.” Most commentaries that include this as fact suggest that three angelic beings were present. If it were so, this must have been such a joyous reunion for Jesus and John the Baptist!

34 James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1916), 395.

35 Jesus’s Passion refers to His sufferings from the Last Supper to His Resurrection—specifically, in Gethsemane and in the accusation, trials, and scourging and on the cross.

36 Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7; 15:20; Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–7; 52:13–53:12.

37 As mentioned in my discussion of Mt 8–9, Roman tax included income tax, ground tax, and poll tax (or head money).

38 Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 212. Also, “Gentiles and Samaritans were not allowed to contribute.”

39 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 3.194–196.

40 David O. McKay, *Ancient Apostles* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1921), 55: “With the probable exception of the tribute money incident, which emphasized for Peter the divine Sonship of his Master, all the lessons following bear directly upon strength of character and principles of conduct.”

41 Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 385.