

The Transfiguration of Christ

Text: Mark 9:1-13 (Refer also Matthew 17:1-13 & Luke 9:28-36)

Introduction:

1. The word 'transfigured' is the word metamorphosis and means "changed into another for. It denotes a visible change of the outward form as expressive of the true inner nature." (Hiebert)
2. The transfiguration was really the crowning point of Christ's humanity and serves as a significant marker in the ministry of Christ. From here, our Lord's compass is clearly set in the direction of Jerusalem and Golgotha's hill.
3. We will study Mark's account of the Transfiguration in 5 sections.

I. The Prediction of the Transfiguration (Vs. 1)

A. The Context of the Prediction (Mk. 8:27-38)

1. Christ's discourse with the disciples at Caesarea Philippi.
2. Significantly, Christ had for the first time, openly taught His disciples of His coming crucifixion, a theme that would be reoccurring from this point on (Vs. 31)

B. The Content of the Prediction (Vs. 1)

1. The Few Involved (1a) – the 'some' are clearly Peter, James and John (Vs. 2)
2. The Foreshadowing Involved (1b) – these men would be given a glimpse of the glorified Christ and the coming kingdom.
3. Hiebert: "The glory of the Lord which the disciples saw there was in essence the very glory which will receive an open manifestation when Christ returns to establish His visible kingdom...the disciples were 'eyewitnesses of his majesty' (2 Pt. 1:16), seeing a foregleam of His future glory as the exalted Messiah."

II. The Situation of the Transfiguration (Vs. 2)

A. The Period – When? (Vs. 2a)

1. "after six days" = six days from the Caesarean discourse
2. The objective of the transfiguration clearly linked to Christ's discourse concerning His Person and work in the preceding verses.

B. The People – Who? (Vs. 2b)

1. These three men chosen as witnesses to this glorious event (See Matt. 18:16)
2. Why these particular three men are chosen for this privilege is unknown to us but they were clearly our Lord's inner circle.

C. The Place – Where? (Vs. 2c)

1. "an high mountain" = a mountain somewhere in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi. Mount Hermon a possibility.

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- Note: Consider the significant mountain peaks in Scripture – Mount Sinai and the giving of the law (holiness and justice of God revealed); the Mount of Transfiguration and the glorifying of the Lord; Mount Calvary and the crucifying of the Lord (grace, mercy and love of God revealed).

III. The Revelation of the Transfiguration (Vs. 3-4)

A. The Revelation of His Person (Vs. 3)

- Luke reveals this took place while Christ was praying – “...and went up into a mountain to **pray**. **And as he prayed**, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.” (Luke 9:29)
- Christ’s Deity and Divinity allowed to shine through for those few moments, giving the disciples a foretaste of how Christ will be known in His glorified state in the future kingdom.
- The radiance of Christ’s Person shone forth in both His countenance and His clothing:
 - His Countenance: Matt. 17:2 “*And was transfigured before them: and his **face did shine as the sun**, and his raiment was white as the light.*”
 - His Clothing: Matt. 17:2 “white as the light.” Mk. 9:3 “his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” Luke 9:29 “his raiment was white and glistening.”
 - ‘shining’ = word was used of the reflection of polished metal surfaces or of the flashing of lightening. (Hiebert)
 - ‘glistening’ = to sparkle with light, to flash out like lightening
 - ‘fuller’ = the occupation of a fuller was to clean and dye woollen clothes. The brilliant whiteness far exceeded anything a man could achieve. “The robe without, ablaze with light, was a reflection of His stainless character within.” (Phillips)
- 1 John 1:5 “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.***”
- John 8:12 “*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.***”
- Note: In this foretaste of the future, we get a glimpse of our own future glorification. “The vision of the holy mount is a gracious pledge that glorious things are in store for the people of God.”

