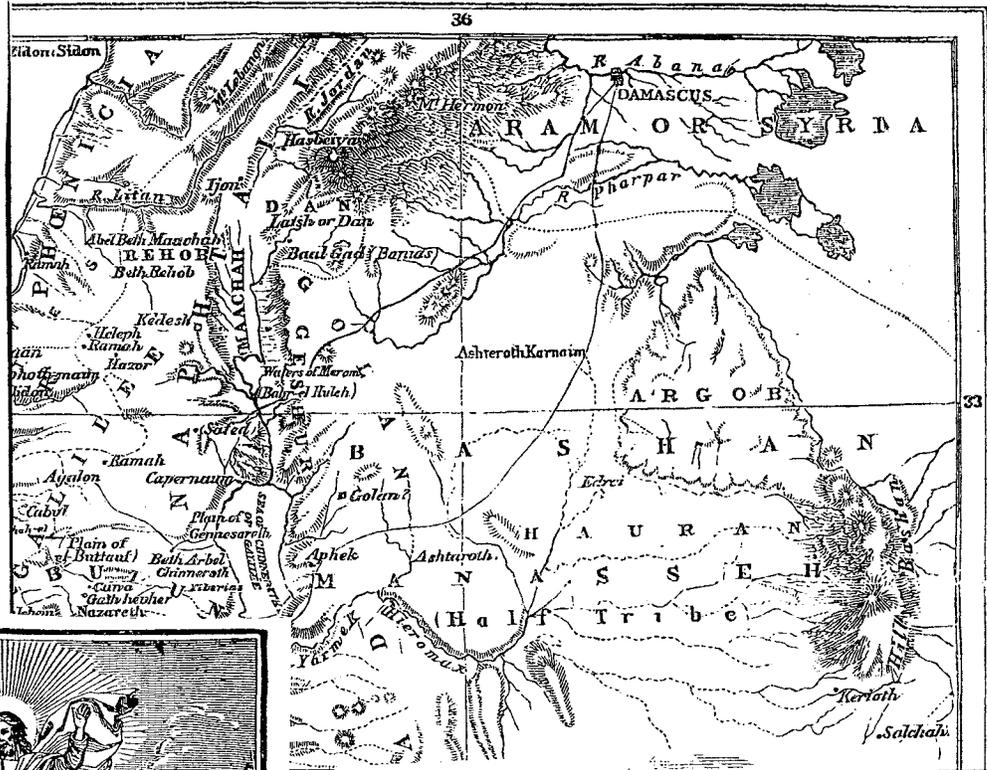
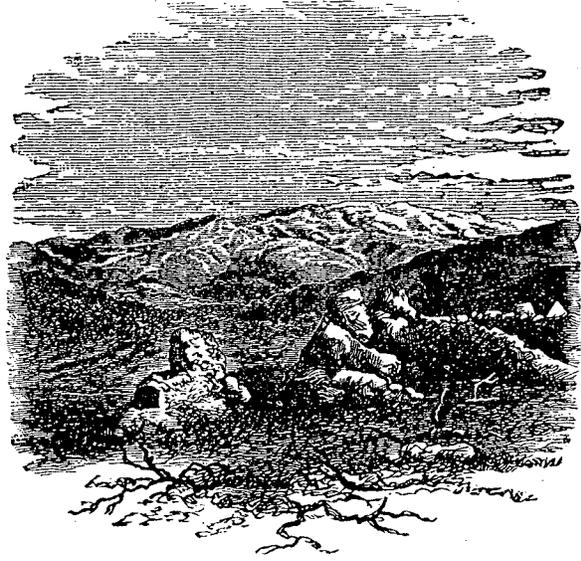


# Mt. Hermon – Startling Witness to the Suffering Messiah and His Kingdom



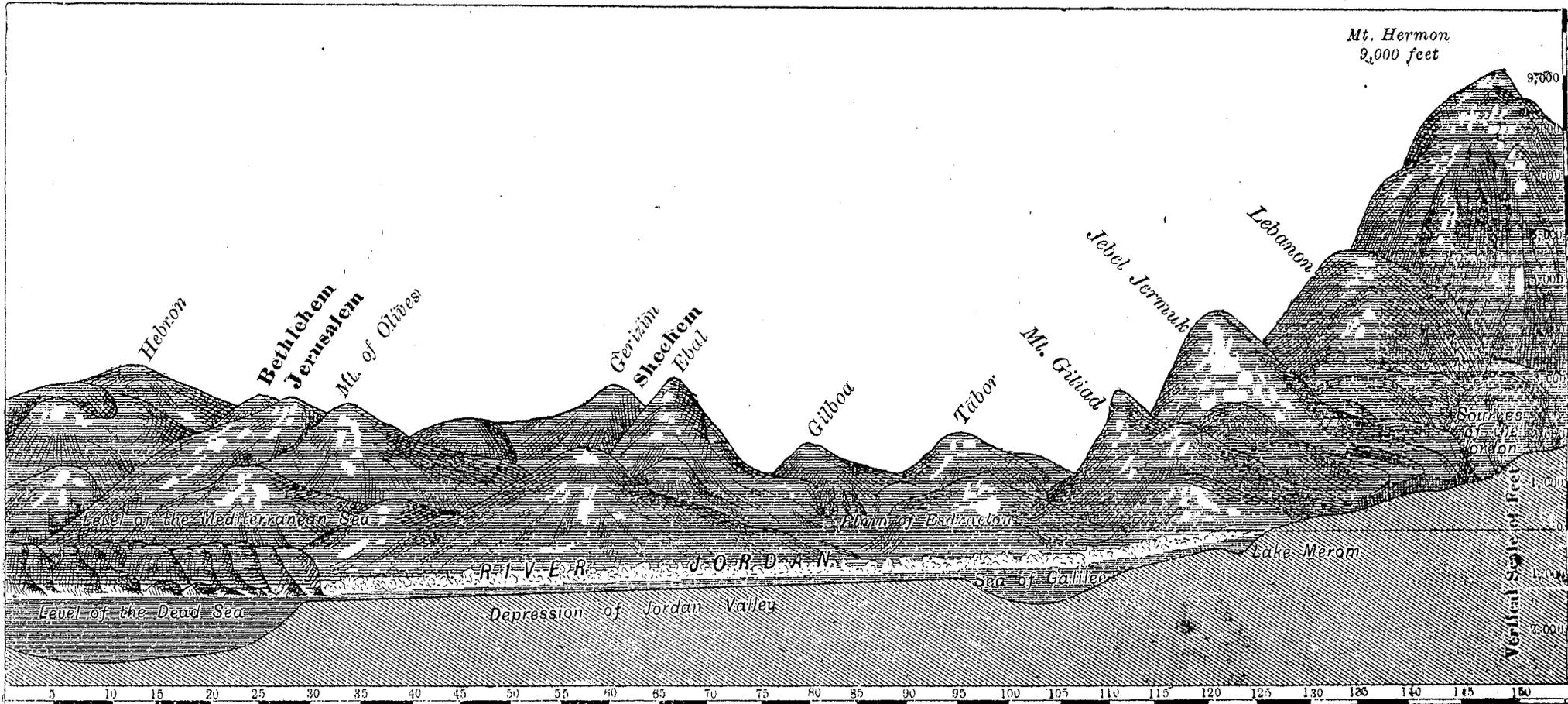
THE TRANSFIGURATION.



