

Mark 9:2-10 Feb.15, 2015

I surveyed a few people in the mall food court again this week. Here's what I asked: What do you know about Jesus' Transfiguration? Two expressed that they didn't know anything about it. A third man at first thought it was a reference to Jesus' ascension to heaven (40 days after his resurrection from the dead).



I'm guessing if we were to ask this question to a larger sampling of people, we'd get similar results. It probably isn't very well known. Even the term "transfiguration" is perhaps going to sound foreign or bemuddling to many people.

I took the opportunity each time I asked the survey question, to tell a little more about this event in Jesus' life. It's unique. Jesus gave other evidence on many occasions to reveal who he is. But this is the one time when He shown forth in his heavenly glory to witnesses here on earth. Take a look...

²After 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 enveloped 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.

I had a 2nd question ready when I was asking my survey at the mall. I told you about the one man who got this event (Mark 9) mixed up with Jesus' ascension (Mark 16:19). Once I was able to redirect him and he understood the reference, he went on to tell me several of the details from Jesus' transfiguration. He had a knowledge of what took place. I asked my follow up question: Based on that, what does Jesus' Transfiguration mean for you? He thought for a moment, and replied: not much is coming to me.

The reason I share this with you is: it might be easy for us to soak in this sight of Jesus' glory today, and move on tomorrow not really carrying the impact with us, the encouragement and direction this provides, into our daily lives. There's a wealth of application here. Let's take home what Jesus' transfiguration means for us.

Peter never forgot this day – never forgot this sight. How could he! And he wrote about the event, many years later. You'll find that record almost at the end of the Bible in 2 Peter ch.1. Just listen for a moment to what he writes for us:

"I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always remember these things. We told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory... We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."
– 2 Peter 1:16-18

Peter never forgot that day, and God makes obvious: he never wants us to forget it either.

Why is this important to remember? Or to put it another way: How can the sight of this event help us today, and in the challenges that come in the days ahead? Our goal is to answer that question.

I want to offer you a visual cue. Maybe this will help give you a reminder to ... Look back time and again to Jesus shining in his glory on the mountain. Check this out:

“As of old the beacon-fires, lighted from hill to hill, announced to them far from Jerusalem the advent of solemn feasts, so does the glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shine through the darkness of the world [for us] and...” – *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim, vol.2, p.101



Let me explain what Bible Historian Alfred Edersheim is talking about here: the beacon-fires he mentions were used during the Old Testament time after the Israelites had been conquered as a nation. They had been taken captive off to foreign lands. There were those in these distant places who still worshipped the Lord. They considered celebration of the religious days important enough that they set up this signal system. They used long poles. They went up to the top of hills and mountains. Starting from the Mount of Olives next to Jerusalem, those who had returned to Jerusalem set fire to the top of the pole, held it up, and waved the pole back and forth until they saw the next place along the chain doing the same thing. Until finally, this chain of lights upon the mountain tops brought the news to those in the lands far off.

They time and again looked to the mountain tops to see these lights. We've got more reason to look again and again to the light of the glory of Jesus shining from the mountain this day recorded in Mark ch.9. Let's complete the thought in the quote with truths we learn from the time Jesus shown in his majesty on the mountaintop.

“The glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shines through the darkness of the world and...”



...it answers the question: Is Jesus really God?

There are those who say: Jesus never claimed to be God. First off, that's just not true. Second, this is now the 2nd time God the Father spoke from heaven identifying Jesus as God the Son. And this day... Jesus also shown in his heavenly glory.

Don't be confused by all the other days Jesus looked just like you and me. That's exactly what those who were waiting were told to expect.

“*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him...*” – Isaiah 53:2

Don't think that for all the other days of his life he didn't have the same divine majesty that he shown with on the mountain top. He always did. But look at how he went about his mission to rescue us:

“*Being in very nature (form) God... he made himself nothing, taking the very nature (form) of a servant, being made in human likeness. He was found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient even to death on a cross.*” – Philippians 2:6-8

Look to Jesus and see your God. And more than that! See what your God is like.

“The glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shines through the darkness of the world and...”



...you hear an answer: Does he care? Can I be sure he loves me (in spite of all I've done)?

Here's an advertisement that hit my mailbox a couple weeks ago. It's for a fitness center. But that's not really important. Look at their sales pitch. The first words they throw at you are: "What's not to love?"

What's not to love... that might work in selling a product to you and me. But how would you feel about trying to "sell" yourself to God in a similar fashion? "What's not to love?"

Talk love, and it's easy to spot our failures. Kids, you love your parents. But how many times have you failed to show it, in fact acting just the opposite: getting angry at them, questioning what they've told you, disobeying them? Let me talk to you other men who are husbands. I love my wife. You love your wife. But how many times have we each failed to take the lead in showing loving service? Now, think of any relationship – marriage, siblings, friendship, etc. – in how many of them could you honestly claim "what's not to love"?

And then we come face to face with God in his glory. Romans 3:23 states our case like this: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Jesus stands on the mountain, and God the Father from heaven says: "This is my Son, whom I love."

That's the answer to how much your God cares about you. God the Son came. He lived up to God's expectations in your place. And after this mountain, he journeyed the road to another mountain – where he took the punishment your sin deserved.

This is the way you and I can be sure of where we stand with God: through faith in Jesus, God the Son, we are right with God. Our relationship is restored. By God's grace (his undeserved love), through faith, we are his dearly loved children.

And we love him in return. We want our relationship with him to grow stronger. We want to know his truth, his direction and his will for our lives. "How can I have certainty about that?", you might ask.

"The glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shines through the darkness of the world and..."



...brings you clarity in answering: What does God want me to know? How can I be certain about what to believe?

"Listen to him." There it is, straight from heaven. Listen to Jesus. Jesus' word - right here [Bible]. Jesus says, "This Word is truth. It cannot be broken. Search the Scriptures."

The importance of time spent listening to Jesus is especially seen when we recognize all the competing ideas that we encounter every day.

A little illustration might help remind us of this. There's more history connected with the signal fires on the mountain tops, which were used by God's people in the centuries leading up to Jesus. There were some people who had animosity toward the Jewish people at that time. And they attempted to mislead them. What they did was: they began lighting false signal fires at wrong times. Their goal was to disrupt and harass the people of God who were worshipping the Lord.



The devil attempts to harass us, and mislead us, and spread false signals that would draw our attention away from Jesus – away from his love for us – away from listening to him – away from trusting in him.

Peter said, "Remember the power and coming of our Lord Jesus." He went on, "We have the word of the prophets made certain. Pay attention to this message, as to a light shining in a dark place."

“The glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shines through the darkness of the world and...”



... gives you the way to know: what is the future in store for you?

Here’s the completion of the original quote we’ve been using, in order to highlight our key truths to carry with us from Jesus’ transfiguration:

“As of old the beacon-fires, lighted from hill to hill, announced to them far from Jerusalem the advent of solemn feasts, so does the glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shine through the darkness of the world and tell of the Resurrection Day.” – *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim, vol.2, p.101

Peter, James and John – as they came down the mountain – didn’t yet fully understand. But they kept tucked securely within, not only what they witnessed on the mountain, but also Jesus’ word to them as they descended. That word? “Tell what you saw here when I have risen from the dead.”

Is Jesus really God? Yes, his resurrection is the ultimate proof for all people to know what Jesus revealed to Peter, James and John on the mountain. He is really God. Can I be sure of God’s love and forgiveness? Yes, Jesus resurrection means God the Father accepted Jesus’ payment in your behalf. Notably, where does our resurrected Lord Jesus direct us – his people – to know his truth? His Word. Take that with you. Amen.