

Transfiguration

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 June 2008

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] in the Gospel chapter 9 on page 1040 where we come to this glorious passage of Scripture.

And again to remind ourselves and specifically for those who haven't been with us over the last number of weeks, we've been seeing that in the last few chapters Luke has been, Luke the Doctor, Luke the one who is giving a reasonable and well examined eye witness account, from eye witness account of Jesus life, has been asking the question who is Jesus and he's been building up this picture of who Jesus is and we've seen that picture being built up and we've seen the facets and the aspects and the angles that have been given to us about the character and the work and the purpose of Jesus probably culminating last week in what he was saying about the cross, very different teaching to what they had expected, very different image of the Messiah that they were used to, the Old Testament, kingly Messiah that we were singing about. They expected to be an earthly king leading an earthly paradise, overthrowing their national enemies and so Jesus is speaking about a different work that he has come to do, a spiritual kingship but also speaking about the cross and the death of Jesus Christ. And these questions about who is Jesus come to their conclusion here really and the final word is from God, the final word is from God Himself and that kind of seals the picture, not only in what Jesus says but when Jesus allows to happen to, what

God allows to happen to Jesus. Why? Why should the disciples follow Jesus to the cross? Why should they follow Him on this way? Why should they deny themselves which is His previous message? Why should they lose their life? Oh God lays on a plate for them, why? Not only for their encouragement but for Christ Himself. And we have this unique event in the life of Jesus which is entitled in this passage, the Transfiguration, that is from the Greek word which isn't used in this account, it's used in the other two accounts but it's a word that we would know well of when we transliterate as metamorphosis, something that is changed, that is a word that is changed into a butterfly. The children will know that word sort of because of transformers, the toys they have, transformers that are changed from one thing into another, from being a car into being a whatever they change into, I don't know I can never do it,

I can't even get a scooter to go up on this front which I was trying to do yesterday. But these kids come in and they change from one thing to another and in an instant they know how they work, they are changed and so that's kind of where the word of being transformed, being different comes from. It's used in Romans 12 about ourselves, that we are living sacrifices, we are not to be conformed to this world but we are to be transformed, we are to be changed, it speaks of a radical change, a real change, an inner change from within that changes, maybe not our looks but it changes what we are from the very inside out so that we are transformed by His love and by His grace and He promises us a new heart. So that is the kind of word that is used here of Jesus, He became different, He changed, He was transformed, He was transfigured before them and it's this great picture of Jesus who emptied himself, who emptied himself to be born in a manger where His glory was hidden and where His kinship and where His divinity was hidden and where it was hidden throughout His childhood and

His youth and throughout, even to a degree, His public ministry but was dripped into people's experiences, they saw the miracles and as they recognized who He was, here it explodes from Him, His divinity. It's the final word as it were from God on this being, this Jesus Christ being God. It is God's revelation to us of exactly who Jesus is that He is glorious.

[5 : 03] His glorious reveal we are told, glorious splendor, it's a picture of God, it's a picture of who Jesus is as God the Son. It's for Jesus a foretaste of what He will be like in heaven in His ascension. It is the glory of God made known and revealed and seen even so only to a degree, even so only to a degree. But nonetheless it is this amazing change as it were from humiliation and from emptiness to fullness and to exaltation here on this mountaintop and undoubtedly this event was for Christ's encouragement in His humanity.

He had very clearly and Luke delineates that in this Gospel that he had begun to set his face for Jerusalem. He had overcome the temptations of Satan. He had preached where he was wanting to preach and now he was setting his face to Jerusalem even though the disciples were saying don't go there, they want to kill you there. No, he had set his face. The foreordination of God was that he was to be going to Jerusalem to the cross to his ultimate purpose for coming into this world. And so at this point he is encouraged with a mountaintop experience, armed by the physicality and the reality as a human but as God of the glory that was His, that united him with his Father and that was close, that reminded him of the closeness of what he enjoyed. It was also a taste of what lay ahead for him in his resurrection and his ascension to the right hand of the Father. He needed that. Christ needed that at this point. So it was for Christ's encouragement but it was also to teach the disciples. Their previous ideas had been shattered. All that they had believed about Jesus was being changed and there was undoubtedly an element of confusion in their lives and in their thinking. They were maybe mentally a bit confused by Jesus' teaching. They still were told in one of the other accounts of the Transfiguration. They still didn't understand about what Jesus said about being raised from the dead. There was still an element of confusion. They still didn't see and they were also tired. They were tired in following Jesus so much so that even when Jesus asked them as He does again, does He not, to watch and pray with them, they fall asleep? They are sleepy on this mountain top and yet they wake up to see this vision, this reality, this experience of Jesus that they never had before. We will go on to see what they heard but this tremendous visual picture was so important to them. It was very important to them. Can I tell you that? Very important if you look with me and turn with me to 1 Peter 1 and verse 16. We have these words and they are very important words for us to remember that the Transfiguration was something that the disciples needed and it was for their teaching. He said, we did not invent cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eyewitnesses of His

