

# A Declaration of War

*The Confession of Peter and the Transfiguration*

Luke 9:18 Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”  
19 And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.”  
20 Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”  
21 And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,  
22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”  
23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.  
24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.  
25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?  
26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.  
27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”  
28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.  
29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.  
30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah,  
31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.  
32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

<sup>33</sup> And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.

<sup>34</sup> As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

<sup>35</sup> And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”

<sup>36</sup> And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

(Luke 9:18-36)

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## Dumping Out the Puzzle

There are **so many things happening** in the stories in **Luke 9:18-36** that that people often miss or have never understood, it can be overwhelming to figure out where to begin. It’s so much more interesting and exciting than the already important arguing over whether the “rock” is Peter or his Confession. After writing several introductions to this sermon that were not working, I’ve discovered that what I wanted to show you upfront was just the **undercards** to **the main event**. So, I went back and looked at an old *Harmony of the Gospels* that is available online to get a better feel for how Luke differs from, especially, Matthew. A *Harmony* is when you compare the Gospel stories side-by-side in a table-like format. They can be very useful.

The main differences are that Luke eliminates about two full chapters from Matthew and Mark, making it so that the feeding of the 5,000 comes just prior to the confession of Peter as you read the Gospel. The reality is, they are probably about 10 months apart from one another. The other main difference is that Matthew gives us much more material, especially in the Confession section, and like last time with John, we will be looking at this with Luke today.

As I was looking at this particular Harmony, I was directed to a footnote that I was not expecting. The author's note said, "It is interesting to note that the imagery employed by Jesus here all appears in Ps. 89, a Messianic Psalm built on 2 Sam 7. Thus note 'build' in Ps 89:4, 'rock' in 89:26, 'anointed' in 89:38, 'the power of Sheol' in 89:48, and the Psalm discusses the perpetuity of the Davidic throne (Kingdom). Jesus applies this imagery to the spiritual Kingdom that He is building."<sup>1</sup> These specific parallels only deal with Peter's confession, and much of it comes from Matthew's telling. But in that instant, my mind went into overdrive.

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<sup>1</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922), § 82. NEAR CÆSAREA PHILIPPI JESUS TESTS THE FAITH OF THE TWELVE IN HIS MESSIAHSHIP, N. b. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36264/36264-h/36264-h.htm>.

*Psalm 89 and the Confession of Peter? Why have I never heard that one before?*<sup>2</sup> But I think what you are about to see as we put all the puzzle pieces on the table and then began to put it together will really **blow your mind** and help you understand better exactly what Jesus was deliberately doing, why he was doing it, and just what was at stake in these very memorable stories.

## Looking At The Pieces

As we start to **look at the pieces** of this puzzle, I want us to think for a moment about **Psalms 87-89**. Preaching these several years back, I learned how important it is to read the Psalms together, not just as isolated songs, but as a book of songs. Psalms 87-89 have much in common with one another. **Psalm 87** foretold **glorious things (87:3)**, life-giving “**springs**” of **gospel (87:7)** concerning how Gentiles, given over to the darkness and the **worship of Satan**, would one day be born again such that they can say Zion is the place of

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<sup>2</sup> I decided to go look at Blomberg’s commentary in the *NT Use of the OT* to see what he would say. Surprisingly, he doesn’t even mention it. Curiously, neither does the commentary on Luke in the same volume, or Mark for that matter. That doesn’t mean no one else has seen it; they have, in pieces. For instance, **Matthew Henry** and **Spurgeon** both note (I think wrongly, but still), the Tabor connection of the Transfiguration and Psalm 89:12, **Swindoll** (*Insights on Matthew*, 24) notices the “son of God” connection in Peter’s confession and Psalm 89:27. Adding the Messiah connection to the Son is **Wilkins** (*ZIBBC*, 169 n. 413). Etc.



their birth. **Psalm 88** described the **descent of the Messiah to the depths** of watery Sheol—Hades (Hell), as he would suffer the wrath of God and being forsaken by all his friends. As it does it, it mentions strange supernatural evil entities such as **Abaddon** and the **Rephaim**. You might put them this way. The springs of life in Psalm 87 give way to torrents of death in Psalm 88. The gentle trickle of water in the former becomes a deluge of destruction in the latter. Together, they both **foreshadow the need for God to resurrect Messiah** from the dead. Psalm 89 brings this to a climax (along with the end of Book III).<sup>3</sup>

Instead of taking you through these psalms, I simply want to **dump the puzzle pieces** out and then turn them over so that we can look at them. First, a couple of foundational or perhaps “**corner**” pieces. Psalms 88 and 89 are the only two psalms written by an “**Ezrahite**,” meaning that their placement together can’t be coincidental. Psalm 88 is from **Heman the Ezrahite**; Psalm 89 is from **Ethan the Ezrahite**. What is an Ezrahite? I find that answer curious. Modern scholarship suggests that it means “native,” that is, **Canaan-**

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<sup>3</sup> See my two sermons on Glorious Things: Springs of Life in the Torrents of Death: a Sermon on Psalm 87-88,” and “The Covenant with David: A Sermon on Psalm 89,” at <https://www.rbnc.com/psalms>.

*ite*. “In this case, Ethan and Heman would be two pre-Israelite figures [or possibly pre-dynastic figures converted to Judaism] renowned for their great wisdom. The writer of Kings incorporates these men as symbols of great wisdom and states that Solomon’s wisdom was greater than even these sages from the past.”<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, and I’m certainly not dogmatic about it, you will see before the end, how interesting a piece of the puzzle this would actually be.

Here are a few more pieces, let’s call them the side pieces. That will make it easier to frame our puzzle around the corner pieces. You already have seen several, how Psalm 89 uses the words “build,” “rock,” “anointed/Messiah/Christ,” “power of Sheol,” and themes of the Davidic throne being established forever. In Matthew’s version of the story of Peter’s confession, Peter confesses that Jesus is the “Messiah” and Jesus in return says that upon this “rock” he will “build” and the “gates of hell” will not prevail. He then gives Peter the “keys of the kingdom.” But there are other side pieces found in Peter’s confessional alone.

Staying just in **Matthew 16:16-19** for the moment, consider how Psalm 87 refers to the “gates of Zion,” an obvious

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<sup>4</sup> Phillip E. McMillion, “Ezrahite,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 742; Claude F. Mariottini, “Ethan (Person),” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 644.

counterpart to the gates of hell. We have the mentioning of Mt. Hermon in Psalm 89:12, which as we will see is the likely location of the transfiguration, and is certainly the location of the Confession and is also related to the “rock.” Peter calls Jesus the “Son of God” and in Psalm 89:27 God refers to his “firstborn.” The curious reference to Peter as “Simon bar-Jonah [son of Jonah]” may have a counterpart in Rahab, the sea-monster found in both Psalm 89:10 and 87:4. And then there is perhaps the biggest of them all—the church, the *ekklesia*, which is found in the LXX of Psalm 89:5 (88:5 LXX).

