

The Transfiguration of Jesus

Peter James and John knew something special was going to happen. Usually when Jesus called them away from the other disciples he was going to give them some special instructions or teaching. One time he let them watch as he raised a little girl from the dead. But today they were heading up a mountain near Jerusalem. Maybe he wanted to show them something special.

He certainly did want to show them something special. So, let's look at what happened, who was involved and what could it all possibly mean?

What happened? Jesus changed from His earthly form to His glorified form. His clothes and his skin began to glow with an immense bright light. Brighter than the white clothes in the Tide Commercials during the Super Bowl last Sunday. Suddenly two other figures appeared, and they were talking to Jesus. They were identified as Moses and Elijah. Then Peter blurts out, "This is so cool, let's build three tents, and stay here. Then they were surrounded in a foggy cloud and a voice from Heaven said, "This is my son whom I dearly love, listen to him." And then it was all over. Moses and Elijah were gone, and the disciples were left with Jesus.

So, who was involved in this? We have Jesus, Peter, James, John, and Moses and Elijah in this story. Oh, and let's not leave out the voice from the cloud which we know is God because of what He said.

Jesus has been carrying on his adult ministry for about three years. He has taught in Synagogues and towns and villages all around Judea. He has raised the dead, healed the sick, cast out demons, and cured the blind and the lame. He miraculously fed more than 5,000 people and has even walked on water. His

followers and believers have grown into a small army and it appears everything is building up to a great climax.

Pete, James, and John appear to be the captains of the disciples. They seem to be the head disciples with Peter being the leader and spokesman. They have witnessed most if not all the miracles, the teachings, and even received some special private instruction when they didn't understand Jesus' parables. They know they are here on this mountain for something special, but they don't know what.

After Jesus transforms Moses and Elijah appear and they talk with Jesus. According to Luke's version of the transfiguration Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talk about his coming departure to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Moses is associated with The Law. He led the exodus or departure from Egypt into the wilderness. He went up on Mount Sinai and received the 10 Commandments from God and gave them to the people. Moses fasted for 40 days more than once and has seen the glory of God. Elijah was among the greatest prophets of Israel. He single-handedly defeated 400 priests of Baal and led the nation of Israel back to proper worship of God during the reign of king Ahab. Elijah also fasted for 40 days and experienced a close encounter with the glory of God. Elijah was taken up into heaven on a fiery chariot. The gathering of these three figures signify something very special because their lives and their ministry looked toward the future and Jesus.

The voice of God is significant in this story and I will explain why in just a moment. But let's look at what Peter says. "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." The scripture narrative says that Peter really didn't know what to say because he and the other disciples were so frightened. But I think this is also a hint to let us

know about what time of year this was. There were three major Jewish celebrations. The first was Passover. The second was The Day of Atonement. The third and the longest of the three was the Feast of Tabernacles. The word translated “shelters” in the NIV version of the Bible was originally translated “tabernacle” in the King James version of the Bible. The Hebrew word is “Mishkan” and means temporary dwelling or tent. So, when Peter blurts out what he says, I think it is because of the time of year they were in...just like if it was Christmas time and I was in a situation where I thought I should say something but didn’t know what to say; I might blurt out, “So are you ready for Christmas?” Anyway, that’s just my opinion.

Now back to the voice coming from the cloud. It said, “This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him.” If Jesus was the Son of God, and the voice from the cloud said this is my son, then the voice must have been the voice of God. So, if God singles out Jesus as the one to listen to from the three of them, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah then God seems to be signifying that Jesus should take precedence over the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Jesus has authority to interpret the Law and fulfills the Prophets.

This moment, the transfiguration is a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. From this point on his focus is on getting his disciples ready for his trial and death, and on heading to Jerusalem for the Passover. The mountaintop moment was pivotal for Peter James and John as well. There was no mistaking the fact that their teacher, their rabbi, and their friend was the Son of God and the Messiah. They probably began wondering how Jesus would start the coming rebellion against Rome and restore the glory of Israel. It wouldn’t be long before they found out.

Jesus still comes to us as the Messiah today. He comes to free us from the tyranny of sin that enslaves us. His glory shines in each one that says “yes” when he calls us to follow him. And someday each of us will see the shining glory of Jesus with our own eyes. As it says in First John 3:2, ² **Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**