

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Mark 9:2-13

Intro: This well known and most glorious incident in the life of our Lord is recorded for us in all three of the synoptic Gospels – Matthew (17:1-8), Mark, and Luke (9:28-36). And the circumstances surrounding this event, is recorded as the same in all three of these records: Peter’s great confession of Christ, the Lord’s first teaching about His death and resurrection, and our Lord’s statement concerning what is involved in coming to Him, and following Him. And so it is important to see this event in the light of what preceded it.

Luke does not include Peter’s objection to what the Lord had to say about dying and rising again, but Matthew does. Luke gives some details that are not recorded in either Matthew or Mark – mainly, that the Lord took Peter and James and John into a mountain (or a high hill) to pray. Then Luke tells us that it was as the Lord was praying that this glorious transformation took place in our Lord.

I. THE LORD’S TRANSFIGURATION (Mark 9:2-3).

Matthew and Mark use the word “transfigured” to describe what happened to the Lord, Luke described it by saying that “as he [the Lord] prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening” (Luke 9:29). You can see here in Mark 9:3 that Mark’s description is that “His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” Matthew said that the Lord “was transfigured,” and then mentioned the Lord’s face – that “His face did shine as the sun” (Matt. 17:2). And then he went on to record that “His raiment was white as the light.” Obviously the Lord’s glory was displayed before the apostles, and it was only because of special enablement that the disciples, Peter, James, and John, would have been able to look at the Lord in His glory at all.

II. MOSES AND ELIJAH (Mark 9:4).

The second amazing thing that happened at this time was the appearance of Moses and Elijah. All three of the Gospel writers tell of the appearance of Moses and Elijah. But only Luke tells that they also appeared, and “appeared in glory,” and not only that they talked to the Lord, which Matthew and Mark also said, *but Luke told what they talked about.* They

“spoke of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31).

Luke also adds an interesting point regarding the disciples. With all of this going on, they went to sleep, and apparently it was then that they saw Moses and Elijah for the first time. So, unless they heard something of what the Lord, Moses, and Elijah were talking about after they woke up, we can't say for sure how much they may have heard of our Lord's conversation with Moses and Elijah. But when you stop to think of other things that they could have talked about, it is very significant that they were speaking to the Lord about His death.

III. PETER'S COMMENT (Mark 9:5-6).

Alexander Maclaren had this to say about Peter at this point:

Peter's foolish words, half excused by his being scarcely awake, may be passed by with the one remark that it was like him to say something, though he did not know what to say, and that it would therefore have been wise to say nothing (Vol. 6, p. 4).

What Peter had in mind, it is impossible to say. To talk about making booths like they would do during the Feast of Tabernacles, would be a suggestion. If that were the case, it would show that Peter did not think that this would be a permanent condition, and that he was possibly thinking about some provision for the three of them for the night. What he and James and John would have done for a shelter, he did not say. Even though the three apostles were “afraid,” it is commendable that Peter said, “It is good for us to be here,” a reference it seems to refer to how he and James and John were feeling about the experience that they were having. Although they couldn't tell at that moment what all of this was leading to, they were glad that they were there.

IV. THE CLOUD AND THE VOICE OF GOD, THE FATHER (Mark 9:7-8).

Moses would have been very familiar with a cloud and the presence of God. The Lord manifested His presence in a cloud with the children of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they got to Canaan. Elijah would have known about the cloud from His knowledge of Israel's history before his lifetime. The message was for the disciples. Moses and Elijah knew Who the Lord was, and why He had come to the earth. Peter knew

Who the Lord was, but He did not know why He had come. But if he know Who the Lord was, he needed to learn that you don't tell the Lord what He ought to say, or try to convince the Lord that He, the Lord, was wrong. *Peter, James, and John needed to listen to the Lord.* "Hear Him!" And that is exactly what we need to learn too.

And then as they looked around, and Luke described it as "suddenly," *Moses and Elijah were gone!*

The final point in our text has to do with:

VI. ON THE WAY BACK TO THE OTHER DISCIPLES (Mark 9:9-13).

The Lord "charged" Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone what they had seen until He, the Son of man, had been raised from the dead. This caused the three disciples to question each other as to what the Lord meant by "the rising from the dead." They still did not understand.

But they had still another question that they asked the Lord. It had been prompted by the fact that they had seen Elijah: "Why say the scribes that Elijah must come first?" This is one places where the scribes were teaching the truth. They said so because Malachi said so. In the last two verses of Malachi's prophecy, we read these words:

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Mal. 4:5-6).

What was the Lord's answer to their question? Matthew adds some information that we need at this point. It was that Elijah had come in the person of John the Baptist. After the words of the Lord Jesus which we have in Mark 9:12 and 13, Matthew added:

13 Then the disciples understood that He spake to them of John the Baptist (Matt. 17:13).

The way the people treated Elijah, was the way that the people treated John the Baptist, and the way that they treated John the Baptist would be the way that they would treat the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be that there will still be a coming of Elijah. It is impossible to say for sure. However that may be, the appearance of Elijah with the Lord and to the three apostles, Elijah's return is still a possibility. The coming of John the

Baptist was said by the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, that his son's ministry would be "in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Applications

This passage may appear just to teach us something more about the ministry of our Lord here on earth, that is, a true historical account of how the Lord appeared to Peter and James and John in this most unusual way, but every passage has practical lessons that we need to apply, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to ourselves. In the time that remains let me point some of these out for our blessing.

