

The Synoptic Gospels and the Metamorphosis of Christ

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To the contemporary reader, the world of the transfiguration is a strange and fascinating world indeed. Reading this story, one glimpses the supernatural, hears the voice of God, and sees walking dead men. There is a pervading sense that something important is going on, yet the transfiguration story is so foreign, so (perhaps) incredulous, it is hard to ascertain what it all means. The fact that it is included in all three synoptic Gospels attests to its importance. But what actually happened on that mountain, and what is the significance? The fact that the synoptic writers use the story in different ways makes the whole problem more complex. This paper will attempt an exegesis of the transfiguration story, centering on the event's relevance in the contexts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

For the purposes of this paper, the Oxford Hypothesis/Two-Source theory on the origin of the gospels will be assumed. Matthew, Mark, and Luke will be used as the names of the synoptic writers, whether or not these names are accurate. Please see the appendix for a synopsis of the three accounts.¹

The Core Story in the Triple-Tradition

These are the elements that are common to all three Synoptics, and form the core of the

¹There has been discussion regarding whether 2 Peter 1:16-18 preserves an attestation to the transfiguration which is independent from the synoptics. For more on this, see Robert J. Miller, "Is There Independent Attestation for the Transfiguration in 2 Peter?" *NTS* 42 (1996), 620-625. Miller argues that "2 Peter depends on Matthew," based on the identical wording of the proclamation from the cloud. It seems, though, that there is too little data in 2 Peter to reach any conclusion regarding literary dependence.

transfiguration story. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up onto a mountain. While there, Jesus is transformed in some manner, and his clothes become gleaming white. The three disciples see Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus. Peter speaks up, and suggests that three booths be built, one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Then a cloud overshadows the group. The voice of God emanates from the cloud, proclaiming that Jesus is his son. “Listen to him,” it bellows, providing the punch-line for the entire vignette. Then Moses and Elijah disappear. Finally, it is explained how this occurrence is to be kept a secret.

The core message of the text is that Jesus is a true prophet like Moses or Elijah, yet, as the Son of God, he is superior to them, and his words carry even greater weight. Less clear, however, is the meaning of the transfiguration itself, why Moses and Elijah are the two who appear, and what they are doing there with Christ.

Before these questions are addressed, the three accounts will be analyzed individually, focusing on the little details that make them different. Then, the literary purpose of the story’s placement in each of the Synoptics will be considered. Finally, special attention will be given to the role of Moses and Elijah in the story.

Mark: The Earliest of the Three

The Gospel of Mark is our earliest source for the transfiguration story. It is suggestive to see what details Mark includes in his version of the story, which Matthew and Luke omit.

First, Mark’s description of the whiteness of Christ’s clothing is more detailed. His garments are whiter than any fuller could possibly bleach them (9:4). Their radiance is beyond anything normally seen.

The next difference is one that is characteristic of Mark. He tends to cast the apostles in an even less positive light than the other gospels. For example, in 9:6, he says that “they were exceedingly afraid,” a detail that Matthew and Luke omit. At the end of the pericope, too, Mark

emphasizes the apostles' inability to grasp the Lord's prediction of his resurrection – they were “questioning what the rising from the dead meant” (9:10).

Matthew: Reverence and Intimacy

Although Matthew records Peter's booth-building suggestion, he omits any editorial comment about Peter being afraid or not knowing what to say. Instead, what he inserts into the story is an act of reverence by the three disciples. In 17:6, they fall on their faces, filled with awe. What comes next is also unique to Matthew's account. Jesus approaches the disciples and touches them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear” (17:7).²

Another detail inserted by Matthew is the observation that Jesus' “face shone like the sun,” while Mark only mentions the luminosity of the Lord's garments. Luke similarly has “the appearance of his countenance was altered,” which could be understood in any number of ways had not Matthew specified that the alteration involved shining like the sun. Perhaps Matthew's insertion of the radiant face is related to the author's emphasis on Christ as the new Moses, a motif also present in Mark.³

Matthew particularizes Peter's statement, moving it from the plural to the singular. Thus, it is no longer “let us make three booths,” but “if you wish, I will make three booths here” (17:4). The dominance of Peter among the disciples may be a theme for Matthew (16:19). So maybe

²Robert Gundry suggests that some of these Matthean additions serve the author's love for parallels, such as in “the contrasts between hearing and touching, falling and getting up, fearing and not fearing... Jesus' face shone... the disciples fall on their face...” *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 345.

