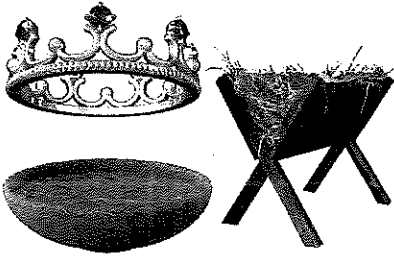


One Story: Transfiguration



Topic

Transfiguration

Theme

The Transfiguration revealed Jesus' glory, alerted the disciples to His coming death, and pointed to His future kingdom.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider how the Transfiguration should affect his service for God as well as His witness.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 11
- Visual 1 from resource CD

Scripture Focus

Matt. 16:1-4; 13-20; 17:1-12; Mark 9:1-13; Luke 9:18-36

Summary

This lesson looks at Peter's answer to Jesus' question, Who do you think I am? It then considers the events and significance of the Transfiguration and looks at what responses it evokes from people, including learners today.

Outline

- I. The Realization of Jesus as Messiah
 - A. People postulated about Jesus' identity
 - B. Jesus asked about His identity
- II. The Transfiguration of Christ
 - A. The revelation of Christ's glory
 - B. The conversation about Christ's death
- III. The Response to the Revelation of Christ
 - A. The initial response
 - B. The intermediate response
 - C. The current response

Memory Verse

*"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"
(Matthew 17:5).*

More than Meets the Eye

VISUAL: Display visual 1 (from resource CD) or handout a copy to each learner. The visual shows disguised insects in their habitats.

ASK: What did you see when you first looked at the pictures?

ASK: Which of the insects would you say is the hardest to spot?

The insects in these pictures are well hidden. By God's design, they blend into their environments making them hard to see. The pictures contain far more than meets the eye.

Jesus came to earth as a man. He often blended into the crowds. Yet there was much to Him than met the eye. One day He led three of His disciples up a mountain to show them His glory. The experience was amazing for the disciples. The event required a response from them. It requires a response from us too.

Keeping a Secret

ASK: Rate yourself at keeping good news a secret with ten being really good at it and one being very poor at it. (Q1)

ASK: Give an example of good news that you had to keep secret. (Q2)

Jesus revealed His glory to three of His disciples but didn't allow them to tell anyone until later. They must have been bursting inside, wanting to tell everyone what they saw. We will look at how their news about Jesus' transfiguration should affect our lives today.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. The Realization of Jesus as Messiah

A. People postulated about Jesus' identity

People asked one question about Jesus wherever He went: *Who is He?* Different people phrased the question in different ways. The doctors of the law probably asked it in amazement at the precocious twelve-year-old Who talked with them so knowledgeably about the Scriptures (Luke 2:47). Curious bystanders at Jesus' baptism must have puzzled over the voice from Heaven and the introduction by which John the Baptist announced Jesus as Son of God and Messiah (Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:25-29).

See the following passages for the variety of reactions to Jesus: Matthew 7:28, 29; 9:8, 33, 34; 12:14, 23; 13:54-57; 14:33; 15:10-12, 31.

READ: Luke 4:22. **ASK:** What did those in the synagogue at Nazareth ask when they heard Jesus teach? (Q3) *Is this not Joseph's son?*

ASK: Does their question imply belief or doubt? (See Luke 4:28–30.) (Q4)

Doubt. The Jews in Nazareth rejected Jesus and saw Him as a common man.

From prison John the Baptist asked, *Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?* (Luke 7:20). The Pharisees and scribes reasoned, *Who is this which speaketh blasphemies?* (Luke 5:21). Most of the common people thought Jesus to be one of the forerunners of the promised Messiah (Matt. 16:14).

The Pharisees and the Sadducees grew disturbed about the multitudes who gathered around Jesus. They wanted to find evidence they could use to destroy His ministry, so they tested Him by asking Him to show them a sign from Heaven to prove by some direct miracle that He is Messiah (Matt. 12:39; 16:1). By asking for a sign, they showed that they had rejected all the miracles He had already performed before them. Jesus didn't indulge the Pharisees and Sadducees. He told them the only sign they would have was the sign of Jonah, a reference to Jesus' resurrection after spending three nights in the tomb. Of course most of the Pharisees and Sadducees rejected Jesus even after He rose from the dead and appeared to more than five hundred people (Matt. 28:11–15).

READ: Matthew 16:2–4. **ASK:** Why did Jesus refer to the Jews, and the Pharisees and Sadducees in particular, as a wicked and adulterous generation?