MOUNT HERMON.



MOUNT HERMON.



Horizontal Scale of Miles.

SECTION OF PALESTINE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH.

A. Zeese & Co., Eng., Chi.

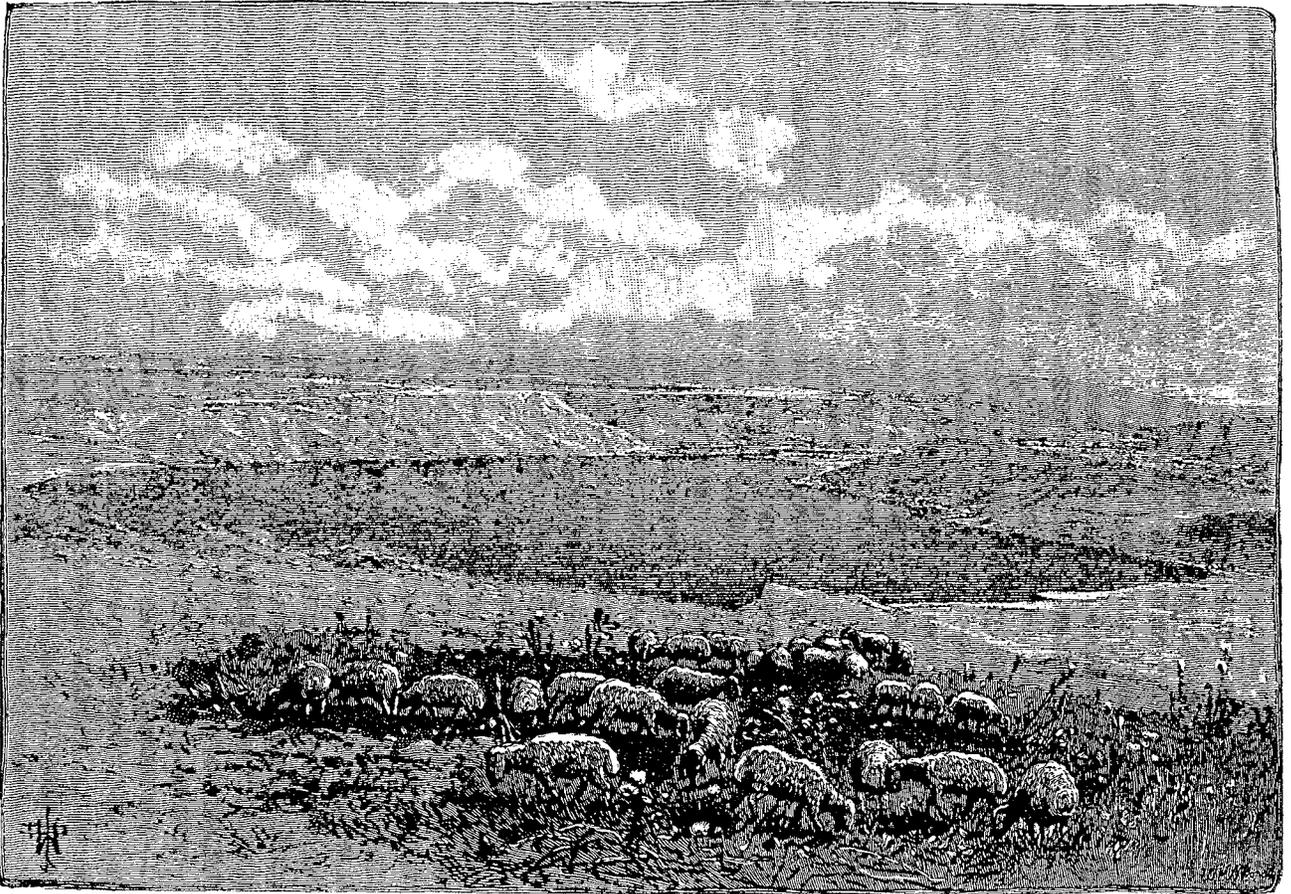
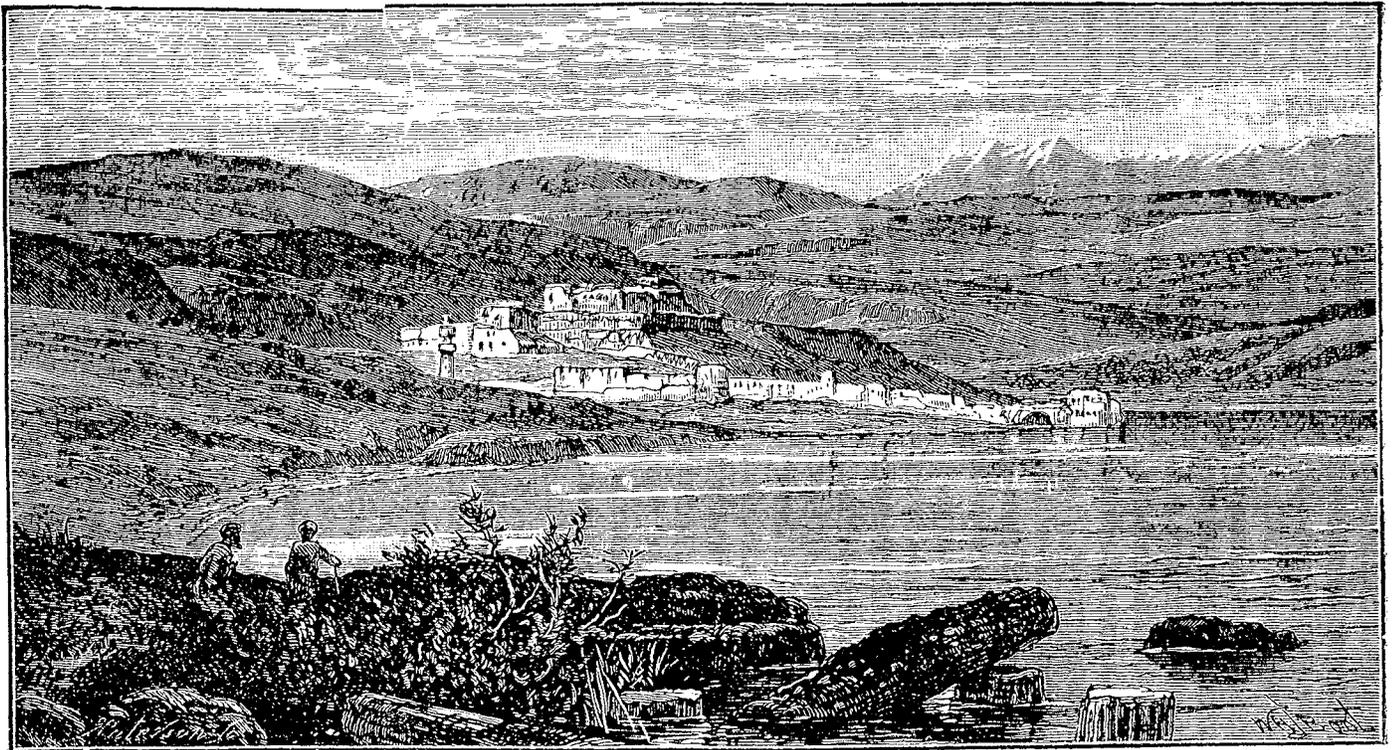


