

**Mark 9: 1-3; “The Transfiguration of Christ”, Sermon # 69 in the series –
“Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
August 7th, 2016, in the Morning Worship Service.**

This incident of the transfiguration in Chapter 9 flows directly out of Jesus’ speaking to His disciples in Chapter 8, verses 34-38 about discipleship. Indeed it goes back further yet, to Jesus’ conversation with Peter, and how He had told Peter in verse 31 that He, his Lord, the One whom he had confessed to be the Christ, must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Peter and the rest of the Apostles did not understand these things. They did not understand how they could lose their life to find it. Peter wanted to keep his Master from having to suffer, and from His having to lose His life. He did not understand that Jesus must suffer for him, in order for him to have eternal life. There were many things that the disciples did not understand at this point in time. They did not understand very well at all, the purpose of Christ’s sufferings, or the glory of the kingdom of God which would follow. Christ’s sufferings would bring many sons into the kingdom, and many sons to eternal glory. Our Lord had a purpose to fulfill in His sufferings, and the Father also has a purpose for us to fulfill in regard to whatever sufferings we go through in this life, for the sake of Christ, and for the sake of righteousness, as His disciple.

This is why Jesus was transfigured before these 3 who were the closest of His companions and disciples. They did not know why Christ must suffer, and they did not know how they could “take up their own cross”. Do you remember what Jesus said to the two on the road to Emmaus? “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” The answer is: Yes, He ought to have suffered and He ought to enter in to His glory. Since this is so true, that there are so many things for us to learn about Christ and His glory, in relation to our bringing glory to His name, there are 3 questions that I want to ask of this text this morning so that it might speak to us more clearly. 1st – How should we understand the times which are related to the revelation of Christ’s glory? 2nd – How should we understand what happened to Christ Himself in the transfiguration? And 3rd – How should we pray for the kingdom of God in relation to the glory of Christ?

1st of all – How should we understand the times which are related to the revelation of Christ’s glory?

The times which are related to the revelation of Christ’s glory are all in the Father’s hand. The Son of God did not know the time of His second coming, to be able to reveal it to His disciples, He says in Mark 13: 32, but He did know of this time of the revelation of His glory in the transfiguration. In verse 2, it says that the transfiguration came after six days. That is, there would be an interlude of six days from the day in which Christ uttered the words of this prediction until the day that it came to pass. In the gospel of Luke he says in Chapter 9, verse 28, “Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” This almost eight days takes in both the day when the prediction was uttered, and the day when the transfiguration took place. The transfiguration took place, at night, on the night of the seventh day, and the things that were seen, ended, going on into the eighth day. This is how to account for the difference between Luke and Mark’s statements of time. Jesus knew the time was most certainly coming for some of those whom He had spoken to on that day in Caesarea, to receive this revelation of His glory. He knew that they would have a special revelation of His glory given to them. They would not “taste death”, till they had seen the kingdom of God present with power. They would not have to wait to come to the time of death in order for this revelation to be given to them.

You and I will have to wait until the time of our death, or to the time of Christ's second Coming, to have this kind of revelation of glory given to us. It is true that there is the time of the latter-day glory of the Church which is coming. And that glory will be very great. But here we find the Scriptures speaking to us of the glory of the kingdom of God present with power in Christ's person. He is the source of all of this power and glory. We should understand that the times and the seasons related to the revelation of Christ's glory, both to individuals and to nations, are all in the Father's hand; both the time of when the revelation of that glory begins, how long it continues in its strength, and when it fades or ceases. The revelation of who it comes to, and when and how it comes to them, is also in His hand. All of this truth is bound up in this incident of the transfiguration. What does this mean for us? This revelation of Christ's glory in the transfiguration only came to Peter, James, and John. It did not come to all of the disciples or even all of the Apostles. It happened only once, but it has great implications for our faith; we who sit here today. Events and incidents related to Christ's glory, being seen by men, are all under the sovereign control and timing of our great God and Father's will. In this particular case, it was revealed to our Lord Jesus by the Father that His glory should be seen by those particular disciples in a much greater sense, at that particular time. And it would not be revealed to others who believed, at that time.

