

## HIS CLOTHES BECAME DAZZLING WHITE

holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. *Seven days you shall present the Lord's offerings by fire*; on the *eighth day* you shall observe a holy convocation and *present the Lord's offerings by fire*; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations

People were to live in rudimentary booths (thus the **three dwellings** in the Gospel account) during the festival. The Temple was illuminated nightly (*present the Lord's offerings by fire*) in memory of the Divine Shekinah.

During the exile in Babylon the captives apparently forgot the obligation. They recovered the festival after their return in either in 458 B. C. or perhaps as late as 428 B. C.

**Nehemiah 8:** <sup>14-18</sup> And they found it written in the law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, **that the people of Israel should live in booths during the festival of the seventh month**, and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, "**Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.**" So the people went out and brought them, and made booths for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them; for from the days of Jeshua son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the festival seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

It may be that Transfiguration did not occur at Succoth, but no first century Jew could fail to see this story of Jesus as a living fulfillment of the promise of the feast.

Please prepare Mark 1:9-15 for next Sunday

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## The Transfiguration

Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516)

Tempera on panel c. 1490-95, 115x151.5 cm.

Capodimonte National Gallery, Naples, Italy

### Today's Gospel St. Mark 9:2-9

✠ **SIX DAYS LATER**, 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, and **his clothes became dazzling white**, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them **Elijah with Moses**, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make **three dwellings**, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say,

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they were terrified. **Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’** Suddenly **when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.** As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. [© NRSV]

### The Divine Radiance Shines From Jesus

The Transfiguration marks the moment when Jesus’ disciples are first shown what has to be little more than a shadow of the Glory that is experienced in the Kingdom of Heaven. **SIX DAYS LATER** is only found in Mark. It may indicate a traditional time of preparation before a great Spiritual event. They go to a **high mountain apart, by themselves**, perhaps indicating that the Christ anticipates, like Moses on Mt. Sinai, a sublime religious experience. This event is unlike that of Moses who ascended the mountain alone. Here, Jesus shares this experience with others. Suddenly, he *is* the experience. **[H]is clothes became dazzling white.** He glows with the *Shekinah*, the Divine Radiance like that brilliance that was seen on Moses’ face when he descended from Mt. Sinai. To save the peoples’ eyes Moses had to veil his face until the radiance wore off.

Jesus is joined by **Elijah with Moses**, the prime examples of the Prophets (Elijah) and the Law (Moses). Peter [may we guess, babbling?] offers to make **three dwellings**, one for each of them. In the midst of his confusion, God makes his point from the cloud, a point concluding that all need to hear over and over again: **[L]isten to him!** Before that we read, **Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved;!’** The event is suddenly over. The drowsy apostles become aware of their surroundings and **when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.**

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How important are those last words, **only Jesus.** With all the soul destructive trash luring us, those words demand to be in the front of the Christian’s mind: **only Jesus, only Jesus, only Jesus.**

### Jesus the Fulfillment of the Festivals

The Gospels, especially John’s Gospel, show us Jesus as the *reality* that the Jewish festivals *symbolized*. He is the fulfillment of the Feasts. In John, Jesus, the Bread of Life, is condemned at the exact moment before Passover when a command was given to consume any remaining leavened Bread. He is nailed to the Cross at the exact moment when the order was given to destroy<sup>1</sup> any remaining bread; and he, the Lamb of God, dies at the exact time when the faithful began the slaying of the Passover lambs. Or again, in John, at the time when the altar was festively washed with water from Siloam at the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth) Jesus sent a man blind from birth to wash at Siloam. The man saw for the first time. Do you see the fulfillment of the symbol? Altars need washing over and over again but the man washed and received a lifelong gift.

### The Fulfillment of Succoth ?

The Transfiguration appears only in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Its details mirror several other events of Succoth, that feast which we Christians more commonly refer to as Tabernacles. The directions for the keeping of the feast are found in the book of Leviticus. Please note the several words in *bold italics*.

Leviticus 23:<sup>33-36</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of *booths* (*tabernacles*: Heb. *Succoth*) to the LORD. The first day shall be a

<sup>1</sup> Consuming or destroying leavened bread was required before Passover began. Unleavened (yeast free) bread took its place..