



Christ to the World Ministries

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Writer: Dr. Charnel Anderson
Advisor: Dr. LeRoy Ford
Bible Editor: Dr. Lorin Cranford

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THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS



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The Transfiguration of Jesus

Read Matthew 17:1-9 in your Bible.

Jesus led his disciples to the region of Caesarea Philippi, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Here, in a secluded area, away from the throngs of people who sought his help and the religious leaders who sought his downfall, Jesus could relax and prepare the disciples for his impending death. Before long Jesus would begin his final journey to Jerusalem, knowing that, once there, he would be put to death.

Jesus quizzed the disciples about his identity. He wanted to know if finally they indeed realized who he was. Simon Peter gave the correct answer, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Then Jesus began to tell the disciples plainly that he would be killed in Jerusalem and on the third day be raised to life (Matthew 16:21).

Jesus and Three Disciples Journeyed to a High Mountain

A week later Jesus took Peter, James and John up onto a high mountain. The Bible does not identify this mountain. It may have been Mount Hermon, the greatest mountain in the whole area. Caesarea Philippi was located on the southwestern slopes of this mountain. The mountain towers more than 9,000 feet above sea level. Its peak, covered with snow much of the year, can be seen from the Dead Sea, 120 miles away.

Jesus went to the mountain to pray. Knowing that he would soon die, he sought God’s will and guidance. He also went to reveal his divine glory to the disciples and to instruct and strengthen them.

Jesus Was Transformed

After arriving on the mountain, Jesus underwent a glorious transformation as he prayed. His true spiritual nature burst through his physical nature, unveiling his deity. Surrounded by brilliant light, his face shone like the sun. His clothes became dazzling white. The scene is one of the most dramatic supernatural events of the Bible.

This dramatic event likely took place at night. Luke tells us that the disciples were very sleepy (Luke 9:32). They came down from the mountain the next day (Luke 9:37). So some time in the early evening or in the night, the deity of Jesus shone through in glowing brilliance and whiteness, suggesting glory, sovereignty and purity.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah, two Old Testament personalities, appeared in glorious splendor with Jesus and talked with him about his approaching death in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Moses the great lawgiver and Elijah the fiery prophet represented the law and the prophets. Their presence indicated that the whole Old Testament found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The three disciples were not fully awake as the startling scene took place (Luke 9:32). Tired and sleepy from the mountain climb, they were slow to comprehend. The dramatic change in Jesus’ appearance and the two Old Testament men, whom they recognized, frightened them. Peter spoke up and suggested building three shelters for Jesus and Moses and Elijah. He wanted to commemorate the dramatic event and preserve their “*mountain-top experience*.” Luke kindly wrote, “*He did not know what he was saying*” (Luke 9:33).

God Spoke From a Cloud

A bright cloud suddenly interrupted Peter and overshadowed them. God spoke from the cloud: “*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!*” (Matthew 17:5). This same voice from God the Father confirmed Peter’s earlier confession of Jesus as the Son of God and the promised Messiah.

The terrified disciples fell facedown to the ground. Jesus came and touched them and said: “*Get up. Don’t be afraid*” (Matthew 17:7). Moses and Elijah were gone and “*they saw no one except Jesus*” (Matthew 17:8).

As Jesus and the three disciples walked down the mountain he instructed them, “*Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead*” (Matthew 17:9). Later, after Jesus’ resurrection, Peter, James, and John would be witnesses of the transfiguration event to the other disciples and, when the gospels were written down, a witness to all Christians everywhere.

The disciples never forgot that night on the mountain. Many years later, Peter wrote: “*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain*” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

The transfiguration revealed Jesus in all His glory. The voice from heaven confirmed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. The event gives us a preview of the full glory of God that all Christians will experience for eternity.

God wants us to have a relationship with him and share in the eternal glory of Jesus Christ. He sent Jesus to live and die for us so that we may have a saved relationship with God. All he asks is that we turn from our self-centered ways and trust Jesus to enter our lives and transform them. A simple prayer of repentance and trust is all it takes for us to live a renewed life based on a desire to do God’s will rather than our own. You can do it now!

Pray this prayer: “*Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*”

Welcome into God’s family! Share with others that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.