

Transfiguration.

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The word translated "transfigured" in the scene on the mount is only found four times in the New Testament Scriptures — Matt. 17: 2; Mark 9: 2; Rom. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 3: 18. The first two of these passages refer to the same thing; and hence, we may say, it is used once respecting our blessed Lord, and twice concerning believers. There is, no doubt, a significant connection between these applications.

First, then, we find that when the Lord had taken Peter, James, and John his brother, and had brought them up into an high mountain apart, He "was *transfigured* before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." (Matt. 17: 1, 2.) Without entering at this time into the special character of this scene, its relation to the period at which our blessed Lord had arrived in His ministry in the midst of Israel, or its dispensational significance, we may, in a few words, consider what this transfiguration was in regard to Himself personally. When He ascended the mountain in company with His disciples, He was, to all outward appearance, but a man amongst men. To the carnal eye there was nothing to distinguish Him from Peter, James, or John. Whatever those whose eyes were anointed saw, or we have since learned from the Scriptures by the teaching of the Spirit of God, there was nothing to indicate any difference between the body which God had prepared for Him and the "earthen vessels" of His disciples. But while on the mount this wondrous change (termed transfiguration) occurred. What, then, was its nature? May we not say, that it was His essential purity or holiness breaking forth and transfusing the vessel in which it was enshrined, so that He stood before His disciples as a being of light? For "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." This vessel — His body — shrouded at other times these rays of His beauty and glory, but now, permitted to stream out unhinderedly, they penetrated through and irradiated both His body and His garments, so that He was actually and livingly glorified before their eyes.

If this were so, Christ, as He was in His transfiguration, is the presentation of what believers will be when they are glorified with Him. Hence, indeed, Moses and Elias, since they appeared in glory when they talked with Him (Luke 9: 30, 31), typify saints in this condition; and herein lies the significant connection in the use of the word on which we are commenting. Christ on the mount shows us what His people will be when He comes to receive them unto Himself; but then this mighty change is morally commenced in them while here. Thus, in Rom. 12: 2, the apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed (*transfigured*) by the renewing of your mind," etc. This Scripture shows that our transfiguration must commence from within; for the apostle enjoins nonconformity to the world, and transfiguration by the renewing of our mind. Confining our attention to this single point, the question may well be put, But how is this to be accomplished? Passing now to 2 Cor. 3: 18, the answer is found. There we see Christ, not on the mount, but glorified at the right hand of God. All the glory of God shines forth from His face, and His face, unlike that of Moses when he talked with the children of Israel, is unveiled. Moreover, all believers are brought into that place where they can gaze on

that glory. "We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord." Then we learn the further thing, that it is by beholding we "are changed (*transfigured*) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This is the moral effect of having Christ in glory before our souls. He is the standard or model; and we, while beholding, are through the power of the Spirit gradually transfigured on towards the likeness of Him on whom we gaze. We say "on towards," because while here in the body we can never be completely conformed to the glorified Christ. It is therefore a gradual moral transfiguration; every ray of His glory that falls upon our souls being made, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, to have this effect.

But, as we learn from other scriptures, when the Lord comes "we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3: 2); for then even our bodies will be changed into the likeness of the body of His glory. (Phil. 3: 21.) Then, according to the purpose of our God, we shall be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. 8: 29.) A passing glimpse of the glory of the One to whom we are to be conformed has been vouchsafed even in this scene. And while we wait for the full accomplishment of this wondrous thought of the heart of God, the blessed responsibility rests upon us of being "transfigured" daily by the renewing of our mind; and we learn that this responsibility can only be met by the blessed occupation of gazing continually upon the glory of the Lord. Thus engaged, we are "transfigured" into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; and while so employed, we wait every moment in the expectation of the time when we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, when our transfiguration will be finished, when we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

What grace! what mercy! what love! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen. E. D.