

## **TRANSFIGURATION: IT'S LIKE A HALL OF FAME**

**The Back Story: Mark 8:31-32** <sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

### **1. JESUS HAD:**

- **pressure** (from facing the cross)
- **a big decision** (to bear a cross)

### **2. DISCIPLES HAD:** confusion

### **3. EVERYONE NEEDED A VISIT FROM “THE HALL OF FAMERS”**

**Mark 9:2-4** After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

### **4. WHY MOSES AND ELIJAH?**

**a. They were the two greatest prophets in the Old Testament.**

**b. They were the two primary figures associated with the Messiah** (Moses was his predictor and Elijah was his precursor), and they were the only two people to see theophanies—special appearances of God ([Exodus 24](#); [1 Kings 19](#)).

**c. Moses represented the Law**, or the Old Covenant. He had written the Pentateuch and had predicted the coming of a great prophet ([Deuteronomy 18:15-19](#)).

**d. Elijah represented the prophets** who had foretold the coming of the Messiah ([Malachi 4:5-6](#)). Moses' and Elijah's presence with Jesus confirmed Jesus' messianic mission to fulfill God's law and the words of God's prophets ([Matthew 5:17](#)).

**e. Their appearance also removed any thought that Jesus was a reincarnation of Elijah or Moses.**

He was not merely one of the prophets. As God's only Son, he far surpassed them in authority and power. Also, their ability to talk to Jesus supports the promise of the resurrection of all believers. [Colossians 3:4](#) says, "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory"

**5. THE BOTTOM LINE: Mark 9:7-8** Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

## Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> *Read Mark 9:2-9*

Jesus took three disciples up into a mountain. The disciples were Peter, James, and John—His inner circle. Why did He take just these three disciples? The answer is not given. Perhaps it was for the same reason that leaders sometimes need to be alone with only a few of their closest friends.

- **There is the need for supportive companionship and prayer** because of severe pressure.
- **There is the need to guard what is happening from spreading out into the public before it should.**

The leader knows that the fewer witnesses to an event the less likely something will spread. In Jesus' case, He was under severe pressure, and the transfiguration and the glory of His person could not be understood until after the cross and the resurrection. He had to keep the matter quiet for now.

Jesus was transfigured. The word in Greek *metamorphoō* means a change into another form; a transformation; a change of countenance; a complete change. In the King James Version, Luke says, "the fashion of His countenance was altered" ([Luke 9:29](#)). Note how the gospel writers describe what happened.

- "His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was white as the light" ([Matthew 17:2](#)).
- "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" ([Mark 9:3](#)).

"The fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening" ([Luke 9:29](#)).

Apparently, the glory of His Godly nature was allowed to shine through His body. "The glory which [He] had with the Father before the world was" emanated through His body right on through His clothes ([John 17:5](#)). Peter says, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty." In John's vision of Jesus in [The Revelation](#), he describes the glory of Christ as the sun which "shines in its strength" ([Rev. 1:16](#)). The Scripture says:

- "God is light" ([1 John 1:5](#)).
- "[God]...dwelling in the light which no man can approach" ([1 Tim. 6:16](#)).
- "[God] who coverest thyself with light as with a garment" ([Psalm 104:2](#)).

### Two things need to be noted.

**1. The word "shining"** (*stilbonta lian*) is a Greek participle which means the shining is active. The transfiguration was a real, active experience. It was no illusion, no dream; it was not of the imagination. It was not a reflection of the sun shining off some rock, glass, or lake. "His [own] face did shine." The glory "shining" was the glory of the Lord's inner nature, of His Godly nature actively shining right through His being.

**2. The full glory of the Godhead was not shining through Jesus.** No one could ever stand in the full glory of the Lord's presence, not in our present physical body. As Scripture says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ...the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no one can approach unto; whom no one hath seen, nor can see" ([1 Tim. 6:14-16](#)). Apparently God allowed only a small degree of the glory, only what the three disciples could bear to shine through the body and clothing of Jesus.

The transfiguration is, of course, a mystery to us. But it should be remembered that it is a mystery cloaked in the fullness of the Godhead. And God's glory is so brilliant there is no need for a sun ([Rev. 21:23](#); [Rev. 22:5](#)). The glory of the Supreme Being who stands behind the universe in His unlimited presence and power, is bound to be beyond description and thought (cp. [Ephes. 3:20](#)).

## Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> *Read Matthew 26: 36-46;27:46-49; Psalm 91:15; Isaiah 41:17*

At least two things drove Him to pray at this time.