(Q5) *They were loyal to themselves and served themselves instead of being loyal to God. Their actions reflected the actions of a disloyal spouse.*

B. Jesus asked about His identity

In early autumn in the year before Jesus was crucified, He and His disciples visited near Caesarea Philippi, where He spent more time with His disciples (Matt. 16:13). He was training them for the tasks they would have after His departure. The purpose of that training included ensuring that they clearly understood His nature as the God-Man and the mission He had come into the world to accomplish. So He asked the disciples how people were identifying Him. Some of the people said He was John the Baptist while others said He was Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

READ: Matthew 16:14. **ASK:** Was thinking Jesus was John the Baptist or one of the prophets a complement to Jesus? Explain. (Q6) *No. Those explanations for Jesus' identity were attempts to marginalize Jesus and explain away any need to be accountable to Him.*

Then Jesus asked His disciples directly whom they thought He was (Matt. 16:15). Instead of several responses, only one came, as Peter spoke for the group. The truth about Jesus expressed in Peter's confession is a solid rock that is foundational to Jesus' identity.

READ: Matthew 16:15, 16. **ASK:** What does Peter's reply say about Jesus' mission and His true nature? (Q7) *As Christ, Jesus is the One sent by the Father to accomplish the sacrifice for sin on the cross. The Son of the Living God identified Jesus as God.*

ASK: Why did the disciples' answer differ from the people's concerning Jesus'

identity? (Q8) *The people recognized Jesus' characteristics as a great prophet; the disciples recognized Him as the Son of God.*

Peter's answer identified both the mission of Jesus, the sent One of God, and His true nature, the Son of God. As the Son of God, He is Lord. As the Christ, He is the One the Father sent to accomplish the sacrifice for sin on the cross. He would rise from the dead in proof of His deity. The truth about Jesus became the foundation of ministry that was to spread worldwide through Christ's church. It brings life to those who believe it and judgment to those who find it a stumbling stone, a rock of offense (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

After commending Peter for his confession of faith and the importance of its message, Jesus charged the disciples not to tell anyone that He is the Christ (Matt. 16:20). This caution seems contrary to what we would expect, but Jesus had two specific reasons for His warning. To advertise His identity would accelerate both the masses' desire to make Him the leader of their revolution against Rome and His enemies' determination to destroy Him. The confession was to be proclaimed after the Cross and Resurrection.

II. The Transfiguration of Christ

Counting the days between the promise and its fulfillment, Matthew and Mark reported that Jesus' transfiguration came six days later. Luke stated that eight days passed, because he counted both the day on which Jesus spoke the words and the day of the Transfiguration, as well as the intervening days.

A. The revelation of Christ's glory

Jesus made a remarkable statement that seemed to contradict what He had been saying about His coming death. He declared that some of His disciples would live to see Him in His kingdom (Matt. 16:28). Apparently He meant that some of the disciples would witness His transfiguration before seeing death. Six days after that promise, He selected three disciples to go with Him to a private place on Mount Hermon (17:1). Peter, James, and John had been among the earliest to become His followers. They formed a kind of inner circle, perhaps because they had walked with Jesus longer.

Luke's record tells us that Jesus' transformation took place while He was praying (Luke 9:29). His face changed from within and became as bright as the sun. His clothing glowed as white as the light (Matt. 17:2), as dazzling as snow sparkling in the sun (Mark 9:3). He stood before the three disciples in glorious splendor. Both Matthew and Mark used the word *transfigured* to speak of the changes in Jesus' appearance.

READ: Matthew 17:1, 2; Mark 9:2, 3; Luke 9:29. **ASK:** What did Jesus' glowing face and shining garment reveal about His true nature? (Q9) *That He is God and that His true nature is so glorious and pure that nothing on earth could match its splendor.*

It is clear that the writers of the synoptic Gospels, though not present at Jesus' Transfiguration, understood the importance of the event as they recorded it. Near

the end of his life, Peter referred to Christ's transfiguration, giving a firsthand account.

READ: 2 Peter 1:16. **ASK:** Based on Peter's testimony, what did the disciples see or experience at this event? (Q10) *Christ's majesty.*

The disciples saw Christ in His magnificence and splendor. They would never look or think of Him the same. Christ's brilliance was forever in their minds.

B. The conversation about Christ's death

When the three disciples awakened, they saw Jesus in His glory, standing with two men whom they could identify as Moses and Elijah. God had buried Moses at his death, but Elijah had been taken up alive into Heaven in a chariot of fire. Moses represented believers who have gone to Heaven through death; and Elijah, those who will be caught up to Heaven in the rapture of the saints without experiencing death.

