

Sermons
A Glimpse of His Glory
Mark 9:2-10
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I invite you to turn with me, tonight, to Mark's gospel again. And we find ourselves in the 9th chapter, as I said, at an event that is absolutely crucial in the life of Christ, but one that is so often misunderstood.

Some 20 miles northeast of Caesarea Philippi, where our Lord and His disciples have been for the last few accounts that we've studied together, stood the tallest mountain in Israel. It's called Mount Hermon. It stands more than 9,000 feet above sea level and more than 10,000 feet above the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan Rift. On a clear day, you can see Mount Hermon's snow-covered slopes literally from all over Israel.

In Mark 9, Jesus chooses three disciples to accompany Him. And then He began to climb Mount Hermon. To reach near the summit would have taken the better part of the day, so it's possible that it would have been late afternoon when the four men reached the higher elevations. Jesus left the others nearby and went off alone to pray as He was so often prone to do.

The view from Mount Hermon, as you can imagine, is truly amazing. You can see so much of the land of Israel and so much of the sky. It's possible that, by the time they arrived there, and Jesus had begun to pray, that the sun had begun to set over the Mediterranean in the west. The night sky was alive with millions of stars, all of them reflecting off the snow of the elevations further up, from the peaks of Mount Hermon.

The three disciples with Jesus were about to witness the truly extraordinary. They were there on this probably early autumn evening, the Christmas of the night and literally on the top of the world, with the constellation spinning overhead, with Jesus, about to witness the truly remarkable. Three mere mortals would get a glimpse of eternity. With them we will discover that during His earthly life, Jesus' true beauty, His true glory, were hidden, veiled as it were by

His humanity. And, here, probably on the slopes of Mount Hermon, for only a moment, three men get a glimpse of the blazing glory of the real Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Let me read it for you - Mark 9, beginning in verse 2: “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; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 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.’ For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!’ All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.”

Jesus deliberately allowed three handpicked witnesses to see and, eventually, to testify to us of His true personal identity, His true personal glory. Jesus was and is the eternal Son of God, the Lord of Glory and, tonight, we see it.

As we begin to work our way through this record of this extraordinary event, I want us to first see, in versus two and three, His physical transformation. Verse 2 begins, “Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves.” Now, it’s important to remember the context and the events that had immediately preceded this. The disciples, you remember, had confessed Jesus as Messiah. They were right about His person; they were just wrong about His mission. They were terribly wrong in their understanding of what it was He had come to do. So, Jesus in that context, made His first prophecy about the church. You see, He wanted them to know that He wasn’t here to establish a political kingdom - not at that time. Instead, He was here to establish a spiritual kingdom over which He, and He alone, would rule. And the visible manifestation of that spiritual kingdom would be an organism called the *ekklesia*, the assembly, the church.

Jesus then made His first clear prophecy about the crucifixion and the resurrection. He said, *“Let Me tell you Messiah’s true mission. Not only am I come to create a spiritual kingdom, but I have to die. I am Isaiah’s suffering servant. I’m going to substitute for sinners who will believe in Me as Isaiah 53:6 says, ‘All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way [there’s every person in this room tonight, every person who has ever lived.]; but [for those who will believe] the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him [Jesus and crush Him instead of us].’”* In Jesus’ own words, later in Mark’s gospel: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” So, Jesus says, *“I’m here as Messiah. I’m on a mission to establish the church and to create that spiritual kingdom. I have to die as a substitute for those who will become My own, who will enter My kingdom.”*

And in that context, Jesus makes a remarkable prophecy in chapter 9:1: “And Jesus was saying to them, ‘Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.’ Now, as we discovered last time, Jesus was talking about this event that we just read about, the event we refer to as the Transfiguration. That’s the most reasonable view based on the context. It follows that prophecy in all three of the synoptic gospels. And it was the majority view of the early church fathers as well. That’s what Jesus was referring to. So, “some of those who are standing here” in verse 1 refers to Peter, James, and John. Jesus provides the three of them with a confirming revelation of the reality of who He is and of His future kingdom.