With this frame, we can now throw in the middle pieces. Matthew says that Jesus’ face shined at the transfiguration, an idea found in the light of God’s face in Psalm 89:15. The Father testifies that this is his son, just as God testifies to the coming promises of the firstborn in Psalm 89. He is called “my chosen one” in both. Moses and Elijah are heavenly witnesses to it, as are the moon and skies in the psalm. The cloud appears in both. Jesus predicts his suffering between the two stories, and the suffering is what Psalm 88 and the latter parts of Psalm 89 are all about. He says he must be killed, and in Psalm 88 he is confined to the regions of the dark. Then Jesus predicts his resurrection, and likewise, Psalm 89 implies

resurrection in several places,<sup>5</sup> including [the Son crushing his foes](#).

These foes take us directly into the more colorful, [supernatural](#) pieces of the puzzle. Psalm 88 speaks of the [Rephaim](#) and [Abaddon/Apollyon](#). Both recall not only the [realm of the dead](#), but Roman [Festivals](#) which are the ost likely setting for our stories. In this vein, Psalm 89 speaks of the “[festal shout](#)” (or war cry). Psalm 87 talks about [springs](#), and there is a most notorious spring where the confession takes place. For Jesus goes up to [Caesarea Philippi](#) in the farthest [northern](#) recesses of Israel; north is found in Psalm 89. Finally, God is called the “[Father in heaven](#)” by Jesus. In Psalm 89, the counterpart is [El, the Father](#) who sits in [the heavenly council with the sons of God](#). This is precisely where the gods were said to have been seated on the top of Mt. Hermon, and where they descended in the days of Jared according to tradition before the Flood. Therefore someone else is there witnessing the transfiguration besides Moses and Elijah and the disciples. Why? Because like the previous stories of

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<sup>5</sup> Including [89:1-5](#), [36](#), [48](#). For instance, *The Moody Handbook* notices the links between Psalm 88 and 89 and says that the question of making known his wonder in the realm of the dead (88:12) is answered in 89:1 affirmatively, implying resurrection, thus fulfilling the Davidic covenant of Psalm 2. [Robert L. Cole](#), “Psalms 86–88: The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of the Messianic King,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 627-28.

calming the storm, casting out the Legion, raising the dead girl, sending out the twelve, and feeding the 5,000, **Jesus is in a battle**. And at the Confession and Transfiguration, he is **declaring all-out war**. He is here. His Kingdom is coming. The church militant is going to begin. What are the infernal powers going to do about it

Following Luke's Order of Feeding the 5,000, the Confession of Peter, the Transfiguration		
Matt/Luke	Psalm 89: Ezrahite (Canaanite?)	Psalm 87-88 (Ezrahite-88:1)
Build (Mt 16:18)	Build (4)	
Rock (Mt 16:18)	Rock (26)	
Christ (Mt 16:16; Lk 9:20)	Anointed (20, 38, 51)	
Gates of Hades (Mt 16:18)	Power of Sheol (48)	Gates of Zion (87:2)
Keys of Kingdom (Mt 16:19)	Davidic Throne (20, 35-36)	
Church ( <i>ekklesia</i> ) (Mt 16:18)	Assembly ( <i>ekklesia</i> , 5)	
Son of God (Mt. 16:16)	Firstborn (27)	
Father in Heaven (Mt 16:17)	Father, El Rock of Salvation (26) El in Council (7)	
High/"The" Mt (Mt. Hermon) (Mt 17:1; Lk 9:28)	Sons of God in heavenlies (6; 37)	
	Divine Council (7)	
Bar-Jonah (Mt 16:17)	Rahab (10)	Rahab and Gentiles (87:4)
Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13) ("Rock" Hermon) (Mt 16:18)	North and Hermon (12), Rock (26)	Holy mount [Zion] (87:1)
Parentalia/Lupercalia	Festal shout or war cry (15)	
Face did shine (Mt 17:2)	Light of your face (15)	
Dth/Rsrctn (Mt 16:21; Lk 9:22)	Crush his foes (23)	
This is my b. Son (Mt 17:6) My chosen one (Lk 9:35)	Testimony (20ff) Chosen one (19)	
Moses/Elijah (Mt 17:4; Lk 9:33) (gods of the council)	Witness (moon; 37)	
Cloud (Mt. 17:5; Lk 9:34)	Witness in <i>clouds</i> faithful (37)	
Cave of Pan (this rock)		My springs are in you (87:7)
Son of man suffer (Lk 9:22)		Life near Sheol (88:3-5) Waves (88:7)
Killed (Lk 9:22)		Regions of dark deep (88:6)
Parentalia/Lupercalia		Rephaim (88:10) Grave/Abaddon (88:11)

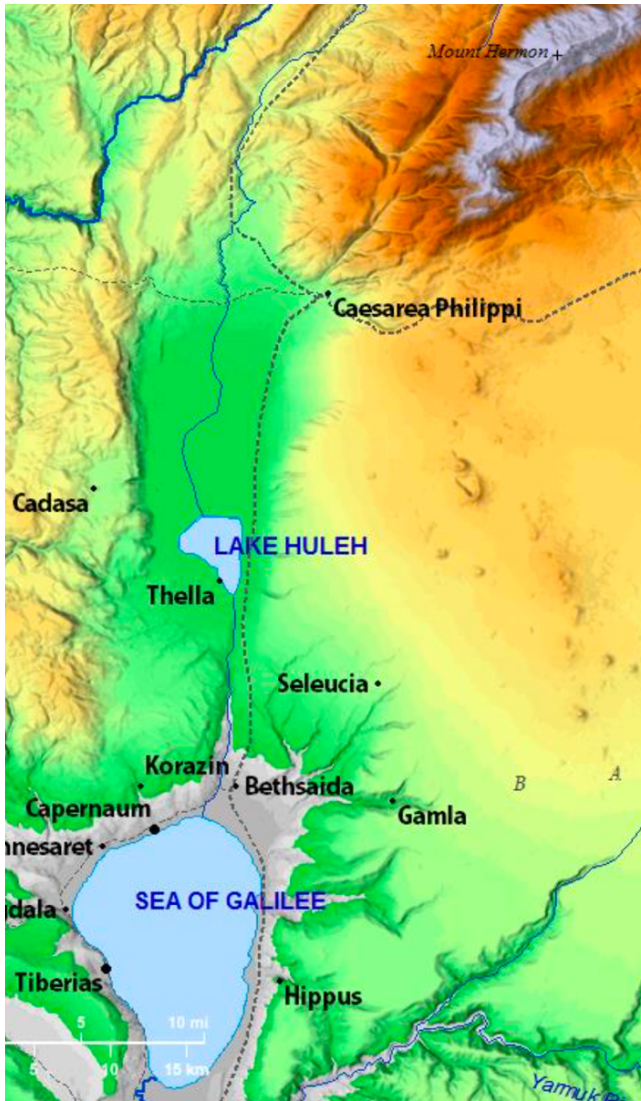
## Putting the Puzzle Together

If these are the pieces, then how do they fit together between these Psalms and our Gospel stories? Before answering, I just want us to remember that we essentially saw the same thing happening last time with [the feeding of the 5,000](#) and [Psalm 23](#) with the shepherd feeding us in the midst of our enemies on green grass over a table and feast of manna and Leviathan in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. So this is not completely unexpected. Especially when you consider that Rahab from Psalm 87 and 89 is the twin of the Leviathan.

