

The Transfiguration; The Hope of Glory

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Today I'm going to be looking at a subject which is an episode that happened in the midst of Christ's ministry here on earth. It is very uplifting. When I was doing the research for this, I found it to be very uplifting and encouraging. I hope it will be for you too, as it was for Jesus' own disciples. It concerns an event that occurred sometime in the midst of Jesus' ministry. My title today is:

The Transfiguration: The Hope of Glory

Although our focus will be on the transfiguration, I want to back up and begin with some of the events leading up to this momentous occasion. These preliminary events introduce some subjects that are referred to and carried on through the narration that we will be focusing on. Some of them clear down to today—some of the things that are brought up. I refer to them as threads; you can picture a thread which is woven into a tapestry. Once in a while that thread will show up and you will see it and it will come up again further on in another spot in the tapestry. Here in Matthew 15, I would like to break into verse 29.

Matthew 15:29 *And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. (KJV)*

In the announcements today (and it seems like every week), we have mention of lame, blind, mute and maimed. Mark's wife is hurting today, Terry's wife is hurting, my wife is hurting—if we could, would we bring them here and lay them at Jesus' feet to be healed? I think we would be glad to do that. We are going to find out that there were 4000 men that came up to that hillside, plus women and children so we don't know the total number. Jesus healed them all. Sometimes we read through these things and just continue reading. But if we would slow down and stop and consider these things, just how did Jesus heal them? He could have climbed on a big rock and looked out over the people and said, in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, be healed! I don't think He did that because it says Jesus had compassion on these people. I think it was personal. Somehow, He was able to take each one of those people, understand their situation and what problems they were going through and heal them personally. That is the kind of compassion and love that Jesus Christ had.

The response of the people is mentioned in verse 31.

31) *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. (KJV)*

These people understood that it was God the Father working through Jesus Christ Who caused this healing to take place. People glorify God but Jesus came for a number of reasons. One of the things He came to do was to reveal the Father. People knew of the Father, they knew their history, they knew what we call the Old Testament but God the Father had often been looked at as a harsh God, a vindictive God Who was ready to punish people who did something wrong. Jesus Christ came as this kind, loving, humble person who was full of compassion and love. Jesus said, if you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. God the Father has exactly the same love and compassion as Jesus Christ. Jesus acted exactly like the Father would act. The two have the same attitude, always ready to forgive on repentance and They worked together, causing this healing and this love.

Another reason Jesus came was to glorify the Father. He was always ready to point to the Father. He didn't take credit for the things He did. He always lifted people up and said My Father works through Me. He is greater than I am. These are a couple of the threads we are going to be picking up on and looking at as we go through these scriptures. God was a God of compassion and love, notice verse 32.

32) Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. (KJV)

They were up there three days. They must have planned—you would think they must have brought some food along expecting to stay awhile. They might have brought some sleeping gear; a lot happens in three days. Once again, you can see Jesus' compassion in the way He is caring for the people. He could just give them time to go to the market on the way home but no, He wanted to give them something to eat. So His disciples, in verse 33 said:

33) And his disciples say unto him, whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? (KJV)

We all know that Jesus took a few loaves of bread and several fish and blessed them, gave thanks to His Father for them and passed them out and in that way fed the people. We look at this and figure how helpless we are. I wish I could do something like that, I wish I could feed a bunch of people right now. We feel so helpless and recognize the fact that Jesus Christ could do anything; could work all these great miracles. What can I do? All I can do, is all I can do. As we heard in the sermonette, God gives gifts to everybody. He didn't give us all the same gifts; we are all different. I can do stuff that you can't do and vice versa and we can do little things.

My wife and I live on a country road and we have a bike trail right next to our place and for some reason, people think that they can come along and unload their trash along our road. We just appointed ourselves to clean it up and when we go for a walk we bring a little bag along and wear gloves and we pick stuff up and trash it where it's supposed to be trashed. God told Adam and Eve to dress and keep the garden, so here

we are and it is a little bit I will admit, but it's just one little thing that we can take on ourselves to be an improvement, to be an example to our neighbors and just help out in general.

