

THE TRANSFIGURATION: A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN'S GLORY MARK 09:02–13

Introduction

The purpose of the transfiguration was to reveal heaven's glory. Heaven's glory would strengthen Jesus to bear the cross and strengthen the disciples in their belief that Jesus was God's Messiah (Mt. 17:1-13; Lk. 9:28-36). A close study of the transfiguration will strengthen the faith of any believer in his Lord. And a strengthened faith will enable the believer to bear the cross of his own call.

- I. Jesus took three disciples all alone up a high mountain (v. 2).
- II. The transfiguration strengthened Jesus (vv. 2-4).
- III. The transfiguration strengthened the disciples (vv. 5-7).
- IV. The transfiguration gave a unique opportunity to discuss God's Messiahship (vv. 8-13).

Mark 09:2–13 Another Outline

The Transfiguration — Some Strange Events.

- I. Jesus was transfigured (v. 3).
- II. There were Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus (v. 4).
- III. There was the ecstatic exhilaration of the experience (vv. 5-6).
- IV. There was God's voice (v. 7).
- V. There was the sudden silence (v. 8).
- VI. There was the restriction: "Not to tell anyone" (v. 9).
- VII. There was the statement: Jesus was to arise from the dead (vv. 9b-10).
- VIII. There was the discussion of Messiahship (vv. 11-13).

I. *Mark 09:02 Disciples, Inner Circle*

Jesus took three disciples all alone up a high mountain. Why did He not take the other disciples with them? The answer is not given. It is left to our speculation. (See *Inner Circle*, Mk. 9:2.)

MARK 09: 02 DISCIPLES, INNER CIRCLE

Peter, James and John 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 ministry role or call. They were not aware of it yet, but they were to fill unique positions in the ministry.

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; 10:1f).
2. James was called to be an apostle and to be martyred for his faith in Christ (Acts 12:2).
3. John was to receive *The Revelation* from God to close out the Scripture. □

II. *Mark 09:02–04 Effect of Transfiguration on Jesus Christ*

The transfiguration strengthened Jesus. Jesus needed to be strengthened. He was about to face the cross and the full weight of all that was involved in dying for the sins of the world. The pressure of bearing God's judgment for all the sins of the world was beginning to press in upon Him. He needed God's strength, encouragement, and assurance in a very special way. Therefore, God gave Jesus two very special experiences.

1. Jesus "was transfigured...His clothes became dazzling white" (See *Transfigured*, Mk. 9:2-3).
2. Jesus was visited by two saints from heaven: Moses, the great lawgiver, and Elijah, the great prophet. Why did Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus? There seem to be two reasons.
 - a. To discuss His death (Lk. 17:31). Jesus needed to be strengthened to bear the weight and pressure of the cross. (See Lk. 22:39-46 and Mt. 27:46-49.)
 - b. They show that Jesus is the true Messiah, the Son of God, the One who is superior to the law and the prophets. Moses represented the law; and Elijah, who was considered the greatest of the prophets, represented the prophets. These two men were honouring and ministering to Jesus. They were symbolizing that the law and the prophets found their fulfilment in Jesus. Jesus is the One of whom the law and the prophets spoke; He is the One to whom the law and the prophets pointed. The old covenant was now to be fulfilled and superseded by Jesus who was to usher in the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6-18; Heb. 9:15-22; see Mt. 9:16-17.)

MARK 09:02–03 TRANSFIGURED (METAMORPHOO)

A change into another form; a transformation; a change of countenance; a complete change. Luke says, "the appearance of His face changed" (Lk. 9:29). Note how the gospel writers describe what happened.

Mat 17:2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Mark 9:3 *His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.*

Luke 9:29 *As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.*

Apparently, *the glory* of His Godly nature was allowed to shine through His body. “The glory [He] had with the Father before the world began” emanated through His body right on through His clothes (Jn. 17:5). Peter says, “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). In John’s vision of Jesus in *The Revelation*, he describes the glory of Christ like the sun “shining in all its brilliance” (Rev. 1:16). The Scripture says:

1 John 1:5 *God is light.*

1 Tim 6:16 *[God] lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.*

Psa 104:2 *[God] wraps himself in light as with a garment.*

Two things need to be noted.

1. The word *dazzling* (*stilbo*) is a Greek participle which means the dazzling 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 off some rock, glass, or lake. “His [own] face shone.” The glory “shone” was the glory of the Lord’s inner nature, of His Godly nature actively dazzling right through His being.
2. The full glory of the Godhead was not shining through Jesus. No man could ever stand in the full glory of the Lord’s presence, not in man’s present physical body. As Scripture says, “Our Lord Jesus Christ...the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or 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 dazzle through the body and clothes of Jesus.

The transfiguration is, of course, a mystery to man. 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; 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 (Eph. 3:20). □

III. **Mark 09:05–07** *Effect of Transfiguration on the Disciples*

The transfiguration strengthened the disciples. They were strengthened in at least four ways.

