

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan**MATTHEW 17****Matthew 17**

Matthew seventeen continues the narrative that began in Chapter 16, as the Lord made His way to northern Israel to get away from the intensity of ministry with His disciples. Caesarea Philippi was the capital of the northernmost part of what is modern-day Israel.

After the death of Herod the Great, the kingdom that he had ruled over was broken up and divided for his sons to rule over. There were several Roman provinces that made up Herod's kingdom. Idumea was south of Judea, then north to Samaria, then farther north to the province of the Galilee. On the other side of the Jordan River, the eastern side was divided into sections as well, each one ruled by a different person. Nabataea, which included ancient and modern Petra, Perea, the Decapolis, and, relative to today's text, the Tetrarchy of Philip, son of Herod. His tetrarchy included Batanea, Auranitis, Trachonitis, and Gaulanitis, where Caesarea Philippi was located. Caesarea Philippi should not be mistaken for Caesarea Maritime, which was the Capital city of Herod the Great's rule. It is located approximately 70 miles Northwest of Jerusalem and the home of Cornelius of Acts 10. Caesarea Philippi was a pagan city and home to the great temple of the Greek god, Pan, the half-goat, half-man mythical figure known as the shepherd god. This is important for you to know because beneath this great temple to the god Pan was a giant crack in the earth known as "The Gates of Hades/Hell." This is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 16:13-19.

Jesus would often go north to the Mt Herman region to escape the press of ministry, escape the oppressive heat of the summers around the Sea of Galilee, and to have alone time with his chosen disciples. On one of those trips, Jesus would have gone away to one of the mountains in the Mt. Herman range, the highest peak is over 9000 feet in elevation, He took aside the three disciples who were His "inner circle." Peter, James, and John were taken to a high mountain where Jesus was "transfigured" before their eyes. While the disciples were being taught by the Lord Jesus, He entered into a glorified state, and there appeared with Him two heavenly beings, Moses and Elijah. These two historic and heavenly figures appeared and began talking with Jesus. Matthew does not tell us what they were talking to Jesus about, but Luke, in his gospel, does. Luke 9:30-31 says these men spoke to Jesus about his coming death in Jerusalem. The word for decease/death in this passage in Luke is transliterated from Greek, "ek-hodos" in English. We smooth that out to "exodus." Ek is the Greek preposition "out/out of," and "hodos" is the Greek word for "way/path/road." When these two words are put together, you get the word "Exodus, or the "way out." Death was the "way out" for Jesus and for us. The way out of this life and back to the Father! Jesus came to die as a substitute for our sins. He died "in our place." Can you imagine what that conversation would have been like. Moses and Elijah encouraging the God of heaven and earth to "stay the course" laid out by the Father for His Son! These passages are so filled with valuable truth; read chapters 16-17 once more.

Prayer and Action Steps

Lord, remind me that I need to make time, schedule time, to "get away" from the routines of life, no matter how good those routines may be. If Jesus did that, so should we. Vance Havner reminded us decades ago that "if you do not make time to come apart, you will just come apart!" Get away and get alone with the Father. You will see the Lord Jesus in a new way.