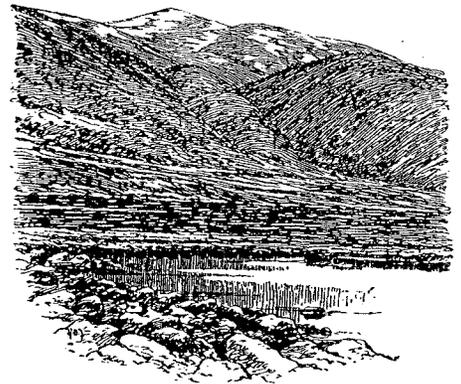
Abb. 121. Der See Genesareth (im Norden). VIEW SOUTH



ON THE SEA OF GALILEE, LOOKING TOWARDS TIBERIAS.



# ***Mt. Hermon – Startling Witness to the Suffering Messiah and His Kingdom***



Mt. Hermon. From a photograph.

## **1A. The Extraordinary Prominence of Mt. Hermon:**

### **1b. The commanding presence of Mt. Hermon:**

George H. Whitney has given a fine summary of the elevated position of the mountain in biblical history:

**Hermon, MOUNT, lofty or prominent peak**, so called doubtless because it was visible from a very great distance. The Sidonians called it *Sirion*, from the root signifying "to glitter," and the Amorites *Shenir*, ("to clatter,") both words meaning "breastplate," and suggested by its rounded, glittering top when the sun's rays were reflected by the snow that covered it, Deut. iii,9; Sol. Song iv 8; Ezek. Xxvii, 5. It was also named *Sion*, "the elevated," towering over all its compeers, Deut. iv., 48.

Mount Hermon was on the north-eastern border of Palestine, Deut. iii, 8; Josh. xii, 1; over against Lebanon, Josh. xi, 17, adjoining the plateau of Bashan, 1 Chron. v, 23.

It was the great landmark of the Israelites. It was associated with their northern border almost as intimately as the sea was with their western. Hermon rises boldly at the southern end of Anti-Libanus to the height of about ten thousand feet above the more continuous chain. Dr. Thomson describes it as seen from Sarepta, from Tyre, and from the Dead Sea.

The modern name of Hermon is *Jebel eth-Thejj*, "the snowy mountain." Through the spring till the earlier part of summer the top is covered with snow; but as the weather becomes hotter large masses melt, and the snow remains only in the streaks in the ravines. On one of the summits are the remains of a circular wall inclosing a small, ruined temple. Probably this marks the site of one of the "high places," where worship was paid to idols. "The dew of Hermon" (Psa. cxxiii, 3) was very likely the distillation of the vapors condensed by the snowy crown of the mountain; and "Zion," in the same passage, is no doubt used as being one of the various names of Hermon. It may be added that the ridge *Jebel Ed-Duhy*, on the north of the valley of Jezreel, has been called the "Little Hermon." (Whitney, *Handbook of Bible Geography*, New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1877, 176.)

The *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* has some more up-to-date information on the impressive mountain visible from great distances in Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon:

The word refers to a consecrated place, a sanctuary. Mt. Hermon comprises the southern spur of the Anti-lebanon chain of mountains, which runs parallel to the Lebanon range and is separated from it by the valley of Beqaa. It is about 9,200 ft. above sea level, and is the highest mountain in Syria. It can be seen from many places in Palestine, even from as far away as the Dead Sea. Because snow covers it for much of the year, the Arabs call it the "gray-haired mountain," or the "mountain of the snow." The water from its melting snows flow into the rivers of N Hauran and provide the principal source for the Jordan River. No trees grow above the snow line, but below it the sides are covered with trees (pine, oak, and poplar) and with vineyards. Its forests contain wolves and leopards, and sometimes Syrian bears. It is not a high summit with a distinctly marked base, but a whole cluster of mountains. Its three summits are nearly equal in height and are the same distance from each other. It extends from sixteen to twenty m. from N to S. In Deuteronomy 3:9 it says that the Sidonians call it *Sirion*, while the Amorites call it *Senir*. *Sirion* occurs outside of Deuteronomy 3:9 only in Psalm 29:6. *Senir*

occurs outside of Deuteronomy 3:9 in 1 Chronicles 5:23, the Song of Solomon 4:8, and Ezekiel 27:5. Deuteronomy 4:48 has "Sion" in the KJV and "Mount Sirion" in the RSV. First Chronicles differentiates between Senir, Hermon and Baal-hermon. The Song of Solomon 4:8 speaks of the "peak of Senir and Hermon. . .

Mt. Hermon was the northern boundary of the Amorite kingdom (Deut. 3:8; 4:48), and thus is said to lie in the territory of Og (Josh. 12:5; 13:11). It was the northern limit of the conquest of Joshua (Josh 11:17; 12:1; 13:5), and the northern limit of the territory of Manasseh. The Hittites dwelt at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh (Josh 11:3). It is mentioned in the Bible as the northern boundary of the Promised Land (Deut 3:8). In ancient times it was regarded as a sacred mountain, as its Heb. name suggests. In Judges 3:3 it is called "Mount Baal-hermon," showing that Baal was worshiped there. Remains of shrines are found on the highest summit. (Merrill C. Tenney, General Editor, III, 1975, 125-126).



HERMON FROM THE NORTHERN SHORE OF LAKE HULEH.

