

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matthew 17:1-13

I. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION?

- A. The transfiguration of Jesus is the climax of Jesus' thirty-three years on earth before His death on the cross.
- B. Much of the beauty of the Transfiguration is found in the mysteries it highlights.
 - 1. Within the transfiguration is found the mystery of the **Incarnation**. The Apostle Paul uses the same language of the transfiguration in Philippians 2:

“God's heavens, the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars are aesthetic marvels, but they pale in comparison to His crowning creative achievement. From the dust of the ground He formed mankind in His own image, crowned us with glory and honor, and gave us dominion over the works of His hands (Gen.1:26-28, 2:7; Ps. 8:3-6). And in the ultimate creative act, He gave His imagebearers the capacity to also be creators, to offer back to Him -- everlastingly -- faithful aesthetic acts for His glory and for the delight of our fellow creatures” (“Faithful Aesthetic Acts,” by Roy Atwood, *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 8, no. 2).

Philippians 2:6-7 (see Hebrews 1:1-3)

who, although He existed in the form (μορφή) of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form (μορφή) of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

- 2. Another mystery is the contrast between the voice from the cloud and **the cry of Jesus from the cross**.
 - a. In Matthew 17:5 the voice from heaven says, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased...”
 - b. Jesus will later cry out from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (Matt.27:46).

“The transfiguration narrative has a remarkable twin of sorts in the account of Jesus' execution, 27.32-54. In the one, a private epiphany, an exalted Jesus, with garments glistening, stands on a high mountain and is flanked by two religious giants from the past. All is light. In the other, a public spectacle, a humiliated Jesus, whose clothes have been torn from him and divided, is lifted upon a cross and flanked by two common, convicted criminals. All is darkness. We have here pictorial antithetical parallelism, a diptych in which the two plates have similar lines but different colours” (Allison & Davies, *ICC II*:706).

- 3. There is a mystery that is found in the words that are spoken by the Father, “This is My **beloved Son**, with whom I am well-pleased.”
 - a. The words “beloved Son” imply the crucifixion (Matthew 17:5; see Matthew 3:17). This is the language of Genesis 22 (Genesis 22:2,12,16).
 - b. What Abraham did on Mount Moriah was ultimately a picture of God's provision of His beloved Son.
 - 4. How could God have a Son? (cf. John 1:18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9)
- C. Too often Christians look at Scripture from a utilitarian point of view. What's in it for me? There should be a place of awe and wonder and sometimes even silence in our contemplation of God (see Psalm 22:23).

II. THE TRANSFIGURATION FORESHADOWS WHAT IS HAPPENING AND WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO BELIEVERS.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

A. Currently, Christians are being “transformed” (μεταμορφόω) into the same image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

B. There is a future glory that we are awaiting for our bodies.

“The young sow wild oats. The old grow sage.”
Winston Churchill (1874 -1965),

1. The grand and glorious goal of our having been predestined is so that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:16-18,29-30).

2. Thinking about who you will be in the future should affect how you live in the present (**1 John 3:2-3**).

a. The elderly Christian may be exhibiting a lack of hope of they are continually professing: “I’m useless,” “I’m no good,” “I’m worthless,” “I’m a burden.”

b. Adults (young and old) can be paralyzed by their bodies if they do not look at them in hope.

“Hardening of the heart
ages people more quickly
than hardening of the
arteries.”

Chuck Gallozzi

C. Someone has said that our culture has no role models for growing old gracefully, only role models for postponing aging.

D. Whenever we think about our bodies, if we are to think as Christians, it should be in the context of:

1. The Incarnation

2. The Death of Jesus

3. The Transfiguration of Jesus, His resurrection, His ascension, and His bodily return to Judge the Living and the Dead.

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:

Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer. Have you been “transformed” in your thinking about your physical body or do you think like the world does?

What is the connection between the transfiguration and Peter’s confession in Matthew 16?

Why is the transfiguration the climax of Jesus’ thirty-three years on earth before His death and resurrection?

What are some of the mysteries of the Transfiguration?

Do you like the body God has given to you? Why or why not?

Why must we think of our bodies in terms of our relationship (union) with Jesus Christ? Why will we end up sinning in our thoughts, words, and deeds if we don’t think of our body in terms of Christ’s Incarnation, Transfiguration, death, resurrection, ascension and return?

Comment on the following quote, “Our culture has no role models for growing old gracefully, only role models for postponing it.” Do you live as if Jesus is your role model for youthfulness or aging?

“The word Matthew and Mark use for Transfiguration is a form of the verb *metamorpho*, from which the English word *metamorphosis* is derived. A metamorphosis is a transformation, a change of form. When the caterpillar goes through metamorphosis, it becomes a butterfly. It indicates a real change in form. (The Greek *morphe* means “shape” or “form.”) The noun from which the verb used here derives describes an essential form, not merely a mask or temporary appearance.

“The English *Transfiguration* employs the prefix *trans-*, which means “across.” A transoceanic voyage travels across the ocean. A transcontinental trip moves across the continent. The English word *transfigure* is an appropriate selection to capture the meaning of the event. A limit or barrier is crossed here. Perhaps we might call it a crossing of the line between natural and supernatural, between the human and the divine.”

Citation: R.C. Sproul, *The Glory of Christ*