

# Transfiguration

Read Luke 9:28-36, Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-8.

When it comes to Jesus, simple words to describe Him sometimes fail to communicate. “Transfiguration” is one of those words. To understand the Transfiguration, other complex theological terms are necessary.

## Talking Points

- A short time after Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi concerning His deity, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a nearby mountain. Logistically, this was probably Mt. Hermon.
- Fulfilling a recent promise, Jesus’ showed His closest friends His heavenly glory. They saw spectacular light emanating through His flesh and clothing. That scene looks back to Moses, who saw the back of YHWH on Mt. Sinai.
- Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared in the cloud that had enveloped the mountaintop. They talked with Jesus about His imminent crucifixion, burial, and resurrection in Jerusalem.
- As suddenly as it happened, the event was over. Jesus told His disciples not to tell the others about what had happened until He was gone.

## Background

Throughout the Old Testament, God occasionally manifested Himself visibly through some physical entity like a burning bush, a cloud of fire, or a pillar of smoke. He appeared as a man to Abraham, announcing Isaac’s birth and the coming judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The theological term for an Old Testament appearance of God is “theophany.” A strong argument can be made that the Old Testament theophanies are physical appearances of the pre-incarnate Son of God, Jesus.

## Incarnation & Transfiguration

Jesus’ appearance on earth as a baby born in Bethlehem was utterly different than a theophany. “Incarnation” is the term used for God taking on human flesh in the person of Jesus. Two thousand years ago, the egg of a virgin in Nazareth was fertilized by the Spirit of God. A miracle occurred. Life was created in Miriam’s womb. Nine months later, Jesus, the God / Man, was born. His Hebrew name is “Yeshua,” meaning “salvation.”

At no time throughout history has anyone experienced God’s completely unveiled glory. Jesus was/is God. For over thirty-three years, Jesus covered the glory that always was His with flesh. With His incarnation, Jesus refused to use His divine power, choosing instead to walk as a human being.

Jesus allowed Peter, James, and John to experience a fraction of the glory He had always possessed atop the highest mountain in Israel. The event described here is known as the “Transfiguration.”

### **Transfiguration Defined:**

- 1: A change in form or appearance
- 2: An exalting, glorifying, or spiritual change

### **Final Thoughts on a Current Issue**

Jesus was fully human while never denying His divinity. Others identified Jesus as “the son of the carpenter,” most likely with a snicker, the result of Nazarene gossip surrounding the facts of His birth. Jesus openly declared Himself as the eternally existing “Son of God.” He was never conflicted with identity issues.

There is a lot of conversation today about “trans-this” and “trans-that.” If a woman or a man wants to be identified as something other than what their genetics dictate, our culture demands that we accept their delusion as fact. Biology doesn’t lie. Neither does the Bible.

While comfortable in His outer skin, there was much more to Jesus on the inside. There was no disconnect between the divine and the human in Yeshua. He always knew who He was and still is. Someday soon, all will see Him in all His glory!

### **Bible Conversations**

- Jesus’ disciples followed Him for over three years. His miracles and teachings aligned with their expectations of the long-awaited Messianic King of the Jewish people. Why did Jesus allow only Peter, James, and John to see His transfigured majesty on Mt. Hermon?
- Thinking back to Israel’s exodus from slavery in Egypt, why did Peter, James, and John want to build booths/tents at the Transfiguration?
- Jesus’ disciples were correct about His identity. But, He did not establish the Messianic Kingdom at that time. We are now living 2,000 years later. Consider why Jesus is still waiting to establish His Kingdom on earth. What do we have in common with those waiting all these years?