

The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-8 [New King James] *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”*

This incredible event relates to the soon-coming Kingdom of God, [**Luke 9:27**] pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles.

[Please download and study the article, ‘*God’s Ordained Christian Festivals And Holy Days*’ found under the sub-heading ‘*Covenants*’ for an understanding of the “*Feast of Tabernacles*”].

Why did Jesus Christ, some six months before His death, take three of His disciples up to the mountain for this unusual experience?

The mountain may have been Mount Hermon, which was near to Caesarea Philippi.

Let us understand what actually happened on the mountain.

Matthew 17:9 [New King James] *“Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’”*

The disciples were shown a vision, **not** a material reality, but a supernatural picture.

We call this vision the Transfiguration because Jesus was changed in form or appearance.

The time setting was important.

The disciples had begun to fully understand just who Jesus was, the Messiah and the Son of God, only a short while before the Transfiguration.

Jesus Christ had begun to talk directly about His coming suffering, death and resurrection, [**Matthew 16:13-27**].

Matthew 16:28 [New King James] *“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”*

In other words, Jesus promised that some of them would see Him in His glorified state.

The flow of events recorded in the gospels indicates that this spectacular vision occurred a short time before Jesus Christ celebrated His last Feast of Tabernacles period.

Peter’s comment during the vision seems to shed additional light on what time of the year this event occurred, [**Matthew 17:4**].

As the glorified Jesus Christ spoke with Moses and Elijah about His coming death and resurrection.

The Jews had a custom that they were **not** to construct booths for the Feast of Tabernacles until after the Feast of Trumpets.

Although the Christian Bible does not say when the vision took place, the narrative indicates that it possibly occurred on or immediately following the Feast of Trumpets, the Holy Day that pictures Jesus Christ's return in power and glory.

[Please download and study the article, 'God's Ordained Christian Festivals And Holy Days' found under the sub-heading 'Covenants' for an understanding of the "Feast of Trumpets"].

2 Peter 1:16-19 [New King James] *"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;"*

When Peter recounted the Transfiguration, he wanted us to understand that the event was prophetic, not just a historical fact.

The Transfiguration only confirmed, in a dramatic way, what was already prophesied, that Jesus Christ is coming in tremendous power to change us by a resurrection from the dead and give us an opportunity to work under Jesus Christ as priests [teachers] and rulers in the prophesied coming with power God's Kingdom on earth, [verses 10-11].

1 Peter 2:9-12 [New King James] *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

This is a prophetic promise for all true Christians.

Jesus Christ's Second Coming will be as Lord of lords and King of kings, [Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:11-16].

At the Transfiguration the disciples saw Jesus Christ's majesty as King of kings.

It is interesting to note that the kings of Ancient Israel were most likely formally crowned on the Feast of Trumpets, the first day of the Hebrew civil year.

The Transfiguration has a connection with the exodus of Ancient Israel.

When Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament, [1 Corinthians 10:4] brought Israel out of Egypt, He allowed His servant Moses to see part of Himself in His glorified state, [Exodus 33:18-23].

When Jesus Christ was about to bring humanity out of the slavery of sin in a spiritual exodus, and about to found His New Testament Church, He again allowed His servants, in this case His disciples who were to become leaders in the Church, to see Him glorified.

The event took on a powerful meaning.

In the Transfiguration, the disciples had proof that the same One who had led Ancient Israel would lead them and many others by the Holy Spirit, [John 16:13].

The spiritual exodus from sin was to be accomplished by Jesus Christ's death or decease, it's interesting to note that the Greek word for "decease" is "exodus."

What about our transfiguration? –

Besides its reference to the Transfiguration vision the New Testament uses the word for transfiguration in two other instances.

Romans 12:2 [New King James] *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Paul tells us that all true Christians must present themselves before God to become transformed.

The Greek word used is “*mētamōrphōō*,” used here to mean a changed mind, a re-educated mind, a transfiguration or renewing of our mind.

Exodus 34:29-35 [New King James] *“Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.”*

Moses’ face was transfigured at Mount Sinai after he had been in the presence of the Creator God, his face shone brightly, so much that people could **not** look at him and he had to wear a veil.

2 Corinthians 3:11-18 [New King James] *“For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech, unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

Where the Jews do **not** accept Jesus Christ as the looked-for Messiah, their minds are veiled and hardened.

All who accept Jesus Christ are without this veil and reflect the glory of the risen Jesus Christ and soon-coming glorious King of kings, [**Revelation 1:10-18**].

The Transfiguration must have been great encouragement to the disciples who witnessed it, for us who understand its significance in our present and future lives, it is a great encouragement also.