1. The transfiguration helped the disciples’ shattered faith (v. 5). The disciples were shattered because Jesus said that He was going to Jerusalem to die (Mk. 8:31). They

began to interpret His words symbolically (Mk. 8:10). The transfiguration made them eye witnesses to the brilliant splendour and radiance of the Messiah's glory and to God's voice of approval. They also saw that the law and the prophets found their fulfilment in Him as represented in Moses and Elijah. Therefore, their spirits were bolstered in the firm conviction that Jesus was God's Messiah.

2. The transfiguration gave the disciples a taste of glory (v. 5). The three disciples were tasting some of heaven's joy, peace, security, fulfilment, and perfection. They did not want to leave this hallowed ground.

Note what Peter did.

- a. He offered to build three *shelters* (*skenas*) 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 which Peter offered to build 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.
 - b. He suggested, only suggested, that the booths be built. Peter, even in a moment as glorious as this, would not act against his Lord's will. Imagine the devotion and loyalty.
3. The transfiguration struck the disciples with awesome fear (v. 6). The disciples' experience can be applied to the future, to the believer's appearance before God in the great Day of Redemption. In fact, that is just what happened to Peter, James, and John. They found themselves in God's presence. The believer's experience in the Day of Redemption will undoubtedly be very much like what they experienced.
 - a. The believer will experience the Shekinah glory, see its full manifestation upon Christ.
 - b. The believer will hear the voice of God proclaiming Christ to be His Son, expressing perfect approval of His redemptive work, and rejoicing that He has been heard and is to be heard throughout all eternity.
 - c. The believer will fall upon his face, prostrate before Christ in awe and adoration and worship.
 - d. The believer will experience the Lord's intercessory work. He will feel the Lord's hand reaching out to touch him and to lift him up. And the believer will stand in the Lord's righteousness and perfection, living in a state of glory forever.
 - e. The believer will witness and experience the Lord's preeminence throughout all eternity.
 4. The transfiguration made the disciples witnesses of God's approval (v. 7; See *Cloud*, Mk. 9:7)

Thought 1. The believer must often get alone with Christ in order to have his strength renewed.

Isa 40:31 *But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 41:1 *“Be silent before me, you islands! Let the nations renew their strength! Let them come forward and speak; let us meet together at the place of judgment.”*

2 Cor 4:16 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*

MARK 09: 07 CLOUD

*Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” **Mark 09:07***

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 mortal men 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 (Exo. 40:34-38) and above the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place. God “*who only is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light*” (1 Tim. 6:16). God dwells in unapproachable light upon which no man can look. Peter later called it “the majestic glory” (2 Pet. 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 (Exo. 19:18; 20:21). There is a point to be made here. The law (old covenant) was dark and threatening (See Law, Gal. 3:10); the new covenant (the love of Christ) is bright and is given to save and bless, not to threaten and condemn (Heb. 12:18-24. See Heb. 8:6-13.)
3. The voice speaking actually says in the Greek, “This is My Son, the One I love.” Note the two facts stressed. Jesus is God’s Son, and He is the Beloved One. The idea is that Jesus is the “one and only Son” who was to be given for the world (Jn. 3:16). □

IV. **Mark 09:08–13 God’s Messiahship**

The transfiguration gave a unique opportunity to discuss God’s Messiahship. Jesus charged the disciples to tell no one about their experience until after He had “risen from

the dead.” The mentioning of *rising from the dead* stirred them to discuss what He meant. They had just witnessed His glory and seen Moses and Elijah with Him. They thought that He was going to set up His kingdom *now* and that He would now reign in glory. Why, then, did Elijah leave? The Scribes or teachers of the law said that Elijah had to come before the Messiah would set up His kingdom. Christ answered the disciples and corrected the view that the Scribes had always taught.

=> First, Scripture does teach that Elijah must come first and restore or prepare all things.

=> Second, Scripture also teaches that the Messiah must die. And it is this fact that they were overlooking (Jn. 10:11, 15, 17-18).

=> Third, Elijah had already come. He was John the Baptist.

Thought I. Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God. Belief in Him is absolutely essential.

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

John 4:25-26 *The woman said, “I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”*

John 6:69 *“We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”* (see Jn. 11:25-27)

Acts 9:22 *Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. (see Acts 17:2-3)*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ■*

GALATIANS 03:10 THE LAW

*All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written:
“Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in
the Book of the Law.” Galatians 03:10*

Chapter three of Galatians gives an excellent study of the law.

1. The law carries with it a curse (Gal. 3:10). The curse is the *mark of death* and the *mark of condemnation* or guilt: alienation from God both in this life and throughout all eternity (see Deu. 27:1f; 28:15; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 3:7, 9).
2. There is a righteousness which is of the law (Rom. 10:5-10; Gal. 3:12). That righteousness promises life to any man who can obey the law perfectly. If a man

can meet every requirement of the law during his lifetime and never once fall below God's holy standard, then that man can escape the penalty of sin which is death.