³There are many parallels outside the Bible to the phenomenon of Christ's glowing face. “To have a brilliant light shine upon one is an important omen of future greatness,” says Eugene Boring in the *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) 107. More specifically, seen from a Jewish background, the glowing face indicates a messenger of God (Noah, Abraham, Daniel, Jeremiah, Stephen); from a Greek background the glowing face indicates a son of God (Boring 109). For a lengthy list of transfiguration parallels, see Keener *Matthew* 437. For some interesting examples and commentary, see Boring 107-109. Despite the many biblical and extra-biblical parallels, the one instance to which the Transfiguration story definitely alludes is the glowing Moses in Exodus 34:29-35.

Matthew is focusing on Peter as leader/spokesperson of the group here. The insertion of “if you wish” may also be another evidence of Matthew’s gentler approach to the disciples. Also, Matthew differs from Mark and Luke in that he has Peter calling Jesus “lord” instead of “rabbi.” Keener suggests this is because, in Matthew, only Judas calls Jesus by this term.⁴

Another piece of Matthean editorial activity is the harmonization of the voice from the cloud at the transfiguration with the voice from heaven at Jesus’ baptism. Mark’s “beloved Son” is also the one “with whom I am well pleased” (17:5, cf. 3:17).

Matthew includes Mark’s command that the disciples not tell what they have seen until after the resurrection (17:9), but he does not show the command’s fulfillment, as Mark does, nor the apostles’ continued puzzlement. Also, Matthew alone describes the cloud as being “bright” (17:5).

Thematically, Matthew’s account is seen as being less eschatology-oriented than Mark’s.⁵ For Matthew, the transfiguration has more to do with Jesus’ identity, especially as the new Moses.⁶

Luke: Praying, Sleeping, and Talking

Luke begins his version of the Transfiguration with an obvious departure from Mark’s and Matthew’s accounts. Instead of “after six days,” Luke has the transformation take place “about eight days after” Peter’s confession, Christ’s prediction of his death, and the admonition

⁴Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 438.

⁵James A. Penner, “Revelation and Discipleship in Matthew’s Transfiguration Account” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April-June 1995) 202.

⁶See Gundry, *Matthew* 344. Matthew lessens the impact of the transfiguration by omitting the disciples’ fear and confusion. Instead, he seems more concerned with Mosaic parallels. Matthew also brings out the compassionate, healing nature of Christ’s identity by showing the Lord touching and comforting the disciples (17:7).

to take up one's cross and follow Jesus (9:28).⁷ Many commentators follow the lead of Jerome, who resolved this discrepancy by positing that "in Matthew the days in the middle are counted, but in Luke the first and last are added."⁸

Prayer is a dominant theme in Luke-Acts, indicated especially in Luke's editorial use of Mark. The transfiguration is a case in point. In 9:28, Luke has Jesus and the three disciples going "up on the mountain to pray."⁹ Then, the transformation takes place as Jesus prays. Perhaps there is an implication that the transfiguration was a response to Christ's prayer.

Luke adds to the description of Moses and Elijah in noting they "appeared in glory," much like Jesus. Also, in 9:32, Luke seems to provide an answer to the obvious question: what were Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talking about? The answer is regrettably vague: "his departure, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem." "Departure" (*exodus*) here is apparently a euphemism for death, though it probably encompasses "the entire death-parousia career of Jesus."¹⁰ Jerusalem, of course, is the city where the prophets are killed (Luke 13:34).

Verse 32 raises a further question regarding the conversation of the transfigured prophets. According to Luke, the three disciples were asleep. So how could they know what was being said? Did Luke just make an educated guess, or did he perhaps get some snippets of information

⁷According to Darrell Bock, *Luke, Volume 1 (Baker Exegetical Commentary)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 866, this temporal peculiarity suggests that Luke had another source besides Matthew or Mark.