Majesty. They sensed His Majesty and His kingship for He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the majestic glory saying, this is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard that voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain, connecting their mature understanding and teaching and expression of their faith in what they had experienced on the mountain of Transfiguration. It was important because they saw that Jesus is the King of Kings, something we need to see also. So we have the Transfiguration in and of itself, glorious revelation for us and for Jesus. But then we also have the appearance of Moses and Elijah, two men. Moses and Elijah appeared in glorious splendour talking with Jesus. Amazing reality.

To foundational Old Testament characters was so remarkable. I do not know how Peter and the others knew that they were Moses and Elijah. It was obviously made clear to them. But it was so amazing that Peter was still half waking up. He did not know what to do. He wondered whether they should make a tent or a tabernacle there. Everyone would stay together and they would not leave that place. He did not really understand what it was about. But it was glorious and he went on and would have gone on as we do to understand. It speaks so clearly to us of the unity and the greatness of God's plan of salvation. Earlier Jesus had said in Matthew 5, I have not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them.

And here is a visual representation of that verse, of that text. It would be great if we had visual representations of every text that we preached from. But there is one for us that is visually made clear with Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets. And they are on this mountaintop with Christ in the centre unifying all of God's purpose and all of God's revelation and all of God's plan from Gethsemane in terms of its revelation to us. Gethsemane, sorry, Eden to Gethsemane, Eden to the cross. And all that is pointed forward to that moment, the perfect plan symbolised, made clear in these three representative figures that we have, personalised, so that we have a reminder that the law and the prophets we are pointing forward to, Jesus Christ who is in the middle here and all that He was coming to do and all that He was coming to achieve. Isn't that a great reward for these guys, apart from the theological reality and the teaching?

[12:11] What a reward for these great men of faith that they didn't know anything about when they died. What a great reward that they appear in glorious splendour talking with Jesus. I think it is significant that we have no record of their graves or their burials in scripture.

Moses, we are told as no known grave. And Elijah of course was taken up to heaven in a chariot and could explain the physical nature of their appearing here in bodily form. But both experience Jesus Christ in this marvellous rewarding way. Both already experienced the glory of the Lord in their own lives on mountaintops before. Moses had experienced that on Mount Sinai. And Elijah, a couple of times I guess on mount Carmel and on mount Horib where God passed the glory of God, passed him a small voice. Both of them looked forward to, both of them prophesied, both of them spoke about this king, this Messiah who was to come. Now they stand beside him. It is great, isn't it? It is clear, it is gentle, it is powerful.

Not only is it a great reward but it is also a great discussion that they have. We are told that they discuss in verse 31, his departure which was about to be brought to fulfilment at Jerusalem. What a discussion! They are discussing what lies ahead, his departure. Now the word that is used is the same as the word for exodus that we use for exodus. His exit, his way out, polite way of saying his death. But wouldn't the talk of his exodus be significant to Moses who led the people in exodus out of Egypt to the freedom of the promised land through the death of the firstborn? The lamb, the Passover lamb, Moses would recall and know and understand that it pointed towards this great death of Jesus. As would Elijah who from Mount Carmel knew of the sacrificial giving of a lamb, sacrificial offering to

God. As Moses, you remember if you know your Bible is the story of the snake being lifted up in the desert, Moses knew all about that and would have pointed forward to the Son of Man being lifted. So must the Son of Man be lifted up, speaking of crucifixion. What a discussion! Not an afterthought. The death wasn't just a mistake, it wasn't something that happened obviously and God took it and used it and changed it. Clearly and we know that we are reminded and encouraged to be reminded that the plan and the purpose is from before the foundation of the world clearly laid out the only way for us, gloriously reminded in this passage, but not only the appearance of Moses and Elijah but also the cloud of glory.