3. Jesus Christ delivers man from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). What does this mean? Jesus Christ kept the law in every single detail. Therefore, He bore no guilt; and He bore no penalty, no mark of death. He had the right to stand before God and claim eternal life, the right to never experience death. He was perfect; He had secured incorruptible righteousness. The glorious gospel is that instead of claiming this right for Himself, He offered to give His perfection and righteousness to the people of the earth and to take their sins upon Himself. He offered to swap His righteousness for man's unrighteousness, to swap His life for man's life. This glorious expression of substitutionary love was the very purpose for which God had created the earth. God willed to show His great and unsearchable love that gave itself so perfectly (Eph. 1:5f). The great tragedy is that man has so much difficulty accepting so great a love (1 Cor. 1:18).

It also means another thing. Jesus Christ accomplishes the same purpose that God intended for the law, and much more. He not only sets the same ideals and standards before us, but He also relates Himself to us. Whereas the law is a set of cold letters with no power to give life (Gal. 3:21), Jesus Christ is a living person possessing the power to raise the dead to life again. He sets the standards and gives the power to keep the standards. He has replaced the law in showing men the awfulness of their sin (through His death), and He adds the extra dimension of strength to live as He lived (Gal. 5:22f; Eph. 1:19f; 3:20).

4. The law was only meant to be a temporary arrangement between God and man (Gal. 3:16). It was to extend only from Moses to Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is "the seed" to whom the promise of righteousness was given (see note, Mt. 5:17). God never intended the law to be *the way of salvation*. It was for the temporary purpose of showing men their sin and its awfulness. Since Jesus Christ has come, He (His perfect life and righteousness) is to be the standard for men.
5. The law was given to show men their sin and to instil within them a personal guilt for disobeying God and His law (Rom. 3:19-20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19). This guilt was to lead men to seek and trust God for salvation. Thus, the law stops every mouth from claiming self-righteousness and makes all the world guilty before God.
6. The law is inferior to God's promise of grace (Gal. 3:19c-20). Three arguments show this.
=> First, the law was not given directly by God. The law was given by angels to men through Moses. Moses was a mediator. But God and God alone gave the promise of grace and righteousness to Abraham.

- => Second, the law was between two parties - man and God. If man kept the law, he would receive the reward of righteousness. The gift of righteousness was conditional under the law. But the promise of grace is given by God alone. No one can break that promise. If man simply believes, he receives the promise of righteousness.
- => Third, the giving of the law came after the promise to Abraham - four hundred and thirty years after. The promise of grace was given first before the law. Therefore, the law cannot void the promise. The promise of God stands.
7. The law has no power to give life (Gal. 3:21). The law demands that each commandment be kept and obeyed. But it is mere words, cold and lifeless. It is entirely external to man. It has no energy whatever to help in keeping the law.
 8. The Scripture is conclusive: all men are lawbreakers and under sin (Gal. 3:22).
 9. The believer is no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14; 7:4; Gal. 3:22). Man is unable to participate in the righteousness of the law, for he is totally incapable of fulfilling the law. But he can experience the grace of God by trusting the righteousness which Jesus Christ has secured. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ judges that man righteous. That man becomes a "participant in the divine nature of God" (2 Pet. 1:4).
 10. The law shuts man up under sin (Gal. 3:23). Man is a permanent prisoner under the law. Under the law he is put in bondage and held captive all the days of his life. The only avenue of escape is Jesus Christ, that is, faith in Him. If Christ fails to deliver, then there is no escape, for the law does not free man; it enslaves.
 11. The law was man's guardian to lead him to see his need for Christ (Gal. 3:24). The *guardian* or *teacher* (paidagogos) was usually a trusted slave who was in charge of a child's moral welfare, but he had one particular duty to which Paul was referring. Every day the guardian took the child to school and delivered him to the teacher. And then at the end of the day, he returned for the child and brought him safely back home. This was what the law was to do. The law was to lead man to Christ, the true Teacher. The law does this by showing man that he cannot secure righteousness by himself. He must look to Christ, the real Teacher, for righteousness and acceptance by God. And once faith in Christ has come, there is no need for the law nor for any other guardian, for Jesus Christ brings us face to face with God.
 12. The law is still in force for the unbeliever (1 Tim. 1:8-14). It remains in force to condemn and to lead the unbeliever to see his need for God.

13. Men were not always transgressors (Rom. 4:15; 5:20). There is no transgression where there is no law, for there is no law to transgress. But men were still sinners before the law was given to Moses. They were just not as aware of their sin nor did they sense as much guilt as was necessary to show their need for God. For that reason the law was given, that men might be more and more aware that they were sinners before God (Rom. 5:19-21). □