

"1 And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." 2 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; 3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 5 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." 6 For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. 7 Then a cloud formed, **overshadowing** them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" 8 All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone. 9 As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. 10 They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. 11 They asked Him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 12 And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 "But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."" Mark 9:1-13, NAS95.

Almost every event in the life of Jesus is portrayed in early Christian art except this one. If you look through the art museums of the world, you will find tremendous paintings of the resurrection, the crucifixion, the walking on the water. But until the 16th century, no art form depicted the event is described in this chapter.

In the 16th century, Raphael began a work on this event. However, before he completed it, his brush was stilled in death. There is something so holy about this event, so majestic, so grand, that it is difficult to portray.

The event is the Transfiguration. It is a time when heaven reached down and touched the earth. And it began with a promise.

And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." (Mark 9:1).

Jesus uses a double negative - "There are some of those standing here who SHALL NOT [ou me] taste death."

It all started when Jesus told His disciples that they would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Some of them might have thought, "Yeah, right! You mean after 2000 years at the second coming." But Jesus said, "No, it will happen in your lifetime. Indeed, some of you who are standing here will see it."

This tells us something about the Transfiguration. It is a manifestation of the kingdom of God and its arrival upon planet earth. All too often when Christians speak of the kingdom of God, they think of something that is going to come in the future. But in this passage we see something different. The kingdom came 2000 years ago. And it came with power.

Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves (Mark 19:2a).

Jesus did not take all of the apostles with Him onto the mountain. He chose out three specific men. Why did Jesus pick these three men. James was to be the first apostle to die for the faith. He would have to be courageous. He would need this vision to sustain him through what was to come.

John would be the last apostle to die. He would write the gospels and epistles of John as well as Revelation. Perhaps Jesus wished to give him something that would endure for a long life.

Peter was to be the one on whom the church would be built. He would be the one to stand up on the Day of Pentecost and proclaim the significance of the gift of tongues. And he would open the doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles. He would need the lessons of this vision.

These three men are going to be with Jesus during the Gethsemane experience. They will be the pillars of the church.

But perhaps there is another reason why Jesus took these men. Perhaps He needed someone to be with Him. He is getting ready to go to Jerusalem to die. The time is drawing closer. It will be the most awful time of His life. And He needs a friend.

Being a Christian doesn't mean that you can go it alone. Jesus needed friends and He knows that we need a friend, too. And that is why He has given us the CHURCH.

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; 3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (Mark 19:2-3).

Four people climbing a high mountain. We aren't told which mountain it was. There were several in northern Galilee from which to choose. Perhaps it was Mount Hermon, whose snow-capped peak rises to a height of 10,000 feet above sea level.

Or it might have been Mount Tabor, the traditional location of the Mount of Transfiguration which lies on the western edge of the Valley of Jezreel (though this isn't really a "high mountain").

It doesn't really matter which mountain it was. What does matter is what happened when they got to the top. Can you imagine it? The trip has been long. The hour is late. They reach a level place on the slope and they sit down. They are tired. Their muscles hurt.

Three of them talk softly among themselves. The fourth sits still. His conversation is with the Lord. He speaks to His Father. And out of the quietness, His Father answers.

The Greek text uses a very special word to describe what happened to Jesus. From it we get our modern word "metamorphoses." It describes a change.

Aside from the description of these particular event, this word is only used two other times in the New Testament.

This same word is used in Romans 12:2 where we are to be transformed. And it is used in 2 Corinthians 3:18 describing how we turn to the Lord and are transformed into His image.

This is a spectacular event. From another dimension, a light comes. It begins to grow in intensity. Jesus explodes with glory. A roaring radiance pours forth from Him. He becomes as He was before He came. For one, brief shining moment the veil of His

And in that glorious homecoming, there are suddenly two other figures. They are the two most famous of the prophets of the Old Testament.

Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. (Mark 9:4).

Why the appearance of these two prophets? Because under Old Testament Law, the truth of a matter must always be established by witnesses. And a single witness was not enough. There must be at least two. And so, the two greatest possible witnesses are sent to testify of this little Galilean rabbi.

Moses was the Old Covenant Lawgiver.

Elijah a great prophet.

The Law and the Prophets - and they both bear witness of Jesus.

Did you ever stop to think that Moses finally made it into the promised land? It only took him an extra 1400 years.

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. (Mark 9:5-6).

Don't you just love Peter? The most solemn and wondrous and unique and holy occasion in the history of planet earth has just taken place and he has to put in his two cents worth.

"Lord, it's a good thing we happened to be here!"

"No one else would have believed this!"

"Those other disciples at the bottom of the hill wouldn't have had a clue what to do with such a revelation, but I'VE got a plan!"

"We'll build a couple of three tabernacles and we'll start our own church. We can call it Mount of Transfiguration Tabernacle. We can feed multitudes and You can take turns preaching with Moses and Elijah."

Peter is just getting started when suddenly there is an interruption. It doesn't come from the other two disciples. It doesn't even come from Jesus. It comes from the Father Himself.

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 9:7-8).