2b. The geographical particulars of Mt. Hermon:

The free encyclopedia, *Wikipedia*, has a very condensed and interesting summary of the geographical uniqueness of this mountain:

Mount Hermon is actually a cluster of mountains with three distinct summits, each about the same height. The Anti-Lebanon range extends for approximately 150 km (93 mi) in a northeast-southwest direction, running parallel to the Lebanon range on the west. The Hermon range covers an area of about 1000 square km, of which about 70km<sup>2</sup> are under Israeli control. Most of the portion of Mount Hermon within the Golan Heights constitutes the Hermon nature reserve.

The mountain forms one of the greatest geographic resources of the area. Because of its height it captures a great deal of precipitation in a very dry area of the world. The Jurassic limestone is broken by faults and solution channels to form a karst topography. Mount Hermon has seasonal winter and spring snow falls which cover all three of its peaks for most of the year. Melt water from the snow-covered mountain's western and southern bases seeps into the rock channels and pores, feeding springs at the base of the mountain, which form streams and rivers. These merge to become the Jordan River. Additionally, the runoff facilitates fertile plant life below the snow line, where vineyards and pine, oak, and poplar trees are abundant.

The springs, and the mountain itself, are much contested by the nations of the area for the use of the water. Mount Hermon is also called the "snowy mountain," the "gray-haired mountain," and the "mountain of snow." It is also called "the eyes of the nation" in Israel because its elevation makes it Israel's primary strategic early warning system.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Hermon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Hermon), p. 2 of 6)

The wikipedia article also mentions that on top of the mountain is "the Hermon Hotel," in the buffer zone between Syria and Israeli-occupied territory, the highest permanent manned UN position in the world. Wikipedia, (p. 1 of 6)

3b. An atmospheric peculiarity:

There's an interesting reference to the dew of Hermon in Psalm 133:3:

The "dew of Hermon" is once referred to in a passage which has long been considered a geographical puzzle—"As the dew of Hermon, the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion" (Psa. cxxxiii, 3). Some have thought that *Zion* ( יְרוּשָׁלַיִם ) is used here for *Sion* ( צִיּוֹן ), one of the old names of Hermon (Deut. iv, 48), but this identification is unnecessary. The snow on the summit of this mountain condenses the vapors that float during the summer in the higher regions of the atmosphere, causing light clouds to hover around it, and abundant dew to descend on it, while the whole country elsewhere is parched, and the whole heaven elsewhere cloudless. One of its tops is actually called *Abu-Nedy*, i.e. "father of dew."

(John M'Clintock, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1894, 209).

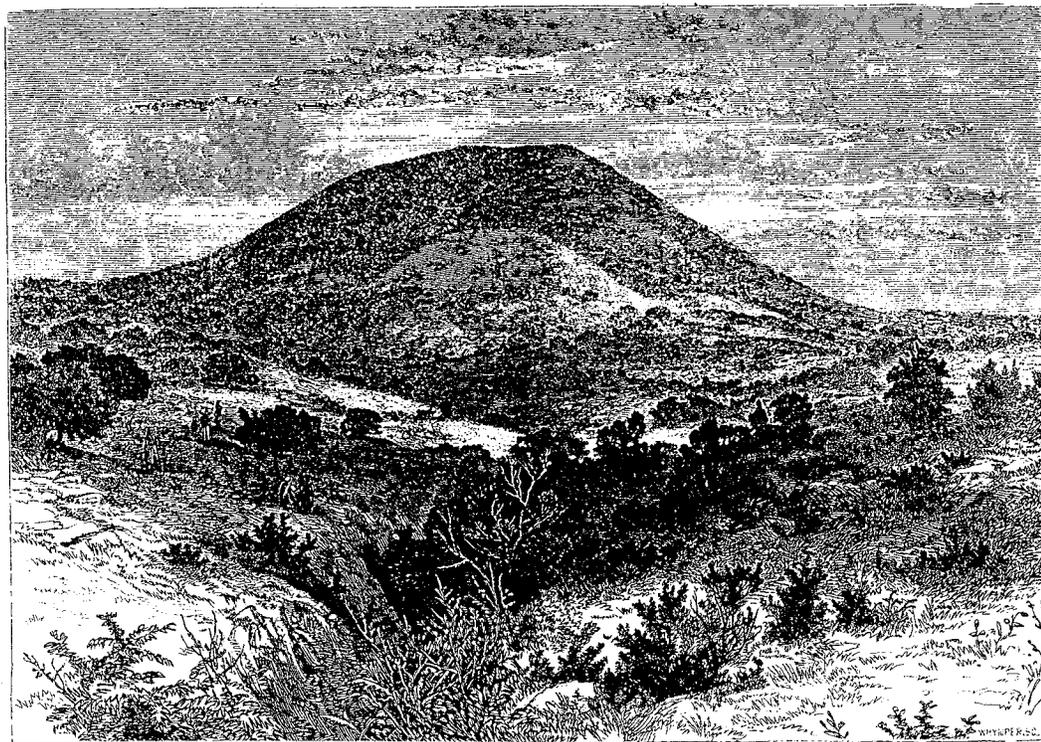
2A. **The Continuous Contest Over the Identity of The Mount of Transfiguration:**

The famous church historian and Christian scholar, Philip Schaff, makes an interesting comparison between two mountains which have historically been identified as the Mt. of Transfiguration:

