

²⁸ Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. ³³ Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” – not knowing what he said. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” ³⁶ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

Text: Luke 9:28-36 A 3/3/19 Exodus 34:29-35 2 Cor. 4:3-6 Psalm 16 Resp. Ps.: 145
Hymns: 16, 720, 794, 660

WHAT JESUS’ TRANSFIGURATION MEANS FOR US

Fellow redeemed in Christ,

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent when we meditate on Jesus’ suffering and death to save us. The events of our text took place about one week after Peter’s beautiful confession of faith in Jesus, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Mt. 16:16). James and John, two of the other disciples, were there to hear Peter’s confession. They agreed with Peter. Jesus allowed them to witness His transfiguration to strengthen their faith in Him. On this Transfiguration Sunday, we will consider **WHAT JESUS’ TRANSFIGURATION MEANS FOR US**.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain. There “*the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.*” The book of Revelation informs us that in heaven there will be “*no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God [illuminates] it. The Lamb is its light*” (21:23). In heaven we will see Jesus shine in all His wonderful glory as God. He will shine so brightly that we won’t need the sun to give us light. Before and after His transfiguration, while He remained on earth, Jesus looked like a normal human being. But during His transfiguration Jesus allowed Peter, James, and John to see some of His true glory as God with their own eyes. They already believed that Jesus is God. Seeing Jesus as God strengthened their faith in Him.

While they witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration “*a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’*” Matthew tells us that the result was that the disciples “*fell on their faces and were greatly afraid*” because they realized that they stood in the presence of almighty God (17:6).

God the Father spoke directly to Peter, James, and John and told them that Jesus is His Son. Again, they already believed this. The heavenly Father’s words strengthened their faith in Jesus.

The three disciples were blessed to see one other special event at this time: *“Two men talked with [Jesus], who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”* The disciples realized that it was Moses and Elijah, two men who had prophesied about and longed for the coming of the Messiah. They spoke with Jesus about His approaching death for the salvation of the world. And Peter, James, and John were there to hear them.

We aren't given the words Jesus, Moses, and Elijah spoke to each other. But we know they talked about what the Bible tells us, that Jesus would soon be going to Jerusalem to be crucified. Jesus would sacrifice Himself on the cross for the sins of the world. The disciples had the Old Testament Scriptures, which say that this is what the Messiah would do (Ps. 22; Is. 53; etc.). Jesus had told them that He would be put to death, but at that time they didn't want to accept it. Later when Jesus had died and risen again, the Bible says, He *“He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures”* (Lk 24:45). And when they did, they remembered hearing Moses and Elijah discuss this with Jesus. And that strengthened their faith in Him.

“Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’” Peter wanted to set up three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah to stay in. Peter was looking at this beautiful glimpse of what it's going to be like to be with Jesus and all the other believers in heaven, and he wanted it to last as long as possible. After Jesus died, and rose again, certainly Peter, James, and John remembered that little taste of heaven they were given on the Mount of Transfiguration. They knew that one day Jesus would take them to heaven to be with Him, Moses, Elijah, and everyone else there, and that will never end!

After Peter, James, and John had witnessed the transfiguration, Mark says that Jesus told them not to tell anyone about it until after His resurrection (Mk. 9:9). So our text says that *“they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.”* At that time the disciples didn't understand that Jesus had come to die for the world's sins, and that He would come back to life again. If at that time they would have told people about seeing Jesus' transfiguration and hearing about His death, the disciples would be confused, and they would confuse the people they talked to. We do know that Jesus had told them at that time that He would rise again after He was crucified. And after Jesus had risen, they remembered that He had told them that He would, and that strengthened their faith in Him (Jn. 2:22).

We weren't there to see Jesus' transfiguration, but it's recorded for us in the Bible. We see it with our eyes of faith, and know that it really happened.

We know that Jesus Christ lived on earth about 2,000 years ago, because the Bible says He did. We know, as the Bible says, that Jesus is the Son of God. The Bible says that *“no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the”* (working of) *“the Holy Spirit”* (1 Cor. 12:3). *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Ro. 10:17). Through our hearing of the Bible the Holy Spirit brought us to believe in Jesus. We say with the Apostle Paul, *“I know whom I have believed”* (2 Tim. 1:12).

We believe that during Jesus' transfiguration the Father said, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* This strengthens our faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

We believe that Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus at the time of His transfiguration about His death, just as the Bible says they did. This strengthens our faith that Jesus died on the cross to save us.

As we heard before, after He was transfigured Jesus told the disciples to *"tell no one the things they had seen, till [He] had risen from the dead"* (Mk. 9:9). The Bible tells us that Jesus rose from the dead, and by faith we know He did. Jesus' resurrection proves that He is God because only God could bring Himself back to life. Romans 1:4 says that Jesus was *"declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead."* Because Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead, our sins are forgiven! Romans 4:25 says that Jesus *"was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."* Because Jesus rose from the dead, He will raise us from the dead and take us to live with Him forever in heaven! Jesus says, *"Because I live, you will live also"* (Jn. 14:19)

Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus during His transfiguration shows us that death for us believers is simply passing from life here on earth into eternal life with Jesus. Jesus says, *"Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?"* (Jesus didn't say, "I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," as if they were dead and gone, but "I am" their God.) *"God is not the God of the dead,"* Jesus says, *"but of the living"* (Mt. 22:31-32). *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die"* (Jn. 11:25-26). Peter knew who Moses and Elijah were, which suggests that we'll all know each other in heaven. Our text says that Moses and Elijah *"appeared in glory"* with Jesus during His transfiguration. Jesus says that when He takes us to heaven, *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Mt. 13:43).

In only three days we begin the Lenten Season. Lent is always a sad time as we meditate on our dear Savior's suffering and death, knowing that it was our fault, because of our sins. But we have been reassured through the story of our Lord's transfiguration that after He died on the cross, Jesus rose again! Jesus is in glory, and we will be, too!

"Dear Jesus, bless our upcoming Lenten meditations on all that You put Yourself through to save us. Lead us all along the way to the foot of Your cross, and to Your empty tomb. Thank You for giving us eyes of faith to see You as our God, knowing that one day we will see You face to face in heaven!" Amen.