Have you heard Him today? Are you listening to Him now? Or is your mind on other matters? Is your attention divided?

God gets Peter's attention. He does this by overshadowing Peter with a cloud. This wasn't any old cloud. This cloud was special.

In the Old Testament , Exodus 16:10 says how the whole congregation of the sons of Israel "looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the CLOUD."

And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I shall come to you in a THICK CLOUD, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever" (Exodus 19:9).

And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that the CLOUD filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 8:10-11).

Why was there a cloud? Because mortal man cannot look upon the glory of God without being destroyed. The cloud was for their protection. The cloud was to keep them alive.

This cloud was also given so that they might hear the voice of the Lord and live through the experience. There was an important message given to them that day - a message that has been entrusted to us. What is this message?

"This is My beloved Son!" You are impressed by prophets and visions and clouds and bright lights. And God says, "You're being impressed by the wrong things!" Moses is impressive. And Elijah is impressive. And a bright cloud overshadowing a high mountain

is impressive. But if that is all you see here, then you've missed the most impressive thing of all.

You've missed the fact that God became a fetus and was born to a Hebrew peasant girl. You've missed the fact that the splendor of heaven was poured into a human body. You've missed the One who was older than time and greater than death. You've missed the Son of God.

Peter speaks of building tabernacles. God says, "I've already prepared a tabernacle and His name is Jesus!" That is what the Bible says in John 1:14 - "And the Word became flesh and TABERNACLED among us..."

By the way, if you go to Israel today and climb Mount Tabor, the traditional location of the Transfiguration, when you get to the top you will find three shrines - three MEMORIALS.

One to Moses.

One to Elijah.

One to Jesus.

Religion has missed the lesson of this passage. Jesus is not just a good man or a godly teacher or a miracle worker or even a prophet. You cannot even compare Him to such lofty prophets as Moses and Elijah, for they are mere men. He is the unique Son of God.

And this brings us to the reason for this entire event. Why did it take place? What is the significance of the transfiguration? Why is it recorded in three out of four of the gospel accounts?

Here is the reason. It is because the transfiguration underlines and proves the confession made by Peter the week before.

Do you remember Peter's confession? Jesus had asked, "Who do people say that I am?" Today the disciples might have checked their latest copy of the Gallup Poll and cited the responses...

41% - Elijah

7% - Other

Then Jesus asked, "But who do YOU say that I am?" And Peter replied, "You are the Christ."

Since that time, a week has passed. And I would bet that during that time Peter has asked himself, "Why did I say that? Am I really certain that He is the Messiah?" And so, he and these other two disciples are given the testimony of two witnesses and the very voice of God as EVIDENCE that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Many years later, Peter would look back on this event as the evidence for the claims of Jesus.

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" - 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18).

This was not a vision or a dream. This was not merely a philosophical stance.

Something happened in history. Heaven reached down and touched the earth. God came near. And nothing will ever again be the same.

As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. (Mark 9:9-10).

Jesus now gives them a warning. It is the same warning that He gave to them after Peter declared Jesus to be the Christ. But there is a subtle change.

Mark 8:27-31 Peter declares Jesus to be the Christ.

The disciples are warned to silence.

Mark 9:9 God declares Jesus to be His beloved Son.

The Son of Man must suffer and be rejected and killed and rise again.

They are to be silent until the Son of Man should rise from the dead.

This time the focus is upon the resurrection. After all, they have just seen a glimpse of the glory of God. They have seen a manifestation of resurrection power.

But they did not understand. They got into a theological discussion of what "rising from the dead" really meant. Was Jesus speaking in spiritual terms? Was He speaking of some new type of spiritual vitality - being born again? Though He had spoken clearly, they did not understand. But they would.

They asked Him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him." (Mark 9:11-13).

As the disciples discussed theology, they came up with a question. It involved their experience on the mountaintop and its correlation with the Scriptures.

The very last book of the Old Testament contained a promise. It was a promise that Elijah would come. They had just seen Elijah on the mountaintop with Jesus. But the timing was wrong.

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

"And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6).

The promise set forth a timetable. First Elijah would come. Then the day of the Lord would come. The answer is given by Jesus.

Elijah DID come. He came and he preached and he baptized and his message was rejected. He was arrested and they did to him whatever they wished.

Do you see the point? The promise of Elijah was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Like Elijah, he had his abode in the wilderness. His clothing was the same. His food was the same. His message was the same. He spoke out against the Ahab and Jezebel of his day and they did to him as the original Ahab and Jezebel sought to do.

There is a lesson here. It is that God's promises are always fulfilled. But they are not always fulfilled in the manner we expect.



That is why we have to be careful when interpreting future prophecy. Those who draw up their timelines of future prophecy and who insist that things will take place just as they have predicted based upon their detail study of the Scriptures will be in for a rude awakening.

God's promises WILL be fulfilled. But not necessarily in the manner in which we have expected.

The key thing will not be all of the surrounding events which surround the coming of Jesus. The key thing will be JESUS. We shall see Him as they saw Him upon the mountain. In all of His glory. And that will be enough.