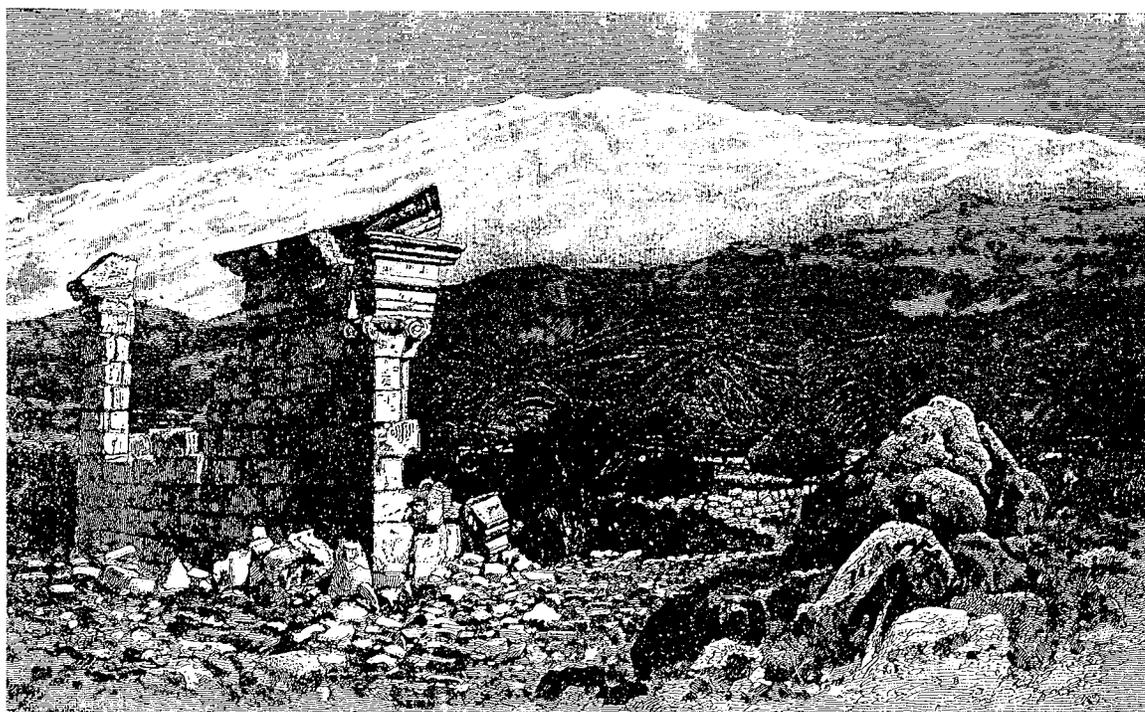
Mount Tabor is the Rigi, Mount Hermon the Mont Blanc, of Palestine. They are the two representative mountains of that country, the one for its gracefulness, the other for its loftiness. They are not mentioned in the New Testament, but repeatedly in the Old. They are associated together by the Psalmist when he says, "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name." Some of the greatest events in the history of Revelation, from the legislation of Moses to the Ascension of Christ, took place on mountains. Tabor or Hermon, probably the latter, is the Mount of Transfiguration. . . Mount Hermon is less graceful [than Mt. Tabor,] but more imposing and sublime. It is called "Jebel esh-Sheikh" by the Arabs, *i.e.*, the chief mountain. It rises on the northern extremity of Galilee to a height of 10,000 feet above the Mediterranean, and presents three lofty peaks. It is covered with eternal snow, which gives it a glistening appearance. It can be seen from every direction far and wide, from Gerizim and Tabor in the south, from Damascus in the east, from the northern heights of the Antilebanon and Lebanon, and from the plains of Coelesyria. Moses saw it from the top of Pisgah in Moab, when "the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan." At its southern base lies Baniyas or Caesarea Philippi, one of the most romantic spots in Palestine. Here the river Jordan gushes out from the rocks. Here, on the boundary line between the Jews and the Gentiles, our Saviour spent several days before he entered on his last journey to Jerusalem. Here he elicited from Peter that famous confession, from which, as from a spiritual rock, have sprung the Christian confessions and creeds of subsequent ages. Here he prophesied the founding of his indestructible Church, his passion and resurrection.

Tabor and Hermon are the two claimants for the honor of being the MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION, or "the holy mount," as Peter calls it. It was certainly "a *high* mountain," according to the Evangelists, and the choice lies between these two. Both are in themselves equally well fitted for the event, Tabor rather than Hermon, on account of its central location in Palestine, only a few miles from Nazareth and the Lake of Gennesaret, where our Saviour spent the greater part of his life on earth.

*Mt. Tabor and Mt. Hermon*



Des Tabor.



RUINED TEMPLE AT THELTHÂTHA. JEBEL ESH SHEIKH—MOUNT HERMON.

Tabor has in its favor the monastic tradition, which goes back to St. Jerome in the fourth century, and which gave rise to a number of buildings on the summit. . . . But two arguments are against Tabor and in favor of Hermon.

(1.) The fact that the summit of Tabor was occupied by a city of the tribe of Zebulun, and was employed without intermission between the times of Antiochus the Great, 218 B.C., to the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, as a fortification, and hence unfit for quiet seclusion and meditation.

(2.) More conclusive than this local objection is the succession of events and the short interval between them. The transfiguration took place "six days" after Peter's confession in Caesarea Philippi, at the foot of Mount Hermon, and was followed by a journey to Capernaum, and thence to Jerusalem. This is all plain if we locate the transfiguration on Hermon; but it would have been a waste of time if Jesus should have traveled from Caesarea Philippi to Mount Tabor, passing Capernaum on the way, and gone back from Mount Tabor to Capernaum, then to proceed again southward to Jerusalem. Moreover, "it is exceedingly improbable that Christ should so suddenly have left his retreat in the highlands of Gaulanitis, and transferred the scene of one of his most secret revelations to Galilee, where he was everywhere persecuted" . . .

(adapted from *Through Bible Lands: Notes of Travel in Egypt, the Desert, and Palestine*, New York: The American Tract Society, 1878, 330-335).

### 3A. The Context of the Transfiguration in the Ministry of Christ:

Henry Van Dyke, in his superb volume, *Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land*, has one of the finest summaries found anywhere of the last six months of our Savior's earthly ministry. With just a few strokes he paints a synoptic picture of the events beginning at the foot of Mt. Hermon and culminating at the top of Mt. Calvary. It is worthwhile quoting his excellent observations, beginning with His arrival at Caesarea Philippi, just north of the ancient city of Dan:

The aqueduct carried by the bridge is still full of flowing water, and the drops which fall from it in a fine mist make a little rainbow as the afternoon sun shines through the archway draped with maidenhair fern. On the stone pavement of the bridge we trace the ruts worn two thousand years ago by the chariots of the men who conquered the world. The chariots have all rolled by. On the broken edge of the tower above the gateway sits a ragged Bedouin boy, making shrill, plaintive music with his pipe of reeds.

We repose in front of our tents among the olive trees at the close of the day. The cool sound of running streams and rustling poplars is on the moving air, and the orange-golden sunset enchants the orchard with mystical light. All the swift visions of striving Saracens and Crusaders of conquering Greeks and Romans, fade away from us, and we see the figure of the Man of Nazareth with His little company of friends and disciples coming up from Galilee.