Jesus often pulled these three aside. They were His inner circle. And, here, they were His personally chosen eyewitnesses. You remember the Old Testament standard of eyewitnesses? Deuteronomy 19:15: “...on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.” So, here are the witnesses: Peter, James, and John.

What were the circumstances? Six days later, after the prophecy, or as Luke puts it, “Some eight days after these sayings”. The first... The day of the prophecy being one day, six days between,

and then the day of the Transfiguration - that's eight days. They all link back to this prophecy of Jesus' death and resurrection and of a visible display of His glory.

Now, notice verse 2 says, "[He] brought them up on a high mountain by themselves." I'm not going to linger here, but Jesus absolutely loved the mountains. Have you ever noticed that in the gospel records? He prayed often in the mountains. He preached in the mountains. He performed miracles in the mountains. He was tempted in the mountains. He calls His disciples in the mountains. He assembles with His followers after the resurrection in the mountains. What is this mountain, though? Now, remember, Jesus and His disciples have been in the vicinity on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, in a town called Caesarea Philippi. Back in chapter 8:27 is when they entered that area, and they haven't left. Their location doesn't seem to change until we get all the way down to verse 30 of this 9th chapter, when they leave and go to Galilee again. So, the mountain referred to, here, is probably in the general vicinity of Caesarea Philippi.

Also, notice that Mark and Matthew, as well, call it a "high mountain". Now, I won't take much time here, but if you heard anything about the history of the life of Christ, you know that there are a lot of people who believe and that the churches, the historic churches celebrating the Transfiguration, are built in the Jezreel Valley - that little arrow-shaped valley there, just between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. That's where there's a place called Mount Tabor, and that's the traditional site of the Transfiguration. This is what it looks like. You can see that hill on the horizon there, Mount Tabor, where the arrow points. That's what it looks like a little closer up. It just sort of juts right up out of the Jezreel Valley - like that. And there's another picture from the south.

This is not likely the site of the Transfiguration for a couple of reasons. One, it's not really a high mountain. It's only 1800 feet above sea level. Secondly, it really didn't allow them to be alone because Josephus tells us, in Jesus' time, there was a settlement on the top of this hill - inhabited, even a walled city. So, that's not likely.

Far more likely is the highest mountain in Israel, which is Mount Hermon, standing some 9,000 feet above sea level, and it's less than 20 miles from Caesarea Philippi. There's Caesarea

Philippi - up north of the Sea of Galilee. And you'll notice, underneath the word "Caesarea Philippi" there's a kind of bump in this geographic map that shows elevation. That's Mount Hermon - 9,000 feet above sea level, only 20 miles from Caesarea Philippi. This is what Mount Hermon looks like. You can see it there, just on the distant horizon. And then, here's a little closer view of Mount Hermon. It dominates, as I said, the landscape of Israel from almost any perspective. These are the foothills of Mount Hermon.

Now, for what immediate reason did Jesus go up to the mountain? Luke tells us why He went up. Luke 9:28: "Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying..." Now, back to Mark's account, verse 2: "He was transfigured before them."

The Greek word for transfigured is a word you'll recognize. I've transliterated it there into English. It's the Greek word *metamorphoō* from which we get our English word metamorphosis. Metamorphosis, of course, describing that process by which an animal physically develops after birth or hatching, changing dramatically from a simple caterpillar into a butterfly. Mark asserts that Jesus was metamorphosized. He was transformed. He was transformed from one form to another.

First of all, with His face is particularly described. Luke says, "the appearance of His face became different." How was His face different? Well, Matthew says, in verse 2 of Matthew 17, "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun..." It's hard for us to picture that, but you know how it is to glance at the sun at noon and you can only keep your eye there a moment, and then it has to shift away? It's so brilliant that it blinds you, takes away your breath almost. That was the change in the face of Jesus Christ. What had been a normal human face, Isaiah 53 describes Jesus as really nothing special to look at. And, yet, in a moment, His face is transformed, metamorphosized. And it's bright like the sun. You can't continue to look.