⁸This is from Jerome's commentary on Matthew (A. D. 398), cited in Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 1b – Matthew 14-28*. Manlio Simonetti, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 53. On Jerome's comment, Simonetti makes the following note:

To make the six-day interval in Matthew 17:1 fit with the eight days in Luke 9:28, Jerome holds that Matthew indicates only the whole days, whereas Luke, applying the criterion of the *synechdoche*, includes the incomplete portions of the day before and the day after the six.

⁹Mark Black points out that "This is the fifth occasion on which Luke shows Jesus at prayer (baptism, after healing, before choosing disciples, before Peter's confession)" *The College Press NIV Commentary: Luke* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996) 193. "Luke's explanation ("to pray," Luke 9:28) is part of his editorial theme that Jesus prays at all decisive moments in his life" – Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark (Sacra Pagina)* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002) 268.

¹⁰Bock, 870. See also I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke (New International Greek Testament Commentary)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 384-385 for deeper nuances to the nature of Jesus' *exodus*.

from Peter, who groggily caught a few phrases as he awoke, shielding his eyes from the blinding light streaming from Jesus' face?

In Luke, Peter starts to talk as Moses and Elijah “were parting from” Jesus (9:33). This raises another interesting question. Where were they about to go, and how were they going to get there? How does a centuries-dead prophet leave a mountain? Luke's earthy prose makes it sound as if they were about to walk off into the sunset. Whatever their mode of departure, by the time the talking cloud dissipates, Moses and Elijah are gone (9:36). Matthew's account seems easier to swallow in that he calls the transfiguration a “vision” (*horama* – 17:9), which can suggest that an occurrence takes place only in the mind, but is not necessarily the most natural understanding of the tem.¹¹

In the same vein, another question to raise is how did Peter identify Moses and Elijah when he saw them? It is doubtful he had seen them before, yet Peter describes them by name as soon as he wakes up and assesses the strange situation before him. Some commentators suggest that the disciples caught enough of the conversation to know who was involved.¹²

Another possible piece of Lukan editorial activity involves the disciples' fear. In Mark, they are “exceedingly afraid” apparently at the sight of the transfigured Jesus and friends (9:6). Luke, however, places the fear later in the story, specifying that “they were afraid as they entered the cloud” (9:34). Realistically, both situations would probably induce fear in anyone. Yet it is interesting that Luke seems to not want the disciples to be afraid of Jesus himself. Matthew's account has no reference to fear, except for the disciples' awestruck genuflecting after God speaks from the cloud (17:6).

Luke elaborates upon the proclamation of God's “beloved Son” by also calling him “my

¹¹See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 348.

¹²Keener, *Matthew*, 438.

Chosen” (9:35), another indicator of messiahship.¹³ It probably refers back to Isaiah 42:1: “Behold my servant... my chosen, in whom my soul delights.”

One final difference in Luke’s account is his omission of the word “transfigured” (*metamorphoo*). Perhaps the word contained unsavory Pagan connotations for Luke’s Gentile readership.¹⁴

Identifying certain details as Lukan editorial activity is not necessarily to call into question their historical veracity.¹⁵ Perhaps Luke had reliable sources which indicated, for example, that the transfiguration happened after a prolonged prayer session. That the gospel writers exhibit different themes and emphases does not mean that they contradict each other, especially from the standpoint of ancient literary standards.

Literary Function of the Passage

How does the transfiguration story function in the context of the synoptic triple-tradition?

First of all, the transfiguration is a preview of the resurrection story. For example, Christ’s shining garments are similar to the “dazzling clothing” worn by the angels standing outside the tomb (Luke 24:4). Matthew describes the angel as having an “appearance like lightning” and “clothing white as snow” (28:3), striking fear in the guards (v.4) and the women (v.5), like the transformed Jesus strikes fear in the disciples in Mark 9:6. In fact, some have

¹³Bock 874. See also Marshall 388 for more on this unusual participle and its textual variants.

¹⁴Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993) 214. Cf. Bock 867.

