

2.1

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The transfiguration of Jesus indicates He is the express image of God.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will worship Jesus for who He is: my Lord, my God, and my Savior.



FOCUS VERSE: Matthew 17:2

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 17:1-13; II Peter 1:16-21



Lesson Title: The Transfiguration of Jesus

Icebreaker: Give an example of a time when you spoke before you thought.

» *How do you picture the Red Sea crossing? Do you think God used the weather and creation to part the sea and bury the Egyptians?*

I. THE ROLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IN THE CONFIRMATION OF FAITH

- A. Transfiguration Is Metamorphosis
- B. The Kingdom of God Is the Kingdom of the Son of Man
- C. I Will Worship Jesus as Almighty God in Flesh
 - » *When you think of Jesus, how do you picture Him?*

II. THE TRANSFIGURATION WAS A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

- A. Peter's Second Letter Affirmed the Significance of the Transfiguration
 - » *What moments in your life have shown you the majesty and glory of God? How have those moments confirmed Scripture to you?*
- B. Peter's Second Letter Affirmed the Deity of Jesus Christ
 - » *What difference does it make if we see Jesus as Almighty God or as one person in a triune Godhead?*
- C. Jesus Is Our God, Lord, and Savior
- D. Worshiping Jesus
 - » *How do we keep adding godly qualities to our faith?*

Prayer Focus

- For understanding to comprehend how the Hebrew Scriptures testify of Jesus
- For help sharing our understanding of Scripture with people we meet

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 17:1-13; II Peter 1:16-21

The Mount of Transfiguration is one of three instances in which a voice from Heaven provided divine confirmation of Jesus Christ's identity. The first instance was at Jesus' baptism by John, in which the voice from Heaven proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). The second was at the Mount of Transfiguration, during which the voice from Heaven spoke the same phrase with the added command: "hear Him" (Matthew 17:5, KJV). The third instance was at the conclusion of Jesus' prayer that God would "glorify thy name," to which the voice spoke to the gathered crowd and said: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28).

In all three instances, the voice from Heaven was directed toward those gathered around Jesus. Even on the third occasion, although the voice spoke at the conclusion of Jesus' prayer, Jesus confirmed, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes" (John 12:30). There is no compelling reason to view these instances as confirmation of separate persons in the Godhead because all three instances were given to the listeners present as affirmation of Jesus being the Messiah and to encourage heeding the words He spoke. Such an understanding is more consistent with Hebraic monotheism, which is the perspective from which all New Testament writers penned Scripture.

Interestingly, in all three synoptic Gospels the Mount of Transfiguration narrative is positioned immediately before the story of the disciples failing to cast demons out of a boy (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43). Despite the transfixing revelation of Jesus' divinity on the mountain, the disciples failed to do Jesus' work once they came down off the mountain. Jesus told them they failed to do the miracle because of their "unbelief" (Matthew 17:20), or "little faith" (ESV), and reminded them, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). Personal, ongoing relationship with God based on faith and built by prayer and fasting ultimately renders more spiritual power than visions of Moses, Elijah, and a transfigured Christ.

THERE IS NO COMPELLING REASON TO VIEW THESE INSTANCES AS CONFIRMATION OF SEPARATE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD BECAUSE ALL THREE INSTANCES WERE GIVEN TO THE LISTENERS PRESENT AS AFFIRMATION OF JESUS BEING THE MESSIAH AND TO ENCOURAGE HEEDING THE WORDS HE SPOKE.

DAY 1

Matthew 17:1-4

¹ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

⁴ Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, 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 Elias.

Biblical Insight

On multiple occasions Jesus chose Peter, James, and John from among the Twelve, such as the healing of Jairus's daughter and to pray with Him separately in Gethsemane. These interactions gave the three disciples a unique and intimate insight into the person and work of Christ.

Peter's words in Matthew 17:4 demonstrated these men's confusion and bewilderment. Both Mark's and Luke's Gospel note that Peter only sputtered these words because he "did not know what to say" (Mark 9:6; Luke 9:33). Similarly, according to Mark 14:40, these three disciples were at a loss for words when Jesus questioned them in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Daily Devotion

When Azadeh discovered she had stage five colon cancer, she felt hopeless. Because of her Muslim faith, praying for healing was not an option. To ask Allah for healing was considered a grave sin.

One day, Azadeh met a former Muslim woman who encouraged her to ask Jesus for healing. According to Islamic teachings, Jesus healed people and would return at the end of time. The former Muslim argued that this meant that Jesus was still alive. Why not ask Him for healing?

Azadeh agreed and attended a prayer meeting at a small Pentecostal church plant. One month later, Azadeh reported that she was completely healed of cancer. She declared, "Allah did not heal me. I know it was Jesus."

Azadeh has been given a unique insight into Jesus that has begun unraveling decades of Islamic teaching. Upon reflection, what insights into Jesus' nature have you received through difficult seasons?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Matthew 17:5-8

⁵ While he yet spake, behold, 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.

⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

⁸ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Biblical Insight

The words emanating from Heaven in this passage immediately remind us of Jesus' baptism by John when similar words boomed from Heaven (Matthew 3:17). However, on this occasion the voice from Heaven added a command not recorded at Jesus' baptism: "hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). This command was obviously directed at the three disciples, as no one else was present, and it implicitly demonstrated the superiority of Jesus' ministry even more than that of Moses and Elijah, who symbolized the Hebrew Law and Prophets (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Matthew 17:8). Jesus is the One the disciples should listen to and prioritize.

Daily Devotion

The word *priority* means, "superiority in rank, position, or privilege" (merriam-webster.com) and comes from the Latin root meaning *first*. Before the 1900s the word *priorities* rarely appeared in print. Then around the 1940s, time management experts transformed the singular priority into multiple priorities.

Decades later, we now live in a world of countless priorities, or "firsts." This is certainly true when it comes to the voices speaking into our lives. There are teachers, employers, significant others, politicians, celebrities, advertisers, influencers, spiritual leaders, and many other voices trying to influence our lives.

As noted in our Biblical Insight today, the voice from Heaven did not command Peter, James, and John to "hear ye them" but rather "hear ye him" (Matthew 3:17). Upon reflection, what voice or voices do you prioritize in your life? Is hearing God your main priority or sometimes just an afterthought?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Matthew 17:9-13

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

¹⁰ And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

¹² But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

¹³ Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Biblical Insight

The prophecy the disciples referred to is found in Malachi 4:5-6. Obviously John the Baptist was not literally Elijah, but John was clearly identified as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Jesus identified John the Baptist as "Elijah who was to come." (See Matthew 11:14.) According to Luke 1, an angel told Elizabeth that John the Baptist would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." However, despite John's arrival to fulfill Malachi's prophecy, he was rejected and martyred, a foreshadowing of how Christ would ultimately be treated.

Daily Devotion

In his book, *Science Speaks*, Professor Peter W. Stoner, chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena State College, outlines the mathematical probability of a single person fulfilling biblical prophecies. According to Stoner, for any man to have ever lived to fulfill simply eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} . That is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. Stoner then calculated that the probability of one person fulfilling forty-eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{157} , yet Jesus fulfilled over three hundred prophecies. For this to occur without God is a mathematical impossibility.

With God, the fulfillment of over three hundred prophecies is further proof that He knows the beginning to the end. Take comfort in knowing that while you do not know what the future holds, God does.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

II Peter 1:16–18

¹⁶ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

¹⁷ For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

¹⁸ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Biblical Insight

Peter's recollection of the voice that spoke from Heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration is important for Oneness theology. Peter understood the voice from Heaven to be a "divine endorsement" of Jesus—a testament of His honor and glory—that was directed toward and given for the benefit of the disciples so that they may be witnesses of Christ's majesty. Peter did not view the instance as persons in a triune Godhead speaking to one another, of which no such biblical example exists (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Peter 1:17).

Daily Devotion

J. Warner Wallace, a cold-case homicide detective, was once an atheist. He was tired of being challenged by Christians, so Wallace began to read the Bible and realized that Christianity was like the cold cases he solved as a detective.

Within his book *Cold-Case Christianity*, Wallace utilizes his detective skills to demonstrate how he went from atheistic skeptic to devout Christian. For Wallace, the tipping point of his faith journey was his realization that each of the Gospels was a record of eyewitness accounts of the writers or of people interviewed. Plus the Gospels were written by known authors soon after Jesus' ascension.

The Gospels are not the only recorded eyewitness testimonies, as seen in II Peter 1. Eyewitness accounts are central to Christianity. As you are reading the New Testament, pay attention for details that only an eyewitness would notice.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

II Peter 1:19–21

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Biblical Insight

Second Peter 1:20–21 communicates several important truths about Scripture. First, Peter affirmed that all Scripture is divinely inspired, not originating solely from human mind and will. Second, Scripture should not be subjected to the private whimsical interpretation of any one individual. In this same epistle Peter rebuked false teachers who nefariously misinterpreted Scripture (II Peter 2:1–3), which is exactly the opposite of what the disciples did (II Peter 1:16). Third, the phrase “knowing this first” indicates the importance and primacy of embracing Scripture, not allowing it to slip from its rightful, principal place (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Peter 1:20–21).

Daily Devotion

During the fall and winter months of 1819 and 1820, 77-year-old Thomas Jefferson used a razor to cut passages from six copies of the New Testament. Then he rearranged and pasted together the selected verses. His goal was to remove any signs of the miraculous and supernatural from the Gospels.

Jefferson viewed the teachings of Jesus as precious as diamonds, but he saw the miraculous as “the dung of ancient political agendas” (“Diamonds and Dunghills,” *The Thomas Jefferson Hour*). To Thomas Jefferson, Jesus was not divine, but rather a moral teacher.

Until his death, Jefferson attended church faithfully and read the verses of Jesus’ teachings, but he did not receive the revelation of Jesus’ deity. Jefferson was too bound by his own understanding and interpretation of Scripture to know who Jesus was.

During personal times of Bible reading and study, don’t merely try to understand Scripture from your own human reasoning. Take time to surrender your understanding to God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