Jesus was able to feed everybody and what we can do is to use our gifts wisely; use the gifts God gave us. Going on down in Chapter 16, Jesus' antagonists show up and confront him.

Matthew 16:1 *The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. (KJV)*

This word *tempting* actually means "tempting with evil intent". These people were trying to trip Jesus up. They wanted to get the best of Him. They wanted to see Him fail. They were not satisfied with seeing people being healed or being fed; they wanted a sign from heaven. I read a thing like that and think, if I was one of Christ's disciples, I think He would consider me one of the sons of thunder. I would be thinking, if you want a sign from heaven, I'll show you a sign from heaven; how about some lightning bolts right now, maybe a tornado—where do you live? I would tend to do that but in Mark's description of this event, it says Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit. To me, He groaned and said, why does this generation seek for a sign? What do I have to do?

4) *A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. And he left them, and departed. (KJV)*

The sign of the prophet Jonah, what's that? That is one of the little threads that we are going to be noticing and following today. They knew what it was. Matthew 12 shows this.

Matthew 12:38 *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.*

39) *But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: (KJV)*

Then He explains what it is.

40) *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (KJV)*

Jesus right there told them that He was going to be buried in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. So when He told the Pharisees that was what was going to happen, they knew what He was talking about.

Continuing in Matthew 16:13, there was another thing—another thread which we are going to be noticing throughout this message. It is that God Himself is involved with some of the things that we are able to understand. God can reveal things to you and to

me or He can actually withhold understanding. We will be seeing other examples of this further on.

Matthew 16:13 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

14) *And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. (KJV)*

They answered with names of some of the greatest, most revered and honored men in their history; these are well respected people. They actually knew that Jesus, somehow, was sent from God.

15) *He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?*

16) *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

17) *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (KJV)*

By this time the disciples had been with Jesus for probably a couple of years. They have seen His miracles; they have heard His teaching. They must have known that He was a man sent from God but Jesus was flesh and blood and flesh and blood could not reveal to the disciples, who He was. The living God, Jesus' Father, had to open their minds and give them understanding just like the living God works with your mind and my mind to give us understanding. They could not understand that Christ was the Son of the living God unless the living God Himself opened their minds to understand it.

Think about it—Jesus is giving glory to his Father, which is one of the threads we were talking about. He didn't say He was able to tell them that He was God's Son directly, the Father had to intervene and teach them that. So, God can choose to inspire understanding.

21) *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. (KJV)*

Again, He's talking about the sign of the prophet, Jonah.

22) *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

23) *But he turned, and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (KJV)*

This is an incredible warning for each one of us. Just a few verses ago, Jesus had kind of patted Peter on the back and said good for you Peter; you have got this figured out.

God is working with you and opening your mind. And here, Satan is working with Peter's mind. Just because we have the mind of God—the Holy Spirit—within us, doesn't keep Satan from bothering us. He is the prince of the power of the air, he has a lot of power. Just like he influenced Peter in this occasion, he can still influence my mind and your mind. Peter acted in a very human way and Jesus rebuked him for it.

Continuing in verse 24.

24) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

25) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (KJV)

We do have to step out in faith. If you don't have to step out in faith, you won't have faith. We ourselves have to be tested now and then.

I think these were very troubling and difficult times for Jesus' disciples. They witnessed all these great miracles, they heard all this teaching, they truly expected Christ to set up the Kingdom of God right then during their life time. Here He is talking about suffering and dying and they can't understand it. He apparently can't explain it to them. Down in verse 28, Jesus gave a few of His disciples an experience that would fill them with hope and purpose for the rest of their lives. They were about to walk through a very unique and momentous time in history.

28) Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. (KJV)

The next section of scripture in my Bible, Matthew 17, has a title over it which says Jesus is transfigured on the mount. All three of Matthew, Mark and Luke, mention and talk about and describe the transfiguration on the mount. But they all look at it from different perspectives. They all add parts to it, but not one of them has the whole thing together. So my wife and I got out a Harmony of the Gospels. This particular book was written by Fred Coulter—some of you may have it. It shows all the transfiguration accounts side by side. We sat there together and tried to weave them together in a time sequence as it would go along. You are not going to be able to follow the transfiguration as I read it, because it is all three of the accounts woven together. Just follow and listen and when I get to the end of this account, I am going to come back and look at some of the highlights and explain those as well as I can understand them.

After six days, Jesus took with Him, Peter, James and John His brother and brought them up to a high mountain, separately, away from the rest of the disciples to pray. Then it took place while He was praying, He was transfigured before them. The appearance of His face was changed, it showed like the sun and His clothing became brilliant; as white as light or as snow. That no launder here on earth is able to whiten them. And behold, suddenly two men appeared who were Moses and Elijah. They appeared in glory and they talked to Jesus of

His coming death which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem. But Peter and those with his were oppressed with sleep. When they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the glory of the two men who were with Him and it happened as these two departed from Him, Peter said to Jesus, Master it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles; one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But he was not really aware of what he was saying since they were extremely terrified. While he was saying these things, behold a bright cloud came and overshadowed them and they were afraid as they entered into the cloud and behold, a voice came out of the cloud saying, this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased or in whom I delight. Listen to Him. When the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were extremely terrified and then Jesus came and touched them and said get up and do not be terrified. When they looked around, they didn't see anyone any longer but only Jesus alone with themselves and as they were descending the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is resurrected from the dead.

So now let's go back and look at some of the highlights of this event. I will mention some of the things that struck me and hopefully, if you read it through yourself, you might find some other things that you might want to research. I found a number of what I consider to be highlights.

I will start with Jesus taking up Peter, James and John. I don't know why He didn't take the rest of them. They seem to be the main disciples, but for some reason He took those three and they said He went up a high mountain. This is probably Mount Herman. It is a beautiful snow-capped mountain and is probably the only snow-capped mountain in the area. It is a magnificent view. Apparently, you can see it from the Dead Sea area which is 120 miles away. It stands more than 9000 feet above the Mediterranean Sea, so obviously they didn't go to the top but they did go onto this mountain.

Then Jesus was transfigured and it says His face changed and shone like the sun. His clothing became brilliant white, as white as light or snow. As no launderer here on earth was able to whiten them. I found that interesting. You think about laundry. That is a modern thing for people to do but it's actually—a fuller or launder—which was an ancient or honored profession; quite a large profession. You brought your clothes to these people and they would put them in a trough and put water in there and some kind of an alkali was added to it. They would stomp on them until they were nice and clean and then put them in the sun to dry. I guess that worked very well and I'm sure that the launderers had very clean, white feet as well.

The next thing that I want to look at is the word *behold*. At first, when I read this, I wasn't even going to add it. But this word is an exclamation, an imperative particle and it is used three times in these few short verses. It means, "look here, pay attention, listen to this". In our vocabulary we would say, this is awesome. Behold, Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared in glory. This is a glimpse into the future. This is a glimpse into what God might have in store for you and me. He does. He is going to give us glory. Elijah and Moses had been dead for ages but this is looking on out into the future. Moses was

actually considered to be a type of Jesus Christ. He was a deliverer; he delivered the people out of Egypt. He was a great prophet; he was a servant of God and the people. He was a mediator between God and Israel as we are going to see a little later. Of course, Elijah is considered to be the greatest prophet. So, these two appeared in glory as they will look when they are resurrected into God's Kingdom. This whole episode portrays that resurrection which the disciples couldn't understand.

