

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: The Miracle of the Transfiguration, Mark 9:2-13

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This incident is also recorded in Matthew 17:1-13 and Luke 9:28–36.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:2-13 ² *After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.*

⁵ *Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)*

⁷ *Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”*

⁸ *Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

⁹ *As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.*

¹¹ *And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”*

¹² *Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”*

INTRODUCTION: The Transfiguration was the most incredible miracle. It was a vision of the past, the present, and the future. You've heard me talk about time and eternity. A few months ago, I had a chart with a timeline and used scripture as a background to explain time and space and how the cross is the center of where human time and eternity intersect.

It is important to note there is only one person who can move about freely in time as he desires, and he is Jesus. We have Old Testament passages where it seems Jesus made Old Testament appearances.

For the critics who have difficulty accepting the supernatural, it's all too easy to just say the Transfiguration never happened and the other miracles didn't happen. If they want to think this, fine. If they've made up their minds and closed them to any measure of the supernatural, this is their choice. Really, arguing with closed-minded people is a waste of time. Spend your time sharing with people who are open—people who are curious. Let them know of the supernatural work that's gone on in your own life.

There are numerous ways we could approach today's Scripture, and I've decided to break it down objectively—who was present, what was said, and the significance of it all. Then, hopefully in a few minutes, you'll have a working knowledge of the deeper meaning of the Transfiguration rather than seeing it as just a mere occurrence. We will look at the following:

1. Who was present at the Transfiguration?
2. What was said on the Mount of Transfiguration?
3. What was the significance of the miracle on the Mount of Transfiguration?

First, WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE TRANSFIGURATION?

Peter was there. Do you recall last week how Jesus rebuked Peter? Jesus had just told his disciples what was going to happen to him in the near future when he referenced his coming crucifixion, and then Peter rebuked him. What did Jesus do? He pulled Peter aside and rebuked him, didn't he? He called him Satan. I am sure that left Peter wondering where he stood with Jesus.

And, now there he was—one of the three chosen by Jesus to be present at the Transfiguration. I'm sure Peter was thankful to know even though he'd made a terrible mistake, he was still included by Jesus—and not only included, but invited to greater intimacy with Christ.

Later on, after the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, Peter would face many challenges. He would lead the Church after Jesus was gone. No doubt the Transfiguration brought him much comfort as he looked back upon that day. Eventually, Peter would face death. History tells us Peter was crucified upside down.

James was also present at the Transfiguration. He and his brother John were sons of Zebedee, a fisherman. Both he and John left their father to follow Jesus. The Book of Acts tells us James died by the sword. We believe he was the first martyred disciple. Both James and John were given the nickname “sons of thunder” because of their fiery tempers.

And, John was also present. This was not John the Baptist but John the brother of James. He was known as the “Disciple Jesus Loved.” He was the author of the Gospel of John; First, Second, and Third John; and Revelation are also attributed to him. I have no doubt the Transfiguration paved the way for the Revelation. When John saw the Revelation, he would have immediately remembered the first Revelation here on the Mount of Transfiguration.

All three of these men would be present with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion.

There were others present:

Moses and Elijah were at the Mount of Transfiguration – What is the significance of both of them being there?

Moses' presence represented the Law of Moses. Moses was the legislator—the one who received the Law from God and explained it to his people. Moses was the first leader of God's people. When they were slaves in Egypt, he confronted Pharaoh. He brought down the Ten Plagues on the Egyptians. He led the Hebrew people out of slavery, parted the waters of the Red Sea, and led the Hebrew people for forty

years in the wilderness. During their wilderness experience, he faced many challenges—feeding and clothing the people and dealing with their pagan ways from time to time. He kept moving forward with the hope of the Promised Land. After years of wandering, the people came to the Promised Land. But, Moses died, and the Scripture said God buried him, and no one knows where. He never entered the Promised Land.

Elijah's presence at the Transfiguration was important because he was the greatest of the prophets. He spoke for God many, many years after Moses. He was a fervent prophet, challenging Baal and the prophets of Baal and calling people to repentance. He was mysterious in many ways. 2 Kings 2:11 tells us that Elijah went into heaven in a whirlwind. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi gave a prophecy in Chapter 4 verse 5: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*

At the Mount of Transfiguration, I believe Moses represented the Law, and Elijah represented the Prophets. And here they were with Jesus, the fulfillment of the Law and the fulfillment of the Prophets!

I doubt the disciples understood what they were seeing, but they had the rest of their lives to think about it.

Let's look at the next question,

Second, WHAT WAS SAID ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION?

Luke Chapter 9 gives us more information.

First there were prayers: We have no record of them, but during the prayers something happened. The appearance of his face changed. His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. I believe at this point in Jesus' prayer, he touched heaven and showed the disciples how he was the cross-section between human time and eternity and the bridge between God and man.

The second set of words spoken were between the Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (Luke 9:30). What was their conversation? We know what it was not! They did not talk about the weather, sports, or politics. There was a lot to talk about. Maybe Jesus

brought them from heaven, or perhaps the disciples were seeing heaven itself—eternal time and human time together at the same time. And, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus had a conversation. Perhaps Jesus said, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” Perhaps they said to Jesus, “All the hardships were worth it.” Perhaps Moses said to Jesus, “You are the fulfillment of the Law.” Perhaps Elijah said, “You are the fulfillment of Prophecy.” We don’t know. Perhaps they praised God all at the same time.

The third set of words spoken were from Peter, who meant well and who had a compulsion for saying something.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:5 ⁵*Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”*

Peter, not knowing what to say, he just said, “Let’s stay here!” This time Jesus did not rebuke him.

If Facebook had been around when Peter was alive, he would have been the first to respond to peoples’ posts. Sometimes it’s OK not to say anything.

The fourth set of words spoken were from a mysterious cloud. *“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”* (Mark 9:7) Numerous times in scripture, there is a cloud of glory, which indicates the presence of God. To give you only one example, there was a cloud that appeared between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. The three disciples found themselves surrounded by the cloud of glory in the presence of God. They certainly would not have been allowed to enter it if Jesus had not let them. I am reminded of Jesus being the way to God.

The voice from the cloud also reminds us of the baptism of Jesus where the voice of God said, *“This is my son in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:17).

Third, WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MIRACLE ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION?

- As I said earlier, Moses represented the Law, and Elijah, the Prophets.

- Another significance is that those from hundreds of years' past were present with Jesus—alive and in real time!
- Another significance: What an empowering miracle this must have been for the disciples. Until now, they had seen what we define as earthly miracles. They saw people healed, the storm calmed, demons cast out, and thousands of people fed by very little fish and bread. But, now they saw a heavenly miracle. Remember a couple of weeks ago when I taught how the Pharisees asked for a sign from heaven—because to them the earthly miracles weren't enough—and Jesus told them they wouldn't get a sign. And, now Jesus gave a sign from heaven to his closest disciples. There it was, the sign from heaven, a gift from God—but not for the Pharisees, only for the true believers.

We hear about Moses and the prophets later in Luke 17. We have the story of the rich man and a poor man, Lazarus. The rich man died and went to Hades, but the poor man went to heaven. In torment, the rich man cried out that someone should go warn his brothers. And, the reply was, *'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead'*” (Luke 16:31).

CONCLUSION: The significance to us today is: We have the record of the miracle as it happened. Three simple men surrounded by the presence of God, with two heroes of the faith receiving a command from God to listen to Jesus. Let us have faith in the story of the Transfiguration.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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