

CHAPTER 9

The Transfiguration Of Christ

The Background of the Transfiguration

The Disturbing Revelation

In Matthew chapter 16, the disciples were told for the first time that Jesus the Christ **must die!** Find the verse in which Jesus reveals this fact: Verse _____. What one word in this verse indicates that this was the Lord's first mention of His death and resurrection? _____
Compare Matthew 17:22-23; 20:17-19.

How did Peter respond to the Lord's announcement? (Circle the correct response.)

- Lord, let it be according to Thy Word (compare Luke 1:38).
- Lord, even though I don't understand, You have spoken, and it must be so!
- Yes Lord, for I believe all that the Scriptures teach, that it is necessary for the Messiah to suffer, and then to enter into His glory (compare Luke 24:25-27,44-46).
- Lord, this shall not be. Lord, You do not know what You are talking about (*Note:* The danger of making such a statement is seen in Matthew 16:23).

Just prior to this Peter had made a tremendous confession of faith: "Thou art the _____, The Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). Peter understood that the term "Christ" or "Messiah" referred to no one less than **God's Anointed King**. Peter also was familiar with the many Old Testament passages which describe the glorious reign of the kingly Messiah (such as Isaiah 2:2-5; 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-8; 33:15-16; Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Zephaniah 3:15; etc.). He apparently did not understand the few Old Testament passages which stated or implied that the Messiah must die (Daniel 9:26; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22; Genesis 3:15; Zechariah 12:10; etc.). Peter failed to realize that before Christ could come as **King**, He must first come as **Saviour!**

Peter's problem was shared by the Jews of his day. In John 12:32-33, the Lord told the people that He would be lifted up to die. These Jews knew that Christ the King must live and reign forever and ever (read John 12:34 and compare Daniel 7:14,27; Isaiah 9:7). They thus faced what seemed to be an impossible problem:

"How Can a Dead Messiah Reign Forever and Ever?"

How did God solve this perplexing problem? (See Acts 2:24; Matthew 16:21--the last seven words, and compare Hebrews 11:17-19.)

- By fulfilling His Word concerning the death of the Messiah but disregarding those passages which speak of the kingdom of the Messiah
- By sending two different Messiahs – One who would suffer and die and Another who would reign as King

- c. By having the Messiah avoid death and march directly to the throne
- d. By resurrection: one Messiah, but two separate advents or comings

Which of the above was Peter's solution? _____ Since Peter did not understand God's solution (see Mark 9:10), he became greatly disturbed at the thought of Christ's death. **"What is going to happen to the King? If the King dies, will there still be a Kingdom? Will we live to see this kingdom?"**

The Mysterious Prediction

In Matthew 16:27, the Lord Jesus announced what great event?

- a. the resurrection
- b. the rapture of the church
- c. the second coming of Christ (compare verse 28; 24:30; 25:31; Luke 9:26, Daniel 7:13-14)
- d. the judgment seat of Christ

If Christ must die (Matthew 16:21), then He must come again (Matthew 16:27)! "The _____ must be _____" (Mark 14:49), and those Scriptures which were not fulfilled at the Lord's first coming must be fulfilled at the Lord's _____ coming. Matthew 16:27 is essentially the first time Jesus spoke of His Second coming. (*Note:* The second coming is mentioned in Matthew 10:23, but it is doubtful that the disciples understood the significance of this statement. Compare Matthew 24:13-14.)

When the Jews read the Scriptures, they could only see **one coming**. Today we are living in the period between the two comings of Christ. According to Matthew 16:18, what has Christ been doing following His death, and prior to His coming as King?

_____ As we read our Bible today (in this church age), we have the advantage of being better able to see two distinct comings of Christ--one coming is now history and the other coming is still future. In the following passages, please **underline** that which belongs with Christ's first coming and **circle** that which belongs with Christ's second coming:

1. Micah 5:2

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

2. Isaiah 9:6-7

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

3. Isaiah 61:1-2 (compare Luke 4:18-19)

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God.

4. Zechariah 9:9-10

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

5. Isaiah 40:3-5 (compare Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3)

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

6. Malachi 3:1-2; 4:5 (compare Mark 1:2 and Matthew 17:3,10-13)

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? Behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

7. Luke 1:31-33

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Did you have difficulty with some of these? If you were a Jew living in the year 100 B. C., would you have understood these passages (with the exception of Luke 1 which would not have been written yet) as referring to two separate comings of the Messiah?