The next highlight - Moses and Elijah talk with Jesus of His coming *death or departure*. That word is Strong's #1841 and it's actually the word "exodus" and recognized as departure from the land of Egypt to the land of promise—that's what the book of Exodus in your Bible is all about. It's a type of our future—Exodus—from this sin-sick world into the Kingdom of God, again provided we remain faithful and use the gifts that God has given to us.

The next highlight - behold a bright cloud came and overshadowed them. A cloud is well-known in scripture to indicate the presence of God. It was not a cloud like we are used to seeing. We see a cloud out there and it casts a shadow on the earth, this cloud was a bright cloud. God, who has never been seen nor can be seen by human beings, dwells in an unapproachable light. Having this cloud come and overshadow them showed that God was very close, as this bright cloud was. It overshadowed them, it enveloped or enshrouded them; it wasn't just overhead like an umbrella. This cloud wrapped around them. God was very near. This word *overshadowed*, Strong's #1982, means to "envelope in a haze of brilliancy". The only other use of this word in the Bible was when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the power of the Highest would overshadow her. Mary was enveloped in a haze of brilliancy. It was truly a powerful, intimate and awesome experience.

Unger's Bible Dictionary says the main use of the word "cloud" in scripture: *is to signify the presence of God and certainly this bright cloud showed again, God's closeness; His involvement with this. God appearing in a cloud harkens back to the Exodus from Egypt when He led the Israelites in the pillar of cloud and fire and when He spoke to Moses out of the thick cloud and thick darkness and smoke and fire from the top of Mount Sinai.*

The subject of God's presence in the cloud would make a sermon or a series of sermons, it's a big subject. We just need to recognize what it indicated during the transfiguration.

Once again, the word "behold" shows up, the imperative participle. God spoke out of the bright cloud and the disciples fell on their faces. The Amplified Bible says God spoke and He said,

This is My Son, My Beloved, with Whom I am [and have always been] delighted. Listen to Him! (AMP)

Listening to Him requires obedience. Yield to Him and obey Him. In much of Jesus' life this fact is the fulfillment of a process, a promise and a prophecy that we can read about in Deuteronomy 18. This is very important as we read it in our Bible, it says, you are My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased and it says listen to Him. This prophecy is presented in Deuteronomy 18. It is part of Moses' farewell address—Moses had the children of Israel before him right before they were to go into the Promised Land. He was not going to go, so he reiterated their future and pointed out all the important things to them. He wanted them to understand because he was not going to be with them.

Deuteronomy 18:15 *The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee ... (KJV)*

We have already seen that Moses was a type of Jesus Christ and Moses understood that as well. God was going to raise up this prophet from among Israel.

15 continued) *... of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;*
16) *According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly ... (KJV)*

This was when they were before Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments; Israel heard God speaking these commandments. The whole top of the mountain was on fire, covered in smoke and cloud and they were terrified, shaking in their sandals.

16 continued) *... saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.*
17) *And the LORD said unto me, they have well-spoken that which they have spoken.*
18) *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.*
19) *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*
20) *But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. (KJV)*

This was critical. God was going to raise up this prophet, who was to be His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was going to teach God's word because God put His words into Jesus' mouth. It is a prophecy of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God's messenger who was sent by God and spoke God's word. Those who claim to speak God's word, who are not representing God are condemned by God.

The disciples understood this. John 14:23.

John 14:23 *Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man loves me, he will keep my words: [here My word and keep My word] and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

24) He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (KJV)

God said He was going to put His words into His mouth and Jesus understood that. He knew He was sent by the Father to speak the Father's words. Acts 3 shows that the disciples understood this prophecy as well and recognized that Jesus Christ fulfilled it.