*The Setting: Caesarea Philippi (Paneas), Mt. Hermon (North), and the Lupercalia*

The way we have you put any puzzle together is by looking at the box. Ours is the Gospels. First, let's consider [the setting](#) of our stories. This will provide the big picture. Luke gives [two](#). He introduces the Confession the most simply of all the Gospels saying, “[Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him](#)” ([Luke 9:18](#)). Then, the Transfiguration story is introduced a few





verses later, “Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on *the mountain* [to oros] to pray” (28). Therefore, wherever he was praying in the first story is the same mountain he went to be transfigured on.<sup>6</sup>

Mark and Matthew add more information. They tell us that Jesus went into the parts of **Caesarea Philippi** (**Matt 16:13**; **Mark 8:27**). They mention nothing about Jesus praying, and yet we

know that the same story is in view, because everything else is the same, save for Matthew’s longer explanation of the Confession. Therefore, Jesus is praying at Caesarea Philippi.

<sup>6</sup> After a long study of “The mountain” with the article, Hilhorst concludes, “The linguistic facts continue to compel us to assume that ‘the mountain’ is a definite mountain, known to original readers and, we may assume, current in the milieu in which the Gospels came into being. The contexts suggest that “the mountain” is situated in Galilee, probably north of the Sea of Galilee.” **Ton Hilhorst**, “The Mountain of Transfiguration in the New Testament and in Later Tradition,” *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 124, ed. . van Ruiten and J.C de Vos (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 322.



Therefore, the mountain he was transfigured on had to be there.<sup>7</sup>

So [where is Caesarea Philippi \(CP\)](#)? The city was a major trade and religious center along the [Via Maris](#), the ancient trade route that went from Egypt along the coast until it finally headed inland to meet up with the more famous King's Highway south of Damascus. Importantly, it was two miles east of the northern most region of the kingdom of Israel, where [Jeroboam](#) put one of his two calves and created an apostate worship center ([1Kgs 12:29-33](#)), following the ancestors of [Dan](#) who themselves, unable to keep their fertile farmlands around modern Tel Aviv because of the continuous attacks from the Philistines, abandoned their land and

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<sup>7</sup> **Going Deeper: Mt. Tabor.** The traditional site of the Transfiguration has been Mt. Tabor. It is interesting that many have connected [Psalm 89:12](#)'s "Mt. Tabor" to the Transfiguration. Matthew Henry for instance says, "It was on the top of a *high mountain*, like the converse Moses had with God, which was on the top of mount Sinai, and his prospect of Canaan from the top of mount Pisgah. Tradition saith, It was on the top of the mount Tabor that Christ was transfigured; and if so, the scripture was fulfilled, *Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name*, Ps. 89:12," but then notes that Lightfoot thought it had to be the mountain by Caesarea Philippi. See [Matthew Henry](#), *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1796. Someone in [Origen's](#) name (probably not him) also identifies it in a scholion on Psalm 89:12 ("Tabor is the mountain in Galilee on which Christ was transfigured." So also, apparently (it is rather confusing), does [Eusebius of Caesarea](#), *Commentary on Psalm 88:13 LXX* (he also mentions Hermon, but is it this Hermon?). This then became the tradition. See [Hilhorst](#), 331.

The strange thing is that Mt. Hermon is in the same verse! At best, Eusebius saw this, but he was confused. Hilhorst suggests that Eusebius was thinking of "Little Hermon" which is in the vicinity of Mt. Tabor (see n. 29). And perhaps he was. But it seems apparent that the Psalmist was speaking of the big Mount Hermon. It seems to me that this is where the confusion and ultimately the origin of Mt. Tabor originated. They saw the correct verse fulfillment, but got the wrong mountain!

moved here, attacking the ancient city of Laish, renaming it after their ancestor, and immediately setting up pagan worship cults in line with the pagans of this region (Jdg 18:27-31), thus cementing their reputation and nickname given by Jacob—serpent. “Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path” (Gen 49:17).

Laish meant “Jewel,” and it perfectly describes this area of the Promised Land. CP sits at the foot of Mt. Hermon, the “many peaked” mountain of Psalm 68, which is also found in Psalm 89:12 where it says, “The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.” The region is gorgeous, filled with stunning waterfalls, beautiful trees, natural springs, and colorful vegetation. But the area, including this particular city, is anything but gorgeous, spiritually speaking. In fact, like Dan and Jeroboam already hinted at, it is the epitome of evil.

This can be brought out by understanding something about the “north.” Heiser writes, “Because of what Israelites believed lurked in the north, the word came to signify something otherworldly.”<sup>8</sup> The north came to be viewed as the

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<sup>8</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 360–361. See also *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, The Watchers & The Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 173.

direction of evil. What kind of evil? **Spiritual evil: sin, death, and the devil.** We're already seen a bit of that here at the northern end of the nation with Dan and Jeroboam and their **sin.** This would also have been the way the Assyrian and Babylonian armies came to invade the Promised Land in a great move of pride that was not only God's judgment upon Israel for its **sin,** but performed by those wicked nations in great sin and rebellion against God. The evil Herods also ruled over this land in Jesus' day. In fact, Herod the Great had rebuilt Caesarea Philippi, erecting a temple to Augustus over **an ancient cave** with even more bizarre supernatural overtones.



Before it was called Caesarea Philippi by Herod, it was known as **Paneas** (today Baniyas as Arabs cannot pronounce “p”), after **the satyr goat-demon god Pan,**<sup>9</sup> a nasty deity of

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<sup>9</sup> “Pan” means “all” in Greek and Pan was called a universal deity, hence the name. A great short write-up on this is **Karen Engle**, “Is the ‘Rock’ Peter, His Confession, or Neither?” *Logos* (Aug 19, 2021), <https://www.logos.com/grow/is-the-rock-peter-his-confession-or-neither/>. For a deeper dive, see **Judd Burton**, *Interview with the Giant: Ethnohistorical Notes on the Nephilim* (Burton Beyond Publications, 2009), Appendix 1 pp. 78-87. Judd did his Dissertation on Paneas



sexual perversion, fertility, rustic music, shepherds and flocks. Remember that Mark introduced Jesus as the Shepherd in the feeding of the 5,000 and now Jesus has just made his way up that Valley of the Shadow of **Death** to Paneas for some reason. The entire place oozed death.