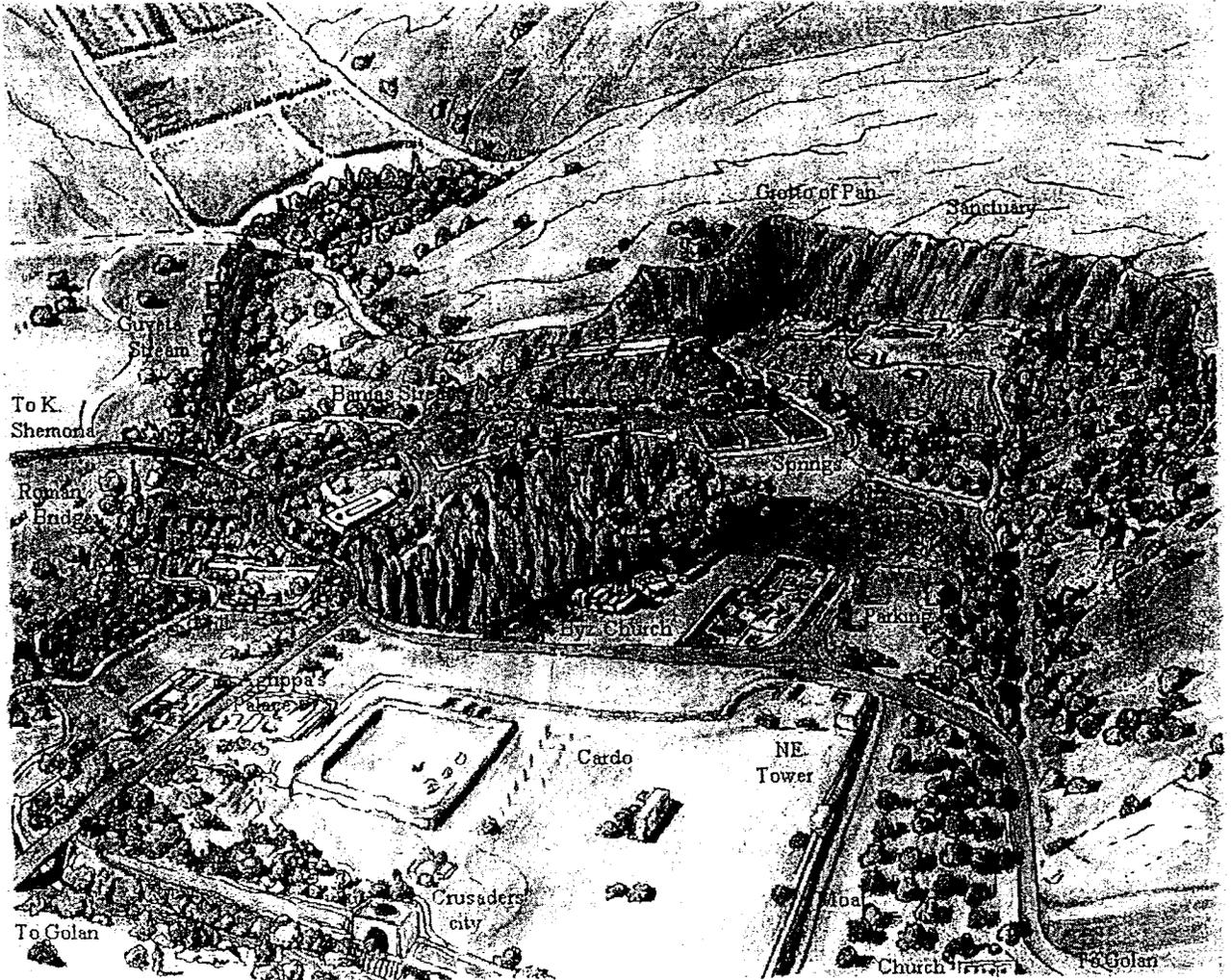
It was here that Jesus retreated with His few faithful followers from the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees. This was the northernmost spot of earth ever trodden by His feet, the longest distance from Jerusalem that He ever travelled. Here in this exquisite garden of Nature, in a region of the Gentiles, within sight of the shrines devoted to those Greek and Roman rites which were so luxurious and so tolerant, four of the most beautiful and significant events of His life and ministry took place.

He asked His disciples plainly to tell their secret thought of Him—whom they believed their Master to be. And when Peter answered simply: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed him for the answer, and declared that He would build His church upon that rock.

Then He took Peter and James and John with Him and climbed one of the high lonely slopes of Hermon. There He was transfigured before them, His face shining like the sun and His garments glistening like the snow on the mountain peaks. But when they begged to stay there with Him, He led them down to the valley again, among the sinning and suffering children of men.

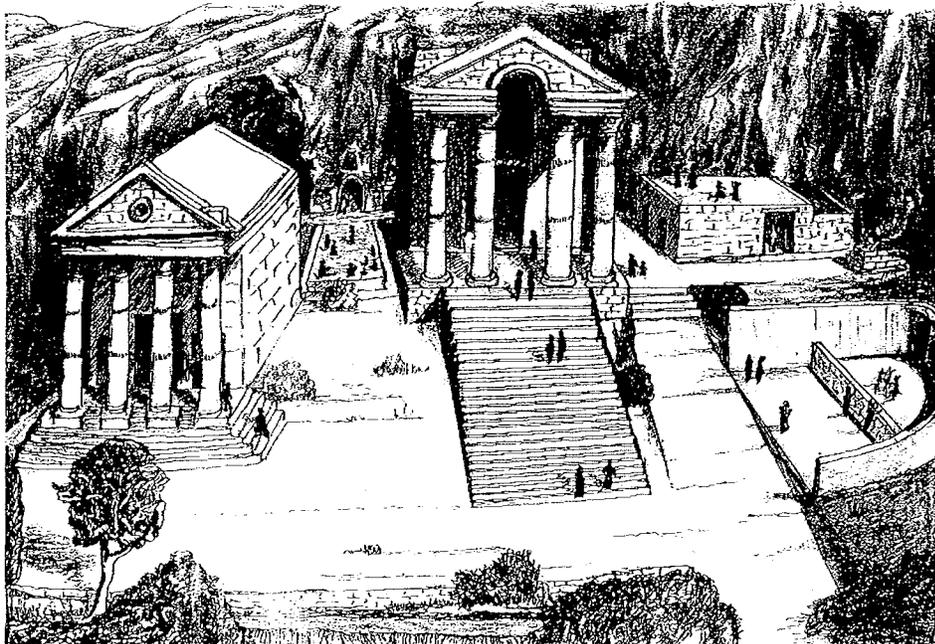
At the foot of the mount of transfiguration, He healed the demoniac boy whom his father had brought to the other disciples, but for whom they had been unable to do anything; and He taught them that the power to help men comes from faith and prayer.