Acts 3:19 *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*

20) And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21) Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22) For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23) And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24) Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25) Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26) Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. (KJV)

We cannot begin to imagine what it was like for Peter, James and John, as they witnessed that awesome transfiguration. The Amplified Bible says

Luke 9:29 *His raiment became dazzling white [flashing with the brilliance of lightning]. (AMP)*

Yet these men stood—they stood there and Peter even began babbling about building three tabernacles. In Mark 9:6 in The Amplified Bible, Mark said that Peter didn't really know what he was talking about;

6) for they were in violent fright [aghast with dread]'. (AMP)

They had to be trembling all over to be in the presence of these magnificent, glorified beings. Luke 9:34 adds,

34) *But even as he was saying this, a cloud came and began to overshadow them, and they were seized with alarm and struck with fear as they entered into the cloud. (AMP)*

Then God spoke. Their hearts must have been absolutely pounding out of their body; I think it had to be a literal miracle for them to even survive this episode. It had to be so traumatic. Even as they were saying that, Peter was still standing, talking to Jesus until God spoke and when God spoke, the disciples were on their faces in reverence and awe. Jesus then touched them and they were alone with Him and they began to descend the mountain. As they hiked down the trail from the mountain, I can imagine the thoughts that were running through their minds. It was such an exciting and sobering experience—like nothing they imagined they were ever going to be involved with. I am sure they were anxious to share this adventure with the other disciples; wait until I tell Philip and Bartholomew how this was. Wait until Andrew hears this. You Thomas are not going to believe it anyway. I wonder what he will say? In Mark 9:9, Jesus interrupted their thoughts.

Mark 9:9 *... he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. (KJV)*

They came down from the mountain and He told them, don't tell anybody—don't tell anybody what you saw and heard.

10) *And they kept that saying with themselves, [they obeyed Christ which must have been so hard to do] questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. (KJV)*

They still didn't comprehend the sign of the prophet Jonah. It is interesting that they have heard Christ talk about it in many different ways. He said, if you destroy this Temple, I will build it up again in three days. They still didn't understand what this was all about. He told them that the Son of Man was going to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth but still they didn't get it.

Mark 9:30 *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.*

31) *For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.*

32) *But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. (KJV)*

Maybe they just didn't want to know the details. How was Christ ever going to be killed and abused by human beings? There were other people who did not understand Jesus' predictions either. We are familiar with the fact that when Jesus was laid in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph—who apparently is Jesus' mother because those are His brothers—followed to

see where Jesus was going to be laid. After they saw where He was going to be laid, they walked back home and kept the Sabbath, which in this case was the annual Sabbath, the first day of Unleavened Bread. The next day would be Friday, the day of the preparation for the weekly Sabbath and they went and bought spices that they might come and anoint Him. We see this in Luke verses 55 and 56, beginning in verse 54.

Luke 23:54 *And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.
55) And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.
56) And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. (KJV)*

That would have been Friday of that week that they bought these spices and ointments and everything to prepare to anoint Jesus' body. My question is, why? Why would they do that? He told them a dozen times that He would be buried three days and three nights and would rise again. So why would you go and anoint His body to try to preserve it. Obviously, they didn't understand. Remember Mary Magdalene on the first day of the week she went to the tomb; she went and the rock was rolled back and Jesus was gone. She saw a man standing there and thought he was a gardener. She said, if you have taken His body, show me where it is so I know. She did not remember that He was supposed to be gone by then.

We could read of men such as those Jesus met on the road to Emmaus; He talked with them. This was three days after He was killed. They didn't understand it either and they were some of His disciples—not the twelve—there were many other disciples that Christ had. They didn't understand. I think it is kind of comical. The only people who actually seemed to understand what Jesus had said were the chief Priests and the Pharisees.

Matthew 27:62 *Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation [that would be the first day of Unleavened Bread], the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,
63) Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. (KJV)*

They remembered what He said, whereas His own mother and His disciples didn't get it.

64) Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so, the last error shall be worse than the first. (KJV)

So, Pilate said to go ahead and set up a guard to guard the tomb. They understood, why didn't the women or the disciples understand? Back to the book of Luke again, this time in chapter 18:31. Again here He is telling them.

