

The Transfiguration

Mark 9:1-8

Mark 9:1-8 – *“And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”*

² *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”— ⁶ because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.*

⁷ *And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” ⁸ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.”*

Background Notes

In verse 1, the Lord said, *“There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”* What did He mean? He was certainly referring to an event that would take place before the death of the disciples. What was that event? The resurrection? Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would come upon the Church? Or the Transfiguration? Most likely He meant the Transfiguration, because the Transfiguration follows immediately. Also, in the parallel accounts (Matthew 17 and Luke 9), the Transfiguration immediately followed this statement. When we get to our doctrinal points, we will see how the Transfiguration best fits our Lord’s prediction here.

The “some” (v1) would be Peter, James, and John - the “inner circle” of the disciples.

The high mountain (v2) where the Transfiguration took place was most likely one of the foothills or ridges in the Mt. Hermon range. Remember, they had been in Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27), which is in the foothills of Mt. Hermon. There is a “traditional” site for the Transfiguration, Mt. Tabor, which is farther south, not far from Nazareth. However, Mt Tabor is not a “high” mountain. Mt. Hermon certainly qualifies as the “high mountain” in verse 2. In fact, Mt. Hermon is snow covered for a good part of the year, and you can even ski there during the winter.

In verses 2-3, the Lord was *transfigured* before them - that is, for a brief time His body was glorified, and even His clothes became radiant! Moses and Elijah appeared (v4), but not in their resurrection bodies, because the resurrection of Moses and Elijah is yet to come in the future. So these appearances would properly be called anthropanies: the spirits of Moses and Elijah took on the bodily form of man. (So Moses did get into the Promised Land after all, didn’t he?)

Matthew's account says a bright cloud that overshadowed them. This cloud was not a fog or rain cloud, but probably the glory cloud known as the "shekinah glory." This cloud was the **visible expression of God's presence**. It was the Old Testament "Pillar of Cloud" that led the children of Israel by day, and the "Pillar of Fire" at night. It was the cloud that covered Mt. Sinai when the Law was given. It was the cloud that filled the Tabernacle, and later the glory cloud that filled the Temple. This was the glory cloud that left the Temple before the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in the 6th century BC - and it wasn't seen again until this very event, the Transfiguration.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Transfiguration was a prophetic glimpse of the coming Kingdom of God on earth.

The Bible teaches that when our Lord returns to this earth, He will set up His earthly Kingdom, and it will endure for a thousand years. It will be the greatest time of peace man has ever known. It is called the Millennium. The Eternal State, the New Heaven and New Earth, will not be ushered in until after the Millennium.

In the Transfiguration, we have a prophetic glimpse of the coming kingdom of God on earth - a prophetic glimpse of the Millennium. It's like a miniature of what conditions will be like then. Just as in the Transfiguration, the Lord will be here on earth in His power and glory. So when the Lord said, "*Some will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God present with power*" - in the Transfiguration there was a glimpse of the coming Kingdom, when the Lord will be here in His power and glory.

Furthermore, during the Millennium, believers will be here with Christ. Old Testament believers, as well as the Church, will all be present in resurrected bodies, having access to the earthly kingdom of Christ, and reigning with Christ. Won't it be great to be able to talk with the Lord as they did on the Mount of Transfiguration?

In addition, the believers who come out of the Great Tribulation will also enter into the Millennial Kingdom in their physical bodies. All these different groups of believers may be pictured here in Moses, Elijah, and the disciples.

2. The Transfiguration left no doubts as to the identity of Jesus.

Back in Mark 8:27, the Lord asked them, "*Who do men say that I am?*" They answered "*John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.* He said to them, "*But who do you say that I am?*" Peter answered and said to Him, "*You are the Christ.*" That confession of faith was confirmed here at the Mount of Transfiguration. The Lord was shown - in no uncertain terms! - to be greater than Moses, or Elijah, or any of the prophets. When God the Father's voice was heard out of the clouds saying, "*This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!*" it would seem that God was drawing attention to the great Messianic prophecy that Moses gave in Deuteronomy 18:15 - "*The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet*

like me... Him you shall hear." Do you see the connection? *"This is my Beloved Son, Listen to Him!"* was definitely a reference back to that great Messianic prophecy. The Transfiguration left no doubts as to who Jesus is!

No wonder Peter wrote of the Transfiguration in the following way: *"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18).*

The Transfiguration left no doubt as to the identity of the Lord Jesus.

Practical Applications

1. Let's not "lower" the Person of Jesus Christ, as Peter did.

When Peter said, *"Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah,"* he didn't realize he was putting his foot in his mouth (as many of us often do!) He should have stopped with "It is good for us to be here" - or said nothing at all. (There are many times when it's better to be silent!)

We don't know exactly what Peter meant by this suggestion. Maybe he thought the Kingdom was going to be set up right then, and that there should be a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles where they would set up "booths," as predicted in Zechariah 14. In any case, in seeking to honor Christ by putting Him in the same category as Moses and Elijah, he actually *dishonored* Christ - because it brought Him down to the level of man!

Jesus Christ was a Man – but He was much more than just a mere good man. **He is God!** If we list Jesus Christ as just one of the world's great leaders, we lower Him - we dishonor Him. If a painting of Jesus Christ is put on the wall beside paintings of the world's great leaders, we lower Jesus - we dishonor Him. We bring Him down to the level of mere man. Whenever a representation of Jesus Christ is set up along with the "saints" of Church history, the person of Christ is dishonored. He's lowered to the level of mere man. Let's be careful not to lower the person of Jesus Christ, as Peter did!

2. Let's listen to the Lord Jesus for everything!

In verse 7, the voice of God said, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* The idea in the words *"hear Him"* was not just to know what Jesus said, but also to **obey** Him - to **submit** to His authority in everything! Submitting to the Lord's authority in everything means that the Word of God is going to govern our lives and our lifestyle. Why? Because the Lord Jesus affirmed **all** Scripture is the **Word of God**, and it is sufficient to cover everything for this life, and for the way we live our lives.

If we listen to the Lord Jesus for everything, what's our view, for example, on marriage and divorce? Are we going to listen to the words of Jesus Christ? If we are, we are going to go to the Word of God and see what it says. We're not going to go to some present-day authority who says that if you're not happy, it's better to get a divorce.

What will our view of the family be? If we're going to listen to Christ, we're going to go to the Word of God and find out what the Word of God says, not what some sociologist says about family structure today.

What's our view of the roles of men and women in the church? Are we going to listen to Jesus Christ here? If we are, we'll go to the Word of God and find out what the Word says. We won't go to the writings of a modern "scholar" who says that the biblical roles only applied to the culture in that day.

What will our view on homosexuality be? Are we going to listen to Christ? If we are, and if we're going to really hear Him, we'll go to the Bible to find out what it says, not to a present day psychologist or psychiatrist. We're going to "hear **Him**"!

What will our view be on the origins of the universe and of mankind? Are we going hear Christ? If we are, we're going to hear the Word of God, and we won't go along with present "scientific" theories that ignore and exclude the God of Creation.

What will our view be on salvation? Will we hear Christ? If we listen to Him, we'll submit to the Word of God. We won't go along with somebody who says the Bible's view of salvation is intolerant or unfair, or that "all roads lead up the same mountain." We're going to go with what Jesus Christ says. We're going to hear Him.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should submit to God's Word in everything. Let's listen to the Lord Jesus for everything!