

A. Jesus is transfigured.

1. (1-2) The transformation of Jesus before His disciples.

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.

a. Jesus took Peter, James, and John:

b. Led them up on a high mountain:

There have been several suggestions for the location of the Mount of Transfiguration.

(Mount Tabor, Mount Hermon, Mount Miron) “The name of the *‘high mountain’* is not known; for those who knew the locality have left no information. (Spurgeon)

c. He was transfigured before them:

The word **transfigured** speaks of a *transformation*, not merely a change in outward appearance. Jesus became so bright in appearance that He was even difficult to look at (**like the sun**).

i. “The verb *metamorphoo* (‘transfigure,’ ‘transform,’ ‘change in form’) suggests a change of inmost nature that may be outwardly visible.” (Carson)

ii. “For Christ to be glorious was almost a less matter than for him to restrain or hide his glory. It is forever his glory that he concealed his glory; and that, though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor.” (Spurgeon)

iii. This happened as a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in [Matthew 16:28](#).

d. **His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light:** It was **His face** that did shine as the sun. He wasn’t transformed into another being with another body; it was **His own face** that shone.

i. Jesus has His disciples with Him when He shines in His glory. He is not glorified apart from them, because they share in His glory. *Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me.* ([John 17:24](#))

ii. “Another thing which we may learn from our Lord Jesus Christ having shown himself to his apostles thus robed in brightness is, that we are scarcely aware of the glory of which the human body is capable.” (Spurgeon)

2. (3) Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

a. **Moses and Elijah:** Remarkably, these two Old Testament persons **appeared** and spoke with the transfigured Jesus. Moses had lived some 1400 years before; Elijah some 900 years before; yet they were alive and in some sort of resurrected, glorified state.

i. It is fair to think that these two particular persons from the Old Testament appeared because they represent the Law (**Moses**) and the Prophets (**Elijah**). The sum of Old Testament revelation came to meet with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration.

ii. We can also say that **Moses and Elijah** represent those who are caught up to God (**Moses** at Jude 9 and **Elijah** at [2 Kings 2:11](#)). More specifically, Moses represents those who die and go to glory, and Elijah represents those who are caught up to heaven without death (as in the rapture described in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)).

iii. From this we see: “Saints long departed still alive; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ.” (Spurgeon)

b. Talking with Him:

[Luke 9:31](#) tells us the theme of their conversation; they *spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*.

i. “They ‘appeared unto *them*’ but they ‘talked with *him*’: the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with the apostles, but with their Master.

3. (4-5) Peter equates Jesus with Moses and Elijah and is dramatically rebuked by a voice from the cloud of God’s glory.

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!”

a. **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:** [Mark 9:6](#) and [Luke 9:33](#) point out that Peter didn’t know what he was saying when he said this. Though said without careful thought, the effect of his words put Jesus on an equal level with Moses and Elijah, building equal shrines for each of them.

i. “Peter suggested the retention of the three in association: Moses, the law-giver; Elijah, the reformer; and Jesus, the Messiah.” (Morgan)

ii. “The *booths* [**tabernacles**] (the word normally means ‘tents’) would be temporary shelters of branches, such as were erected for the Feast of Tabernacles.” (France)

b. **A bright cloud overshadowed them:**

This is the cloud of God’s glory, called the *shekinah* in the Old Testament. From this cloud of glory, God the Father spoke.

i. “When God draws near to man it is absolutely necessary that his glory should be veiled. No man can see his face and live. Hence the cloud, in this instance, and in other cases.” (Spurgeon)

c. **This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!**

The Father, from heaven, rebuked Peter’s attempt to put Jesus on an equal footing with Moses and Elijah – and **while he was still speaking**. It was important to interrupt Peter, so that all would know that Jesus is unique and the **beloved Son** – He deserves our special attention, so **Hear Him!**

i. With these words from heaven, God the Father clearly set Jesus above the Law and the Prophets. He is not merely *another* or even a *better* lawgiver or prophet. Jesus is the **only begotten Son**.

d. **Hear Him!**

If we should listen to anyone, we should listen to Jesus. One would think that a voice from heaven would say, “Listen to me!” But the Father said, “**Hear Him!**” Everything points us to Jesus.

4. (6-8) The disciples react with a holy fear.

