

A Comparison of the Synoptic Accounts of the Transfiguration ¹

Matthew 17:1-9	Mark 9:2-10	Luke 9:28-36
<p><u>Six days later</u>², Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John³ and led them up a <u>high</u> mountain⁴, <u>by themselves</u>. And he was <u>transfigured</u>⁵ before them, and</p>	<p><u>Six days later</u>², Jesus took with him Peter and James and John³ and led them up a <u>high</u> mountain⁴ apart, <u>by themselves</u>. And he was <u>transfigured</u>⁵ before them, [X] and</p>	<p>Now about eight days¹⁶ after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter <i>and John and James</i>³ and went up on the [X] mountain⁴ to pray¹⁷ [X]. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face⁶ changed, and</p>

¹ All texts taken from NRSVue. See also www.Txtandcontxt.com/the-transfiguration-an-introduction.

² Exod 24:15-16 - The indication of 6 days later is unusually precise and may be in part a reference to part of the Sinai theophany.

³ Exod 24:1 - Moses also took three key figures along with him up on the mountain for the Sinai theophany: Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu.

⁴ Exod 19:20; 24:9-18; 1 Kgs 19:8-18 - a high mountain (“the mountain” in Luke) is a key location for the two other major Biblical figures who appear in this story chatting with Jesus: Moses and Elijah.

⁵ Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18 - Greek *metamorphoo* is used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe the transformation that believers will undergo, but this is sometimes obscured by translation.

¹⁶ Gen 17:2; 21:4; Lev 12:3 - This is an unusually precise time indication (see notes on “six days later” in Matthew and Mark). Eight days is specifically the number of days to wait after a male child is born before he is circumcised and thus this could perhaps anticipate Jesus’s resurrection on the “first day” after the old week.

¹⁷ Prayer is often a time when revelation occurs elsewhere in Luke (3:21-22; 22:39-46) and prayer accompanies major decisions and turning points in the life and ministry of Jesus in Luke (5:16; 3:21; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 11:1; 22:32, 41, 44).

<p>his face⁶ shone like the sun⁷, and his clothes became bright as light⁸. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah⁹, talking with him.</p> <p>Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”¹⁰ [X] While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them¹¹, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the</p>	<p>his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one on earth could brighten them⁸. And there appeared to them <i>Elijah with Moses</i>⁹, who were talking with Jesus.</p> <p>Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; {let us} set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” {He did not know what to say,} {for they were terrified.¹⁴} Then a cloud overshadowed them¹¹, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This</p>	<p>his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning⁸. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah⁹, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking about his exodus, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.</p> <p>Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep¹⁸, but as they awoke they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; {let us} set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses,</p>
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⁶ Exod 34:35 - Allusion to Moses whose face shone after the Sinai theophany.

⁷ Dan 10:6; Rev 1:16; 10:1 - This description is similar to descriptions of the heavenly Son of Man in Daniel’s vision, Christ himself in John’s vision, and an angel in John’s vision.

⁸ Dan 7:9; 12:3; 2 Esd 7:97; Matt 13:43; 28:3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10; Rev 1:12-16; 3:4-5; 4:4; 7:9, 13

⁹ Deut 18:15; 34: 5-6; 2 Kgs 2:9-12; Mal 4:5; 2 Esd 6:26; Matt 5:17; 7:12; 11:9; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 26:22 - Probably Moses and Elijah are representative of the “Law and the Prophets” though they are also surely to both be understood as prophets whose roles were significant with Jesus. It is also instructive that both these men had theophanies of Yahweh on Mount Sinai (or Horeb) and now they are standing with Jesus talking as if they knew him already because Jesus *is* Yahweh in the flesh they recognized him here.

¹⁰ Lev 23:39-42; Deut 16; Luke 9:54

¹¹ Exod 24:15-18; 40:34-38; Isa 4:5; Ezek 1:4; Rev 14:14

¹⁸ A uniquely Lukan addition - see Luke 22:45-46

<p><u>Beloved</u>; with him I am well pleased¹²; listen to him!¹³” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.¹⁴ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.”¹⁵ And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.</p> <p><u>As they were coming down the mountain</u>, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” [X]</p>	<p>is my Son, <u>the Beloved</u>¹²; listen to him!¹³” Suddenly <u>when they looked around</u>, they saw no one <u>with them</u> any more, but only Jesus.</p> <p><u>As they were coming down the mountain</u>, he ordered them to tell no one about <u>what they had seen</u>, <u>until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead</u>. {So they kept the matter to themselves,} <u>questioning what this rising from the dead could mean</u>.</p>	<p>and one for Elijah,” {not realizing what he was saying.} While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them¹¹, <i>{and they were terrified}</i>¹⁴ <u>as they entered the cloud</u>. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son¹², my Chosen¹⁹; listen to him!¹³” <u>When the voice had spoken</u>, Jesus was found alone. <i>{And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.}</i> [X]</p>
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¹² Psa 2:7; Isa 42:1; 2 Sam 7:14; Matt 16:16;

¹³ Deut 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22

¹⁴ Exod 3:1-6; 34:30; Isa 6:1-5; Ezek 1:28; Dan 8:27; Jon 1:10, 16; Matt 8:25-25; 14:26; 28:8-10; Mark 4:41; 6:51; 16:8; Luke 2:9; 24:5; Rev 1:17 - Terror is a typical response to a theophany or angelic visitation

¹⁵ Isa 6:7; Ezek 1:28-2:2; Dan 8:17-18; 10:9-10, 16, 18.

¹⁹ Isa 42:1; Luke 3:22; 23:35.

Key	
TEXT	Unique Matthean Contribution
TEXT	Unique Lukan Contribution
TEXT	Unique Markan Contribution
<i>TEXT</i>	Same wording, but different order of wording from the others
[X]	Lacking word(s) that the other 2 gospels include
<u>TEXT</u>	Matthew and Mark in agreement against Luke
TEXT	Matthew and Luke in agreement against Mark
{TEXT}	Mark and Luke in agreement against Matthew

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. **(2 Peter 1:16-18)**

Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. **(John 12:28-30)**