Luke alone wrote that the three men talked about Jesus' soon decease at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). The fact of Christ's coming death would have been important to Luke, who presented Christ as the perfect Savior.

READ: Luke 9:31. **ASK:** To what experience could Moses relate that could have found its way into his conversation with Jesus and Elijah? (See Exodus 11:1—12:30) (Q11) *The Passover, including the death of the perfect lamb and the applying of the lamb's blood to the doorposts.*

Moses could relate to blessing of having a lamb die a substitutionary death on one's behalf. And Elijah was well acquainted with the Lord's personal compassion (1 Kings 19:1–8). The Angel of the Lord revived Elijah after he fled from Jezebel. We don't know if these experiences made their way into the three-way conversation, but no doubt they formed the framework from which Moses and Elijah viewed the coming death of Christ.

The prospect of bearing the burden of sin and of dying on behalf of sinners meant great pain and suffering for Jesus, but success in the plan of God was certain. Jesus must have been blessed by all that took place on that mountain.

III. The Response to the Revelation of Christ

A. The initial response

The Transfiguration—the demonstration of the deity of Christ unveiled through His humanity—affirmed Peter's testimony that Jesus is the Son of God and Messiah (Matt. 16:16). God the Father affirmed Jesus' righteousness with the words *in [Him] I am well pleased* (17:5). The scene overwhelmed Peter, who responded with a mixture of admiration and fear. His suggestion to make three tabernacles alluded to the Feast of Tabernacles, which was coming up. The suggestion was, however, inappropriate, for Peter said, *It is good for us to be here* (17:4); that is, *Let's stay here.*

ASK: Why was it wrong for Peter to want to stay on the mountain with Jesus,

Elijah, and Moses? (Q12) *Staying there would have meant Jesus would not go to the cross. Jesus' kingdom could not be established without the cross.*

Peter preferred the glory of Jesus to the prospect of death that Jesus had revealed to the disciples (Luke 9:22).

By suggesting a tabernacle for each person, Peter was putting Christ on the same level as Moses and Elijah. However, God's voice, coming from the bright cloud of glory that surrounded them all, reminded the disciples that Jesus is not just one of many prophets: *This is my beloved Son; hear him* (Luke 9:34, 35). The Father's voice also confirmed Jesus' dedication to do the Father's will and the dependence of His humanity upon the Spirit's power. Jesus' transfiguration was indeed a glimpse of the kingdom. But by suggesting three tabernacles, Peter was putting the King's crown before the Savior's cross, just as Satan had tried to persuade Jesus to do in the desert temptations.

B. The intermediate response

As the three disciples and the Master journeyed down the mountain, Peter, James, and John undoubtedly were elated about seeing the Lord in His glory and thinking that the kingdom was coming soon, regardless of what Christ had said about His death. The three men must have been bursting with excitement to tell everybody. But Jesus instructed them not to tell anyone what they had seen.

READ: Matthew 17:9. **ASK:** What conclusion would the other disciples have come to if they heard about Jesus' transfiguration? (Q13) *That Jesus would soon institute His kingdom.*

Peter, James, and John were missing the whole point of the Incarnation. The kingdom would not be possible until first Jesus Christ endured the cross. Telling the other disciples and believers about seeing their Master in His glory would only have fed their expectations for the kingdom instead of preparing them for the shocking events of His crucifixion and the miracle of His resurrection.

Peter, James, and John puzzled over Jesus' statement that He would rise from the dead. Since they had trouble believing that He would die, rising from the dead was still more mysterious and remote. They had recognized the prophet Elijah with Jesus on the mountain. It was easier to think about Malachi's prophecy concerning Elijah, who would be the forerunner of Messiah (Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 17:10–12; Mark 9:11–13). Since they had seen Elijah, their reasoning seemed to be, Elijah has come; therefore Messiah's kingdom must be on the way! Jesus explained to them that Elijah had come in the person of John the Baptist.

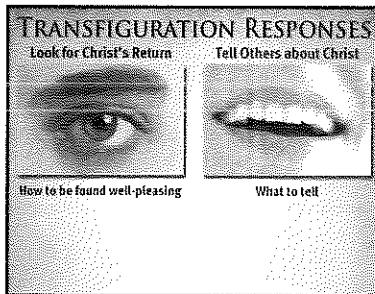
In Galilee Jesus continued teaching His disciples, preparing them for their future ministry. He outlined three important events they needed to be prepared to face: the betrayal of their Master, His death, and His resurrection (Matt. 17:22, 23). That He should die seemed so destructive to their hopes that they could not grasp the significance of His final statement that He would be resurrected (Mark 9:30–32). It was not long before all these events took place. In time the disciples looked back on the betrayal, death, and resurrection of Christ with understanding and a dedication to tell others the gospel.