Mark also refers to His clothing. Notice verse 3: "and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them." The word, radiant, is used in the Septuagint of the radiance of the stars. So, His clothes became radiant, exceedingly white. And

just so we get it, Mark adds, “*there’s nobody on earth that can make garments this white.*” His point is: this was supernatural. There was something extraordinary going on here. Jesus’ face was as bright as the noonday sun and His clothes were radiant, white as the stars, beaming, glazing shining. Supernatural white. Matthew says, “His garments became as white as light.” Luke puts it like this: “His clothing became white and gleaming.” Gleaming literally means to flash like lightning. We know what that’s like here in North Texas. You’ve seen, as I have, the lightning absolutely brighten the night. That was the face and the clothing of Jesus Christ in this moment.

So, you have the sun, you have the stars, you have lightning. The gospel writers, here, compare the brilliance of Jesus and His clothes to the three brightest forms of light in the ancient world. And, if it was evening or night, as it may very well have been, then these brilliant lights would have been even more spectacular with the backdrop of the dark night and the millions of stars that you could see from one of those summits at Mount Hermon.

Now, what’s going on here? What’s happening is it’s as if for a moment, the veil of Jesus’ humanity slipped away, and those around Him, the three He had specifically chosen to be with Him, got just a glimpse of His true personal glory. Here, we look over the shoulders, as it were, of the three eyewitnesses and see that, in spite of His humanity, in spite of His being like us in every way except for sin, even coming and, as He’s just predicted, suffering death at the hands of men, Jesus is far more than just a man. We just catch a glimpse of His true person, just a glimpse of His glory. That’s His physical transformation.

But then I want you to notice His unusual companions. Verse 4: “Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.” It’s interesting - Elijah and Moses. If you were to go back, and we won’t take the time to do this, but if you go back to the Old Testament, you would find that both of these men interacted with the second person of the Trinity during their lifetimes. 1 Corinthians 10 tells us that the rock that followed the children of Israel out of Egypt was none other than Christ. And Moses was there and interacted with Christ on Mount Sinai for two 40-day stints, you remember. Elijah, also, in 1 Kings 19, went to Horeb, of the Mount of God, which is another term for Sinai and, there on Sinai, Elijah also interacted with a visible

manifestation of God, probably the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God. So, here they are again.

By a miracle of God you have, not an apparition, but the real Moses and the real Elijah. Moses has been dead for 1400 years, Elijah for 900 years. And here they are again, glorified. Luke 9 describes them as “appearing in glory”. Why Elijah and Moses. What’s the significance of these two? Well, certainly, they both had a unique relationship to God. Moses is described as being the only one who enjoyed a face-to-face relationship with God. He enjoyed companionship with Him, we’re told, “as a man speaks to his friend”. Nobody else enjoyed communion with God like that in the Old Testament. Elijah, you remember, was certainly unique in his relationship with God. He was taken away without dying. And so, they’re both special in that sense, a unique relationship to God. But both Moses and Elijah, as I already mentioned, had met with God on another mountain, Mount Sinai, and probably with the pre-incarnate appearance of the eternal Son of God.

But perhaps the reason the two appear together, most of all, is that together they represent all of the Old Testament. When people living in the time of Christ referred to the Old Testament, what we call the Old Testament, they called it the Scripture, or they called it the Law and the Prophets. The Law describing the first five books of the Old Testament, the Prophets describing the rest of the Old Testament revelation. The greatest of the Old Testament prophets was generally considered to be Elijah. So, you have Moses and Elijah, and together they are the law and the prophets. They represent all of the Old Testament.