¹⁵Most liberal scholars, of course, reject the transfiguration story out of hand. See, for example, Joseph B. Bernardin, “The Transfiguration” *JBL* 52 (1933), 181-189, who asserts that “the incident is a fiction of the later Jewish Christian community, composed as a result of the dispute with the Jews over Jesus’ Messiahship” (189).

suggested that Mark's transfiguration story is actually a misplaced resurrection account.¹⁶

Despite these parallels, though, it should be noted that the resurrected Jesus does not look like the transfigured Christ (he is mistaken for a gardener, for example – John 20:15).

One aspect of the Gospels is that various things associated with the eschaton are sometimes spoken of as a single event (e.g., Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, judgment on Jerusalem, second coming, etc.). In some aspect, the Kingdom is still coming, yet in other aspects, it has already come.¹⁷ Thus, the transfiguration story is a fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy in Mark 9:1 (Matt. 16:28).¹⁸ Here, following Peter's confession, the prediction of Christ's death, and the call to radical discipleship, the Lord says that "there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."¹⁹ Then, "after six days," the transfiguration occurs, seeming to at-least-partially fulfill the prophecy. Thus, Mark has the transfiguration as *a* (though not *the* ultimate) fulfillment of the coming kingdom.²⁰

¹⁶For a refutation, see Robert H. Stein, "Is the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) a Misplaced Resurrection-Account?" *JBL* 95 (1976) 79-96. See also A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), who points out that the presence of Moses and Elijah in particular raises difficulties for those who take the transfiguration as a misplaced resurrection account (128).

¹⁷Mark 4:26-29 – the Kingdom already exists in "seed" form, scattered invisibly throughout the earth.

¹⁸According to F. C. Syngé, when a saying of Jesus in Mark is introduced with *kai elegen* (as in 9:1), "This is an indication that he has added a current saying of Jesus which possesses no context" ("Short Comments: The Transfiguration Story" *Expository Times* 82, 82-83). In the instance of Mark 9:1, however, Moore disagrees. Though the saying may have originally lacked a context, Mark uses it as a bridge to introduce the transfiguration (126). "In the tradition followed by all three Synoptists Mk. 9:1 is connected on the one hand to the coming of the Son of Man in glory (Mk. 8:38), and on the other hand to the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2ff)" – Moore 125.

¹⁹Notice that Jesus here does not say that they will see that actual arrival of the kingdom. Rather, they will see the effects of its having already arrived.

²⁰France lists several events that could be understood as a manifestation of the establishment of God's kingdom:

Jesus' death on the cross and the symbolic tearing of the temple curtain; his victory over death in the resurrection; his ascension and the heavenly enthronement which it implies; the powerful coming of the Spirit at Pentecost; the dynamic growth of the church despite opposition; the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70... all would be within the lifetime of at least some of those standing there.

Thus, to France, Mark 9:1 is not a reference to the Parousia (344-345).

William Lane has some of the best comments on Mark 9:1. He notes that in Mark, “the Kingdom of God and the person of Jesus are so integrally bound together as to be inseparable.”²¹

Lane also suggests one compare 2 Peter 1:16-18:

Peter made known to his churches the power *that was to be revealed* at Jesus’ coming in terms of the glory *which had been revealed* in the transfiguration... The transfiguration was a momentary, but real (and witnessed) manifestation of Jesus’ sovereign power which pointed beyond itself to the parousia.²²

Besides being a preview of the *parousia*, the transfiguration also looks back to Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20), confirming that Jesus is indeed the Messiah *and* the divine offspring. First of all, Christ’s authority is established in the fact that he is conversing with Moses and Elijah.²³ Secondly, the voice of God itself establishes Jesus’ identity, echoing the terminology of both Peter’s confession and the voice at Christ’s baptism: “This is my Son.”²⁴ Peter probably understood “Son of God” to be a synonym for “Messiah,” but God’s thundering cloud-voice proclaims a divine status for Christ beyond being the anointed king of Israel. Thus, the nature (or identity) of Jesus is seen as a central theme in the transfiguration story.

Thus, the transfiguration story serves as a preview of things to come, a confirmation of Peter’s confession and the Lord’s Passion prediction, and an assertion of Jesus’ identity and

²¹*The Gospel According To Mark (New International Commenary)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 312.