Luke 18:31 *Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.*

32) For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

33) And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

34) And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. (KJV)

We saw before that God opened Peter's and the disciples' mind to know that Jesus was His Son, but now it says they couldn't understand these things because it was hidden from them. God, for some reason had withheld understanding from the disciples. This is food for thought. I have pondered over this. I think this is the most significant scripture that I have found during this research because it makes me wonder, what else is God holding or hiding from us that we do not understand. Just recently we have had a lot of things opened to our understanding. We see things now in the last few years which we have not seen ever, in the forty or fifty years that I have been in the church. God is opening understanding to our minds. What else is hidden? What else is there out of sight? This is a big book, there are a lot of pages in it. There is not one of us who hasn't had our mind opened to just these latest events. That is the relationship of Jesus with His Father and the relationship of His Father with us. We have all marveled I'm sure. I've read these scriptures. I have read them a dozen times and I have never understood them before. Why is that? I think it is because they were hidden from us until this time. I think God opened our minds to understand it now, which is fascinating.

God can reveal understanding and here we can see that God can hide or withhold understanding. Why haven't we seen this before? I think that's why—God has held it back. I wonder what is still out there; what is still hidden that we cannot perceive? What is there that we hear that we do not understand?

The next thing which comes to my mind is, why is He giving it to my mind and not somebody else's mind. I just have to say, that is God's choice. I know God chooses some out of society to give understanding to in the first place. I am sure that He would give each of us understanding at different rates as well.

What comes into my mind is that I have to give God the credit for anything, anybody understands. It is not my words, not my brilliance, not my understanding of the Bible but it is God revealing the things to people in His own good time. I cannot change anybody's mind, only God can do that. I need to speak the truth in love, in such a way that makes people want to be here and want to learn. Such a thing as the sign of the prophet Jonah to us is so utterly simple. It is hard to imagine that here we are 2000 years after these things were revealed to the disciples and the world around us is now full of understanding about the resurrection. Millions of people know about the resurrection and they celebrate it on Easter Sunday. About a day and a half after Christ was buried so they still don't understand the sign of the prophet Jonah and it is spelt out

a dozen times. The question is, how do we understand this new information? How do we represent it? How do we teach it?

I have a personal example I would like to relate. For the better part of five years I was blessed to work with a prisoner up at the local prison and I visited him every week that I possibly could for the five years—just under five years. I am really happy that I did not get to know this man while he was still out on the street because he was a one-man wrecking crew. I am sure He did nearly everything evil that there was to do. He had been a terror and there were a lot of people who were very afraid of this guy. But he also had an incredible knowledge of the Bible. When he was imprisoned, he had a lot of time to study God's word and he actually became a kind of evangelist behind bars. He would get a new cellmate and talk to him and get him to read the Bible. He would also give him reading material. Other people he knew he would talk to at lunch time. So he would teach these people but he got so frustrated he could hardly stand it. He said they listen to me, they understand what I'm saying and they nod and smile and then they go right back to doing the evil they were doing before. He just wanted to grab them and slam them against the wall, he was so upset with these people. I would say, that's not your call. It's God's call who gets to understand. Your job is to be a good example, to be patient and to teach the truth in love.

This went on and on. He heard me, he listened to me and he would go back and would keep doing his thing. He would come back and get so frustrated again that people would not become converted. I had to continually tell him that you have to be humble, you have to teach the truth in love. My friend has since died and I miss him terribly. I think back over the time I spent with him and I wonder, did God send me to him for his benefit or for my benefit? Because as I worked with him and talked with him and tried to teach him this, it finally became evident that maybe I ought to try it myself. Like I say, I could have been one of the sons of thunder. I wonder, was this guy maybe an angel in disguise? If he was, it was a tremendous disguise, this guy was covered in evil tattoos. We got to baptize him while he was in prison and he was horrible to look at. But again, I think I learned as much or more than he did.

Back to the transfiguration in 2 Peter. We cannot talk about the transfiguration without seeing the effect it had on Peter. The transfiguration gave Peter a foundation of confidence and hope in teaching about the resurrection from the dead and the eventual return of Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:16-18 demonstrates this.

