

Christ in all of Scripture

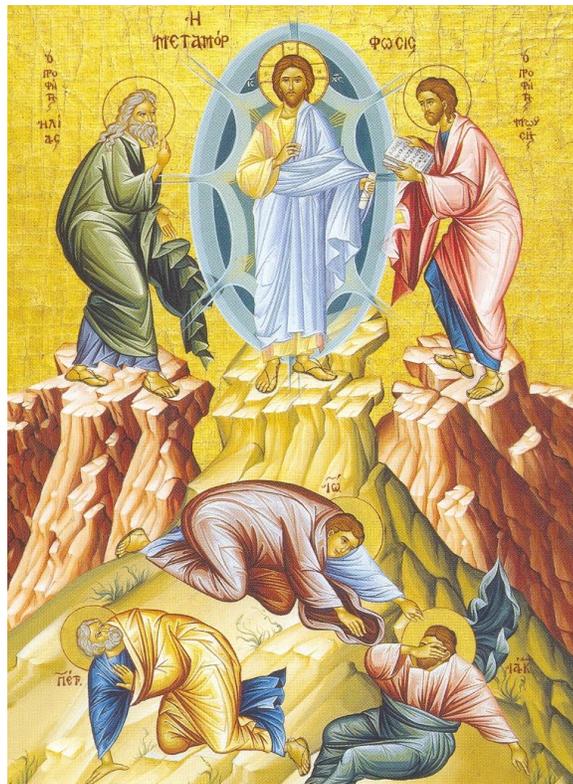
The Transfiguration of Jesus

Luke 9:28-36

Read the Passage

²⁸ Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. ³³ Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.

³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” ³⁶ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.



“The Transfiguration”



Gospel Preview in the Text

The Gospel writers are aware that the Greek word "graphein" means both "to write" and "to draw." The evangelists recognize that words can be used to draw vivid (graphic) pictures that can tell a "story within a story." By recognizing a passage as iconic, we are alerted to a foreshowing as well as a foretelling of the gospel account of the suffering (cross) and glory (resurrection) of Jesus.

THE TRANSFIGURATION	THE CRUCIFIXION
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Jesus goes up a mountain to pray (Luke 9:28).2. Peter, James, and John are singled out from the other disciples to go with him (Luke 9:28).3. The three disciples are overcome with sleep (Luke 9:32).4. Jesus' clothing is made glorious (Luke 9:29).5. Jesus is glorified between Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:30).6. Peter utters three words that depreciate Jesus: "let us make three tabernacles" (Luke 9:33).7. God says, "This is my chosen Son!" (Luke 9:35).	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Jesus goes up a mountain (Olives) to pray (Luke 22:39-41).2. Peter, James, and John are singled out from the other disciples to go with him (cf. Mark 14:33).3. The three disciples are overcome with sleep (Luke 22:45).4. Jesus' clothing is stripped away in shame (cf. Matt 27:35).5. Jesus is crucified between two thieves (Luke 23:33).6. Peter utters three words of denial of Jesus (Luke 22:34).7. The centurion says, "Truly this was God's Son!" (cf. Mark 15:39).

Prophetic Narrative of the Gospel in the Text

No scene from the earthly life of Jesus could be more contrasted to the Transfiguration than Calvary! But strangely, the glory of Jesus appears to foreshadow his suffering. Perhaps we are being shown how to see something of the Lord's glory even in his suffering! There are a number of connections that the evangelists want us to understand.

1. Jesus prays in both the scenes of the Mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane, on the skirt of the Olivet Mount.



2. The Savior takes Peter, James, and John along with him to a place of seclusion apart from the other disciples in both accounts.
3. In both scenes the three disciples are overcome with sleep.
4. In the Transfiguration, Jesus' glory shines forth through his dazzling clothing. In the crucifixion, he is stripped and suffers nakedness and shame.
5. In the Transfiguration, Jesus is in the company of Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets. They are speaking with Jesus about the "exodus" (Gk. Luke 9:31) he would accomplish in Jerusalem. The death of Jesus in Jerusalem as the Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7) thus directly connects the Transfiguration to Calvary. On the cross, however, Jesus is in the company not of holy prophets, but of two condemned thieves.
6. In both accounts Peter utters three words of folly. His word of intention to build three tabernacles diminishes the unique person of Christ by equating him to Moses and Elijah. Likewise, Peter's three denials diminish Jesus during the passion of the Lord.
7. Instructively, both accounts testify to Jesus as God's Son. The Father speaks from heaven on the Mount of the Transfiguration, saying, "This is my Son." At Calvary, the centurion testifies that Jesus was innocent (Lk) and that in fact he was in truth the Son of God (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39).

Gospel Takeaways from the Text

There is a necessary connection between suffering and glory that characterizes the gospel (Luke 24:26). The pattern of suffering anticipates the pattern of glory! Because Jesus utterly humbled himself, Paul said, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross, God has highly exalted him, and at his name every knee shall bow (Phil 2:5-11). If we too are made to suffer for Jesus, we can take comfort that the measure of our suffering anticipates the measure of glory God will give us. And the sufferings of this present age, Paul says, are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will come! (Rom 8:18)!

Peter exhorts the church to remember that the gospel is not a cleverly designed fable, but faithful witnesses attest to its truth. He invokes his own witness of the Transfiguration, recalling that God spoke from heaven, the majestic Glory attesting to the honor and glory of Jesus (2 Pet 1:16-19). This testimony is a light shining in a dark place, inviting the Morning Star himself to arise in our hearts. The power of the gospel is reassured to our own hearts when we see its saving power in new faith.

The mystery of the gospel we preach is seen in this, that while suffering normally precedes glory, on the Transfiguration we see Jesus' glory before his suffering. This preview of Christ's glory enables us to see the Mount of Crucifixion with different eyes. We can look more closely at the crucifixion and



see the glory of Jesus *in* the suffering of the cross! Wherever Jesus is, there is glory! His example of suffering in light of glory teaches us to see glory even in our own suffering!

It is instructive that in Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, after the voice from heaven corrects Peter and shows the unique person of the Son of God, Jesus stoops down to touch his disciples and to say, "Arise!" (Matt 17: 6-7). This tender gesture of the Savior foretells that Peter and the others will experience a kind of resurrection themselves after the crucifixion of Jesus.

We learn that the glory of "arising" after a fall is itself a testimony about the resurrection power that works in us already as Paul says in Philippians 3:10-11:

"O that I might know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his suffering, becoming like him in his death, that I might by any means attain to the resurrection of the dead." Jesus endured the suffering of the cross in joy, knowing the exceeding weight of glory God was working for his glory and for his people (Heb 12:1-3).

It is a great consolation in suffering to remember that the pattern of our sorrow anticipates the reward of our glory! This comfort explains the apostles' re-imagination of suffering as an opportunity to proclaim the gospel:

"So they departed from the presence of the council,
rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer for his name."

-Acts 5:41

Consider the following verses on the pattern of suffering and glory as the rhythm of the Christian life:

"Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"

-Luke 24:26

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever, Amen."

-1 Pet 5:10-11

"And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation."

-2 Cor 1:7

"But we see Jesus...for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor."

-Heb 2:9

"If indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

-Rom 8:17-18



“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

-Phil 4:11-13

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”

-1 Pet 1:10-11

“If we died with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.”

-2 Tim 2:10

“I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

-2 Tim 2:10