Do you see the significance of this? Here is Jesus, who’s announced Himself as the Messiah. And the disciples have embraced that. He’s described His mission. And, suddenly, the two men most responsible, most summarizing the Old Testament, are there talking with Jesus. You see, Jesus is not like Mohammed who just steals the Old Testament tradition and fashions it into his own unique self-styled religion. Jesus is not a walk on in the drama redemption. He is intimately connected to; He is anticipated by the greatest men in Old Testament Judaism. The work of Moses and Elijah points to Jesus. The work of the Law and the Prophets points to Jesus. Ultimately, they are nothing less than witnesses to the validity of the claims of Jesus to be the

Messiah, and to be the fulfillment of all the Old Testament. So, the glorified persons of Moses and Elijah appeared.

And all three gospels, that record this event, say that they were talking with Jesus. The idea behind the Greek expressions that are used is they were engaged in a conversation. I love that. That's a wonderful glimpse into heaven, isn't it? Here is Jesus in all His glory and here are two men who should have fallen on their faces in abject terror before God Himself. And, yet, they're standing there talking with Him, enjoying fellowship. They are glorified but still unique, recognizable persons. They can reason and speak, and they can enjoy interpersonal relationships with none other than God Himself.

So, what were they talking about? Only Luke tells us what it was they were talking about. Luke says, in chapter 9, they "were speaking of His departure [literally His exodus] which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." They were talking together about Jesus' death, about His atonement. Again, the Greek text implies that this was an extended theological conversation. Wouldn't you have loved to have listened in on that conversation? Moses had written of it. He'd written of the death of Christ in the first five books of the Old Testament, of Satan's head being bruised, of the Messiah coming of the seed of the woman, and all that He would accomplish. The one to whom rulership belonged in chapter 49 of Genesis. The fact that, in His glory - don't miss the point here. The fact that, in His glory, He's talking to Moses and Elijah and, together, they are talking about Jesus' death, shows what to the disciples who just heard that Jesus is going to die? It shows them that all heaven knew the plan, that it was consistent with Old Testament revelation, both the law and the prophets, just as Jesus had just explained it to His disciples.

Now, while all of this is going on, sort of "Meanwhile, back at the ranch", the disciples are asleep. Luke tells us, in verse 32 of his - of the 9th chapter, "Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him." I don't know about you, but these guys really encourage me. It encourages me to see the human weaknesses of the apostles. They've just hiked up some distance, up a 9000-foot mountain. They're tired. They've expended a lot of energy; Jesus leaves them in one

place and, as He was often prone to do, goes to another to pray alone. And Jesus has been praying, apparently for a long time. And they pray for a while too. And then they fall asleep. Has it ever happened to you? Take heart, it happened to the apostles.

When they wake up, Jesus has been radically changed. He's blazing like the sun. His face was like the sun. His clothes as white as light itself - like lightning. And there are two glorious figures with Him. And God enables them, somehow, to recognize that they are none other than Moses and Elijah.

Now, what follows their awakening? That brings us, thirdly, to His disciples' confusion. Luke tells us that after Peter, James, and John woke up, Moses and Elijah started to leave. Luke 9:33: "And as these were leaving Him, Peter [speaks up]" ... Look at Mark 9:5: "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.'" Now, what was Peter thinking here? Well, really, he wasn't, as we'll see in a moment. But on one level, what was he thinking? He's saying, "*Wow! Jesus is truly great! He is on the same level with the greatest men in human history, Moses and Elijah. It's good for us to be here. This is really great! So, let's build three tents or three palm branch booths - one for You, Jesus, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*"

Now, does Peter's suggestion strike you as a little odd? It should. Here's why. Look at verse 6: "For he did not know what to answer..." For the first time in his life, Peter didn't know what to say. But he didn't let that get in his way. He just said something. Moreover, when he did speak, he really didn't know what he was saying because Luke adds, "not realizing what he was saying."

