**Listen to Jesus**

Based on [Matthew 17:1-9](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt17.1-9)

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The Transfiguration of Our Lord

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The Gospel lesson is about The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. Once, Jesus took three disciples with him up on a mountain, and there he was transfigured before them. That he was “transfigured” means that His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light itself. Why did this happen? What does this mean?

There are many doctrinally sound explanations as to why Jesus was transfigured, why only Peter, James, and John were invited to witness it, why Moses and Elijah appeared, why Peter offered to build three tents, why the voice of God the Father came in the cloud, and why--after these things happened--Jesus told the three disciples to keep it a secret until the resurrection. However, the truth is that the bible never explicitly says why Jesus was transfigured at this time--what his transfiguration was supposed to “mean.”

The significance of the Transfiguration has been interpreted several ways. **The first way focuses on the witness and the testimony of Peter, James and John.** This would claim an “Apologetic” purpose for the transfiguration. And whether that was its original significance or not, Peter uses the transfiguration event to defend the Gospel and identity of Jesus Christ. Peter says in today’s epistle, “**For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**” Peter says the apostles are not speaking mythically or metaphorically when they attest to the identity of Christ; they preach realities, they preach the majesty they saw with their own eyes. The transfiguration is therefore based “upon the testimony of two or three witnesses” as God’s Word requires.

A second interpretation is that the transfiguration of Jesus is in response to the disciple’s questions concerning heaven, life after death, the restoration of Israel, etc. **What is the ultimate fate and destiny of those who follow Christ and live and die in Him?** The transfiguration is thus a preview of what heaven will be like and an illustration of the glory that awaits the Christian.

And whether or not this is sound biblical teaching. John, who was one of the three on the mountain, writes in his first epistle, “**Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is**” (1 John 3:2).

When you are on your deathbed, or even facing a bad day, ***do not forget that you who believe in Christ are destined for perfection***. Not now--not while this world remains as it is--will you become perfect. One false prophet, the pastor of the largest church in the US, wrote a book entitled “Your Best Life Now.” Do not listen to him. Friends, if your best life is now, that means you’re going to hell. For the one who believes in Christ, your best life is not now, but in heaven. And even Death itself, though itself an enemy, is a passage to paradise with Christ, and his coming again will bring about your resurrection, and he will endow you with a new, spiritual body like his, that shines with his holiness, without sin or infirmity, without corruption or fear of falling away from him.

“**Behold! I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality**” (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

A third interpretation is that--when Jesus was transfigured--his divine nature shone through his humble demeanor exposing his true identity as God. In the OT reading, we heard how Moses would go up on Mount Sinai and speak with God. And the scripture says that when he would come down and tell the people what God had said, “**the skin of his face shone, because he had been talking with God**.” It is significant that Jesus face shone, not after having talked with God, but on its own accord. The shining divinity of Jesus did not come from external exposure to God, but from his own being, from who he really is…”God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” He is the life and light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.

Moses and Elijah are the most authoritative prophets of the Old Testament. Their appearance with Jesus on the mountain shows that Jesus did not come to overthrow the Old Covenant but to fulfill it, and that his coming, not in majesty, but in meekness, is in accord with the Scriptures. Christ did not come to bring a new teaching without first bringing the Old to completion. **It was precisely by hiding his majesty, Jesus he would die at the hands of the mighty, and his death would be a sacrifice fulfilling the Law of Moses, shedding his blood as a propitiation for our sins.** The transfiguration is a glimpse of Jesus’ divinity, and also, because it is a temporary glimpse. The fact that the cloud departs, and Jesus appearance returns to normal, shows Peter, James and John that Jesus did not come to conquer in glory before dying in humility.

All three of these interpretations of the transfiguration--**that it was eyewitness testimony of Jesus’ majesty and authority, that it was to comfort disciples then and now of our future glory in heaven; that it was to show that, despite his humble appearance, Jesus was truly God of God, light of light, very God of very God—**all three of them are teachings found elsewhere in scripture, so they are good and edifying to faith. They do not come from the interpretation of men, but from the Holy Spirit. And even if they aren’t the explicit purpose for the transfiguration; the transfiguration testifies to them.

But there is one Biblically explicit purpose for the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. It is given in the words of God the Father…and there is no higher authority in heaven or on earth. Peter, James, John, and all disciples until the end of the age are given this command straight from the lips of God the Father. When Jesus appears in majesty, the Father commands the disciples “Listen to Him.”

This is the simple command for our simple faith. Listen to Jesus. And the next thing Jesus says is, “Rise and have no fear.” **If you listen to the world,** you have reason to doubt and fear. Even if things seem to go well with you, the world cannot give you a clean conscience before God. **If you listen to your heart**, you may believe doing what *you* think is best, but it can never assure you that you are right with God, or that you obey Him and He is pleased with you. But the Father says, “**This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him**.” If you listen to Jesus you listen to the Father, and if you listen to the Father, through Jesus Christ, you listen to God and will never be put to shame.

And Jesus tells you something today and every Divine Service. He promises of the bread we eat, “**This is my body given for you**”; He testifies of the cup we drink “**This is my blood shed for you**”. LISTEN TO HIM! Because he gives this promise in John 6:54: “**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up on the Last Day**.” This is the Word of Jesus. Listen to Him.