Those to whom the revelation came, were not even permitted to speak a word about it until "the Son of Man was raised from the dead". This ought to show us something about the glory of Christ being revealed to us and to others. His glory, the excellence of His person, and the glory of Christ's kingdom coming with power is not something that men may receive just because they want it now. This was not a "cunningly devised tale" which was made up by these men. The time of its happening was not in the hands of Peter, James, and John. It was in the hands of God. God had purposes to fulfill in relation to those particular men, in regard to their ministry. Their ministry would be to both believers and unbelievers, and Jesus knew that it would be good that they should receive a greater revelation at this particular time, when others did not. The same kind of thing applies to us today; if I can word it carefully. There is even today a revelation of the glory of Christ which is given to some Christians which is not given to others, and this is given in order to fulfill the purposes of God in our day and generation. I am speaking now, in regard to some who are presently alive. I am speaking of a revelation of the glory of Christ that comes to the mind and the heart of a minister or to any Christian who desires to serve Christ and to follow Him fully. I am speaking of those who desire to act in conjunction with the written revelation of the Word of God in promoting Christ's glory and His kingdom. To these, I am saying, He sometimes does sovereignly give to them a greater vision of the glory of Christ, than that which they had before. And this perception of glory leaves an impression upon their mind and heart for the rest of their life and ministry. In relation to it, they come to understand what they in particular can do to promote Christ's glory by the power, and wisdom and presence of the Holy Spirit revealing it to their minds.

I am not speaking of the Charismatic revelations of our day which go outside the boundaries of what the Word of God, the Bible, defines. I am not speaking of those who wish to do things based on their own authority and who disregard the counsel of the elders of the church that they attend and go their own way no matter what anyone might say to them, because they believe that God has given them some special revelation. But I do believe that there is a revelation of the glory of Christ which most really and definitely comes to some believers and not to others. Or if it does come to others, it is not with such a great a measure of power and blessing. But in conjunction with the truth of God's blessed Word, and His sovereign purposes in the timing of the application of these blessings, these revelations of the greatness of the glory of Christ do come. In applying this truth, I want to say that I believe that this is what many persons, who have experienced this revelation of the greatness of the glory of Christ have mistakenly called, "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit".

I am thinking now of Reuben A. Torrey and Dwight .L. Moody, and Martin Lloyd-Jones and other godly men who have contended for this. But this experience that Peter, and James, and John were given was not given to them because they were seeking it. And it was not a “baptism” at all. Rather it was a greater experience of the glory of Christ and a filling with the power of the Holy Spirit. And I think that “the baptism of the Spirit” which those men were contending for ought to be spoken of, in just these terms. The baptism of the Holy Spirit for every believer takes place at the moment of their regeneration. They are sovereignly placed, spiritually, into the body of Christ, once and for all. And then they are personally sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The true formula is, “One baptism and many fillings”. The experience that I believe is true, for some, according to God’s sovereign bestowal, is that they receive a greater revelation of the glory of God to their heart and mind which is very personal, and not at all extra-Biblical. In their heart and their mind, it was very much like this transfiguration, spiritually speaking, taking place in their souls. It was very real; and it was almost too sacred to speak of.

Listen to the words of D.L. Moody – Mr. Moody had gone East to New York City to collect funds for the sufferers from the Chicago fire, but his heart and soul were crying out for the power from on high. “My heart was not in the work of begging,” said he. “I could not appeal.” “I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit.” “Well, one day, in the city of New York – oh, what a day! – I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name.” “Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years.” “I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand.” “I went to preaching again.” “The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted.” “I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world – it would be as the small dust of the balance.”

To comment on this – I believe that surely that this is something to be hoped for; that all believers might know something of the greater reality of the greatness of Christ’s glory, at some point in their experience as a Christian. But we dare not think of this experience of the glory of Christ in terms of a person’s being unable to do anything for Christ without it. If you have truly believed in Christ, you have the Spirit. And you will have a faith which works at promoting the glory of God and Christ. But let each person live up to the light that has been given to them, and not be seeking ecstatic experiences. Your experience of the glory of Christ, if we learn anything from this incident of the transfiguration, ought to humble you to a reverent silence; to contemplate what God is calling you to do and to suffer for Him. It will not lead you to boast of your gifts or the special revelations that have been given to you. If you have received greater revelation of the glory of Christ, it is for you alone. You can prove it to no one, except perhaps your companions who were with you at the time. But if it is real, it will lead you like the Apostle Paul to say, “Oh, that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain the resurrection of the dead.” That is where the lasting transcendent glory exists forever.

Let the transfiguration of Christ before these three Apostles be the sign to your faith that the glory of Christ is greater than your greatest conception of it could be. Let it motivate you to a greater service for Him. Christ has called you, as it says in 1st Thessalonians 2: 12: “That you might walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” God knows what degree of beholding Christ’s glory would be best for you personally. Do not covet another man’s experiences or his blessings. Rather desire to behold more of Christ’s glory that it might motivate you to serve Him more fervently and labor for Him more diligently.