Pan was worshiped since truly ancient times<sup>10</sup> at a **grotto**, the entrance to a huge yawning cave where deplorable acts took place, including sexual

perversion (someone has called his temple “a **first-century red-light district**<sup>11</sup>) and **sacrifices** (perhaps human) that were thrown into the waters of the cave for a very specific reason. You see, the cave, situated on a huge, long rock scarp some 250 ft. long and 100 ft. high, and is the source of one of several **springs** surrounding the area that feed the headwaters of

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after digging there. See Judd H. Burton, “[Religion, Society, and Sacred Space at Baniyas: A Religious History of Baniyas/Caesarea Philippi, 21 BC-AD 1635](#),” *Dissertation to Texas Tech University* (2010).

<sup>10</sup> Its first reference may be Polybius (Hist. XVI, 18) in 200 BC. However, it is clear that his cult here extends back far into prehistory.

<sup>11</sup> Engle.

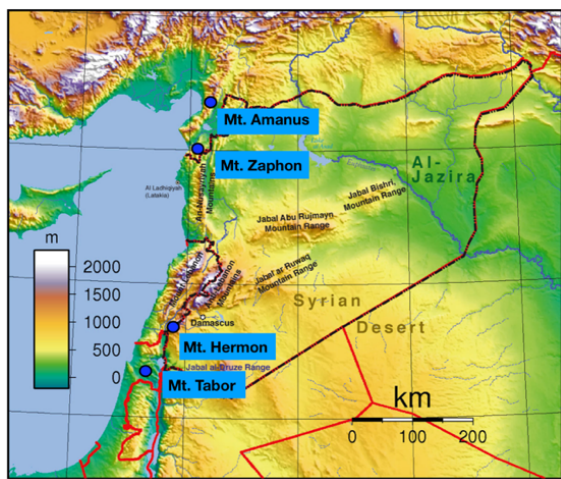
the Jordan River. It contains a spring, a *chasma*—“a mystical, physical connection to the River Styx flowing in the netherworld.”<sup>12</sup> This source was thought in ancient times to be bottomless, “no length of cord is sufficient to reach [its depth]” (Josephus, *Wars* I.403-05). As such, it is considered quite literally to be the Gate of Hell. Eusebius (*Church History* 6.18) describes an annual festival where animals were cast into the water after their throats had been slit. Those who miraculously resurfaced were considered sacrifices rejected by the demons inhabiting the water, while the appearance of blood meant that the gods of the underworld accepted it. This spring has an opposite in Psalm 87:7, “My springs are in you (LORD).” Not in the cave of Pan and the gates of hell.

Eusebius’ annual festival took place in mid-February each year at two overlapping and related holidays. The *Parentalia* was an ancient Roman festival that commenced on February 13 (*Februa* means “Purifications” or “Purgings”) and ran for nine days in honor of dead family members. The last day of the festival saw the offering of sacrifices to placate the most evil entities of the underworld. In the middle of

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<sup>12</sup> “Banias,” *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land 5 Supplementary Volume*, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society 2008): 1587.

this they also celebrated the **Lupercalia**, a bizarre, erotic, also Halloween-like fertility festival where men would dress up in goat skins and hit the bare thighs of all the women lined up on the streets to ensure fertility. The whole event would also protect against wolves and, believe it or not, *werewolves* preying on flocks of local shepherds. Remember, Pan is the god of shepherds? Well, he was also known as Lycaean Pan, the werewolf equivalent to the Faunus Pan goat demon-god. In this, the Romans were also reenacting their own founding myth of the cave in which Romulus and Remus were suckled from the she-wolf. And this is all just Caesarea Philippi! That Jesus could have taken the disciples here for these festivals is a very real possibility.

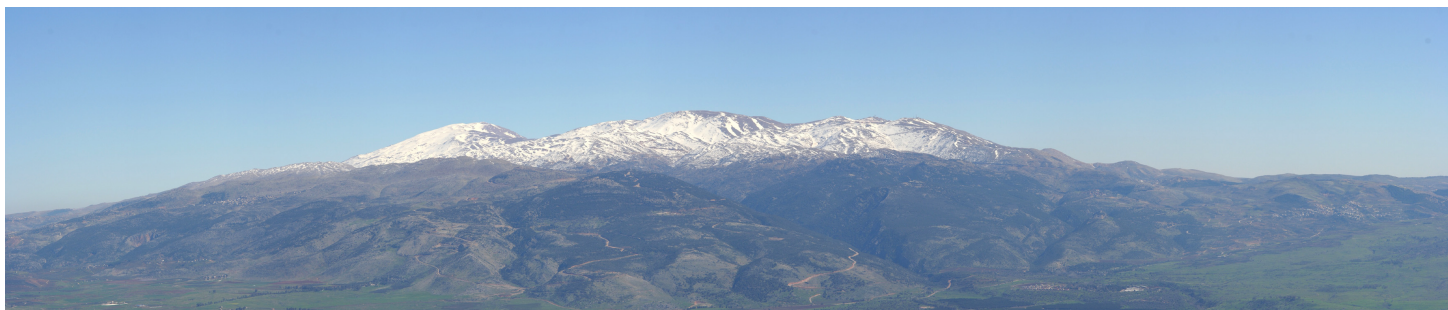


The other main thing you need to know about is **the mountain** that houses the cave. The word “north” in Hebrew is *tsaphon*. But this is much more than a location descriptor. Remember how we said that north is the direction of evil?

This is embodied in their very word for north. Along the coast, north of Sidon, Tyre, and Ugarit, there rises a mile straight out of the Mediterranean Sea **Jebel al-Aqra'**, known



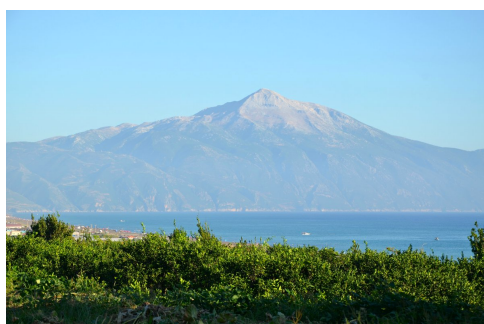
in the Bible simply as **Mt. Tsaphon** (cf. **Isa 14:13**; **Ps 89:13**; **48:2**). Based on Hermon and Tabor being in **Psalm 89:13**, “**north**” in this verse could be translated as this mountain, with “**south**” being Mt. Amanus very near it.<sup>13</sup>



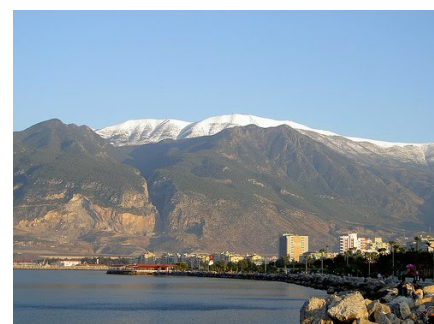
Mt. Hermon, Israel



Mt. Tabor  
Israel



Mt. Zaphon  
Syria



Mt. Amanus  
(Nur Mountains, Turkey)

Mt. Tsaphon is the home of **the storm god Baal**, where he built his temple after he ascended as top-dog among the sons of El and where he held council as he ruled the gods of the Canaanite pantheon. When the Greeks conquered the

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<sup>13</sup> For a mythological-supernatural interpretation see **Pieter M. Venter**, “The Translation of Psalm 89:13[12] and Its Implications,” *HTS* 61:1&2 (2005): 531-44.