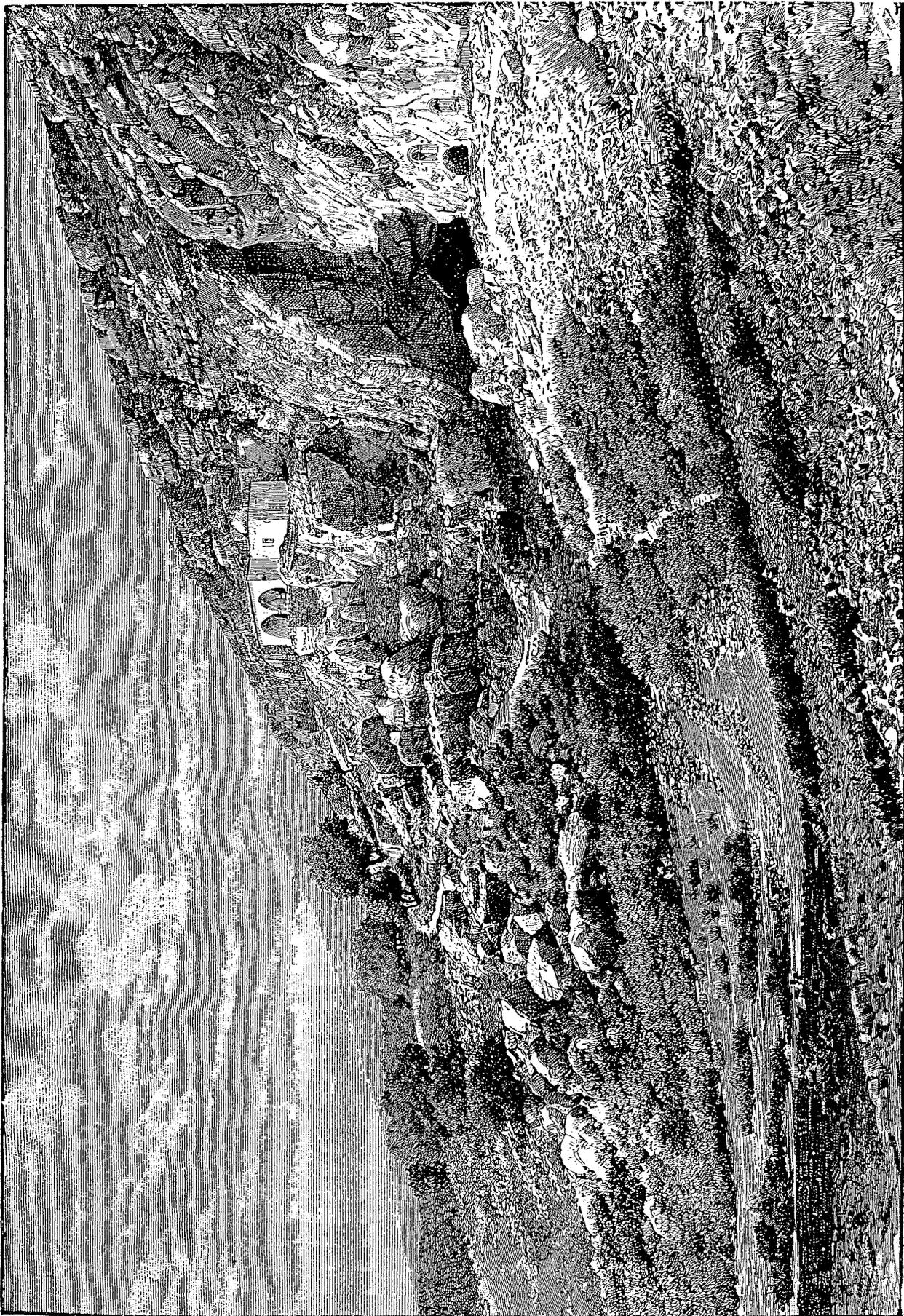
The spectacularly beautiful source of the Banias branch of the Jordan surrounded by Greek and pagan sanctuaries. The second picture below shows the reconstruction of Greek temples near the site of Peter's confession.



Banias\_Temples.jpg (JPEG Image, 720x501 pixels)

[http://www.biblewalks.com/Photos/banias\\_temple.jpg](http://www.biblewalks.com/Photos/banias_temple.jpg)





SOURCES OF THE JORDAN BENEATH THE CAVE OF PAN.

## 5A. The Centrality of the Transfiguration in the Incarnation of Christ:

It would be unthinkable to write a book on the life of Christ or the gospel story without commenting one of the highlights in our Savior's earthly ministry and undoubtedly the high point in the experience of the disciples Peter, James and John.

One of the great works on the ministry of Christ is by Cunningham Geikie, who has written widely and with real spiritual insight on a variety of biblical topics. Thus far this writer has not quoted him, but it is worthwhile to reproduce here some of his excellent comments on the transfiguration of Christ. The points of the outline are added by this writer for the sake of clarity.

### 1b. The companions of the Savior:

Taking the three of His little band most closely in sympathy with Him, and most able to receive the disclosures that might be made to them, He ascended into the hills towards evening, for silent prayer. The favoured friends were Peter, the rock-like, His host at Capernaum from the first; and the two Sons of Thunder, John and James; loved disciples both, but John, the younger, nearest his Master's heart of all the Twelve, as most like Himself in spirit. They had been singled out, already, for similar especial honour, for they alone had entered the death-chamber in the house of Jairus, and they were, hereafter, to be the only witnesses of the awful sorrow of Gethsemane.

### 2b. The communion and prayer:

Evening fell while Jesus poured out His soul in high communion with His Father, and the three, having finished their nightly devotions, had wrapped themselves in their abbas and lain down on the hill-side, to sleep. Meanwhile their Master continued in prayer. His whole soul filled with the crisis so fast approaching.

### 3b. The condition of the Savior:

He had taken the three with Him, to overcome their dread of His death and repugnance to the thought of it, as unbefitting the Messiah; to strengthen them to bear the sight of His humiliation hereafter; and to give them an earnest of the glory into which He would enter after His decease, and thus teach them that, though unseen, He was, more than ever, mighty to help. He was about to receive a solemn consecration for the cross, but, with it, a strong support to His soul in the prospect of such a death. He was a man like ourselves, and His nature, now in its high prime, and delighting in life, must have shrunk from the thought of dying. The prolonged agony and shame of so painful and ignominious an end, must have clouded His spirit at times; but, above all, who can conceive the moral suffering that must have been in the thought that, though the Holy One, He was to be made an offering for sin; that, though filled with unutterable love to His people, He was to die at their hands as their enemy; that, though innocent and stainless, He was to suffer as a criminal; that, though the beloved Son of God, He was to be condemned as a blasphemer?

### 4b. The change in His appearance:

As He continued praying, His soul rose above all earthly sorrows. Drawn forth by the nearness of His Heavenly Father, the Divinity within shone through the veiling flesh till



His raiment kindled to the dazzling brightness of light, or of the glittering snow on the peaks above Him and His face glowed with a sunlike majesty.