Now 2nd – How should we understand what happened to Christ Himself in the transfiguration?

Are we to think that somehow Christ’s human nature and His body were changed temporarily to become what He looks like now in His glorified state? Well, yes and no. Christ

was not yet glorified, and yet His appearance was radically changed. Moses and Elijah were there. And they appeared with Him, and they were speaking with him about His death; His decease; His departure, which was about to take place at Jerusalem. They were speaking with Him about all that His death, His burial, His coming resurrection, and ascension back to heaven, would accomplish. But a veil was pulled back that night, and Christ the Man of Glory was seen; and the heavenly reality of Christ and the saints in glory came to be seen by mortal men. John says in his gospel, "And we beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Look at verse 3 once again. It says, "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them." In Matthew 17: 2 it says, "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." In Luke's gospel it says, "The appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening." When it says in Mark 9: 2 that, "He was transfigured before them", the word transfigured is "metamorpho-o", it means "to change" or "to transform". I believe that in this context it means that He was transformed in His normal human appearance so that the glory of His divinity and His perfect human nature would be seen by men as they really were seen by God the Father and the holy angels; in terms of perfect light.

Even as the hymn *Silent Night* describes, applying it to His birth; it is more appropriate to apply it to His transfiguration: "Radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace...." Jesus was revealed that night, the glorious Son of God and Son of Man, as He was, in the sight of God. And He was revealed also, in terms of the power that He would wield after He ascended to heaven. When He was raised from the dead, later on, Jesus would say, "All power and authority is given to me in heaven and earth". But here we behold and experience a small foretaste of what He looks like now, in His glory, at the right hand of the Father. God is light, and Christ is the God-man. He is the light of this dark World. He is the Sun of righteousness; He is the radiance of His Father's glory and the express representation of His nature. God dwells in unapproachable light, and no man has seen Him or can see Him, it says in 1st Timothy 6: 16. But Jesus Christ revealed Him that night. The radiance of His divine glory could be perceived in His countenance, irradiating and emanating forth from His body, so that His appearance was greatly altered.

This had a great effect upon His disciples when they perceived His face "shining like the sun". What they really saw in this transformation produced the profound effect upon them of their coming to know experientially much more of the power, the glory, and the majesty of His person. The Apostle Peter in 2nd Peter Chapter 1, verse 16 says: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." His "megalaiotes", as it is in the Greek. His superbnness; His magnificence; His majesty; His mighty power; His glory, splendor, and brightness. They realized, as they had never realized before, just how great and awesome this person was who stood before them. But I believe that His countenance and His garments shining as they did, communicated to these Apostles as well, much more than just a vision of the light of God. I believe they also perceived in this transfiguration the great holiness of Christ our Lord; the pure glory of this consummate attribute of His deity.

Actually, we could say that the revelation of the great glory of Christ had to be softened somewhat, in order that these men might not die. The revelation of the glory of Christ is far too great for flesh and blood to take in. This is why we must be changed and transformed in both body and soul to be able to live with Christ forever. "Assuredly, I say to you, that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God come with power." I would urge you today to be thankful for Christ the mediator of the New Covenant, who could give such a revelation of Himself to men that they long to know more of His glory. I would urge you to be thankful for such a glorious ministry as we have, in promoting the glory of such a Savior and Lord, as Christ is. He died so that we who believe in Him might be with Him forever

beholding His glory. John Chapter 17, verse 24 says, "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; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

Now 3rd – How should we pray for the kingdom of God in relation to the glory of Christ?

We should pray that the kingdom of God, that is the spiritual revelation of Christ, would come to us with power. I have said that God is sovereign in the timing of the giving of the revelation of Christ's glory. This is very true, but sometimes He is also very mysterious about it. When the transfiguration took place; when this revelation took place, these 3 men were supposed to be praying. That is what Luke's gospel tells us was the purpose which Jesus had taken them up on the mountain for. Luke 9: 28 says, "Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray." But then Luke goes on to say in verse 32 that, "Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep." You would think that if such a great revelation like this was to be given to them, that it would only be given when these men were in their most alert and most observant state. But it was not so that night. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter." And: "It is the glory of kings to search it out," it says in Proverbs 25: 2. The Apostles were men who, at several critical times during the ministry of their Lord, were told to watch and pray, but we read that they slept. Christ was praying in the garden of Gethsemane when the apostles were sleeping. And here, Christ was praying when they were heavy with sleep at the beginning of the transfiguration.

