

The Transfiguration

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The vision of The Transfiguration, as recorded in the New Testament, is one of the most enigmatic events of the life of Jesus Christ. The event has vast significance on many levels. It has particular relevance for the Feast of Tabernacles. To fully comprehend the vision, the life situation in which it occurred must be carefully analyzed, and the significance of the two persons appearing in the vision, Elijah and Moses, must be carefully considered. (Mark 9:2, 5)

Jesus carefully prepared the apostles for the transfiguration by six specific teaching situations:

First, Jesus provides an object lesson in faith in Jesus' ability as Messiah to accomplish his purpose. (Matthew 16:5-12)

Secondly, Jesus explicitly questions the disciples to ensure they are fully aware of his role as Messiah. (Matthew 16:13-17)

Thirdly, Jesus informs the disciples that their role is to bring the knowledge of salvation to the "Church". (Matthew 16:18-19)

- Jesus is the Rock
- Peter is the "representative" apostle
- Keys open doors – the knowledge Jesus was giving to the apostles is the key to salvation
- The apostles are to be given the keys to the Kingdom of God, the knowledge that is required for people to be prepared for the gift of eternal life

Fourthly, Jesus discusses the Purpose of the First Advent: for the first time Jesus speaks plainly about his crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 16:21)

Fifthly, Jesus then points out how diametrically opposed to the Plan of God is the popular conception of the Messiah. (Matthew 16:22-23)

- The apostles did not yet grasp the nature of the First Advent: they ascribed to the popular conception of a political Messiah freeing Israel from Roman overlordship and establishing Israel as the first of the nations
- For Jesus to talk of his death was unthinkable – such a thing could NOT happen to the Messiah

Finally, Jesus presents four related parables as a segue into the Transfiguration. (Mark 8:34-38, 9:1)

- Taking Up the Cross: to follow Christ requires absolute commitment
- Loss of Life: only through Christ's words of salvation is it possible to save one's life (looking to the resurrection)
- Shame in Christ: unless a person embraces and acknowledges the teaching, the words, of Christ, when Jesus comes, he will not recognize that person
- Seeing the Kingdom: this is the segue into the transfiguration which provides an object lesson on the Kingdom of God, and the meaning of this parable

The Transfiguration: (Mark 9:2-8)

- Jesus appears in a glorified state: this answers to the final parable – Jesus appears glorified as he will be in the Kingdom; Peter, James, and John have seen the Kingdom before facing death
- Elijah and Moses, also glorified, speak with Jesus: they are also represented as being in the Kingdom; they speak with Jesus concerning the Plan of God (this is clearly an allusion the prophecy of Malachi 4:4-6)
- Peter proposes the construction of three tabernacles: this is the most important feature of the vision
- Listen to him: this is the final injunction in the vision – it alludes to all the preparation for the vision

The apostles remain confused about the resurrection. (Mark 9:9-13)

The apostle John explains the solution to the confusion: only through the indwelling of Holy Spirit can the Plan of God be understood. (John 14:25-26, 16:7-15)

Three Tabernacles: our goal as Christians is to "tabernacle" with God the Father – to "dwell" in the family of God, the message of the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:16-18, 28-29, 37-39)

This sermon is based on the paper "*The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle*" located at: <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>