

## **Foundations: CONFIRMATION**

**Mark 9:2-8 (AFBC 1/21/18)**

<sup>2</sup>After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup>His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."  
<sup>6</sup>(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)  
<sup>7</sup>Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" <sup>8</sup>Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except  
**Jesus.**

We call this event in the life of Jesus "The Transfiguration." We call the place where it happened "The Mount of Transfiguration."

Only thing, we don't know which mountain it was—only that it was "a high mountain."

What we do know is that Jesus went there with three of his disciples—the three men who seemed to form Jesus' inner circle. They always seemed to be with Jesus in his most critical moments.

Peter, James, and John went with Jesus to a mountain to pray. While they were there, something amazing happened.

Matthew tells us that Jesus was transfigured, or... transformed. In other words, His appearance changed.

The disciples saw Jesus in some kind of glorified state. His face shone with the brightness of the sun. His clothes became dazzling white.

Then there appeared with Jesus two of the greatest characters from the Old Testament: Moses and Elijah. The disciples watched as Jesus talked with them there on that mountain top.

If you remember the stories of these two men, you know that they each had their own mountaintop experiences; but now

they're with Jesus in order, it seems, to help Jesus' disciples understand who He is.

This is all so spectacular that Peter cannot just stand there and watch. He has to do something.

He says to Jesus, "Lord, this is wonderful. We're on holy ground. We ought to stay put right here. Let me build three shelters—one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Peter wanted to set up camp and stay right there on top of that mountain; but Jesus wouldn't allow it. Jesus knew His mission would be back down off that mountain in the valleys of life—where folks are sick, hurting, and lost.

Jesus would be about the Father's business until, eventually, this would take Him to yet another mountain top experience—the one on Mount Calvary.

Think with me, please, about the message that comes to us from the Mount of Transfiguration. If we look at this story with the eyes of faith, I believe we'll find the Gospel here.

In fact, the entire Biblical story of God working to save His people is summarized and expressed through the significance of the three men who met and talked together that day on this sacred mountain top.

Moses, Elijah, and Jesus—what I want you to see today is that each of them has something important to communicate to us concerning the redemptive work of God among his people.

**1.** Let's begin with **Moses**. What was the significance of Moses?

Two things: a) God worked through Moses to deliver the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt. b) Then, at Sinai, God used Moses to communicate His law and the demands of his covenant to His people.

You recall that it was there, at Sinai, that Moses had his mountain top experience with the Lord. For forty days, Moses communed with God on that mountain. He received God's law on tablets of stone.

When Moses came down from the mountain, the Bible tells us his face was radiant from being in the presence of God. Moses delivered God's commandments to the people.

Now it's easy for us to be confused about the nature of God's law. These are not random regulations imposed by a God who needs to show His people who's boss or who's in control.

The giving of the law was a gracious act by a God who loves us, and desires only the best for us. For life to be good for everyone, there are certain rules which need to be followed.

Life itself must be respected, thus murder, the intentional taking of another person's life, is forbidden. The family is protected with laws about respecting parents and honoring marriage vows.

Laws against stealing and coveting protect one's property, while regulations about the Sabbath help to keep that property in proper perspective related to one's own health and well-being and relationship with God.

Of course, foremost are the laws concerning the love and respect due God Himself. In Judaism, the first five books of the Bible are called the "Torah." "Torah" means "instruction, or guidance."

This is really the purpose of God's law. It provides guidance and instruction for living. The God who redeemed his people from slavery and entered into covenant with them also has a purpose for their lives.

To follow God's will and keep his commandments would bring life and blessing to the people of Israel. This was God's promise.

So... there on the Mount of Transfiguration was Moses, the man who brought God's law to His people—a law which was for their good, but also a law which God expected to be obeyed.

That's the message I get from Moses' presence on this Mount of Transfiguration.

**2.** The second person we find on the mountain is **Elijah**. As Moses excelled in delivering God's law, Elijah excelled in pointing out clearly and forcefully when and where these laws had been

broken. Elijah was a prophet—a proclaimer of truth--often regarded as the greatest of all the prophets.

It was the prophets' calling to uncover the chasm between the way things are and the way they ought to be. The prophets spoke to people on behalf of God. They delivered a message they had first received from God.

Now, like Moses before him, Elijah also had a well-known mountaintop experience. For Elijah, this took place on Mount Carmel where he had his encounter with the 450 prophets of Baal.

In a day not so unlike our own, when people could not decide which, if any, god to follow, Elijah summoned the people to Mount Carmel.

