

# WHAT REALLY HAPPENED on THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

*A Preview of the Glory that shall be Revealed*

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### Introduction: Be Not Conformed but Be Transformed

The Bible says,

- Ro 12.2      **be not conformed** to this world: **but be ye transformed** by the renewing of your mind

The nature of this transformation is truly astonishing. To explain why, let us look at what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration. (To get the complete picture, all three accounts should be considered (Mt 17.1-8, Mk 9.2-8 & Lk 9.28-36).)

How does this explain Romans 12? Because the word in the original language translated “transformed” in Romans 12.2 is the same as translated “transfigured” in that incident.

### The Mount of Transfiguration

#### **A High Mountain Apart**

Jesus took Peter, James and John apart (Mt 17.1) into a high mount.

- Why? To pray with him (Lk 9.28).
- Apparently, this continued into the night, for the disciples, heavy with sleep, fell asleep (Lk 9.32).

#### **They Beheld His Glory**

Sometime that night they awoke. An amazing sight met their wondering eyes.

- Jesus in glory.
- The OT Cloud of Glory.
- Two men in glory.

A dazzling light had dispelled the pervasive darkness of the night. It came from Jesus.

- Lk 9.32      when they were awake, **they saw His glory**
- Lk 9.29      **the fashion of His face was altered**
- Mt 17.2      **(Jesus) was transfigured ... and His face did shine as the sun**

What did it mean?

They saw Who Jesus really was.

Behind the veil of the fleshly tabernacle/tent indwelt by the man Christ Jesus was the very Glory of God, the same Pillar of Fire which once tabernacled behind the OT animal-skin veil.

He was the antitype of the OT tabernacle/temple and veil.

- Jn 1.14 the Word was made flesh and dwelt (*literally, **tabernacled**, pitched His tent*) among us
- Jn 2.21 he spake of **the temple** of his body
- Heb 10.20 **the veil**, that is to say, his flesh

Glimpses of that glory had shone out earlier through a chink in that veil in His miracles.

- Lk 13.17 all the people rejoiced for all **the glorious things** that were done by him.
- Jn 2.11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana... and **manifested forth his glory**

But on the Mount of Transfiguration that night, the spiritual veil was pulled right back.

- Jn 1.14 the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, **and we beheld his glory**

The Glory of God was openly visible in His face.

- 2 Cor 4.6 God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of **the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**.

The disciples had a fuller revelation of who Jesus was than anything hitherto. They were,

- 2 P 1.16 eyewitnesses of his majesty

The word “eyewitnesses” is significant. In the language of that day, it was applied to those few in the ancient pagan mystery religions who progressed to the final stage of initiation. Only these were granted a complete revelation of their god. So, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the apostles were admitted to a full revelation of who Jesus really was,

- 1 Cor 2.8 the Lord of glory
- Heb 1.3 the brightness of his (= *God’s*) glory
- Jas 2.1 the Glory (= *the literal translation, i.e., the Shekinah, Ro 9.4*)

That glory was such that even His very garments were transfigured into pure light.

- Mt 17.2 his raiment was **white as the light**
- Mk 9.3 his **raiment became shining, exceeding white** as snow; so as no fuller (= *launderer*) on earth can white them
- Lk 9.29 his raiment was **white and glistening** (*or, as one translator accurately puts it, **dazzling white, flashing with the brilliance of lightning***)

### **Different from Moses**

When Jesus and the three disciples returned the next day, they found the other disciples surrounded by a great multitude. We are then told something very unusual.

- Mk 9.15 all the people, when they beheld him **were greatly amazed**

Why so amazed? Was it an echo of Moses’ appearance when he returned after being in the Cloud of Glory on Mt Sinai?

- Ex 34.29-30 Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone

Yet how different was Jesus' experience from Moses'! Though the face of both did shine,

- With Moses, a mere piece of cloth put over his shining face could hide "*the glory of his countenance*" (Ex 34.29-35; 2 Cor 3.7).
- But with Jesus, the glory shone through and transfigured even His clothing.