<https://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/viewFile/422/322>



peoples who lived here, they renamed it after Zeus. And Zeus in Revelation is, Satan, the devil.<sup>14</sup>

This takes us to **Mt. Hermon**, also there in Psalm 89. According to the Canaanites, **Baal's father, El**, ruled over his seventy sons from the top of Mt. Hermon. Even the Babylonians, who lived over 750 miles away as the crow flies, believed that it was the **home of the gods**.<sup>15</sup> Hermon was essentially understood to be the Mt. Olympus of the ANE. Therefore, curiously, the summit of Hermon represents the gates of *heaven*.<sup>16</sup> What if Jesus went here on the last day of that festival, when the grossest of sacrifices were being offered to the worst of deities down below? It fits the timeline.

**One of the most disturbing stories** in all of the ancient world, which is echoed in many biblical texts (**Gen 6:1-4; Jude 6, 2Pet 1:16-2:4, 1Pet 3:18-22; 1Cor 11:10; Psalms 24; 68; etc.**), takes place on the top of Mt. Hermon. The Jews told the story this way, according to their most ancient traditions.

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<sup>14</sup> Revelation 2:13, "Where Satan's throne is." See my "**Satan, Zeus, Baal, and the Prince of Rome**," *Academia* (May 24, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> This is found in the oldest surviving piece of ancient literature that we have on earth, the *Gilgamesh Epic* (See *Gilgamesh Epic C: Old Babylonian fragment*, ANET, 504-05. Discussion in **J. Day**, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 117 and **E. Lipinski**, "El's Abode. Mythological Traditions Related to Mount Hermon," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 2 (1971), 15-41.

<sup>16</sup> **E. Theodore Mullen, Jr.**, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, HSM Number 24, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Jf. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 158.

And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men <sup>3</sup> and beget us children.' And *Semjaza*, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.' And they all answered him and said: '*Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves* by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.' Then *sware they all together and bound themselves* by mutual imprecations upon it. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of **Mount Hermon**, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it.

(1 Enoch 6)

Curiously, Shemihazah may be El, and thus, this may be his mountain. Even more interesting, the other leader is Azazel, who is sometimes confused with Pan. One on top, the other at the bottom.

“**Fable**,” people say, even though all these cultures believed the same thing, they just made it up totally independently of one another. Amazingly, in the 1860s, Sir

Charles Warren, who later became the head of the London Metropolitan Police department that oversaw the infamous Jack the Ripper case, was also a world renowned surveyor for her Royal Majesty. He was surveying the summit of Mt. Hermon and discovered not only the highest ancient pagan temple on earth dating back to pre-Greek times, but a gigantic stone at the temple complex that predated the NT, inscribed in Greek which read,

*kata keleusin theou megistou kai agiou oi omnuontes enteuthen*  
 (“According to the command of the greatest and holy God,  
those who take an oath proceed from here”).



Fig. 4.—Greek Inscription from Mount Hermon.

Clermont-Ganneau, M.I., “24. Mount Hermon and its God in an inedited Greek Inscription” [Italics original], *Palestine Exploration Fund: Quarterly Statement* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1903), 137.

This antediluvian rebellion is talked about by Jude and Peter directly when they talk about the angels who sinned being thrown into Tartarus. It was a great violation of sacred space, the mixing of realms that was forbidden by the Most High. It led directly, Moses and Paul say, to a **great darkness** (**Deut 32:7-8; Acts 17:26-27**) that spread over the earth, when God then put these **wicked watchers**, these **sons of God** or **angels** over the nations to rule them, and people had been in bondage and slavery to them ever since. This is a darkness that civilizations long since freed, culturally speaking by the power of the Gospel and Christ's church, from its terrifying grips ends up mocking and saying wasn't really that bad as they forget the olden days. It's why even Christians often mock the idea, even though it is in their own Bibles. It is the darkness that the same civilizations are seeing encroach with break-neck speed in terrifying ways that many still deny are what they so obviously are. Soon, no one will be in denial anymore.

If I'm right, **I can't think of anything more relevant** to therefore understand with all the bizarre and wicked things you are looking at in the present world. To understand the times you live in, you must understand the supernatural war that is right here in our passage. If men are **slaves to sin**,

slaves to death, and slaves to the devil in these ways just outlined in the context of our stories, then something needed to be done about it, if any were to have hope. For we were without hope in this world and always are apart from the intercessory work of God to men. Enter Psalm 89 and the stories of Peter's Confession and Jesus' transfiguration.

### *Story One: The Confession of Peter*

Now that we have the setting, we can start to fit the specific pieces of the puzzle together by looking at them carefully. Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (Luke 9:18). This is a repetition of the short narrative with Herod prior to feeding the 5,000. They answer as he did. John the Baptist. Elijah. One of the prophets of old (19). But whereas Herod was left pondering the riddle, Jesus confronts the disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God” (20). “Christ” is “Messiah,” and it is proof that the feeding of the 5,000 was in fact recognition that the disciples knew that he was fulfilling Messianic expectations.

But the word is also found in Psalm 89. “I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him” (20),



the LORD says. He's set **him here for a purpose**. “But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of watch against *your anointed*” (38). This is a link back to the very depressing and sad Psalm 88. **Something is wrong**. The LORD is pouring out his wrath on the Messiah. “Remember, O Lord,” how “*they mock the footsteps of your anointed*” (50-51). The prayer is that **the Lord will not be angry forever**. Each of these tells us something about the Messiah, his anointed life, his death, and his resurrection. This is important for what Jesus will say next in Luke.

At this point, Luke, following Mark, **breaks the story off**, saying simply that Jesus “**strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one**” (Luke 9:21). Yet, the sentence does not end here. For Jesus adds, “**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised**” (22). This is precisely what the three verses about the Messiah in Psalm 89 hint at. But it is also there in Psalm 88. The Son of Man must suffer: “**For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol**” (Ps 88:3). Sheol is the Hebrew equivalent of **Hades**. It is the dark abyss, where everyone went upon death. “**I am counted among those who go down to the pit ... like one set loose among the dead, like**

the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more” (4-5). Indeed, **Messiah will be killed**. “You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves” (6-7). It is exactly as Jesus just told his disciples.