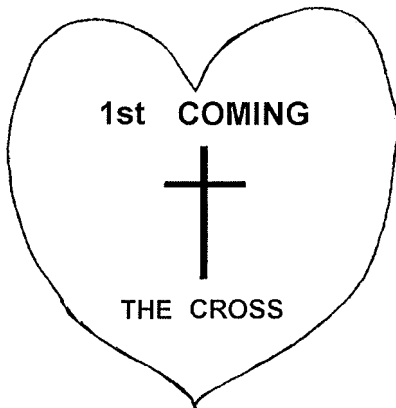
Read Matthew 16:26. Which is worth more to you--the world and all that it offers or your own soul? How can a person lose his own soul? The answer is given in Matthew 16:27: When Christ comes He is going to R_____ and judge every man!

The Bible tells us about a man who will gain the whole world and lose his own soul. He is described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-10 and Revelation 13:1-8. Everything Satan will offer, he will take (compare Matthew 4:8-9 where the Lord Jesus refused this offer). He will have power, control, wealth, wisdom, fame and adoration. But when Christ shall return with power and great glory, what will happen to this man (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11-20)?

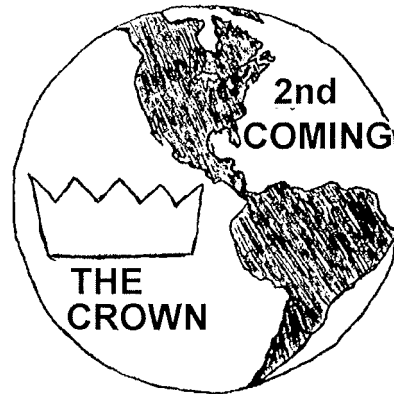
Indeed, he will be the first (along with the false prophet) to be thrown into the L_____ of F_____ (Revelation 19:20). He shall lose his own soul! Christ came the first time as **SAVIOR**, He shall return the second time as **JUDGE**! At His first coming He came in voluntary humiliation (Philippians 2:8 – "He humbled Himself") and weakness (compare Matthew 27:26-31); at His second coming He shall come in " _____ and great _____ " (Matthew 24:30)!

The Lord's first coming was necessary to set things right in man's heart; His second coming is necessary to set things right in man's world:

HE'S KING OF MY LIFE



HE'S KING OF THE WORLD



The Mysterious Prediction

With this needed background, we are ready to examine the Lord's mysterious prediction given in Matthew 16:28:

Who were those standing and listening to these words of Jesus (verse 24)?

What would some of these men see before they would see death (verse 28)?

Today it is more than 1900 years since Jesus spoke these puzzling words. Christ has not yet returned to earth to establish His kingdom. All of the disciples have long since died. Did the Lord's prediction fail? Did some really see the King in His Kingdom?

What is the next recorded event that took place after Jesus made this remarkable prediction (Matthew 17:1-3)?

[Note: The first word ("And") in verse 1 connects the end of chapter 16 with the beginning of

chapter 17. It would help in this case to ignore the uninspired chapter division. Compare Luke 9:26-30.]

In 2 Peter 1:16-18, the aged apostle reminds his readers that he was an eyewitness (v. 16) and earwitness (v. 18) of a remarkable event. According to verses 17-18, what event from our Lord's earthly life was Peter referring to? _____ In verse 16, he refers to this event as the "P _____ and C _____ of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, Peter was saying "we saw the Lord coming in power (see Mark 9:1) when we were with Him in the holy mountain." Thus, the puzzle is solved! The "some standing here" (Matthew 16:28) can now be identified as _____, _____, and _____ (Matthew 17:1). At a time when the disciples were disturbed over the announcement of His coming death, Jesus did a wonderful thing. He took three of His disciples and gave them a foretaste and a **preview** of the coming kingdom! "**If the King dies, will there still be a kingdom?**" Peter, James and John were beginning to understand the answer!

