

## The Transfiguration of Christ

Matthew 17:1-13 (cf. Mk. 9:1-13; Luke 9:27-36)

The transfiguration is one of the most important events in the earthly ministry of Christ. It took place shortly after Christ began to tell His disciples about going to Jerusalem to be crucified and raised after three days (16:21). Then Jesus promised He would give them a “preview” of Him “*coming in his kingdom*” (16:27-28).



The transfiguration is the fulfillment of that promised “preview.” The transfiguration is a miniature picture of the coming kingdom.

The transfiguration took place on “*an high mountain apart*” (probably Mount Hermon, close to Caesarea Philippi).

(17:1-2).

### A. The TRANSFIGURING.

1. “*transfigured*” (translated from the Greek word *met-am-or-fo’-o*). We get our word “metamorphosis” from this word. It means to change the outward form or appearance... to transform. Especially, to change to something exalted and glorious. Luke 9:29 says “*the fashion of his countenance was ALTERED, and his raiment was white and GLISTERING.*”

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A caterpillar builds a cocoon and later emerges as a beautiful monarch butterfly. The metamorphosis of the caterpillar came from the inside-out. Our Lord's glory was not reflected but radiated from the inside-out. His divine glory shined out through His flesh. It must have been a sight to “Behold!”

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2. Peter, James, and John got a glimpse of Christ in His glorified body, as He will appear when He comes “*in his kingdom.*” Peter makes it clear what they were witnessing on the mount was a vision of Christ coming in majesty and power (see 2 Peter 1:15-18).

3. Jesus said He would come “*with power and great glory*” (Mt. 24:30). There won’t be anything dull about the coming kingdom of God in comparison to the kingdoms of this world. It will be a dazzling sight.

B. The **TIMING**. —“*And after SIX DAYS...*”

1. Six days pass from the promise in 16:28, and Christ is transfigured on the SEVENTH day. [Luke 9:28 says, “*about eight days*”—This is no contradiction. After six days and about eight days is the seventh day!]
2. God works in series of “sevens.”
  - a) Seven days in a week—Six days of work, seventh rest.
  - b) Figuring one day as 1,000 years (2 Pet. 3:8), God divides the history of man into seven days of 1,000 years each: 4,000 before Christ; 2,000 after Christ; 1,000 years Kingdom of Christ on earth. Christ comes “*in his kingdom*” on the seventh day. We don’t know how accurate our calendars are. One thing is certain, we are on the verge of the seventh millennial day—the coming of Christ.
3. Genesis 2:1 has no “*evening and morning*” as the other six days. This is because it is a picture of the “last day” — “*The day of the Lord*” when Christ’s reigns in His kingdom for 1,000 years and brings you to the gate of eternity.

(17:3).

A. The **SUBJECTS** in the discussion— Jesus, Moses, and Elijah (the last two men mentioned in the O.T.)

1. Moses and Elijah foreshadow those at Christ’s coming. Moses, who died 2000 years earlier, represented the dead in Christ who will be raised. Elijah, who was taken to heaven while still alive represents those who are alive and remain at His coming (cf. Mt. 16:28).
2. As amazing as appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ was to the disciples, they were not there to draw attention to themselves! They were there to bear witness to Christ. Moses

represented the Law and Elijah the prophets—The two major divisions of the O.T.—All focusing on Christ (Rom. 10:4; Acts 10:43). We are to be pointing people to Christ!

B. The **SUBSTANCE** of the discussion (cf. Luke 9:30–31).

➡ The word “*decease*” in Luke 9:31 refers to death or departure (exiting from life). A dead person is often referred to as “the deceased”— He has exited this life.

1. Moses wrote about all the sacrifices offered in worship—The sin offering; burnt offering; peace offering; etc. all which pointed to Christ’s death on the cross for our sins. Likewise, the prophets also prophesied of Christ coming. Therefore, it should not surprise us that they would discuss Christ’s impending death at Jerusalem.

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I can imagine how the conversation may have went:

**Moses:** “I wrote about the sacrifices of bullocks, lambs, and turtledoves, offered at the tabernacle and Temple.”

**Jesus:** “Those sacrifices all pictured what I will accomplish in Jerusalem.”

**Elijah:** “Us prophets spoke about one who would be lead as a lamb to the slaughter and become an offering for sin. Was that You?” (Isa. 53).

**Jesus:** That’s right Elijah. I am the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

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2. His suffering and death was not something that merely would happen. It was an **accomplishment**. It accomplished the fulfillment of prophecy... the payment for our sins...
  - a) Jesus’ death was an accomplishment as God’s provision for our salvation! When Jesus cried from the cross, “*It is finished*,” He was announcing “Mission accomplished!” Jesus accomplished God’s plan of salvation.

b) This discussion of what Christ's death accomplished at Calvary is the interest of heaven and should be the main topic of our discussion also!

C. The **SPECTATORS** of the discussion.

1. Peter, James, and John overheard the discussion. Jesus set this same trio of disciples apart on three occasions. On each occasion they were exposed to some aspect of death: (1) At the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead (Luke 8:51). (2) In the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus prayed about His coming death (Mt. 26:37). (3) At His transfiguration they overheard a discussion of Christ's death.
2. These events showed the disciples: (1) Jesus had power over death (Jarius' daughter). (2) He was surrendered to die (in Gethsemane). (3) He would be glorified over death (transfiguration).
3. Listening to the discussion of Christ's impending death, they heard of Christ's death from the viewpoint of heaven rather than that of the world.

(17:4-5).

- Peter blurts out rashly without thinking (Mk. 9:5-6). Ecclesiastes 5:2—*Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God...* Peter is like many who talk when they don't know what to say. Someone said, "If your mind goes blank, be sure to turn off the sound."
- To put Christ, God in the flesh, in the same class as Moses and Elijah, mere human men, was thoughtless speaking. Christ is PREEMINENT over all men.
  - A. In His **PERSON**— *"This is my beloved SON..."*
  - B. In His **PERFORMANCE**— *"...in whom I am WELL PLEASED..."* Jesus did those things that pleased His Father (John 8:29—*I do always those things that please him.*)
  - C. In His **PROCLAMATION**— *"HEAR YE HIM."*

- Mark 8:36— *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*
- Luke 14:11— *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*
- John 14:6—*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
- John 3:3—*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*
- John 3:16—*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*
- Luke 13:3—*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
- Matthew 23:33— *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

***“Never man spake like this man.”*** When Jesus speaks, you had better listen— ***“HEAR YE HIM!”*** Are you listening?

(17:6-8).

- A. As Peter begins to talk about paying homage to Moses and Elijah, they depart, leaving ***“Jesus only!”***
- ➡ ***“Jesus only”***—the fulfillment of the law and the prophets!
- B. Do you want a good motto for your life? I suggest these two words: ***“Jesus only.”***
1. Not Jesus and Joseph Smith... Not Jesus and Mohammad... Not Jesus and the Pope. Paul said, *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”* (1 Cor. 2:2).
  2. ***“...save Jesus only...”*** — Or, to say it another way — ***“Only Jesus saves!”***