

**File No. 128**

**MATTHEW 17:1–9**

Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–36

**JESUS SHINING BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN (TRANSFIGURATION)**

(SBS Bk 5 Story No 10)

*Story Notes*

Peter, James and John were called to see Jesus transfigured. Here, as Peter later said (II Pet. 1:18), three of them saw Jesus glorified on the 'holy mountain'. Moses and Elijah joined him and they talked together about the new exodus that would happen (Luke 9:31). All the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) would be fulfilled in the liberation Christ would gain for his people by his death.

The term 'holy mountain' is always used of Zion of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, the place of David's throne. Even though Jesus was not literally in Jerusalem, 'this mountain' was the place of enthronement for him and therefore, could be called 'the holy mountain'.

Surrounded by such glory, Peter said it was good to be there. Obviously, Jesus agreed because he had taken them with him, but his purpose was not for them to stay there but to hear the Father acknowledge his Son.

It was this word that terrified the disciples rather than the vision, but they could no longer bear to look at Jesus. Peter knew Jesus was the Son of God but could not have known it as he now heard it. Jesus was the Beloved Son and Servant of the Lord who pleased the Father and who would be Judge and King over all the nations. This was the day that had been foretold in Psalm 2:6–8 and Isaiah 42:1–4. This word had been heard at the baptism of Jesus (3:17), but now, with the added command, to listen to what the Son said.

Jesus touched them, and told them not to fear. Only Jesus was present now, and in his usual appearance. The glory of God was not intended to make them fearful but to bring them to sonship.

Later, Peter said the word of the prophets was made more certain to them by this event (II Pet. 1:19). They knew Jesus would fulfill all God's purpose.

For the moment, what had happened on the mountain was not to be told to anyone (cf. 8:4; 16:20) until the Son was raised from death and the 'exodus' had been accomplished. After his death and resurrection, the nature of Christ's kingship would be clear to his disciples and he did not want them embroiled in the confusion of public debate before that time.

Seeing Elijah on the mountain may have reminded the disciples of the scribal teaching that said he would reappear before Messiah's coming (11:14; Mal. 3:1; 4:6). Everything seemed to them to be ready for glorious fulfillment. But neither they nor the scribes could recognise that John the Baptist was that Elijah. His sufferings did not fit with the glory they imagined for the coming kingdom, and they still had to learn that Messiah would suffer.

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