²²Lane 314, emphasis in original. How was the transfiguration story to be understood by Mark’s first readers in light of 9:1? “Mark tells us how he understands the Transfiguration. It was a preview of the exaltation of Jesus such as should sustain the Church through evil days that would come” (Synge 83), especially following the “pessimistic projection for their likely fate in [Mark] 8:34-38” (France 346). Cf. Donahue and Harrington 273.

²³“To converse with exalted authorities from the past is a means of legitimation of the first order” (Boring 108).

²⁴The parallel with Exodus 34:5 may be significant here. In the Exodus passage, the Lord “descended in the cloud” and proclaimed his name (identity) to Moses. In the transfiguration, the cloud descends and the voice proclaims the identity of Jesus (Penner 207).

authority as the Son of God.

Jesus, the New Moses

There are multiple parallels and allusions in the transfiguration which lead the biblically literate reader to associate Christ with Moses. Among these:

- The fact that the experience takes place on a mountain recalls Moses at Sinai.
- The triad of Peter, James, and John may be parallel to Exodus 24:1, when Moses takes Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu with him to the mountain. However, there are also seventy elders present in that context, and only Moses himself is allowed to ascend.
- The transfiguration's most obvious parallel is Exodus 34:29-35. Here, Moses comes down from the mountain with the skin of his face shining from being in God's presence. This caused the people to be afraid (like Mark 9:6), so Moses began wearing a veil over his face in public.
- The cloud, of course, is parallel to the *shekinah* cloud that hovered over the tabernacle and led the Israelites through the wilderness, serving as a constant reminder of God's presence. The combination of Peter's "tabernacles" with the appearance of the cloud immediately thereafter reinforces this association.
- Just as Christ and the three apostles were "overshadowed" with a cloud, Moses was covered in cloud atop Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:15-16). Also, Matthew's "bright" cloud might be similar to the fiery appearance of the Sinai cloud (Ex. 24:17).
- The "six days" that lead up to the transfiguration in Matthew and Mark remind one of Exodus 24:15-18, in which Moses ascends the mountain and a cloud covers it for six days before God speaks on the seventh.
- Exodus 19:18-19 seems to have God speaking to Moses from out of a cloud.
- "Listen to him" is taken by many to be an allusion to Deuteronomy 18:18-19: the

prediction of a prophet like Moses who must be listened to.

Outside of the transfiguration context, Matthew especially draws attention to Jesus as the new Moses (the fulfillment of the Deut. 18:18-19 prophecy). For example, in the birth narrative, the baby Jesus goes to Egypt and has to escape the clutches of Herod, who, like Pharaoh, orders that baby boys be killed. And, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches with authority, expounding on the ten commandments and other aspects of the law. Jesus gives people miraculous bread, which corresponds to manna. The list could go on and on. As Jeremias sums up the comparison: “Moses and Christ are both divine messengers, they are both misunderstood and rejected, and together they stand for the combination and contrast of the law and the gospel.”²⁵

Moses and Elijah

Perhaps the oldest (and most common until recent years) explanation for the presence of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration is that they represent the “Law” and the “Prophets” respectively.²⁶ Thus, the transfiguration is given a dispensationalist interpretation, that Christ (representing the New Testament) eclipses the Old Testament. R. T. France says this traditional interpretation is “probably the least valid” of the many interpretive suggestions.²⁷ First, Moses himself was considered a prophet. Also, Elijah was not a writing prophet. And the books which tell about Elijah are contained in the “writings” (*kethubim*) portion of the Hebrew Bible, not in the “prophets” (*neviim*).

Here are some useful observations regarding Moses and Elijah:

²⁵J. Jeremias, “Moyses” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Abridged in One Volume)*. Geoffrey Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 624.

²⁶See Penner, 204ff, for a recent exposition promoting the “Law and Prophets” interpretation.

²⁷France 351.