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.

a. **They fell on their faces and were greatly afraid:**

They didn’t fall on their faces when they saw Jesus transfigured; not when His face shone like the sun; not when His clothes became as white as the light; not when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him; not when Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus; and not even when the cloud of glory appeared and overshadowed them. But **when the disciples heard** the voice from heaven, **they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid**.

i. “They were in the immediate presence of God, and listening to their Father’s voice: well might they lie and prostrate and tremble.

b. **Arise, and do not be afraid:**

The disciples were once again uniquely in awe of Jesus. This helps explain the purpose of the Transfiguration: to reassure the disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, even if He would indeed be crucified as He had so surprisingly revealed.

c. When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only:

is significant that their entire focus was forced upon Jesus once again. The cloud was gone; Moses had left, and Elijah had disappeared.

i. "Though the apostles saw 'Jesus only,' they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by...O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet 'Jesus only' shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you." (Spurgeon) One is our Master,' and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only." (Spurgeon)

5. (9-13) The problem of Elijah coming first.

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." And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

a. Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead:

Wisely, Jesus told the disciples to not speak of the transfiguration until after His resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was the final confirmation of His ministry and glory; until then, reports of the transfiguration would be more likely to *test* the faith of those who did not see it rather than *strengthen* their faith.

b. Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?

The disciples had heard that **Elijah must come**, according to the promise of [Malachi 4:5](#): *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*

c. Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things:

Jesus reassured the disciples that Elijah would indeed come first. But the first coming of Jesus did not bring the *great and dreadful day of the LORD*. Instead, the [Malachi 4:5](#) coming of Elijah is probably best identified with the appearance of the two witnesses of [Revelation 11:3-13](#), and then the Second Coming of Jesus.

d. But I say to you that Elijah has come already:

Yet there was also a sense in which Jesus could rightly say "**Elijah has come already.**" Elijah had arrived in the work of John the Baptist, who ministered in Elijah's *spirit and power* ([Luke 1:17](#)).

i. This is evident from a comparison of the life and work of both Elijah and John the Baptist.

- Elijah was noted as being full of zeal for God; so was John the Baptist.
- Elijah boldly rebuked sin in high places; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah called sinners and compromisers to a decision of repentance; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah attracted multitudes in his ministry; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah attracted the attention and fury of a king and his wife; so did John the Baptist.
- Elijah was an austere man; so was John the Baptist.
- Elijah fled to the wilderness; John the Baptist also lived there.
- Elijah lived in a corrupt time and was used to restore failing spiritual life; so was it true of John the Baptist.

B. Jesus casts out a difficult demon from a boy.

1. (14-16) A demon too tough for the disciples to handle.

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

a. Have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic:

This particular boy's epileptic symptoms were demonic in origin ([Matthew 17:18](#)), though this certainly could not be said about every case of epileptic symptoms, either then or today. The narrative in [Mark 9:14-29](#) tells us that the boy was made deaf and dumb by this demon.

- i. “Matthew describes the boy by the verb *seleniazesthai*, which literally means *to be moonstruck*.” (Barclay)
- ii. “When Moses came down from the mountain he was confronted by Israel's apostasy ([Exodus 32](#)); so on Jesus' return from the mountain he enters a scene of spiritual conflict and unbelief.” (France)
- iii. “It is easy to feel Christian in the moment of prayer and meditation; it is easy to feel close to God when the world is shut out. But that is not religion – that is escapism. Real religion is to rise from our knees before God to meet men and the problems of the human situation.” (Barclay)

b. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him:

Sometimes Jesus' followers fail, but Jesus never does. The man was wise for going straight to Jesus when His followers failed.

- i. On previous occasions, the disciples did cast out demons ([Luke 10:17](#)). Yet here **they could not cure him**. This is because there are ranks of demonic powers ([Ephesians 6:12](#)), and evidently some demons are stronger (more stubborn, resistant) than others. Since the disciples had been given the authority to cast out demons before ([Matthew 10:8](#)), apparently this demon was more difficult than most.
- ii. Their failure taught them.
 - It taught them not to get into a rut of mechanical ministry.
 - It taught them the great superiority of Jesus.
 - It taught them to practice the presence of Jesus.
 - It taught them to come to Jesus with the problem.
- iii. “They were confounded at their want of success-but not at their want of faith, which was the cause of their miscarriage!” (Clarke)

2. (17-21) Jesus easily casts the demon out.

Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

a. O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?