He shouted at them, **“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is god, follow him” (I Kings 18:21).**

The story continues in I Kings, chapter 18. Elijah had a sacrificial bull placed on each of two separate altars—one for Baal, and one for the Lord.

He challenged the prophets of Baal to call upon their gods to send fire to consume their sacrifice--which they did. But the fire never came.

When they finally gave up, Elijah went to work. He had a trench dug around the Lord's altar. The sacrifice was doused with water again and again until even the trench below the altar was overflowing.

Then Elijah cried out to the Lord. Soon, fire descended upon that altar, consuming the sacrifice, the wood, the stones--even lapping up the water in the trench.

The people of Israel witnessed all this; and they began shouting, “The Lord—He is God! The Lord—He is God! Then, on Elijah's command, they seized all 450 prophets of Baal and killed them.

This was the clear message of the prophets: when God's law is broken, there's judgment. And if God is forced to execute his judgment upon a person or a people, it will destroy them.

The prophets had a keen consciousness as to the nature of sin, and the separation from God to which it ultimately leads. We've almost lost this in our day.

But on the Mount of Transfiguration, we see the prophet Elijah; and we're reminded of both the reality of sin and God's judgment upon it.

Moses reminds us of God's law. Elijah reminds us of God's judgment upon those who break His law.

**3.** And then, finally... we see **Jesus**. As we study this scene atop the Mount of Transfiguration, we see Jesus--for this was, after all, HIS mountain top experience.

Mark tells us that Moses and Elijah were there to talk with Jesus. We may wonder what they said to our Lord.

Mark doesn't tell us; but in Luke's account of the transfiguration, we are told that Moses and Elijah **"spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem"** (Luke 9:31b)

The word translated "departure" is interesting. In Greek, it's the word "exodus," the same word that serves as the title of the second book of the Bible, and the word that is always used in reference to the departure of the Hebrew people from Egypt.

The exodus is crucial to our understanding of the Old Testament. It's the pivotal redemptive act of God whereby He delivers His people from bondage. Moses had served as God's human mediator of this divine deliverance.

Now, it was Jesus' turn. He would be the new Mediator of God's salvation, the great Deliverer from bondage to sin and death.

Jesus had tried to explain this to his disciples. Only days before, Peter had made his great confession at Caesarea Philippi: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But when Jesus tried to tell his disciples that he would have to go to Jerusalem and suffer and die there, Peter rebuked him. **“This shall never happen to you, Lord,”** he said (Matthew 16:22).

Jesus knew, however, that it must happen. Moses and Elijah met Jesus there on the mountain. They confirmed to Him His mission of delivering His people from their sin.

Did Jesus need this word of confirmation? I don’t know; but I feel quite sure His followers did.

They needed to hear this clear word of confirmation from the Heavenly Father: **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.” (Mark 9:7)**

These words from the Father reminded the disciples, as they remind us, of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He is God’s Son sent to love us, and, as His ultimate expression of love, to die for us all... so that “whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

This is the Gospel. It’s the good news that completes this message on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Moses’ presence reminds us that God has established laws that provide guidance for us in the living of our lives--and God expects His laws to be obeyed.

The presence of the prophet Elijah indicates that we have often chosen to break God’s law, and we are thus subjected to God’s judgment.

Then there’s Jesus; and He brings to us the good news that there is forgiveness of sin and eternal life for “whoever believes in Him.”

Did you hear what the disciples did after witnessing the Transfiguration? They fell on their faces in fear. But Jesus came to them, touched them, told them to get up...and not be afraid.

Then the Bible says, **“When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus” (verse 8)**. What’s the message? Simply that there is no one for us to look to for the forgiveness and salvation that we need but Jesus Christ. This confirms it—Christ alone!

Yes, we should always try to follow God's law for our lives, but with the understanding that no one has ever done this perfectly but Jesus. All the rest of us have broken God's law. As a result, we've been separated from God by our sin.

We should also do good works, but again--no good deeds will ever earn our salvation. We must rely instead upon the saving work Jesus did for us when He took our sins upon Himself and died a sacrificial death for us.

No one but Jesus could do that. No one but Jesus can be our Savior. And no one but Jesus should be followed as Lord.

So, today, if you've never committed your life to Jesus Christ as Savior, I invite you to acknowledge your need. Admit that you have sin in your life that needs to be forgiven.

Believe that through His sacrificial death, Christ has made it possible for you to receive his forgiveness.

Confess your sin, ask to be forgiven, and then commit your life to following Jesus Christ from this day forward. Receive him now as your Savior and Lord.