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(Ryle) In fact, we experience metamorphosis as believers in three stages:

- a. **Salvation** – 2 Cor. 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*
- b. **Sanctification** – 2 Cor. 3:18 *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** (metamorphosis) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* Rom 12:1-2 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed** (metamorphosis) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*
- c. **Glorification** – Php. 3:20-21 *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall **change our vile body**, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”* 1 John 3:2 *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.”*

B. The Revelation of His Purpose (Vs. 4)

1. The Figures in the Discussion
 - a. Moses – representative of the law
 - b. Elijah – representative of the prophets
 - c. Both the law and the prophets prophesied of the coming Messiah. Their presence was a further seal of confirmation upon Christ’s Messianic credentials.
2. The Focus of the Discussion
 - a. Matthew and Mark only mention that a discussion took place but don’t reveal the details of the discussion.
 - b. Luke highlights the theme of the discussion - Luke 9:31 *“Who appeared in glory, and **spake of his decease** which he should **accomplish** at Jerusalem.”*
 - c. The law demanded it, the prophets predicted it and Christ fulfilled it!
 - d. The cross stands as the centrepiece of eternity. It was for the cross that Christ came. He would ‘accomplish’ what had been determined in the eternal counsels of the Godhead; He would accomplish all the prophecies concerning His death; He would accomplish our salvation!
 - e. *“...Christ died for our sins...”* (1 Cor. 15:3)

IV. The Reaction to the Transfiguration (Vs. 5-6)

There are two things we can observe about Peter's response. There was:

A. Something Commendable (Vs. 5)

1. Peter recognized the value of the occasion – “it is good for us to be here”. Indeed, it is a wonderful thing to be in the presence of Christ!
2. Peter desired to prolong the occasion – Luke 9:33 indicates that Peter replied just as Moses and Elias were about to depart – “...as they departed from him, Peter said...” Appears Peter was suggesting they do something similar to what would take place at the Jewish feast of tabernacles.
3. ‘tabernacles’ = tents or booths, temporary shelters such as the Israelites used during the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. Something Carnal (Vs. 6)

1. Peter ‘answered’ even though he wasn’t addressed! (Vs. 5) Peter is a lesson to all of us who are inclined to blurt out our muddled thoughts even when we aren’t invited to do so!
 - a. Prov. 18:13 *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”*
 - b. Prov. 29:11 *“A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”*
2. Peter said something because he didn’t know what to say! Luke adds “not knowing what he said.” So, Peter didn’t know what to say or what he actually said!
3. Peter was motivated by fear – “sore afraid”. The only other place this word is used is in Heb. 12:21, describing Moses’ terror on Mount Sinai.

V. The Validation of the Transfiguration (Vs. 7)

A. A Supernatural Sign (Vs. 7a)

1. “a cloud” = Matthew describes it as “a bright cloud”.
2. A cloud often associated with the presence of God in the Bible. For example, the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness; the cloud of Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:9).

B. A Supernatural Sound (Vs. 7b)

1. A declaration – “This is my beloved Son”
 - a. A reiteration of the Father’s declaration at Christ’s baptism. Mark 1:11 *“And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* At Christ’s baptism it was addressed to Christ, now it is addressed to the disciples.
 - b. Jesus Christ is the Father’s Eternal Son. This is the testimony of heaven!
2. A decree – “hear him”

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- a. Command is present imperative which sets forth a continuing duty. This is the Father's command to all to heed what Christ has to say.
- b. Heb. 1:1-2 *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his Son...**"*
- c. This was a rebuke from above for Peter!
- a. Challenge: Do we take time to hear what Christ has to say to us through His Word? Or is His Voice crowded out by the many other voices that tend to till our lives?

VI. The Conclusion to the Transfiguration (Vs. 8-9)

A. The Person they Saw (Vs. 8)

1. The vision abruptly comes to an end – "And suddenly"
2. Christ now fills their vision. May Jesus fill our vision!
3. Maclaren: "Moses dies, Elijah fades, clouds and symbols and voices and all mortal things vanish, but Jesus Christ stands before us, the manifest God, forever and ever, the sole illumination of the world...We may make that scene the picture of our lives."

B. The Precept they Received (Vs. 9)

1. They were commanded not to share the vision till after Christ's resurrection.
2. The timing was to be according to Christ's will. The disciples were not ready yet to communicate these truths as their understanding was still so limited.

Conclusion:

1. Have you experienced the transformation of salvation?
2. Are we cooperating with the transformation of sanctification?
3. What fills your vision? Christ or other things?