Why was Peter not thinking clearly? Well, look at verse 6: "For he did not know what to answer; for they [the three disciples] became terrified." It's an intensive form of the word *phobos*. It's only used twice in the New Testament. They were absolutely out of their minds with fear. And in the middle of that, he doesn't want it to end, but he's afraid, and so he just starts talking, and it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

But you know what? Peter betrays an attitude that is so common in our world. Our world is filled with people who are happy to build an equal booth on their little pantheon of gods for Jesus. Let's just add another booth for Jesus. They're happy to acknowledge and follow Jesus as long as you simply make Him equal to other great prophets and other great men. I've had so many discussions with people, whether they be Buddhists or others, who are simply happy to recognize Jesus as a wonderful teacher. Let's build a booth for Him and put Him alongside the others. Let's put Him alongside Buddha. Let's put Him alongside whomever - you name it. In a sense, that's where Peter was at that moment. He was carried away with the opportunity to see Moses and Elijah, and he blurred the lines between them and Jesus. He puts the three of them in the same category. *Let's build one for you and one for you and one for you.*

God will have nothing to do with that. He will not allow that confusion of His Son to continue. And so, what we see next is His Father's declaration. Verse 7: "Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them..." The Greek word for overshadowed is a very rare word. It's used in Exodus 40 when it said that a cloud settled on the Tabernacle. The glory of the Lord filled it. So, the picture then is of this cloud that settles down on the top of Mount Hermon, the summit where they are, and envelops them, like at Sinai. Matthew adds that it was a "bright cloud". It's probably the glory cloud, the shekinah as it's called. There was a brilliant, blazing cloud in the Old Testament that represented the presence of God. It went before the children of Israel, you remember, by day and it was a pillar of fire by night - a brilliant, blazing, lightning cloud that demonstrated the presence of God. It settled on Sinai in Exodus 19. And here, it settles on the top of this high mountain, probably Mount Hermon, a visible manifestation of the presence of God in the form of a blazing, white cloud. It's like an Exodus 24 when Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain and "the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days..." And then God speaks from the midst of the cloud. That's exactly what happens here.

This happened often in the Old Testament. Out of that blazing cloud, the shekinah, the visible manifestation of the presence of God, comes a voice. Verse 7: "a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!'" Very similar to what happened a couple of years before at Jesus' baptism back in Mark 1:11. But then, Jesus talked, excuse me, the Father talked

to Jesus. Now, God the Father breaks the silence again. But this time, He speaks to Peter, James, and John. And He does so to make sure that these three witnesses of this event, and all of us who would eventually hear their testimony, understand that Jesus is unique. He doesn't fit in the same category, even with the greatest of men and the greatest of prophets - even Moses and Elijah. He belongs in His own box, His own category. He is God's unique, one-of-a-kind Son. Luke adds, "My Chosen One". Matthew adds, "with whom I am well-pleased". God the Father says, "This is My one-of-a-kind Son. There's nobody else like Him and He's the one I love. He's the one I'm well-pleased with. He's the One I've chosen for this mission. Therefore, listen to Him."

Because of His unique relationship to the Father, God the Father... Think about this for a moment now. From the cloud, God Himself speaks and says, "*That's the One! Listen to Him.*" That means both embracing what He says as the truth and obeying His commands. It really points back to Deuteronomy. You remember Moses, in Deuteronomy 18, promised that "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." That was a prophecy of the coming Messiah and now God Himself says, "*This is Him. Listen to Him.*"

When the voice is done, Matthew tells us that "When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. [I love this] And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, 'Get up, and do not be afraid.'" At this point, Jesus has returned to His human form. And notice verse 8: "All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone." God made it clear, both by what He said about Jesus and by, in that moment, sweeping Moses and Elijah away, that Jesus is unique. He says, "*This is the One. This is My Son. This is the One with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him.*" And when the disciples look up, there's no chance for them being confused. Elijah and Moses are gone, and Jesus is there alone.

Compared to the glory of Christ, Moses and Elijah, and the greatest men of the Old Testament, just vanish away. "Don't compare My Son to anyone!", Jesus, excuse me, the Father says. It's as if the Father put this sort of giant arrow above the head of Christ, pointing to Him saying, "*He is My one and only Son. He's the One I love. He's the specially Chosen One to represent Me.*"

And I am well-pleased with everything He has done and everything He has taught. So, listen to Him. Hear His teaching. Embrace His teaching as the truth. And obey it, whatever it costs you.”