1) Let us consider what happened to our Lord. This has been spoken of as a transfiguration. That is what the Greek word means. We get our word *metamorphosis* from the Greek word which Matthew and Mark use in recording this event in the life of our Lord. It was a change in our Lord's appearance. Suddenly His glory was manifested. His Deity was revealed. Both John and Peter spoke of this event in their writings of Scripture. The Apostle John mentioned it in John 1:14 where we read:

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

The Apostle Peter mentioned it in 2 Peter 1:16-18:

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount (2 Peter 1:16-18).

John said, "We beheld His glory." Peter wrote, "We . . . were eyewitnesses of His majesty." And then Peter added that they heard His Father speaking from heaven when God declared, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." There were actually three witnesses of this event. So we know that it was a true event. It really happened. For a brief moment the glory of the Lord was displayed, and it was like the

brilliance of the sun.

Now if you know the purpose of our salvation, you know that we have been saved to be “conformed to the image of His Son,” God’s Son, as we read in Romans 8:29. The Apostle John said that “we shall be like Him,” speaking of our Lord, “for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). And to make it even more certain in our minds, twice in the NT this word is used about us, those of us who know the Lord. It is used in Romans 12:2 where it is translated “transformed.” This is a work that is taking place in our lives, and has been taking place ever since we first trusted in Christ. And we have been contributing to that work by reading the Word, by obeying the Word, by prayer, and through our fellowship with each other. Paul also used this word in 2 Cor. 3:18:

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

There this word for the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ is translated “changed.” Where do we behold the glory of the Lord? We see it in Christ. And where do we see Christ? In the mirror. And what is the mirror? It is the Word of God.

If you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you are being changed. You may not know it, but it is going on. With some it is taking place faster than with others because they spend more time in the Word and in fellowship with the Lord. So this is a very important word for all of us. We will never be Deity, but we will be “like” the Lord Jesus. That is really why we have been saved. We use the God-given instruments for our transfiguration, but it is God Who does the work.

2) Secondly, let me mention this. The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ made Peter and James and John realize that there is always more, much more for us to learn about the Lord. And the more you and I know, the more we will realize how little we know, and how much more there is to learn about Him. You probably remember that when the Lord called those who were weary and heavy laden to come to Him, He said to them, as He says to us, “Learn of Me.” A great deal of the strain and stress and worry that we experience daily is because we don’t know the Lord as well as we should, and as well as we can know Him. Be sure to spend time every day with the Lord in His Word.

3) A third point I would point out to you is in God’s word to the apostles,

and in particular to Peter. It was pointed out in the quotation I read to you from Alexander Maclaren that Peter usually had something to say. And here in our text he spoke even though he didn't know what to say. Peter didn't know that there was no reason for him to say anything. He was talking when he should have been listening. The Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. HEAR HIM." In these words that Father was declaring that everything that the Lord Jesus says is completely reliable. Peter didn't need to worry that the Lord didn't know what He was saying, nor that He didn't mean what He said.

We need to ask ourselves, How good am I at hearing what the Lord has said in His Word. Don't question anything that you find in the Word. It is all true and dependable. And don't let anyone tell you that the Lord tells them things that are not in the Bible. That is adding to the Word of God, and it will bring judgment to the person who persists in claiming that he, or she, gets messages directly from the Lord which are not in the Word. "Hear Him." You will find that you have enough in the word to keep you occupied until the Lord comes, or until He takes you home.

4) Let me point out that this experience that the apostles had with the Lord, tells us some interesting things about heaven.

One is that there won't need to be any introductions in heaven. Peter and James and John did not need for the Lord or anyone else to tell them that the two men who appeared with the Lord were Moses and Elijah. They knew them immediately. And I will tell you something else. Moses and Elijah knew who Peter and James and John were. The Lord did not have to say, "Peter, I want you to meet Moses," or "Elijah, I want you to know these two brothers, James and John." There was immediate recognition of all parties. We are all going to feel right at home when we arrive there.

But I want you to note one good thing that Peter said to the Lord. He said, "Master, it is good for us to be here." I don't recollect that Peter ever said that about any other place. That "Mount of Transfiguration," as it has been called, was a foretaste of heaven for Peter and James and John. That's probably what people say when they get to heaven. "It is good for us to be here."

And let me say another thing about this passage. Moses and Elijah believed that the Lord was going to die, and they knew where He was

going to die. They had no question about that like the Apostles did. And more than that they believed that the Lord was going to be raised from the dead. They knew that they knew that the Lord had to die and be raised again in order for them to retain the glory that they had already experienced.

And just one more point. When Peter and James and John went up on the mount, the only one who was with them was the Lord. And when they went back down, Moses was gone, Elijah was gone, but they still had the Lord, and the Lord is the main One Whom we need.

Concl: May I make a suggestion about this amazing event that Peter and James and John had. You and I never have experienced anything like this, and we never will. But let us put ourselves into the picture and seek to learn all that Peter and James and John were taken up there to learn. Peter and John never forgot it. James, you may remember, was put to death by Herod. So James did not write any book of the Bible. But we can be sure that if he had, he, too, would have spoken of seeing the Lord in His glory, and he would have marveled that he was ordained to share that glory through all eternity. So you and I can learn from what we read, and can take these few applications that I have pointed out, and apply them to ourselves just as the apostles were to apply what they saw and heard to their own salvation.