- 1. The cross lay right before Him.** The *weight* and *load* of bearing the sin of the world was closing in on Him, and the pressure was almost more than He could bear. The terrifying strain and pressure are seen in three significant events that lay just ahead: the need for Moses and Elijah to talk with Him about His death; the excruciating pressure of Gethsemane; and the terrifying cry on the cross.
- 2. The disciples had so much to learn and time was short.** Jesus faced a tremendous problem: how to make them understand that God's way was not the way of earthly power and might, but the way of spiritual and eternal salvation ([John 3:16](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#); [1 Peter 2:24](#); [1 Peter 3:18](#)).

Jesus had no choice with such pressure and responsibility bearing in upon Him. He had to seek God and trust God to meet His need, and God did—in a most remarkable and encouraging way. While He met Jesus' need, God also met the needs of the three disciples who accompanied Him. Remember: God will always meet the needs of the person who prays and seeks His help. What do you do when times are tough? Who do you seek? Do you go for advice or a Savior?

Consider who Jesus brought with him: Peter, James, and John. They apparently formed an inner circle around Jesus. Jesus revealed more to these three men than to the other disciples. They were with Him when He raised

Jairus' daughter, when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and here on the mount of transfiguration. Why were these three chosen to receive these additional revelations?

What is known is this. Each was being chosen for a very special leadership role. They were not aware of it yet, but they were to fill unique positions.

**1. Peter was to be the leader of the early church**, the one who was to open the door of the gospel to both Jew and Gentile after Pentecost ([Acts 2:1f](#); [Acts 10:1f](#)).

**2. James was to be the head of the first great church which was to be at Jerusalem** ([Acts 15:13](#)).

**3. John was to receive The Revelation from God** to close out the Scripture.

**Wednesday, February 25<sup>st</sup>**      *Read Mt. 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29; 2 Cor. 3:18*

The second event was the change of Jesus' countenance and clothing. Note three points.

**1. His countenance or face was altered and became different.**

**2. His clothing was altered** and became different, a glittering or dazzling white. The word "glistering" or "dazzling" (*exastraptōn*) means to flash like lightning, to gleam, brighten, be radiant.

**3. Jesus was praying when these changes took place.** Apparently, He was concentrating so intensely and was so wrapped up in God that God transformed Him, that is, allowed His Godly nature to shine right through Him. Note several lessons.

**1) The divine nature of Christ is seen in this event.** God is showing man that Christ is definitely His Son. There is no excuse for unbelief.

**2) The need of Christ was desperate, so God was meeting His need in a very special way.** When our needs are desperate, God will meet our need in a very special way if we will come to Him in intense prayer.

**What's up with the cloud in verse 7?** Well, the cloud enveloped both Jesus and the three disciples. The cloud and the voice of God terrified the disciples and caused them to fall immediately upon their faces, prostrate and unable to look up. As mortals they were paralyzed in fear. Note three facts.

**1. The cloud was "a bright cloud."** This was the Shekinah glory, the cloud that symbolized God's presence. It was the cloud that guided Israel out of Egypt and that rested upon the tabernacle ([Exodus 40:34-38](#)) and above the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place. God "only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" ([1 Tim. 6:16](#)). God dwells in unapproachable light upon which no man can look. Peter later called it "the excellent glory" ([2 Peter 1:17](#)).

**2. The "bright cloud" overshadowing Jesus is in contrast to the dark and threatening cloud that overshadowed the giving of the old covenant to Moses**, that is, **the law** ([Exodus 19:18](#); [Exodus 20:21](#)). There is a point to be made here. The law (old covenant) was dark and threatening (read Galatians 3:10); the new covenant (the love of Christ) is bright and is given to save and bless, not to threaten and condemn ([Hebrews 12:18-24](#). Cp. [Hebrews 8:6-13](#).)

**3. The voice speaking actually says in the Greek, "This is My Son, the Beloved One."** Note the two facts stressed. Jesus is God's Son, and He is the Beloved One. The idea is that Jesus is the "only begotten Son" who was to be given for the world ([John 3:16](#)).

**Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>**      *Read Luke 18:31; 24:26-27; 1 Peter 1:11; Matt. 20:19*

The third event was the two men who appeared and talked with Jesus. Note two things.

**1. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus.** Moses was the great *lawgiver* and Elijah was *the greatest of the prophets*. These two men were honoring and ministering to Jesus. By such they were *symbolizing* that the law and the prophets found their fulfillment in Jesus. Jesus was the One of whom the law and the prophets spoke; He was the One to whom they pointed ([Luke 24:26-27](#); [1 Peter 1:11](#)).