5b. The comfort of Moses and Elijah:

Amidst such an effulgence it was impossible the three could sleep. Roused by the splendour, they gazed, awe-struck, at the wonder, when, lo! Two human forms, in glory like that of the angels, stood by His side—Moses and Elijah, the founder, and the great defender, of the Old Economy, which He had come at once to supersede and to fulfill. Their presence from the upper world was a symbol that the Law and the Prophets henceforth gave place to a higher Dispensation; but they had also another mission. They had passed through death, or, at least, from life, and knew the triumph that lay beyond mortality to the faithful servants of God. Who could speak to Him as they, of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and temper the gloom of its anticipation? Their presence spoke of the grave conquered, and of the eternal glory beyond. The empty tomb under Mount Abarim, and the horses and chariots of Elijah, dispelled all fears of the future, and instantly banished all human weakness. That His Eternal Father should have honoured and cheered Him by such an embassy at such a time, girt His soul to the joyful acceptance of the awful task of redemption. Human agitation and spiritual conflict passed away, to return no more in their bitterness till the night before Calvary. His whole nature rose to the height of His great enterprise. Henceforth His one thought was to finish the work His Father had given Him to do.

6b. The concern of Peter:

Meanwhile, the three Apostles, dazzled, confused, and lost in wonder, gazed silently on the amazing sight, and listened. But it is not given to earth to have more than brief glimpses of Heaven. Moses and Elijah had ere long finished their mission, and were about to return to the presence of God. Could they not be induced to stay awhile? Peter, ever first to speak, and hardly knowing, in his confusion, what he said, would at least try to prolong such an interview. "Master," said he, to amplify his words, "it is good for us to be here; let us gather some branches from the slopes around, and put up three booths, like those of the Feast of Tabernacles; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The cares and troubles of his wandering life, and all his gloomy forebodings for his Master and himself, had faded away before such brightness and joy, and, in his fond childlike simplicity, he dreamed of lengthening out the delight.

7b. The contrast between Mt. Sinai and the Mt. of Transfiguration:

The Almighty had come down of old, to Mount Sinai, in blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but now, a bright cloud descended from the clear sky, like that from which He had of old spoken to Moses at the door of the Tabernacle, and overshadowed Jesus and the two heavenly visitors, filling the three Apostles with fear, as they saw it spread round and over their Master, and those with Him. It was the symbol of the presence of God, for He, also, had drawn nigh to bear witness to His Eternal Son.

8b. The confirmation of the Father:

It was not enough that Moses and Elijah had honoured Him—a voice from the midst of the cloud added a still higher testimony; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear he Him."

9b. The commentary of Peter:

Such a confirmation of the great confession of Peter was never to be forgotten. Almost a generation later, when he wrote his second Epistle, the remembrance of this night was as vivid as ever. "We were eye-witnesses," says he, "of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.' And this voice which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." The brightness of a vision so amazing lingered in the memory of those who beheld it to the latest day of their lives.

*(The Life and Words of Christ, New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1913, 236-239).*

Talented and pious individuals have tried to picture the scene on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Perhaps none is more famous than that by the Italian artist Raphael. Philip Schaff shows a real appreciation of this icon when he writes:

Every one knows the picture of the Transfiguration in the Vatican, which represents the Saviour soaring above the earth and floating in glory, Moses and Elijah bowing in adoration before him, the disciples overpowered by the dazzling light, and below, in startling contrast to this scene of celestial peace, the misery of the lunatic whose healing follows in the gospel narrative. It is one of the sublimest conceptions of human genius, and yet but an imperfect reflection of the reality. It was the last work of Raphael, and accompanied his coffin to the grave in the Pantheon. He died of the transfiguration, in the prime of manhood; but his picture, multiplied in ten thousand copies all over the earth, will continue to preach to admiring beholders the best sermon on this supernatural event.

(*Through Bible Lands: Notes of Travel in Egypt, the Desert, and Palestine*, New York: The American Tract Society, 1878, 335-336).

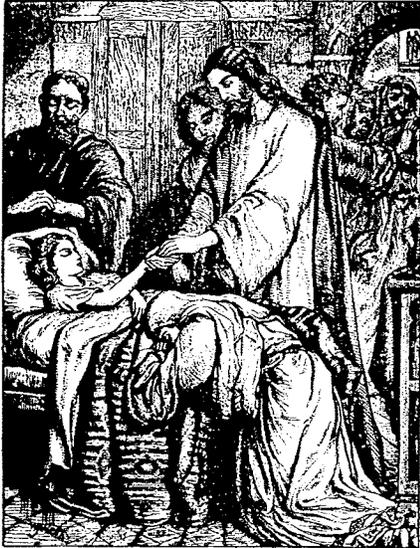
*Raphael's Timeless Painting of the Transfiguration*



THE TRANSFIGURATION—FROM THE GREAT RAPHAEL PAINTING.

# Christ's Companionship With Peter, James and John

The Raising of Jairus' Daughter  
Luke 8:51



The Mt. of Transfiguration  
Mt. 17:12; Mk. 9:2; Lk. 9:28



The Agony in Gethsemane  
Mt. 26:37



of a Sweet Person

Transfiguration of His Person

of His Passion

Prayer for restoration to life

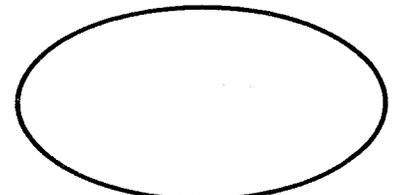
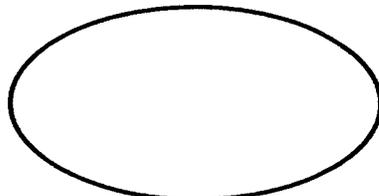
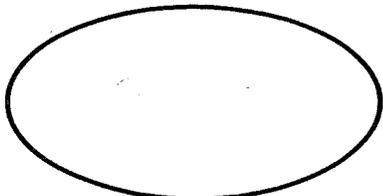
Prayer out of devotion

Prayer for deliverance from  
the cup

Divine

Divine

Human



# Christ's Companionship With Peter, James and John

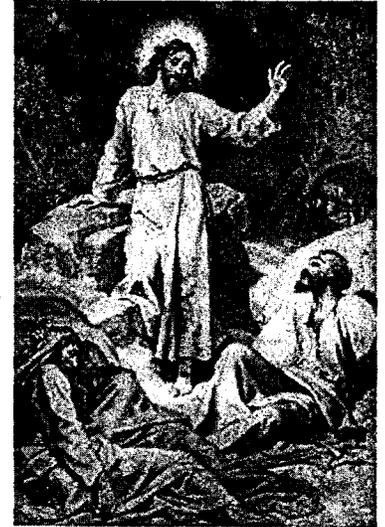
**The Raising of Jairus' Daughter**  
Luke 8:51



**The Mt. of Transfiguration**  
Mt. 17:12; Mk. 9:2; Lk. 9:28



**The Agony in Gethsemane**  
Mt. 26:37



Vivification of a Sweet Person

Transfiguration of His Person

Anticipation of His Passion

Prayer for restoration to life

Prayer out of devotion

Prayer for deliverance from the cup

Divine Power

Divine Performance

Human Passion

**Concern**

**Companionship**

**Comfort**