But then, a couple of strange things are said in the Psalm. “Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the *departed* rise up to praise you?” (10). “Departed” is the word *rephaim*. These are **the giants of old**, creatures who when they died became demons. Creatures that were said to inhabit the underworld by Jew and Canaanite alike. In Jewish tradition, they are here because they were **punished by God** in the Great Flood and locked up (**Jub 10:6-9**; cf. **1En 10**). Pan, who was sometimes conflated with **Azazel**, the Watcher, was one of them. That’s why they offered placations to him at the Lupercalia and hoped he would accept them on behalf of dead relatives. You didn’t want to meet them when you died.

**Vs. 11** adds, “**Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?**” Abaddon is Apollyon in Revelation 9, and he lives in the bottomless pit of the Netherworld. Why is it bringing this up?



We need to return to **Matthew's additions** to Peter's Confession. A confession is a **declaration of faith**. We've just seen the question, "**Is your steadfast love declared in the grave?**" What does Peter declare? In Matthew, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (**Matt 16:16**). Son of God is relevant for a couple of reasons. First, In **Psalm 89:27**, the Father declares something. "**I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.**" Here, firstborn refers to *a status*. Yet, it is the language of a **Son**. If he is the firstborn son, then God has other sons. Throughout the Scripture, they are called "**sons of God.**" In fact, they are here in **Psalm 89:6**. "**For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings** (lit. "**sons of El**" is like the **LORD?**" These are the entities called **Watchers**, some of whom (including Azazel) came down on Mt. Hermon and committed the great sin. **Genesis 6:4** calls them "**sons of God.**" The Messiah, for what he will do (as we look back on it) as the God-Man will be exalted to the highest status, not ontologically (he has always been God of God and is exactly like the LORD), but **positionally**, having given up his exalted status to become a man, he is lifted up above all rule and power and authority in heaven or on earth at his ascension.

Matthew continues. “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah...’” (Matt 16:17). The only time anywhere that Peter is called by his earlier name and Father’s name. It has echoes in Psalm 89:10 (and 87:4) in Rahab, the sea-monster. “You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.” What was Jonah swallowed by? A sea-monster. Curiously, the LXX translates this fish as a *kētos* (Jonah 2:1), the same word that it uses to translate Rahab in Job 26:12. Just as interesting, old maps show that Caesarea Philippi was called *Beth-Rehob*, as was the valley north of Dan leading down into the Hula Valley.<sup>17</sup> So, in giving us this name for Peter at this location, Jesus is very clearly giving several signals that draw our attention to the evil location he has come to.

Rahab is essentially the female version of Leviathan, so it is interesting to think about how both of these creatures have now come up in our thinking of the Feeding of the

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to Judd Burton for both of these amazing insights and map.



5,000 and the Confession of Peter. But Peter is not cursed with this name. **Jesus will give him a new name!**

“Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 16:17). This has a very important parallel in Psalm 89. In the Psalm, God is not just generic “G-O-D.” He is *the Father*. We’ve seen this implied in his Son. Of the Son it now says, “He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God...’” (Ps 89:26). Here, I believe God should be transliterated—**El**. El means something like “Mighty.” But El is also the **father god** of the Canaanites who held council on Mt. Hermon. The God of the Bible is often called El—the True El, not the usurper who had a consort that we might know as Saturn or Kronos or Shemi-hazah<sup>18</sup> (the instigator of the rebellion along with Azazel). And in this very psalm, he holds council over the sons. “El, greatly to be feared *in the council* of the holy ones” (7).

Now you will see **why all this matters**. Matthew continues, “And I tell you, you are Peter (his new name), and on this *rock* I will build my church, and *the gates of hell* shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). This is **an amazing verse**. Most of us have really only heard it in the context of **the great argument** between the Reformers and Rome. They argue over “the rock.” “**The Rock is Peter,**” Rome says, and

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<sup>18</sup> This is Derek Gilbert’s thesis on the identity of El of the Canaanites, and it makes a lot of sense. See **Derek P. Gilbert**, *The Second Coming of Saturn* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2021).

this proves that you need to listen to the Pope, because Peter was the first Pope. “The Rock was Peter’s confession of faith,” the Reformers rightly countered. The church is built on nothing less than Jesus blood that we confess, by faith.

The Reformers are using the context of Peter’s confession, and rightly so. “The Rock” refers to Peter’s Confession that Jesus is the Messiah, a truth revealed to him by the Father. The Catholics are using an obvious word play with Peter. Rock in Greek is *petra*. Peter in Greek is *Petros*.

What few are aware of is that there is another rock here. We don’t realize it because we’ve never been to Caesarea Philippi. That rock is literally the mountain they are standing on, that Jesus took them to near the Grotto to Pan. It is Mt. Hermon.<sup>19</sup> This is going to become very important to see when we come to the Transfiguration pieces of the puzzle. Yet now, I want to add yet a fourth rock, a new one I saw because of Psalm 89. I did not finish the verse earlier. It says, “He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’”

Here then we see that people have created a terrible either/or fallacy. In fact, “rock” is a quadruple entendre. It is the confession, faith in Christ. It is Peter, who symbolizes not