2 Peter 1:16 *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* (KJV)

Referring back to the transfiguration.

17) *For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

18) *And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (KJV)*

That's the way we read those verses but it is not the way Peter would have said them. In verse 17, Peter would have said he received from God the Father honor and glory when *such* a voice came to him from the excellent glory. This word *such* that we tend to read over, is an emphatic word. It's an intensive particle. It's made to show extra force and clarity. It means "so great". This great voice came out of heaven. It was not just a regular voice, it certainly wasn't an angel's voice, it was the voice of God. So great that Peter, James and John fell on their faces even while they were talking to the glorified Christ. It was an amazing thing. This must have given Peter and should give us, an incredible amount of hope and encouragement when we look at the glorified future that God has in store for all of those who trust and obey Him.

There are actually three instances recorded in scripture during Jesus' ministry where God spoke to men. Here we have been focusing on the one in the middle of His ministry at the transfiguration. But we recognize the fact that at Jesus' baptism this voice came from heaven, saying *This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*. We are familiar with that, but in John 12, we see the third quotation from the Father.

John 12:23 *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

24) *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (KJV)*

Again, this is referring back to the sign of the prophet Jonah. The fact that this grain of wheat must be buried before it can produce any kind of production.

25) *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. (KJV)*

Jesus again predicts His death, so the very end of Christ's ministry is approaching. His upcoming trial began to weigh heavily on His mind. Jesus had known that this torture and death was coming since before the earth began. The subject of the resurrection from the dead continues as Jesus metaphorically describes the value and the outcome of His death. Verse 27.

27) *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? (KJV)*

His soul was troubled, He knew what was coming, He knew this suffering beyond description was right around the corner. He understood the enormity of the suffering and abuse that lay ahead of Him. Jesus was a human being and He knew what was coming up. He thought, there must be another way.

27 continued) ... *Father, save me from this hour: (KJV)*

Just as He said when He was praying in the garden, Father if there's another way, let Us talk about it. Then He says:

27 continued) ... *but for this cause came I unto this hour.* (KJV)

Jesus understood that He was going to suffer and He understood why He came to the earth. This was why He was here. This is the role I was intended to fulfill from before the foundation of the earth. I knew it was coming I just didn't know it was going to be this hard. But here it is. These people whom I love—these people whom I love and am suffering for and dying for, hate Me. The very people who I am giving My life for are going to spit on Me, jeer at Me and laugh at Me even in my hour of agony. Yes, My soul is troubled. But again Father, not My will but Yours be done. Ultimately this was Jesus' will as well. Jesus and the Father both loved us more than we can imagine. Then in verse 28, Jesus knew that the outcome of His agony and death would ultimately bring glory to God. This is one of the threads we've been following.

28) *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* (KJV)

Jesus came to give glory to God and He knew that because God had the power to resurrect Him from death, He was going to give glory to God.

29) *The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

30) *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.* (KJV)

The object of the Father, in speaking here, was not to encourage Jesus. When He spoke at Jesus' baptism, it was not to encourage Jesus nor was it at the transfiguration. It was to encourage you and me. These words came from the Father for our sake, to give us encouragement and to give us hope. This life has a great purpose. The ordeals that Christ's disciples both then and now must endure and overcome are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is coming; the rewards which God has in mind.

My title was, The Transfiguration: The Hope of Glory. The transfiguration gives us a glimpse or a snapshot into the future of the relationship that we can attain with each other, with Jesus Christ and with God, with His help. If we do our part, if we remain faithful and use the gifts which God has given us. God's desire was to encourage you and me. Different facets of encouragement include to embolden, to aide and support, it includes hope and trust, confidence and faith. It brings comfort and consolation and it also prompts us and leads us and draws us. God is with us. If we put Him first and give Him the glory, it lets God speed that day when we receive the glory that He has in store for us.