Can I say to you, sitting here tonight, the Father is still saying that. God, who made you, who keeps your heart beating every moment, says to you, *“That’s My Son. What are you going to do with Him? You better listen to Him. You better accept what He says as true. You better embrace Him.”* That’s the Father’s declaration.

Fifthly, I want you to notice His careful preparation. Jesus prepares His disciples, now as they begin their journey, possibly the next morning, down the hill. Verse 9: “As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.” Now, that does two things. One, it makes it very clear that Jesus invited them there to be witnesses and eventually to testify of that. But this remarkable event that they had seen could not be fully understood, even by them, until the resurrection. So, they were only to bear witness of it after His resurrection.

Notice verse 10: “They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.” Again, these guys are such an encouragement to me, because go back to just a week before. Mark 8:31: “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man 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. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him [Oh no, that can’t happen!].” A week later, Jesus says, *“Don’t tell anybody about this until after I’m risen from the dead.”*

And they have a discussion as Jesus walks on ahead. *“What do you think he meant by that? Rising from the dead - what’s that about?”* Perhaps they had taken His earlier comments to be some sort of reference to something spiritual. They couldn’t bring themselves to believe that the true Messiah was actually going to physically die. They couldn’t come to grips with it. They didn’t get it. But Jesus prepares them for the future, not only for their sakes, but for yours and mine. Jesus said, *“I brought you along to be witnesses. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, a*

matter is established. You were here to see it. And after I'm raising the dead, I want you to tell everybody about it. I want you to write it down so that, in the 21st century, in Dallas, Texas, there would be believers who would hear about it. And the faith that I want to build in them would be accomplished."

Now, that brings us to why. What are the implications of this event? What's it all about? The first one really is already very obvious because we've touched on it. There is absolutely no question... After this event we call the Transfiguration, there's no question left about the true identity of Jesus Christ or the necessity of the cross. The two greatest men in Old Testament history, Moses and Elijah, affirmed both who he is and they talked together with Him about His death, about the exodus that He must accomplish in Jerusalem. It's absolutely necessary that He do this. So, both the Law and the Prophets, the entirety of the Old Testament Scripture, represented by these two men, witnessed to Jesus.

Then, Jesus Himself, is enveloped by the shekinah glory cloud showing that He was, in fact, God was the One who was present, the One who shaped and determined Old Testament history. And then, as if that wasn't enough, the Father adds His testimony by speaking out loud, by saying that Jesus is the One He's chosen to come to earth. He says Jesus is His unique Son, the One He loves, the One with whom He's completely pleased. Then God Himself tells us, "Listen to Him. Peter, James, John, listen to Him! He has to die. He alone is the truth. He alone is the way. He alone is the life."

The reality of Jesus' true identity was clearly revealed and there were eyewitnesses there to see it, for our sakes. Look over at 2 Peter. Peter writes about this event - beginning of his second letter. 2 Peter 1:16: "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [These weren't myths. These weren't fairy tales] but we were [underline this] eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'-- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." Peter says, "*We saw it. We heard it. God actually spoke from heaven and said, 'He's the One.'* Can there be any doubt?"

And these witnesses, these three men (Peter, James and John), were so convinced by this and later by Jesus' resurrection that they were actually willing to die for the person who had been so transformed before them. James was the first - 14 years after Jesus' death, in 44 AD. James was killed by Herod with the sword. It's recorded in Acts 12. You can read about it there. Peter came next. In the year 66 or 67 AD, some 36 or 37 years after Jesus' death, Peter died for the Lord he saw transfigured. He died crucified, tradition says, upside down. John was still alive 65 years after this event, but he was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, and eventually died there, where he got another glimpse, by the way, of Jesus' glory. Read Revelation 1 and you see the magnificence of the risen Christ displayed to John there.