The Glorious Transformation

About a week after the Lord's mysterious prediction (compare Matthew 17:1 and Luke 9:28), Jesus took three of His disciples with Him to a mountain:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. _____ Peter | A. The Beloved Disciple (John 13:23-25; 19:26; 20:2-3; 21:7,20) and the one who would write the book of Revelation |
| 2. _____ James | B. The First Disciple to be Killed (Acts 12:1-2) |
| 3. _____ John | C. The Leader and Spokesman (Matthew 16:16; Acts 2:14) |

On at least two other occasions the Lord drew these three men apart to be with Himself (Luke 8:49-56; Matthew 26:36-38).

The mountain is not identified, except to say that it was H _____ (Matthew 17:1) and H _____ (2 Peter 1:18--because of God's glorious Presence which was manifested there). Why did the Lord go to this Mountain (Luke 9:28)? _____

1. What time of day did the Lord often pray (Luke 6:12; 21:37; 22:39-40; Matthew, 14:23)? _____
2. While on the mountain, the disciples engaged in what activity (Luke 9:32)?

3. When did they return from the mountain (Luke 9:37)?

Therefore, **when** would you say the transfiguration of Christ took place?

What really happened to the Lord there on the mount? In Luke 9:29 we read that while He _____ the appearance of His face was _____ (literally "became

different"--His appearance **changed**). Matthew 17:2 says He was _____ before them, and thus we call this event the "**transfiguration**" of Christ.

The word "transfigured" is from the Greek verb **metamorphoō** which is made up of two parts: 1) **meta**, which means "change" and 2) **morphē**, which means "form." Hence, it means "to be changed into another form, to be transformed." Our English word "**metamorphosis**" comes from this Greek word and is used to describe some of nature's most amazing, God-designed transformations, such as the changing of a caterpillar to a butterfly or the changing of a tadpole to a frog!

In what ways was Christ transformed?

- 1) His face shone as the _____ (Matthew 17:2). The sun shines so brightly a person cannot look directly at it without injuring his eyes!
- 2) His raiment (garments) was white as _____ (Matthew 17:2).
- 3) His raiment was white and _____ (Luke 9:29). This word means His garments were flashing with the brilliance of lightning.
- 4) His raiment became _____, exceeding _____ as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them (Mark 9:3). There is no launderer or bleach on the face of the earth that can make garments this white and brilliant (regardless of what the commercials and advertisements say!).

Furthermore, all this probably took place at night! When the disciples woke up (Luke 9:32), they saw something which they never forgot. What they had seen was still fresh in Peter's mind at the end of his life, for he wrote: "We were _____ of His _____" (His magnificence and greatness)--2 Peter 1:16. The aged apostle John shared a similar testimony: "We beheld His _____" (John 1:14, which is probably a reference to this unforgettable event!).

The resplendent glory of God's Son was veiled during most of His incarnate life and ministry (His first coming). The transfiguration was one of those rare times when His glory was allowed to shine forth (compare John 11:4,40-44; 18:4-6; 1 Cor.2:8). At the second coming, this inner glory will be outwardly displayed, even as it was on the holy mount (Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Luke 9:26; Daniel 7:13-14). The disciples caught a preview of that glorious event!

The word "transfigured" or "transformed" is used four times in the New Testament. Twice it is used of Christ, and twice it is used of that great inner transformation which God brings about in the heart of the believer. Please **MATCH** the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. _____ Matthew 17:2 | |
| 2. _____ Mark 9:2 | A. Of Christ |
| 3. _____ Romans 12:2 | B. Of the Believer |
| 4. _____ 2 Corinthians 3:18 | |

"His raiment white and glistening,
 White as the glistening snow:
 His form a blaze of splendour,
 The like no sun can show
 His wondrous eyes resplendent
 In ecstasy of prayer;
 His radiant face transfigured
 To heaven's own beauty there.

← OF CHRIST

OF THE BELIEVER →

Soon passed that scene of grandeur;
 But steadfast, changeless, sure,
 Our blest transfiguration
 Is promised to endure,
 The manifested glory
 Of our great Lord to see,
 Shall change us to His likeness:
 As He is, we shall be.

