

New Testament word study: *katoptrizomenoi*: “beholding as in a mirror”

This word occurs only once in the New Testament, and derives from *katoptron*, "a mirror" (which is *kata*: "down," and *ops*: "an eye or sight" - which we recognize in e.g. English “optics”)

In the Active Voice the word signifies "to make to reflect, to mirror".
In the Middle Voice, it means "to reflect as a mirror".

Hence *katopritzomai*: “to look at one’s self in a mirror” –*Thayer*.

Our word is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and occurs in an absolutely tremendous context which brings out the meaning:

The apostle Paul first refers to that his
“...sufficiency is from God Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter [of the Law] but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (v.5-6).

Paul then sets forth this wonderful fact:

BUT IF the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away:

HOW shall not rather ***the ministration of the spirit*** be with glory?

FOR [*gar*. particle of affirmation and conclusion denoting “truly therefore, verily as the case stands” – *Thayer*]

IF ***the ministration of condemnation*** hath glory,
much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

FOR [*gar*] VERILY that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.

FOR [*gar*] IF that which passeth away was with glory, ***much more*** that which remaineth is in glory.

HAVING THEREFORE such a hope, we use ***great boldness of speech***,

(and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away: but their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant ***the same veil*** remaineth, it not being revealed to them that it is done away ***in Christ***.

But unto this day, ***whenever Moses is read***, a veil lieth upon their heart. But whenever it [i.e. Israel’s heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away)

NOW ***THE LORD*** is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

BUT **WE ALL**, with unveiled **face** beholding as in a mirror [*katoptrizomenoi*] the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3: 7-18, ASV; *emphasis Rotherham*)

Ancient mirrors were made not of glass, but of highly polished metal: silver, brass, gold.

The person saw himself, but *his face would be illuminated by the reflections from the mirror*.

His face would thus radiate either white or yellow (depending on the metal used). He would not see this reflection or *change himself*, but others would see it.

Before looking at this further, let us note the reference here to Moses veiling his face as set forth in Exodus 34:

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that **Moses** knew not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with Him.

And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses spake to them.

And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that Jehovah had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

But when Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him”. (Exodus 34: 29-35, ASV; *emphasis Rotherham*).

Moses' face shone, because he had been beholding the glory of the Lord on the mountain. He therefore veiled his face – and to this day, as Paul says:

“**whenever Moses is read, a veil** lieth upon their heart.

But whenever it [i.e. Israel's heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away)!”

BUT NOT SO WITH US WHO BELIEVE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

“... **WE ALL**, with unveiled **face** BEHOLDING as in a mirror [*katoptrizomenoi*]...”

Beholding WHAT?

“The GLORY of the Lord”

And we evidently only do so behold when we, with our inner eye of faith, look at HIM and consider WHO He is and WHAT He has done.

And THIS requires that we get to know the Living Word, which we can only do through the Written Word.

There is no other source of information; there is no other way to get to “know HIM” Who is our great and glorious God and Saviour, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHEN we are *thus* beholding the Glory of the Lord, something happens: we are THEN through the reflections from HIS Glory:

“**transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit”.

The word “transformed” (or “transfigured”, as the KJV has it) first occurs regarding the Transfiguration of our Lord:

Matthew 17:1-5

“And after six days [exclusive Jewish reckoning, i.e. only whole, completed days] Jesus

taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, *And was **transfigured** before them:*

and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him...,

...a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, “*This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him*” (KJV)

Mark 9:2-7

And after six days [exclusive Jewish reckoning] Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was **transfigured** before them.

And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them...

...And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “*This is My beloved Son: hear Him*”. (KJV)

The word “transformed” or “transfigured” is *metamorphoō* (cfr. English “metamorphosis”) meaning “to change one’s form, to transform, to alter one’s form”; from *meta* (implying change) and *morphoō* “to form” - *Vine*.

[The verb *morphoō* occurs *only once*, in Galatians 4:19 about Paul’s travail in birth again “until Christ *be formed* in you” i.e. the Galatian believers)]

The Greek *metamorphoō* – in addition to “transfigured” in Matthew and Mark - occurs only *two* other places:

Romans 12:2:

“And be not **conformed** to this world: but be ye **transformed** [*metamorphoō*] **BY the renewing of your mind, that** [*eis*: towards (the purpose that)] ye may *prove* what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”.

And our text in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

“But *we all*, with open face BEHOLDING, as in a glass, THE GLORY [*doxa*] of the Lord, are **changed into** [*metamorphoō*] the *same* image [*eikon*] from glory to glory, even as BY the Spirit of the Lord”

From which we understand the beautiful truth, that the Holy Spirit gradually *transforms us* into *the Lord’s image* so that we may *prove* the perfect will of God

(“prove”: *dokimazō*; “to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals; hence to recognise as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy” – *Strong/Thayer*).

AND the Holy Spirit effects this transformative renewing of our mind by the means of our BEHOLDING the Glory of the Lord.

HENCE the need for us to get to *know* the Lord so we can thus *behold* and *see* HIM with our inner eye of faith; and *hence* we examine the Scriptures, because “they...testify of ME”, because *thereby* we do get to know and love Him, even our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Note on the Transfiguration record in Luke’s Gospel:

Luke 9:28-36

“And it came to pass about an eight days [inclusive *Gentile* reckoning i.e. including any part of a day counted as one day] after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.

And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

Who appeared in GLORY [*doxa*] and spake of His decease [*exodus*; “exit” i.e. departure] which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw **HIS GLORY**, [*doxa*] and the two men that stood with Him...they departed from Him...there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, “*This is My beloved Son: hear Him*”. (KJV)

Each gospel, in God's perfect way, records *exactly* what is required for His purposes in each of the four gospels.

Note the *precise* differences between Luke (in the purpose of the Divine Author addressed primarily to *Gentiles*), and Matthew and Mark, with primary purpose towards *Jewish* and - in Mark - Jewish *and* Roman readers, expressed in

- 1) the number of days, and
- 2) Matthew and Mark using "*transfigured*", and Luke using "*altered*";

Luke does *not* use *metamorphoō*.

The Divine Author ensures that *he* uses the phrase *egeneto heteron*, "was altered,"; literally: "became [*ginomai*] different [*heteros*]".

Thereby the Divine Author ensures that Luke's mainly *Greek*-speaking and pagan (or formerly pagan) Gentile readers do *not* associate *our* Lord's transfiguration with all the heathen gods and goddesses, who in classical Greek mythology and language constantly "metamorphosed" (*metamorphoō*) into humans or animals for a variety of degrading purposes].