- Moses fits in with the theme, discussed above, of Jesus as the new Moses, the prophet like Moses of Deut. 18:18. J. Jeremias' description of Moses is striking in its parallels to Christ:

All in one, he is mediator, reconciler, legislator, prophet, high priest, king, and personification of the law... He is the faithful servant who sees God's glory and mediates the law. He is also a prophet for the whole world, a deliverer, and a man of prayer who vicariously accepts Israel's sin.²⁸
- Elijah is also prominent in the Gospels. In Matthew and Mark, immediately following the transfiguration, Christ speaks to the apostles about John the Baptist being the new Elijah. Jesus himself was confused with Elijah (Matt. 16:14, Mark 6:15). Jews at the time apparently expected a return of Elijah associated the coming of the Messiah.²⁹
- Moses and Elijah are similar to Jesus in regard to their mysterious deaths. Elijah did not die, but was taken into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). It was prophesied that he would return (Mal. 4:5-6). And Moses is said to have been buried by God, so no one knew the location of his tomb (Deut. 34:5-6).
- Both Moses and Elijah experienced theophanies on a mountain (Horeb, to be exact, for both of them – 1 Kings 19).³⁰
- Another view is that "Moses and Elijah prefigure Jesus in being rejected by the people and vindicated by God."³¹ As prophets who suffered persecution, they vindicated Jesus'

²⁸Bromiley 622.

²⁹See J. Jeremias, "Elihu." *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Abridged in One Volume)*. Geoffrey Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 306-308.

³⁰Denis Baly, "Short Comments: The Transfiguration Story" *Expository Times* 82 (1979) 83.

³¹Margaret Pamment, "Moses and Elijah in the Story of the Transfiguration." *Expository Times* 92 (1981) 339. This view is strengthened by Luke's detail that the three prophets were discussing Christ's impending suffering in Jerusalem, and that the transfiguration follows the Lord's Passion prediction.

prediction of his Passion.

There is a redactional peculiarity regarding Moses and Elijah that has not been noted yet. Mark has “Elijah with Moses” where Matthew and Luke have “Moses and Elijah,” the order one would expect, since Moses is considered the most noteworthy of the two. However, “in Mark’s Gospel the party mentioned second and introduced by “with” (*syn*) is the more notable figure, and so all the synoptic evangelists are saying the same thing.”³²

What about the three tabernacles? Some commentators see an allusion here to the Old Testament tabernacle, or the Feast of Tabernacles. It seems more likely, though, that Peter is simply trying to prolong the experience.³³ Why not set up some shelters so Moses and Elijah can stick around? The problem with his suggestion (as it is usually understood) is that Peter is treating the three prophets as equals, when one was decidedly superior. Admittedly, though, Peter “did not know what he said” (Luke 9:33).

Summation

So, the transfiguration stands as a confirmation of Christ’s status as prophet, messiah, and Son of God. It is a revelation that the Kingdom of God has, in some sense, arrived. It looks back to Peter’s confession and to the Lord’s double prediction of his own Passion and his disciples’ persecution. But it also looks forward to the resurrection of Christ and the glorification of his saints. And the entire episode is built atop a mound of allusions to the Old Testament – especially to the ministry of Moses.

³²Donahue and Harrington, 269.

³³Donahue and Harrington, 270; Marshall, 386. See also Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 459: The three disciples hope to “keep listening to what Elijah and Moses are saying to Jesus.”

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83.

Synopsis of the Transfiguration

Based on Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (153-154)

Matt. 17:1-9

1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart.
2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.
3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."
5 He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them,
and a voice from the cloud said,
"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear. 8 And when

Mark 9:2-10

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them,
3 and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them.
4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus.

5 And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them,
and a voice came out of the cloud,
"This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

8 And suddenly

Luke 9:28-36

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.
29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white.

30 And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they awakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.
33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he said.
34 As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.
35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying,
"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

they lifted up their eyes, they
saw no one
but Jesus only.

looking around they
no longer saw any one with them
but Jesus only.

36 And when the voice had
spoken,
Jesus was found alone.
And they kept silence and told no
one in those days anything of what
they had seen.

9 And as they were coming down
the mountain,
Jesus commanded them,
“Tell no one the vision,
until the Son of man
is raised from the dead.”

9 And as they were coming down
the mountain,
he charged them
to tell no one what they had seen,
until the Son of man
should have risen from the dead.

10 So they kept the matter to
themselves, questioning what the
rising of the dead meant.