Wouldn't you have loved to have been there - on Mount Hermon? Seeing Jesus in His glory? Seeing Moses and Elijah? Hearing them talk about Jesus' death for apparently an extended period of time? Seeing the glory cloud sort of come in and envelope the top of the mountain, this blazing lightning cloud? And then hearing, out of that cloud, the voice of God Himself, hearing God's own verbal testimony to the reality of who Jesus really is. That would have been great, wouldn't it?

But are you ready for this? We have something even better. Look at 2 Peter 1 again. Verse 19: "So we have the prophetic word made more sure..." Peter says, *"It was a great experience. It was amazing. We were eyewitnesses. We saw it. We heard it. But we have something even better."* "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation [somebody's individual mind, out of somebody's head], for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." You know Peter is saying? He's saying, *"I had an amazing experience that confirmed to me the reality of who Jesus was. But you don't have to have that experience to believe in Him. In fact, you have something more sure than your senses. You have the eternal Word of God."* It's like Abraham saying to the rich man in hell, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be

persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.” “*You’ve got all you need*”, Peter says. No questions left.

You understand that? Do you really understand that God has done everything you need to believe in Jesus Christ? He has made it crystal clear. And if you have not done that, if you have not brought yourself to the place of humility where you’re willing to bow your knee before Jesus Christ, you, as it were, have lifted your fist in the face of God and said, “I don’t care!”, or “I don’t believe it!” I plead with you not to enter eternity like that.

There’s one other lesson we learn, one other implication from this amazing account. Every believer is to experience an equally, radical transformation. Every believer. You see the verb transformed in this text occurs four times in the New Testament. Twice it refers to Jesus and His transfiguration. The other two times it refers to us who are believers. We are to be metamorphosized. We are to experience a radical transformation.

The first one is in Romans 12. Look at Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world [we’ve talked about that before. Don’t allow the mindset of the age to push you into its mold, into its way of thinking. We’re going to talk more about that this fall, I think.], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [be metamorphosized by the renewing of your mind], so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” You see, we are to be radically changed as well. And the way it happens is in our minds, through the Word of God. The Word of God bathes our minds. It shapes and fashions our thinking. Instead of our minds being shaped and fashioned by the thinking of the world around us, our minds are shaped and fashioned after God’s mind. It’s important to Him. Our minds are transformed.

There’s a second use of this word. It’s in 2 Corinthians - that pertains to us, that is. 2 Corinthians 3:18. I love this verse. “But we all [that is all believers], with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [metamorphosized] into the same image from glory to glory [from one level of glory to the next], just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” The point here is, as we behold Jesus Christ on the pages of Scripture, as we do as we’ve

done tonight, as we see Him, as we behold Him, as we think about Him, as we meditate on Him, as we confess our sins, as we pursue holiness, we are, step by step, metamorphosized into His image. We can be radically changed as well in our thinking and in our characters.

He was transformed before them. May God be able to say that about us in the weeks and months and years ahead.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, thank You that You have left no questions about who Jesus is. Lord, what else could You have done to prove to us who He was? As we have traveled through this magnificent gospel, as we've seen all that Jesus has done, as we've heard His teaching, and now, as we've been allowed to glimpse, as it were, over the shoulders of the three witnesses, His personal glory, as we've heard You identify Him as Your own unique, one-of-a-kind Son, Lord, we're left with no excuses for not believing Him, no excuses for not following Him, no excuses for not giving our lives to Him instead of living for ourselves. Father, I pray that, tonight, You would work in the hearts of people here. Lord, I know there are people here who have grown up in the church, whose hearts are hard as stone. Lord, let them see the beauty of Christ and let them see themselves in the reflection and hate what they have become, and see the beauty of Christ and want to be willing to give up everything else to gain Him. Father, only You can do that in their hearts. And we pray that, tonight, You would do that.

Father, I pray for those of us who are already in Christ. Confirm our faith. Strengthen our faith, even as You did for the apostles through this event. Father, more than that, we pray that You would transform us radically, from one level of glory to the next, gradually, until someday we awake in His likeness, bearing a perfect, moral resemblance to our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't let us be content, Oh God, with anything less. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!