C. The current response

The disciples eventually learned that the Transfiguration of Christ has relevance for the current age. Peter related it to the yet future coming of the Lord (2 Pet. 1:16). When Christ returns, He will do so in the honor and glory He demonstrated at His transfiguration (1:17).

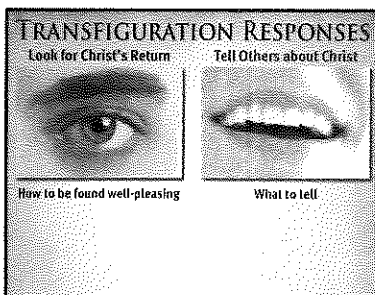
READ: 2 Peter 1:16, 17.

As believers, we ought to be looking forward to Christ's return for us at the Rapture and then His return with us to set up His kingdom on earth. The disciples found the return of Christ highly motivating. Those events should be highly motivating for us too. For what we do for the Lord before He comes will affect our rewards and our opportunities to praise the Lord for all eternity (2 Cor. 5:9, 10).



RESOURCE: Display resource 11. **READ:** 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10. **ASK:** What would it take to be found well-pleasing to Christ at His coming? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q14) *We need to live by His power and serve Him with pure motives, seeking to glorify Him.*

Our ongoing response to the Transfiguration should also include telling others about Christ. Christ wanted Peter, James, and John to keep His revelation of Himself a secret for a time, but that is no longer the case. We are called to tell the world about Christ (Matt. 28:16–20).



RESOURCE: Display resource 11. **ASK:** What truths revealed at the Transfiguration are important for us to know and share today? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q15) *Jesus is God's Son, is glorious in majesty, and was found well-pleasing to the Father.*

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Living for the Coming Christ

ASK: How has the future coming of Christ in all His glory and honor affected your life? (Q16)

Christ was well-pleasing to the Father. Being well-pleasing to God takes serving Him in the power of the Spirit rather than our own power, and it takes serving Him out of love and for His glory.

ASK: What adjustments might you need to make to whom you depend on in your service for God? (Q17)

ASK: What adjustments might you need to make to your motivations for serving God? (Q18)

The Transfiguration is a glimpse at the future kingdom of Christ. Don't miss your opportunity to live for Christ now!

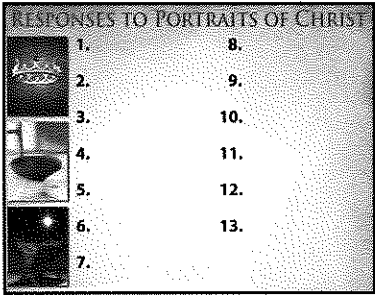
Personal Eyewitness Accounts

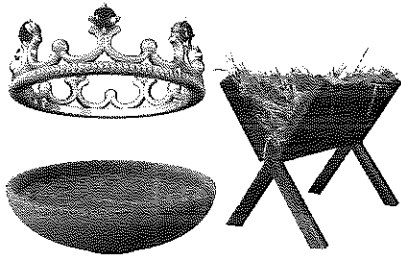
Each of us who knows Christ as Savior has a personal *eyewitness account* (salvation testimony). Ahead of time, ask one or two learners to be prepared to briefly share how they came to know the Savior. Then discuss as a group how they could naturally share their testimonies with others as part of their responsibility to tell others about Christ. (Q19)

Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 8 or use the following: Live in anticipation of Christ's return.

Encourage learners to memorize Matthew 17:5. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.





One Story: Triumphal Entry

Topic

Triumphal entry

Theme

Jesus offers all people
His peace.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will understand Christ is the source of true peace and will seek to share His peace with the lost.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 12

Scripture Focus

Matt. 21:1–17; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:11–48; 20:9–19

Summary

This lesson follows Jesus on His final journey to Jerusalem. It considers His teaching to the disciples and their inability to understand. It also presents Jesus' offer of peace that Jerusalem rejected but that is now available to all men through His death on the cross.

Outline

- I. Jesus' Teaching concerning His Death
- II. Disciples' Expectations of Glory
- III. Jesus' Parable about the Rejection of the Kingdom
- IV. Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem
 - A. The people's response to Jesus
 - B. Jesus' response to the people
- V. Cleansing of the Temple
 - A. Chasing out the thieves
 - B. Caring for the needy

Memory Verse

*"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows,
and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him;
he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3).*