I wish I had more time to look at the cloud of glory. There is so much we could say about the cloud of glory that appears here so beautifully and which speaks about Jesus while he was speaking. A cloud appeared in verse 34 and enveloped them. They were afraid as they entered the cloud. So clearly in biblical symbolism the cloud being symbolic of the presence of God, the pillar of cloud by day that followed the Israelites and of fire by night symbolizing God's presence. The cloud that descended at the entrance of the tent of meeting, the shekinah glory cloud that came on the atonement, in the holy of holies atonement seat and spoke of God's protection and God's presence and God's nearness and God's favour and God's blessing. And what does Ezekiel say is so terrible that the glory of the Lord has departed from the temple or that the cloud of the Lord, the presence of the Lord, whatever happens in your life if the presence of the Lord departs from you as a Christian, there is nothing that is more awful than that. And so the cloud symbolizes and speaks of God, God's approval and God's blessing and God's presence and then we have God's voice. This is my Son whom I have chosen. Listen to him. All kinds of connotations with Old Testament revelations of God. This is my Son. Prophetically we have sung it in Psalm 2. The installation of Jesus as the King of Kings, the ascended Savior, spoken of here as if the work is done. You are enthroned on high because of who you are. This is my Son. Clearly Old Testament language speaking in kingly terms of Jesus. Who is Jesus? He is a prophet, he is a priest, he is a king we are told. Well here it is spoken of in kingly terms. Then he says, whom I have chosen? Reminder of the language of the servant of Isaiah 53, the chosen one of God, the priest set aside to do the work of God, prophet, priest, sorry, king and priest. And then he says, listen to him, prophet, listen to him. And Moses, if by the time he gets to glory his memory is good, which I am sure it is, unlike mine. We have that. He would have remembered saying that himself in Deuteronomy chapter 18 and verse 15 where he says, the Lord your

[18 : 21] God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. So we have all this language of God here. It is not just plucked. It is not just spoken in the moment. It is encapsulating generations of revelation of the outworking of God's purpose. All is made so clear by God. This is the Son. This is the Savior. This is the Redeemer. I love Him. I am protecting Him. I am involved intimately in this salvation.

I am not a distant God who has wound up my Son and sent Him off against His will. I am incredibly involved in this salvation. We are reminded of that. And that is a great encouragement to Jesus at this time. That God the Father at the moment where He is heading towards the cross, God the Father envelops Him with His love. As glorious as the forsakenness He would shortly feel, loved by the Father, agreed this work by the Father, involved the Father, encouraged Christ and also taught the disciples in us, surely listen again, listen to Him, not listen to Him because He is a prophet from long time ago, not listen to Him if you have got a few spare moments now and again, but listen to Him because He is God. Listen to Him and you know the disciples needed that. Listen to Me as I head towards

Jerusalem and Golgotha hill. It is not what you expect. Salvation is not what you expect. Did even the angels expect it? The Son of God to be nailed to a tree. Listen He said to Me, uniquely authority. God the Father sets Him apart here as uniquely authoritative.

Listen to Me. So as we close, can I just give one or two, and it maybe seems irreverent to bring it down to a practical level, but it is all there for our to enable us to worship and to know more of our Saviour. I think at a very practical level, and it is almost on this side here, is not it very easy for us to sleep and not pray? The disciples were expert at it, they did it, you know, and it is recorded several times they did that. They slept when they were asked to be praying. They were asleep when they were asked to be spiritually vigilant. And when we are sleeping we are not really listening. We are not listening to Jesus. And indeed we are not worshiping or speaking to Me either. So there is a very practical lesson there for us to remind us of the dangers of being asleep spiritually, of being silent spiritually, of being not in communication on a regular basis with Jesus Christ our Lord. Not listening, not praying. What are we missing? That is the case. If you are not a praying person, what are you missing? I don't care what you know in your head. What are you missing if you don't know Jesus at this personal, revelatory, relational way? Easy for us to sleep and not pray. But it is also a great reminder to us, as we have seen of the majesty of God's plan that is just encapsulated in this event. That God just brings everything together, He pulls so much of revelation together in this event for us to see from Eden to Gethsemane, nearer side of that, to see all the perspective of the Old Testament and the shadow and the figures and the types and the experiences and the preparation bringing us to Christ, seeing a sovereign God at work. We will never stop learning about that. We will never stop to be amazed by how much perfection and glory there is between the Old and New Testament, between God's purposes and God's revelation and God's fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is a worthy God. We serve a worthy God, but also the glory of Jesus Christ. Because if anything else is made clear here, it is of the majesty of Jesus, the kingship of Jesus, that He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