--George Rawson

If you are really saved, Who is **IN YOU** (2 Corinthians 13:5; 4:6-7; Colossians 1:27; Galatians 2:20; John 14:20)? _____ Is this Person being veiled, or do you allow Him to shine forth? How does the **world** (the speech, mannerisms, habits, expressions, fads, styles, amusements and philosophies of this sinful **age**) hinder this? (See Romans 12:2 which could be translated, "Stop letting the world squeeze you into its mold....")

Since we are not able to share the experience which Peter, James and John had, how can we, as believers, see the glory of the Lord today (2 Corinthians 3:18; compare Luke 24:26-27)?

Note: The life-changing truth of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is wonderfully illustrated in a classic short story: *The Great Stone Face*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The Intriguing Conversation

Two men suddenly appeared with Jesus on the mount: 1) _____ (representing the law), and 2) _____ (representing the prophets). What were these men doing (Matthew 17:3)? _____ What was the subject of their conversation (Luke 9:31)? **His** _____

The word "decease" is the Greek word "**exodus**" (Hebrews 11:22) which means "going out, departure" and this word clearly refers to the Lord's coming death and departure from this world (Matthew 16:21). The significance of Christ's death was understood by saints in heaven, if not by men on earth (see Matthew 16:22). Moses and Elijah knew that they were in paradise "on credit." Their sins had been "passed over" (Romans 3:25 – the word "remission" means "passing over, letting sins go unpunished"), and they were anticipating the day when the complete payment would be made for their sins (compare Hebrews 10:4,11-12). This was the theme of their conversation. [*Note:* Both the law and the prophets (represented by Moses and Elijah) predicted the death of Messiah (Luke 24:25-27).]

In this scene, we can see a picture of the kinds of people who will be involved in Christ's 1000 year Kingdom:

- | | | |
|----------|---|--------------------------|
| 1. _____ | the glorified King | A. The Lord Jesus |
| 2. _____ | glorified believers | B. Peter, James and John |
| 3. _____ | believers who enter the kingdom in their natural, mortal bodies | C. Moses and Elijah |

The Foolish Suggestion

When Peter awoke from his sleep (Luke 9:32), he saw the Lord in His majesty and Moses and Elijah with Him. As Moses and Elijah were about to leave (Luke 9:33), Peter (perhaps wanting to prolong the experience) blurted out his nonsensical statement as found in Matthew 17:4-- "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The term "tabernacle" indicated a "tent" or a "temporary dwelling place." Certainly the Lord was not about to dwell for any length of time on a mountain. The urgency of His mission demanded that He come down from the mountain and begin His determined march to the cross (Luke 9:51).

Did Peter know what he was talking about (Mark 9:6; Luke 9:33)? _____ Peter did what we often do. He spoke first and did his thinking afterward (compare Matthew 16:22; 26:35; John 13:8-9, etc.)! Later in his life, however, Peter did some careful thinking about a tabernacle, and he realized that it would not be good to stay in a tabernacle for too long. In 2 Peter 1:13-15 Peter wrote these sensible and thoughtful words:

I think it meet, as long as I am in this **tabernacle** (same word as in Matthew 17:4 – a temporary dwelling place, in this case referring to his body), to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my **tabernacle**, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me (see John 21:16-19). Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my **decease** (same word as in Luke 9:31 – referring to his departure or death) to have these things always in remembrance.

In the next three verses Peter spoke of his remarkable experience in the mount of transfiguration! It would be far better to leave the tabernacle and to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1:21-23)!

The Heavenly Commendation

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud (signifying God's glorious presence) overshadowed the group, and the voice of God the Father was clearly heard (Matthew 17:5): "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Christ pleased God because He _____ (Romans 15:3)!

God the Father's words on this mountain were the same as God's words at the Lord's baptism (Matthew 3:17), with one additional phrase added:

"Hear Ye Him"
(Be hearing and obeying Him!!!)