There is a sense that Jesus is frustrated with His disciples. His season of ministry before the cross was coming to an end, and perhaps He felt frustration that the disciples did not have more faith.

b. Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him:

Jesus delivered the demon-possessed boy instantly. What was too hard for the disciples was not too hard for Jesus.

c. Because of your unbelief:

Jesus laid the inability of the disciples to cast out the demon at their **unbelief**. To be successful in a battle against demons, there must be trust in the Lord GOD who has complete authority over the demons.

i. "There are some things which are obtained by a stronger faith, and by more fervent and importunate prayers, than others are.

d. If you have faith as a mustard seed:

The faith that we must have has more to do with what *kind* of faith it is than with *how much* faith there is. A small amount of faith, as small **as a mustard seed** (a very small seed), can accomplish great things if that small amount of faith is placed in the great and mighty God.

i. What matters most is what our faith is in, the *object* of our faith. "The eye cannot see itself. Did you ever see your own eye? In a mirror you may have done so, but that was only a reflection of it. And you may, in like manner, see the evidence of your faith, but you cannot look at the faith itself. Faith looks away to itself to the object of faith, even to Christ." (Spurgeon)

ii. **You will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there":** "Jesus here in effect calls faith an 'uprooter of mountains,' a phrase current in the Jewish schools for a Rabbi distinguished by legal lore or personal experience." (Bruce)

e. This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting:

We show our faith in and reliance on God through prayer and fasting. It displays an occupation with and dependence on Jesus.

i. **Prayer and fasting** demonstrate:

- Great willingness to identify with the afflicted person.
- Great appreciation of the strength of the demonic world.
- Great dependence upon God.
- Great desire to fight and sacrifice for the sake of deliverance.

ii. "He that would overcome the devil in certain instances must first reach heaven by prayer, and conquer himself by self-denial." (Spurgeon)

D. Look forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1. (22-23) Jesus reminds His disciples about His future sufferings.

Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

a. The Son of Man is about to be betrayed:

Though they were frequent, these reminders about Jesus' suffering and resurrection were disbelieved and forgotten by the disciples until after His resurrection ([Luke 24:6-8](#)).

b. And the third day He will be raised up:

Jesus rarely told His disciples about His coming death without also telling of His coming resurrection. We know that the disciples didn't really comprehend the glorious triumph of the resurrection, because they were **exceedingly sorrowful**.

2. (24-26) Time to pay the temple tax.

When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free."

a. Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?

This was a normal tax or fee applied to every Jewish man. Faithful Jewish men paid this obligation; others sought to escape the responsibility.

i. "Payment could be made in person at the Passover festival in Jerusalem...but collections were made in other areas of Palestine and abroad a month earlier. This incident therefore takes place about a month before Passover." (France)

b. From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?

Peter gave the quick and natural answer to this question. But then Jesus explained that He is not liable to pay this tax, because the Father doesn't require it of His own Son.

i. "Rabbis were exempt from paying this tax, and so were the priests in Jerusalem; would Jesus claim a similar exemption? The question assumes that he does pay regularly, and Peter agrees." (France)

3. (27) Jesus pays the tax anyway, and by miraculous provision.

"Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

a. Nevertheless, lest we offend them:

Jesus was not obligated to pay this tax under the principle He had just discussed with Peter; that as a son, not a servant, He did not have to pay this temple tax. Yet Jesus also recognized the importance of avoiding needless controversy, and so was willing to pay the tax so as to not **offend** those who questioned.

i. The use of the Greek word *skandalizein* leads Barclay to write: "Therefore Jesus is saying: 'We must pay so as not to set a bad example to others. We must not only do our duty, we must go beyond duty, in order that we may show others what they ought to do.'"

b. Cast in a hook:

Peter was a professional fisherman who used *nets*, not **a hook** and a line. It must have humbled Peter to fish in this manner, and we can imagine that he hoped none of his other fishermen friends saw him trying to catch one fish at a time.

i. "How this money came into the mouth of the fish is a very idle dispute, considering that he that speaks was the Creator of all things." (Poole)

c. Take that and give it to them for Me and you:

i. "Thus the great Son pays the tax levied for his Father's house; but he exercises his royal prerogative in the act, and takes the shekel out of the royal treasury. As man he pays, but first as God he causes the fish to bring him the shekel in its mouth." (Spurgeon)

iii. Yet He did pay for Peter; as a foreshadow of the work of redemption for all men. Jesus, who did not actually owe the price, paid it nevertheless – and at the same time, with the same price, paid for Peter as well.

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GRACE & PEACE!