

Luke 9:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

Analysis

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. Luke alone connects the transformation explicitly to prayer: *en tō proseuchesthai auton* (ἐν τῷ προσεύχεσθαι αὐτόν, "while He was praying"). The phrase **the fashion of his countenance was altered** uses *egeneto heteron to eidos tou prosōpou autou* (έγένετο ἔτερον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ)—*heteron* means "different in kind," and *eidos* means "visible form" or "appearance." This was no mere emotional glow but ontological unveiling—the divine glory normally veiled in flesh shone forth.

His raiment was white and glistering (*ho himatismos autou leukos exastraptōn, ὁ ἱματισμὸς αὐτοῦ λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων*)—*leukos* (white) suggests purity and heavenly origin, while *exastraptōn* means "flashing like lightning," intense radiant brightness. Matthew says His face "shone like the sun" and garments became "white as light" (Matthew 17:2). Mark adds "no launderer on earth could whiten them" (Mark 9:3). This recalls the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9 and anticipates the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:13-16. The Transfiguration manifested Jesus' true divine nature, confirming Peter's confession (v. 20).

Historical Context

In Jewish thought, radiant glory (Shekinah) indicated God's presence—Moses' face shone after Sinai encounters (Exodus 34:29-35), requiring a veil. But Jesus' glory was intrinsic, not reflected—He is the radiance of God's glory (Hebrews 1:3).

White garments symbolized heavenly beings (angels, the redeemed in Revelation). The transformation previewed Christ's resurrection body and second coming appearance. The disciples witnessed the glory Jesus possessed before creation (John 17:5), temporarily veiled during incarnation but to be fully revealed at the parousia. This empirical experience validated Christian hope—glorification is certain because these eyewitnesses saw Christ transfigured (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the connection between prayer and Christ's transfiguration reveal about the purpose and power of communion with God?
2. How does witnessing Christ's intrinsic divine glory (not merely reflected glory like Moses) confirm His unique identity as God incarnate?
3. In what ways does the Transfiguration as a preview of Christ's glorified state encourage Christian hope for bodily resurrection?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοῦ τὸ εἶδος
And was as G3588 he prayed his G3588 the fashion
G2532 G1096 G1722 G4336 G846 G1491

τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἔτερον καὶ ὁ ἱματισμὸς αὐτοῦ
G3588 countenance his altered And G3588 raiment his
G4383 G846 G2087 G2532 G2441 G846

λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων
was white and glistening
G3022 G1823

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 17:2 (Parallel theme): And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Revelation 20:11 (Parallel theme): And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Isaiah 53:2 (Parallel theme): For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Isaiah 33:17 (Parallel theme): Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

Acts 6:15 (Parallel theme): And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Mark 16:12 (Parallel theme): After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

John 1:14 (Parallel theme): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.