That is important for us. You might not see that now, and I know I don't see that as I should, but it is a reminder to us that that is the King that we will meet one day, and that is the future kingdom that will be ruled by this sovereign. It might not seem like that at this stage in our experience, and we will maybe be reminded of that again this evening, but we recognise and the reality of that is sealed by what happened on the cross. The glory of Jesus Christ is a crucified King. It never can be other than utterly central to our faith that the King of kings that we believe in and that we serve is a crucified and resurrected Savior. That is the kind of King we serve. It is utterly counter cultural in everything it says and does, and His glory is revealed most of all in His suffering.

[24 : 20] For us, I think there is a great mystery in that, but there is His glory is most revealed. The glory of His character, of His being, of His love is most revealed in that He is a suffering Savior, a denying Savior, denying Himself His glory, emptying or taking the form of a servant, dying in our place, experiencing the forsakenness within the Trinity, within the Godhead. That suffering reveals His glory, most reveals who He is most, and it is a glory in which we share when we become Christians, because that reminds me of the compatibility that there must be in our lives between glory and experiencing God and enjoying God and suffering. You see, as glory is revealed in the context of Exodus, departure, death, suffering, inner place, substitutionary, but in our lives there is this recognition that for us to enjoy the experience of the glory of Jesus in our hearts and in the lives which we share, as

John 17 says when we become Christians, we share in that glory the glory of knowledge and love and fellowship and all that goes with it. It comes through suffering, it is not that suffering is redemptive, but it is the road in which we travel, that we recognise that we will only ever know and enjoy the love and the glory of God when we deny our self-centred and sinful right to self-government, when we deny that we are lords of our own lives, when we give Him the rightful place, where we admit to our lostness, when we see that becoming Christians we enter into a battlefield that we never have experienced up to that point. So while we share the good news, we recognise that there is not a catch but there is a cost and that the glory of Jesus, knowing His love, can only be experienced as we recognise our need, as we recognise our desperate, desperate need for Him, as we recognise the place that we have come to because of our sin, the mess and the torment and the hopelessness and the despair. You know we will not seek the Savior unless we recognise these spiritual truths.

Now we don't need physically to be in the gutter to recognise that. We can be middle class and recognise that because it is not a class issue, it is not a cultural issue, it is a spiritual issue. It is about recognising spiritual poverty and our need before Jesus Christ and that way of suffering where we are without hope in ourselves, where we recognise that it is through losing our life, as Jesus has taught in the previous chapter, that we will find our life. That is where we experience the glory. That is where we share the glory. There is that intimate link between glory and suffering in Jesus and for His followers. And we are also encouraged by God's perfect timing of encouragement where Jesus and the disciples is not great. God the Father at this point gives a perfect moment of encouragement. Let's look at that very human side as well as all the glory of the divinity and the revelation.

Jesus needed encouragement and strength to go on. His disciples needed that. Do we not need that to go on? Do we not need encouragement and strength? Are we not weak, struggling?

Can we not look forward to worshipping the King of Kings who is ascended today along with Moses and Elijah who are there also but Jesus is there as King of Kings? That is the great hope we have as Christians. It is a hope. It is not a vague hope like, oh I hope it is going to be a nice day tomorrow which is a very vague hope here. But it is a sure and certain hope. It is not a longing. It is a hope that is based on these firm truths, these firm realities. Sure and certain hope of the resurrection is what is the basis of our recognition and our knowledge that we will be with Jesus Christ. That is a great hope and a great encouragement to carry on and to be strong. Let us be strong when we lose our friends. Let us be strong when we go out and serve. Let us be strong when this mission team share the gospel. May they be strong and encouraged by the God and the King of Kings that they serve. That he has many people in this city. May that be their experience and ours. That is our heads in prayer. Gracious God we ask and pray that you would go before us, that you would bless us, that you would teach us from your word, that we would be encouraged, that we would be lifted up, that we would be taught, that we like Peter would remember these events and remind ourselves that our faith is not based on cleverly invented stories but on the revelation of God through his word and through the spirit in our hearts.

[30 : 12] Gracious God we ask that that would transform us as we have a picture of the transformed, transfigured God in Christ. And may we continually be seeing that happen in our experience. Lord bless our parting Sam. Bless us as we worship together throughout this day and hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.