**2. The conversation concerned the death of Jesus.** Jesus was sensing extreme pressure in thinking about His death, and the thought probably never left His mind. Death for Him meant so much more than our death. He was going to die for the sins of all in all generations, and God was going to separate Himself from Jesus. The pressure and suffering were to be unbearable. He desperately needed to be strengthened—inwardly and spiritually—to bear the suffering of the cross.

Apparently, Jesus needed a very special kind of encouragement, an encouragement from two Old Testament believers—believers who had lived in the faith and expectation of His coming to save them. Sharing their love for Him and their trust and hope in His dying for them, they would stir Him to continue on for the sake of mankind. It must have been a precious moment for all three. Luke gives some hint of this. His word for "decease" (*exodos*) means exodus. There stood Moses sharing how God had so miraculously saved and delivered the children of Israel out of bondage, and how the exodus (deliverance) was only a picture of the marvelous deliverance that He, God's Son, was to accomplish. Jesus was to accomplish a new exodus, a new *saving deliverance*, except this time it was to be for all people. All people were to be delivered from the bondage of sin and death, from the devil and hell—delivered into the glorious liberty of God and life, both abundant and eternal life. Jesus' dying was to be well worth it, Moses and Elijah stressed. Note: the very encouragement that our Lord needed as Man was given by two who had believed and hoped in His coming. Being reminded of the marvelous deliverance (*exodus*) that had happened so long ago was bound to strengthen and lift the heart of Christ. Just seeing Moses and Elijah stand there, two who had trusted and believed and hoped, was bound to cause the Lord's spirit to rise. He was greatly encouraged, and knew that He could not fail these men who had trusted and hoped in Him so much.

Elijah's stress, of course, would have been the many prophecies concerning the sufferings of Jesus and the glory that should follow. Again, Luke hints at this in the word "accomplish" (*pleroo*). Think about this: Our faith and hope are realized and fulfilled in Christ. He is our Deliverer or Exodus out of the grip of sin and death, the devil and hell. We can be free in Christ, free to live abundantly and eternally.

### **Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>      Read Gal 6:2; Heb. 13:3; Acts 20:35**

The fourth event was the presence of three disciples to witness the event. Apparently it was night. The three had fallen asleep. Suddenly something woke them—more than likely the brilliance of the light, the Shekinah glory upon Christ. The three were *tasting glory*. They were in the very presence of God Himself and were tasting some of heaven's perfection: joy, peace, security, fulfillment. They did not want to leave this hallowed ground. Note what Peter did. Peter offered to build three *shelters* (*skēnas*) for Jesus and the two prophets. By this act he hoped to extend the stay of the heavenly guests and the glorious experience. The shelters offered were the booths made of branches and grass which could be quickly built, the kind often built by travellers on their stops along the road night by night.

There is always a pull to live in the glory and forget the human need, to experience the high and neglect the low. We must always remember: it is the discipline of serving where there is need and ministering to the low that results in glory and the experiences of highs.

The fifth event was the cloud that overshadowed them. The cloud and the voice of God terrified the disciples and caused them to fall immediately upon their faces, prostrate and unable to look up. As mortal men they were crouched in fear, and paralyzed in terror. Note three facts.

- 1. The cloud was "a bright cloud."** This was the Shekinah glory, the cloud that symbolized God's presence. It was the cloud that guided Israel out of Egypt and that rested upon the tabernacle and above the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place ([Exodus 40:34-38](#)). God dwells in unapproachable light upon which no man can look. Peter later called it "the excellent glory" ([2 Peter 1:17](#)).
- 2. The "bright cloud" overshadowing Christ was a sharp contrast to the dark and threatening cloud that overshadowed the giving of the old covenant to Moses, that is, the law** ([Exodus 19:18](#); [Exodus 20:21](#)). There is a point to be made here. The law (old covenant) was dark and threatening ([Galatians 3:10](#)). The new covenant (the love of Christ) is bright: it is given to save and bless, not to threaten and condemn ([Hebrews 12:18-24](#); [Hebrews 8:6-13](#).)
- 3. The voice which spoke actually said, "This is My Son, the Beloved One"** (Greek). Note the two facts stressed: **Christ is God's Son**, and **He is the Beloved One**. The idea is that Christ is the *only begotten Son* who was to be given for the world.