

## The Transfiguration

Most of us are familiar with the events surrounding what we call the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is mentioned in detail in all three of the synoptic gospels and mentioned in John's gospel. As John begins his account of the life of Jesus, he alludes to the transfiguration event when he tells us: **we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NASB)**

The Transfiguration is considered one of the five milestones of Jesus' life according to the gospels, alongside His baptism, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. It is the moment in which the divine nature of Jesus manifests itself in His human nature. It may be viewed as foreshadowing of His resurrection. Some scholars suggest that the transfiguration cannot be fully understood without knowing and understanding His resurrection and the implication that by His resurrection He defeated death.

Perhaps you have never thought about the transfiguration in this light before. As we begin this morning's message, reflect on what we just covered. We will attempt to make this event in the earthly ministry of Jesus have relevance for us today.

Let's review the event by reading through Mark's account as found in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone. (Mark 9:2-8 NASB)**

The passage begins with the time as six day later. Six days from when? What happened to mark the time for the disciples? We can flip back to the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter and find that Jesus had fed a crowd of about 4000 people. Later, in the same chapter, Peter makes the confession that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8:29).

Jesus begins to tell His disciples that He would be killed and then be raised after three days (Mark 8:31). Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him. Jesus answered Peter's rebuke with these words: **"Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." (Mark 8:33 NASB)**

Six days after this, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on a tall mountain. While they were there, we are told that Jesus was transfigured. The Greek word used is the same one from which we get metamorphosis. A change occurred. Jesus became radiant. His clothes were extremely white. Standing with Jesus are two men. Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus.

Of all of the people mentioned in the Old Testament, why was Moses and Elijah standing there talking with Jesus? We may remember that in His sermon on the mount, Jesus told the crowd: **"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18 NASB)**

Jesus did not come to nullify any of the law or prophecies. Remembering this, we see that the man most remembered for delivering the law- Moses is one of the men seen on this mountain with Jesus. The other man-Elijah is a prophet. He is not an ordinary prophet but one who never tasted death but was taken up into heaven. His ascent into heaven is symbolic to the ascension of Jesus as recorded in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9-11.

What is the significance of the transfiguration? Peter, James, and John knew Jesus for a relatively short time. They had seen Him perform miracles and began to see His power. Now, at this point in His ministry, it was time for the disciples to be prepared for a time when Jesus would no longer be walking with them on earth. Here, on this mountain, Jesus is seen with people from the past. One of the men had died the other had been taken by God into heaven. Both of the men were historical figures who had been gone from their earthly existence for a long while. Elijah was taken up to heaven some time around 850 years before the birth of Jesus. Moses died more than 1500 years before the birth of Jesus. The fact that both of these men were with Jesus reinforces the fact that our death on earth is not an ending.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark, Jesus is explaining to the Sadducees that death is not the end. There is a resurrection. He quotes from the Old Testament where Moses is called by God from the burning bush.

**But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.” (Mark 12:26-27 NASB)**

The transfiguration allowed Peter, James, and John to see these two historic figures alive and talking with Jesus. They could see that death and time could not over rule God. In this one event, God may be seen as the God of the living and that God remembers the saints even after they are no longer on earth. Peter had just made the confession that Jesus is the Christ. Now, he sees Jesus with the same radiance that Moses had when he went on the mountain to receive the Law. There is a connection between the Moses, Elijah, and Jesus that most people fail to see. On this mountain, God gives a visual to help Peter, James, and John to remember forever. This connection is spelled out as Jesus rebukes the religious leaders of His day when, in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, He tells them: **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. (John 5:39-40 NASB)**

The students of the scripture missed all of the signs that pointed toward Jesus. Even the disciples failed to grasp the connection. Following the resurrection, Jesus joined up with a couple of His disciples walking along the road to Emmaus. He had to explain the connection between the Law, the prophet, and the Messiah.

**And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:25-27 NASB)**

Jesus stated that Moses and the prophets pointed toward Him. Jesus pointed out that His claims may be found in the scripture. Many times, we find prophecies that point to Jesus as the Christ or Messiah. Often, we have them pointed out as we near the celebration of Christmas or Easter. We read from Isaiah about a virgin giving birth or about being healed by His stripes. We may not consider that Moses prophesied about the coming of Jesus.

In Deuteronomy the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter, we find that Moses spoke of a prophet.

**“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ The LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. (Deuteronomy 18:15-18 NASB)**

As Jesus grew in popularity, John’s disciple asked John about Jesus. John answered them with these words: **“He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:31-36 NASB)**

Here, John is basically repeating the words of Moses that Jesus (the great prophet) comes from above and will speak only the words of God.

On the mountain, that day, God made it clear that Jesus is the one and only one whom we should be listening to and worshipping. Peter would later write about that day when he saw Jesus transformed into the glory of God and heard the voice of God. Here’s what he shares: **For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18 NASB)**

Perhaps one of the most over looked lessons from the events on the mountain that day is that those who are in the presence of God radiate with the glory of God. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus radiated the glory of God. Have we been in the presence of God so that others see His radiance and glory shining in us? Have we been on the mountain talking with God? Does He live within us and are we allowing His Spirit to fill our hearts with His light?