

REFLECTION BASED ON 2 KINGS 2:1-12 AND MARK 9:2-9

Transfiguration is a display of God's glory in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, being confirmed at his baptism, now receives an affirmation by the Father in the presence of two great prophets in Israel's history. Peter cites the transfiguration as historical proof of the true gospel of Christ (2Pet 1:16-18).

"¹⁶ 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 had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain."

It is hard to imagine what Jesus looked like when he transfigured or changed in form. The gospel writers speak of his face becoming bright like the sun and his dazzling white clothes. Peter explains that God gave Him honour and glory 2 Pet 1:17. In addition, the appearance of Moses and Elijah, OT figures who did not have a normal death and burial, probably indicates Jesus who will live even after the crucifixion. And the clouds overshadowed Jesus during His transfiguration also have a symbolic as well as historical significance.

Historically, it is a reminder of God's departure and appearance to Moses on Mountain Sinai (Ex 24), when God also spoke from a cloud. It is also a symbol of the second coming of Christ. Jesus will come with clouds and be revealed as God's chosen one. Moses gave the law and promised the Israelites that God would provide for them a prophet just like him, so his presence points to him, affirming Jesus as the greatest prophet of the last days. (Deut. 18:15)

¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people, you shall heed such a prophet.

It is believed that probably, Moses' appearance is to confirm that this is the prophet raised up for you; this is the one among you, the Son of Joseph and Mary. Elijah, too, was expected by the Jews to come in the last days (Mal 4:5-6).

⁵ Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.

This is why some of his disciples told him in the district of Caesarea Philippi when he asked them, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:16).

²⁹ He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah (Mark 8:29).

Therefore, it is more than a coincidence for Peter to be present and to request a shrine to be built. In all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Peter wishes to remain on the mountain and to build booths for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. To do so would be to mistake Jesus' identity and the nature of his mission; he is greater than the OT figures. It is also important to note that this quintessential "mountaintop experience" is incomplete without the rest of the gospel story, emphasizing the self-sacrificial mission of Jesus.¹ This evidence and expression of God's presence and power were for all of humanity!

¹ Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible*.

We must remind ourselves that Peter confirmed Jesus as the Son of God, and here we are, receiving heavenly confirmation from God. Peter, probably whispering, *"I knew this! Here we are with James and John, hearing what I said."* It is like a prayer that is answered. As I reflect on this, I ask myself, how do I feel when my prayers are answered? Like Peter, do I wish to set up a booth for myself or give the glory to God and use it to bless others?

The transfiguration calls to mind God's redemption through the Exodus and the future return and glory of Christ, His Son.

Mark's story concludes with God's voice speaking from the clouds, which marked God's presence (Ex. 40:38).

*³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day,
and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all
the house of Israel at each stage of their journey.*

For the disciples, when they heard that Jesus was God's beloved Son, the chosen one with whom He was well pleased, they probably remembered what is written in the OT scriptures:

Psalm 2:7 *"I will tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, 'You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.'"*

Isaiah 42:1 *"Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations."*

And possibly, Gen 22:2 – “He said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.’”

These, among other related verses, give most theologians a ground to conclude that all scriptures focus on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.² Therefore, suggesting that we should exegete the bible having this in one's mind that the OT lays the foundation for the NT.

Jesus chose these disciples to see this amazing revelation of how their souls must have rejoiced within them. "He chose them to see this amazing revelation, so when Peter describes this experience in 2 Pet 1:18:

⁸ *We heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain.*

He is talking from his experience with the Lord, Jesus Christ. I wonder what experiences we have with Jesus that we can share with others, even when they don't get it. How am I sharing my mountaintop experiences with people around me. Sometimes, people come into our lives for a purpose, and one such purpose is to share the good news of Jesus, your story of what Jesus has done and still doing.

Christ calls us to the places where he communes with God and with the saints of our spiritual heritage- to remember them, to study them and listen to what they have to teach us. Christ frees us to be conduits of the glory of God. The

² Ronald F. Youngblood and F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison, Nelson's Bible Dictionary.

presence and power of God are no longer hidden but are unveiled through our witness of word and works.

Mountaintop experiences are an important part of the Christian experience.³ But they are worthless unless they motivate us to have greater confidence and assurance by sharing the good news with the world. Every time we receive validation that our faith is meaningful and based on more than hope and whim, it should compel us to share the words the disciples heard, the very voice of God, *"This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him"* (v35). Jesus provides all we need to be agents of love, grace, healing, and forgiveness in our world.

In the 2 Kings reading, the loss of Elijah did not deter Elisha from what must be done; it did not dis-figure him for the ministry to come. It is a welcome reminder to us to lead, mentor, and shepherd others. It is not our ministry but God's; we cannot walk the journey for others, but we can invite them, as Elijah did, to keep their eyes open- to keep watch for evidence of God's grace and power.

We don't often try to interpret the details of our lives and our time according to a detailed scriptural plot. But we are called to do what the heavenly voice said: *Listen to Jesus because he is God's beloved Son*. And as we learn to listen, even if sometimes we get scared and say all the wrong things, we may find that glory creeps up on us unawares, strengthening us just as it did for the disciples, for the road ahead.⁴

³ Jenee Woodard, *The Abingdon Creative Preaching Annual*. 2016.

⁴ Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*.

Pray...

The one transfigured is in our midst. Christ is clothed with power and might.
The one who is our light and our salvation calls. Christ reveals God's truth and
light. The one who is God's Son is revealed in glory.
Christ is the very image of God. The one who unveils the gospel leads us forth.
We will not shut out the lessons he teaches. Amen

By Rev Samuel Annan.