Why the difference?

- With Moses, the glory was **without**. It was only **upon** him.
- With Jesus it irradiated from **within**. It was **in** Him.

### ***Entering the Cloud of Glory***

As if that were not enough, the disciples then saw another glorious sight/light.

- Mt 17.5        **a bright cloud** (= a cloud full of/composed of light) **overshadowed them**

Then,

- Lk 9.34-35     **they entered into the cloud**. And there came a voice out of the cloud

Peter later described this as the very Cloud of Glory, the Glory that led Israel in the wilderness.

- 2 P 1.17        there came a voice from **the excellent glory**

How awesome!

### **What Did This Event Signify?**

What did it all mean?

#### ***Not Only a Preview of the Coming Revelation of the Glory of Christ***

The popularity of Jesus' early ministry was subsiding. Opposition was growing, especially from the religious leadership. To encourage the disciples and to strengthen their faith, they were given **a preview of Christ's coming in the glory of His Kingdom**.

A few days before His transfiguration, He said,

- Mt 16:27-28    the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father... There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man **coming in his kingdom**.

The three apostles have long since died but our Lord has not yet come. So, they must have seen something when still alive equivalent to the coming in power and glory of Christ's future kingdom. What?

His transfiguration.

When they beheld Christ on the mountain, they saw Him as He will be when He comes in glory. His face shining as the sun dispelling the night darkness was a preview of His coming kingdom.

- Rev 21.23      the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon... for **the glory of the Lamb did lighten it**, and **the Lamb is the light** thereof

#### ***But Also a Preview of the Restored Glory of Redeemed Mankind***

The disciples had not only a preview of Christ coming in the glory of His kingdom. They also saw the grand conclusion of God's plan of redemption for mankind, the restoration of the lost glory.

- Lk 9.30-31     behold...**Moses and Elias...appeared in glory**

When the disciples saw Jesus in glory,

- They not only saw **the Lord of glory**, “crowned with glory” (Heb 2.9).
- They also saw **a glorified Man**, a preview of God’s purpose to restore to man his original glory (1 Cor 11.7), lost at the fall (Ro 3.23; 1 P 1.24). Christ was the last Adam but the second man (1 Cor 15.45,47), the first of a new creation (Rev 3.14).

So, when they saw Moses and Elijah in glory, they were given a preview of redeemed mankind and of that new creation.

To put it in other words, they previewed not just **His** appearing in glory but also **our** appearing with Him in glory.

- Col 3.4 when Christ shall appear, then shall ye also **appear with him in glory**
- Ro 8.17-18 we shall be **glorified together with him**.

### **Called to the Obtaining of the Glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

And that is not all! Although not specified in the transfiguration accounts, we are told elsewhere that we shall not just appear with Christ in glory. That glory shall be nothing less than His very own glory.

- Jn 17.22 **the glory which thou gavest me** I have given them
- Col 1.27 **Christ in you**, the hope of glory
- 2 Th 2.14 called ... to **the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**
- 1 Jn 3.2 when he shall appear **we shall be like him**

Just as Jesus’ face shone as the sun on the mount of Transfiguration, so also shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Mt 13.43).

Oh, blessed hope (Ti 2.14)!

- Not only of the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- But also, of our appearing with Him, and like Him, restored to our original glory.

### **Conclusion: But There Is More: Not Just a Preview, But Also a Foretaste**

But that is not all.

Not only are we granted in this awesome scene a heart-warming **preview**,

- Of **Christ’s future appearing in glory** at His Coming; and,
- Of **our own future blessed hope** when we are glorified, being transformed into His likeness and appearing with Him in glory.

We may also experience **a present foretaste**, a firstfruits, of that future transformation and glorification **here and now, in this present world**.

How?

By the Holy Ghost.

Let us illustrate by looking at what really happened on the day of Pentecost.