How well did Peter hear the Lord in Matthew 16:21-22? In these last days, how does God speak to men (Hebrews 1:1-2)? _____

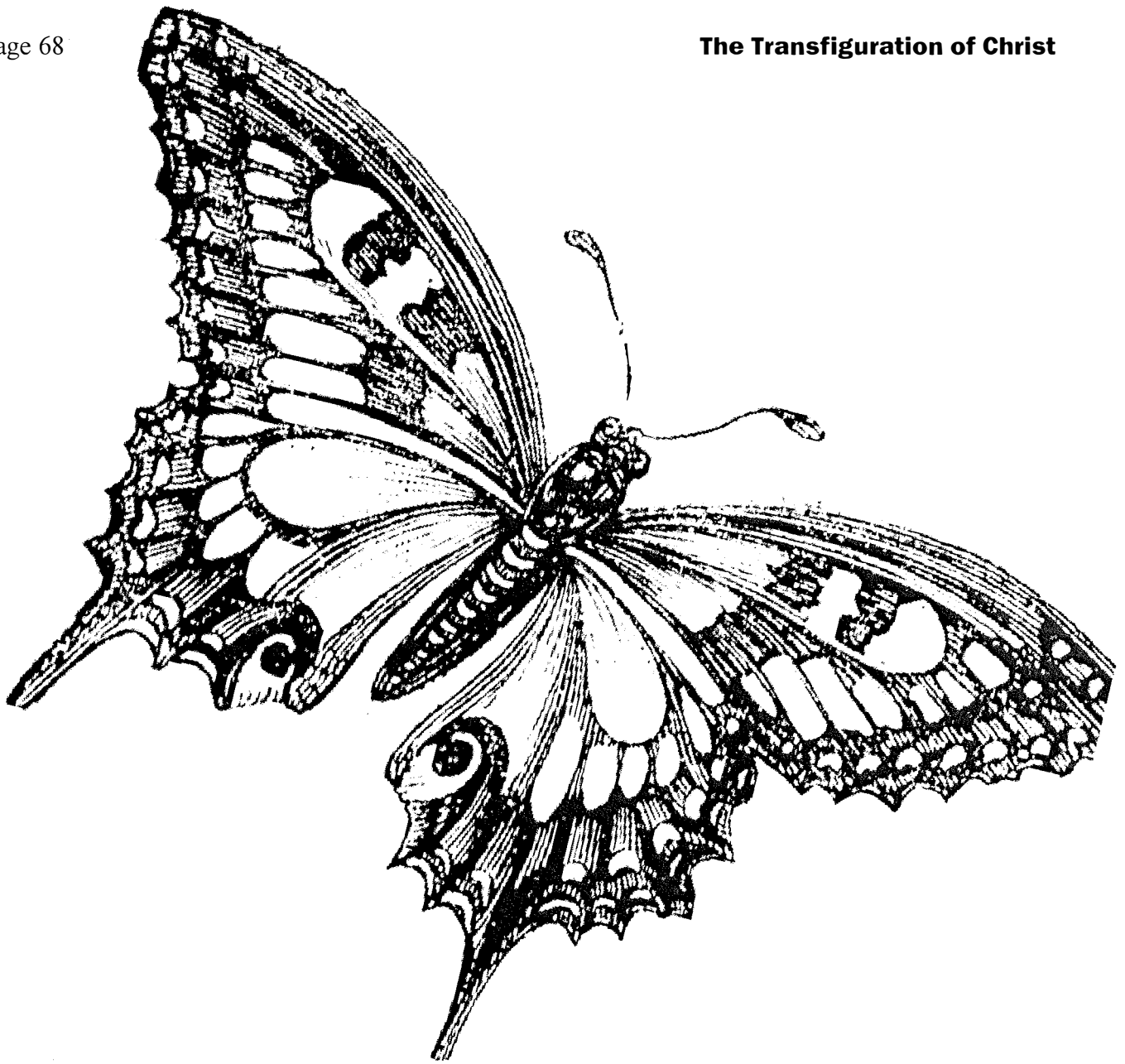
In 2 Peter 1:17-18 the aged apostle reminds his readers that he actually heard the voice of God from heaven, a privilege which none of Peter's readers and none of us living today could have. But what **do** we have today that is totally sufficient for our living and dying (2 Peter 1:19-21)? _____

The kingdom will surely come! Christ has already given a **preview!** As we live between the Lord's two comings, may we **HEAR** and **HEED** all that the King says to us in His written Word!

God's Perfect Will

*"... PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD, AND
ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT
WILL OF GOD" — ROM. 12:2*





“But we all, with open (unveiled) face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed (transformed, transfigured) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

(2 Cor. 3:18)