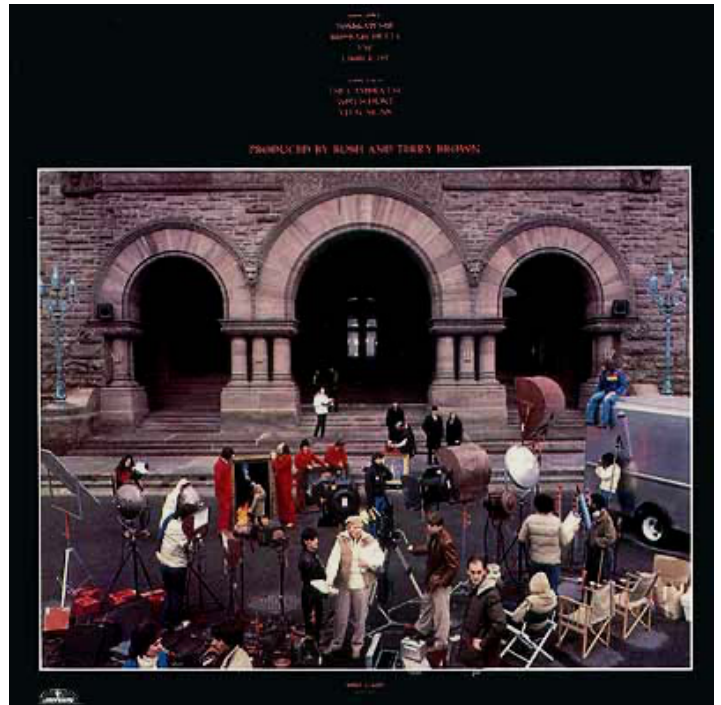
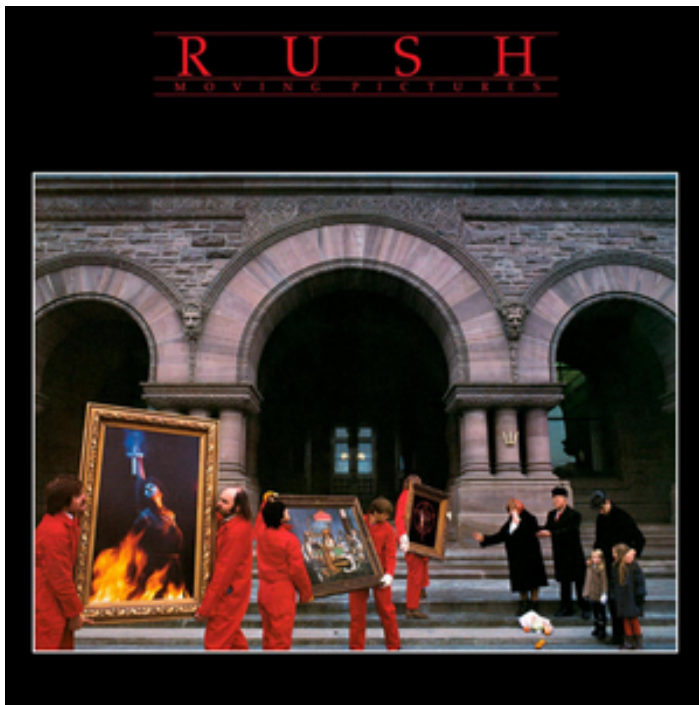
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<sup>19</sup> This thesis has been popularized by Heiser. See *Unseen Realm* and *Reversing Hermon*. Burton also discusses it.



the Pope, but **the church**. It is God **the Father**, our Rock.<sup>20</sup> And it is **Mt. Hermon**. These are not mutually exclusive.

People say, “**That’s not possible.**” *Au contraire*. Have you ever seen Rush’s eighth studio album cover art? The front cover shows a bunch of movers *moving* pictures—paintings out of a building. To the side, a crowd of people watch crying, because the pictures are so *moving*—emotional. On the back cover, a film crew is filming it so that you can watch it on TV—a motion, that is *moving* picture. And the album itself is titled *Moving Pictures*.<sup>21</sup> Quadruple entendre. Language is fun.



Quadruple Entendre: Rush’s *Moving Pictures*

<sup>20</sup> Perhaps even **quintuple** if you separate the Father as Rock from the salvation as Rock.

<sup>21</sup> It’s funny. Rush’s official website only calls it a Triple entendre. They missed the name of the album!

In Jesus' statement to Peter, he says he will "build." This is found in **Psalm 89:4**. "I will establish your offspring forever, and *build* your throne for all generations." This refers to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ. Jesus specifically calls it his "church." This is the word *ekklesia*, and it too is found in Psalm 89. "Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the *assembly* of the holy ones!" (5). Given that this psalm is prophetic, we now have a **double entendre** here. This *assembly* is both the heavenly assembly of the divine council and the church of redeemed humans who will eventually take its place through the work of Jesus. It is not an accident that Jesus chooses this word, or that it is found in this Psalm.

All this happens so that the gates of hell will not prevail. Where are the gates of hell? Literally, right where Jesus is speaking, at the cave of pan. The image is of a war. The gates of hell are going to be on the defensive. But not the way anyone thought. Yet, the Psalm tells you in an amazing parallel. "Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol/Hell?" (Ps 89:48). The Messiah must die.

## *Story Two: The Transfiguration*

Let's turn to Luke now and consider **the Transfiguration** pieces of the puzzle. He says, “**Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.**” Recently, scholars have suggested that **the timing of this**, given all that Jesus is doing with sacred time and sacred geography, best fits the **Parentalia and Lupercalia** festivals, only a few weeks before he would be put to death.<sup>22</sup> But why would Jesus do this? It is because of the war. **The transfiguration is a declaration of war, a showing himself in his glory** to Satan and the heavenly host that he is coming for them on the high feast day when everyone below is offering sacrifices to placate him! **It is a taunt in their own backyard:** What are you going to do about it? Come and get me. And this too is found in Psalm 89. “**Blessed are the people who know *the festal shout*, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face**” (**Ps 89:15**). Festal shout matches **the evil festivals of Paneas**. And it could be translated as “**war cry**,” which fits so much of this part of the psalm.

Where is Jesus taking them? Luke says, “**the mountain**,” the same place where he was just praying in Caesarea Philippi. This is **Mt. Hermon**, hence Matthew calls it “**a high mountain**,” the same language used for the mountain where

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<sup>22</sup> This is Dr. Judd Burton's thesis which he is developing in our new book.



Jesus was tempted earlier (**Matt 4:8**). It makes sense that Jesus would return to this same place where the Devil tempted him, for this is the place of **El's divine council** where the sons of God sit in assembly, this evil place in the north, this rock that it about to be rocked by the Son of God.

Why is he taking them here? So that all can see **the light of his face**, literally. “**And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white**” (**Luke 9:29**). Matthew says, “*His face did shine.*” The light of God's face, as **Psalm 89:15** puts it. This is a deeply fascinating thing. It is essentially a glimpse of Jesus in his supernatural self-unveiled as it were, like Moses looking upon God on Mt. Sinai. “**O mountain of the gods, mountain of Bashan [that is, Mt. Hermon], O many -peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan! Why do you look with hatred ... at the mount that God desired for his abode**” (**Ps 68:16**). **Psalm 87:1** refers to Holy Mount Zion, the tiny unassuming peak in Jerusalem, nothing to look at. Psalm 68 continues, “**Sinai is now in the sanctuary**” (**17**). God chooses his own place in his own time. **Right now, he is choosing Mt. Hermon itself. He is declaring war.**

In appearing as he does, Jesus is now **showing himself most similarly to the Angel of the LORD**, his OT appearance as the glorious **divine warrior**, the one who terrified his enemies and friends alike.<sup>23</sup> We rightly make a big deal of Elijah and Moses being there. They represent the Law and the Prophets. What is not often considered is that they are here *to be witnesses*. “**On the testimony of two or three witnesses,**” a complaint or covenant is established. They are **the heavenly human witnesses**. The disciples are **the earthly human witnesses**. Psalm 89 is clear that they must be witnesses for what is happening at this moment.

And **what is happening?** The **new covenant** with Greater David is being declared. “**You have said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one’**” (Ps 89:3), the **Messiah**. “**My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him**” (28). “**I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips**” (34). He will be made **the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth** (27). His offspring will be established and built forever (4). And the gates of hell shall not prevail.