The lesson that we learn from this is that God's timing in the giving of His greatest revelations of the glory of Christ has often come at a time when men were not looking for it; when they were not watching, and even when they were not praying. But Christ has always been praying at that critical time. A person cannot always be so alert that they will know the time of their Lord's coming to them with His greatest revelations of Himself. The key to God's coming in greater saving and converting power to any church, and the best preparation for their being given greater revelations of Christ's glory, is for each of us to make sure that we have the grace of Christ working in our hearts now. And the best way to obtain that enabling grace is to pray for it. In this regard there will no doubt be some of us who are foolish and some of us who are wise.

Turn with me over to Matthew 25, verse 1. This is what it will be like when the time nears of our Lord returning a second time; when He will bodily and physically appear, and the full revelation of His glory will be seen. "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom." "Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish." "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept." "And at midnight a cry was heard: Behold the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!" "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'" "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'" "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut." "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'" "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'" "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

Now, even though watching was the order of the day, still all the virgins fell asleep. All ten virgins, who represent all professed Christians in every generation, have lamps. The lamps are their profession of faith; they are saying, "I am watching for you Lord". But the foolish took no oil with them during this time of going out to meet the Bridegroom. The oil which the wise brought with them is the grace which comes to any believer through "having transacted" the purchase of grace beforehand. Jesus paid the purchase price of redemption; and He payed it in

full, on the cross. But there are some who say that they are Christians who are really not. They do not pray and have dealings with God over the reality of grace in their soul. They have common grace; they go to church; perhaps they even have a form of godliness. But they deny the power of godliness. What is the power of vital godliness? It is the oil of the Holy Spirit's working in the heart of the true believer. There are some who are Christians who do not know the reality of this, and they do not go to transact this business, by praying to the Lord to ask for it. And so when the revelation of the glory of Christ comes, they are not ready, either in life or in death. At the time of the Lord's return, or at the time of your death, it will be too late to transact this. No other person can give you this oil of grace. You must come to the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord for the gift of salvation. You must come to Him to find the power and grace to be able to be a profitable servant to Christ, and to receive the vision of the greatness of His glory, either in this life or the next. Have you done this, dear ones listening to me this morning? Do you have Christ?

Peter, James, and John had transacted this business by faith in the Lord when they first began to follow Him. They had oil in their lamps on the night of the transfiguration. They were asleep at first, but then at midnight they arose and saw the heavenly Bridegroom in all of His glory! What about you? Are you ready for greater revelations of Christ? Do you pray for revival? Are you ready to die and go to be with Him, and see Him in all His glory? When Christ returns, He will come in the glory of His Father, he says in verse 38 of Chapter 8. You and I need to understand that entering in to the glory of the kingdom of God, when we die as a believer, will most certainly make up for all the sufferings, and any cross-bearing which any disciple will go through in this life. This was one of the main purposes of the Lord's giving these 3 disciples a taste of the greatness of His glory was so that they would be able to face the trials and difficulties of ministry that were coming. The Lord knows that it also the same for us, who would be His faithful followers. This revelation of the glory of Christ is not only given to show us the glory of what is coming when it comes our time to die. It was given to show all of Christ's disciples the glory of the kingdom of God coming with power at any point during this church age now.

This revelation of Christ's glory was not simply given to the Apostles and disciples of that generation to strengthen their faith. It was given to them, so that they would write it down, and thereby give it to us, in order that our faith might be strengthened now, to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God. If we are going to pursue greater holiness in our lives; if we are going to be those who practice righteousness and keep God's commandments when others are not; if we are going to "shine as lights in the midst of a crooked generation", we need to pray for a greater revelation of Christ's glory. That is what He is giving us today in the preaching of His Word. But pray for the accompanying revelation of the glory of God by His Spirit. Each of us should pray as Moses prayed: "Lord, show me Your glory." If we are going to be those who suffer for Christ; if we are going to be those who will die with holy confidence, we also will need to have a foretaste of that glory that is coming; to know something of the reality of the glory of the Lord, so that we will be prepared to meet Him face to face. You may not think that you are ready for this. But Christ knows when you are ready and when you should have further revelation of His glory. When Christ's glory and His power are sensed in this greater way in our midst we will call it revival. So why don't we begin to pray for it now: "Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalm 85: 6) May He be transfigured in our minds and hearts so that His glory shines there, and may that glory make lasting impressions on us.