

Jesus, Moses, and Elijah

Mark 9:2-8 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*Six days later, Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John, and *brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; ³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter *said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. ⁷ Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” ⁸ All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.*

Introduction

Today we are following Jesus to a high mountain. There we witness a supernatural phenomenon on Jesus. He changes into an extremely radiant and bright figure. The Bible calls it transfiguration. From the Greek word used here for transfiguration came the English word ‘metamorphosis.’

This Greek word appears four times in the New Testament. Twice referring to Jesus’ transfiguration (Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2). The other two times referring to God’s will for us to be transformed into His image (Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18).

The English word “metamorphosis” is generally used in context of an object or person changing into a totally different physical figure. E.g. a cocoon into butterfly. But, in the Bible, it means much more than just a change of physical form. It is a complete change and a total transformation into different figure--from earthly to heavenly--like Jesus did. That’s the topic for today.

I am going to lead you today’s text verse by verse beginning with verse 2.

Content

Verse 2a: *Six days later, Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John, and *brought them up on **a high mountain** by themselves.*

Jesus took three disciples to a high mountain for an overnight field trip. He had something in mind--to reveal who He truly was to His disciples--like He did before: e.g. Mark 4:35-41. Through the storm instance in the Sea of Galilee, the disciples discovered that even the winds and waves obeyed Jesus. They also discovered that thousands of evil spirits obeyed Jesus. They realized that Jesus is the Lord of all, both on earth and in the heavens.

Mountains: a little note on mountains. Mountains have a special meaning and place in God's Kingdom work. For instance, God called up Moses to Mount Sinai and gave him the Ten Commandments. Elijah fought a battle with 450 Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19). Jesus was transfigured on a high mountain.

Verse 2b and 3: *And He was transfigured before them; ³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.*

As soon as they arrived at the summit, Jesus began to transfigure Himself to the point where *His garments became so "radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them."* *"His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light"* (Matthew 17:2). Here, Jesus took on the form of His heavenly glory. The radiance and whiteness signify His holiness and glory. That's what we will witness when we stand before Him. His holiness and glory.

The Bible further describes His holiness and glory this way: *His face was like the sun shining in its strength* (Revelation 1:16). *And the city (New Jerusalem in Heaven--kc) has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb* (Revelation 21:23). *And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.* (Revelation 22:5).

That night, Peter, James, and John foretasted and witnessed such radiance and glory of Jesus, the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8). Please keep in mind that God has a plan to transform all of us likewise--the resurrection body of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Verse 4: ⁴ *Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.*

Please pay attention to who appeared before Jesus. Elijah the prophet along with Moses. They started conversing with Jesus about His *"departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:31).

Verse 5 & 6: ⁵ *Peter *said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."* ⁶ *For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.*

Remember: Peter had never met Elijah (9th century B.C.) or Moses (16th century B.C.), yet, somehow he knew both of them. It is going to be like that for us too. When we get to Heaven, we will be able to recognize right away numerous prophets and saints whom we have never met before. We will know Jesus right away along with Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul. Some believers testify that in their encounter with many biblical characters such as Abraham, David, Noah, and Enoch, they didn't have to be told.

Somehow, they knew them right away. I cannot wait until I do the same with all these wonderful people of God in Heaven.

Back to the text: Peter was so excited (actually, terrified) to witness the whole thing that he said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Verses 7 & 8: ⁷ Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” ⁸ All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

Listen to Jesus! With an exclamation point! Then, they see Moses and Elijah no more! They were gone. Jesus alone. Listen to Jesus!

Up until that point, in fact, in the previous chapter, Mark 8, Peter knew and confessed that Jesus was the Messiah the Son of the Living God. But a chapter later, God further explained to Peter and others what it means to be the Messiah: that Jesus is far superior to all the prophets and even greater than Moses.

Let me elaborate a little more here. It was no accident that Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus. There’s a significant meaning behind it.

In the Scripture, Moses represents the Law, a.k.a. Torah, the first five books in the Old Testament. Elijah represents all the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and so forth. The collection of those prophetic books are called the Prophets. Jesus and others often talked about and quoted from the first two sections of the Hebrew Scripture: *the Law and the Prophets*.

E.g. 1. Speaking of Golden Rule, Jesus says, “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the **Law and the Prophets**” (Matthew 7:12). Another instance. Speaking about loving the Lord with all our hearts and minds and loving our neighbor as ourselves, Jesus says, “On these two commandments depend the whole **Law and the Prophets**” (Matthew 22:40).

E.g. 2. Philip, Jesus’ disciple, introduced the Lord to his friend Nathanael saying, “We have found Him of whom **Moses in the Law and also the Prophets** wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45)

You may wonder how great Jesus is compared to Moses. *Moses is a servant* (Hebrews 3:5). *Jesus is the son* (Hebrews 3:6).

How about Abraham? Christ is far greater than Abraham. He was with God long before Abraham was born: *Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?*” (John 8:53). *So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am”*(John 8:57-58).

What about prophets? *“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”* (Revelation 19:10). That means, all the prophecy in the Bible points out to Jesus.

In a nutshell, Jesus trumped them all: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. As Moses and Elijah submitted to Jesus that night, so do the Law and the Prophets to Christ. Jesus alone stands. Listen to Him! God says.

I am going to present to you a few cases that show Jesus’ superiority over the Law and the Prophets.

Examples that Christ trumps the Law and the Prophets:

1. One Sabbath day, the hungry disciples picked the heads of grain and ate—some Pharisees cried ‘foul’—the violation of the 4th Commandment! Jesus said to them, *“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”*²⁸ *So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”* (Matthew 12:8, Luke 6:5, Mark 2:27-28).
2. The woman caught in adultery was saved by grace. Jesus said to the accusers, *“He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her”* (John 8:7).
3. Jesus’ new teaching on enemy: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’*⁴⁴ *But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you* (Matthew 5:43-44).
4. Jerusalem Council declared that circumcision among Gentile believers is not necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1, 28-29). The Law and the Prophets must be screened by Jesus.

Conclusion

That night, Peter and the other two disciples witnessed that Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah. He is greater than Abraham, Moses and all the prophets of God combined. He is the Son of God, the Messiah (Matthew 16:16). He trumps all.

Listen to Him! God commands.

Amen.