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<sup>23</sup> See Matt Foreman and Douglas Van Dorn, *The Angel of the LORD: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2020), 207-11.

As Jesus stands over those gates of hell, he is also standing on the gate of heaven, the meeting place between God and man, the cosmic mountain, in the presence of the supernatural divine council who is seeing it all themselves. Those just mentioned are not the only ones bearing witness. The moon and skies are witnesses too (Psalm 89:37). What is the moon? To pagans it was a god (Sin) or a goddess (Nanna). They are there, in the skies, on the mountain. Unseen. But spoken about in the holy word of God. Dr. Heiser has taught us much about all this. He isn't making it up. This is the point of the cloud. There are witnesses in the clouds (37).

Witnesses to what? To the testimony of the Father. "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" (Luke 9:35). Exactly as the Psalm said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one" (Ps 89:3). "I exalted one chosen from the people" (19). But you see? That's just it. He is chosen from the people. Yet, he is very God of very God. God and man. Two essences in one Person. Incredible. Unfathomable.

The covenant is being declared at this very moment in time, according to the Psalm. It is being seen prophetically by a Canaanite turned believer, appropriate for such a pagan place as this. It is being directed at the heavenly host, both loyal and unfaithful. The saints of old are witnessing it. The

Disciples and foundation of the church are seeing it. The fallen supernatural entities are seeing it.

**What would happen?** It's astonishing. If you know the story, this is similar to the Baal Cycle. Yam, Baal's brother, is about to be exalted by El as, essentially, the firstborn. So **Baal goes to war because he is jealous**. Baal is quite literally the Satan of the NT. Baal kills Yam and takes the throne for himself.

This **same kind of jealousy and rage** now hits him and his fallen brothers full force when they witness the covenant being declared on the mountain. What will they do? **They will do the same thing Baal did to Yam. They will kill him.** This is exactly what Jesus was talking about. This is precisely how Psalm 89 ends—death and confusion. It must happen. He must go to Jerusalem.

It is what Psalm 88 is talking about. And no one understood it. For if they did, **they never would have put him to death**. Because in dying, Jesus conquers sin, death, and the devil. The promise was right there, in the psalm. Hearing echoes of **Genesis 3:15**, “**I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him**” (**Ps 89:23**). How? “**I will make known known your faithfulness to all generations**” (1), answering the question in the previous psalm, can anyone **make known** his wonder in the realm of the dead? (See n. 5

above.) Yes, through resurrection. That is how he conquers. And so first, he must die. Who is making it known? Not Ethan, not ultimately. Christ, the Messiah, who sang these songs before creation began.

**Psalms 87-89** are **prophecies of the Messiah**. His life. His suffering. His death. His resurrection. They are blurry, on purpose, so that the evil powers whom we have seen throughout them—Abaddon/Apollyon, Rahab, the rephaim, Pan, the Moon, El, his divine council in the skies, will be confused. Jesus must suffer and be put to death so that the covenant first testified in space and time right here at the transfiguration, spoken about in Psalm 89, foreshadowed all the way back in **Genesis 3:15**, **might be cut in blood** and made legal by heavenly rules. And this is precisely what our stories are about in the Confession and Transfiguration.

**What does this mean for us?** I suggest **two** things. First, Peter talks about this event much later. Luke tells us he was afraid to say anything at the time (**Luke 9:36**). But in his second letter he says this. “**For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty**” (**2Pe 3:16**). The transfiguration isn’t the Baal Cycle! It



wasn't a metaphor. It was seen by actual people in known history. Peter and the others saw it. "For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain" (17-18). The holy mountain! Hermon is no longer cursed (Hermon is a play on the word "curse" in Hebrew), because Jesus has conquered the infernal powers.

"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (19). It was a prophetic word, we've seen, from the Psalms.<sup>24</sup> Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Psalms in our stories today. You can believe it, because there were witnesses to it.

Second, he goes on to tell you that false prophets arose among Israel and they will arise among you as well, bringing in destructive heresies about Christ, denying the very Master himself (2:1). He warns against sensuality and greed and

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<sup>24</sup> This is what he is getting at in the next verses, "Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (19-20).

even uses the very fall of these same watchers in Genesis 6 as an example (4). All tied to the transfiguration. When you see with such eyes, you can never go back. The world is now a totally different place. The evil things happening in it are put into a completely different perspective. For Jesus, though he has conquered and won the war, has not yet round up all those evil creatures and thrown them into the Lake of Fire. Beware.

To see these things, Jesus tells us what must happen. Not greed and sensuality and being overtaken by the desires of the flesh. But rather found right between our two stories, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). How interesting that Jesus hasn’t even died yet, but still speaks of the cross here, *for us*. He knew the gauntlet he was throwing down on that mountain. He knew what it would take to build his church so that the gates of hell would fall when the Gospel went forth in power in proclamation.

This kingdom is different. “Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (23). “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” (24). What a great question, and one that Jesus would completely sympathize in our

own weakness, for it was the very temptation the Devil presented to him on this very mountain.

He would not give in. Do not give in yourselves. Jesus concludes, “Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels” (26). Ryken has a great word here, because he knows that he is often ashamed, to his own shame, and often so are we. In public, in prayer, in witnessing to our faith. We hesitate. We are timid. We are afraid. Jesus’ words haunt us because there are times when we are ashamed. But the disciples would be more ashamed than us! They would deny him. They would flee from him. They would gather in secret afterwards, in shame.

But Jesus showed them grace. Because these words are law, not Gospel. God always shows kindness and good news to those who fail yet trust in the Son. “He went to the cross to die for their shame, and when he was raised from the dead, he went back to give them the courage to meet the terms of his discipleship. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he enabled them to give their lives away for him and for his gospel.”<sup>25</sup> By that same power at work in the church today,

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<sup>25</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 466.

confess the Christ, see the glory, and be confirmed in in power by the word of God. For he is coming with his holy angels in the glory of his Father, even as he did in the past. The time for judgment will come. The infernal powers are doomed. Jesus has won. His church assaults the gates of hell every time the Gospel is proclaimed. And there's nothing they can do about. Take comfort in the Rock. Take comfort in Christ and his church.<sup>26</sup> He is the King of Glory. He is the Lord God Almighty, and his is the victory. Amen.

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<sup>26</sup> **Going Deeper.** The big question about **vv. 26-27** is when do these things happen? Is, “**When he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels**” the same time as “**there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God?**” I suggest no. The second happened to the disciples. Either at his resurrection, his ascension, Pentecost (why choose?). The first happens at the Second Coming. I agree with Hendriksen that the whole thing is viewed as a unit of his exaltation, inaugurated and then consummated. Thus, even 70 AD would fit in here (contrary to him). His commentary is worth reading. See **William Hendriksen** and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 501-02.

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