

Jesus Is Transfigured

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: At the transfiguration, Peter, James, and John beheld Jesus' glory, which gave them a glimpse into the day when Jesus will return in full glory.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Matthew 17:1-13

Have you ever seen something amazing? Not just something neat or unique but something that left you awestruck? Something so beautiful and so grand that you struggled to find the words to describe it? Something that made you feel the significance of just how small and fragile you are?

Tiptoe toward the edge of the Grand Canyon and you could catch a view of the six-thousand-foot drop. Sail to the middle of the ocean and you will notice there is no land in sight, only water and waves. When we gaze at something as majestic as the Grand Canyon or the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, things are put in perspective. We realize quickly that we are small and fragile individuals in a grand world. Moreover, when our eyes are caught by the majesty of creation, our minds should turn to the majestic Creator.



What is the most breathtaking thing you've ever seen? In that moment, how did you feel?

Group Time

Point 1: Experiencing the Son of God's Glory (Matt. 17:1-5)

¹ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

When Jesus and the three disciples reached the peak of the mountain, Jesus was transfigured in front of them. We don't have every detail about this significant moment, but what we do know is Jesus exploded with light! We can permanently damage our eyes if we look at the sun directly, and it is around 93 million miles away. Here, directly in front of the disciples, Jesus' face shone like the burning star that brightens our days.

God's Glory: The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect _____ through His activity. Another sense of the word is the inherent _____ of God, the unbearable _____ and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness.

As if the divine glory of Jesus shining through were not enough, the disciples then saw Moses and Elijah next to Jesus, and the three began to converse. Peter, James, and John would have spent much of their lives hearing and reading about these figures, and here they were right in front of their eyes! But the importance of these figures is greater than just the men themselves, for they signified something crucial—that Jesus is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17).



How does Moses and Elijah's purpose at the transfiguration relate to our chief purpose in life?

Point 2: Experiencing the Son of God's Grace (Matt. 17:6-8)

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

God is different than us; we are the creature and He is the Creator. This isn't a case of God being like us, just bigger—as if we have knowledge, He just has more of it, or as if we have power, He just has more of it. No, He isn't just a bigger version of us. He is altogether different—He is transcendent and incomprehensible by us. At the mere sound of the thunderous voice of God from a bright cloud, the three disciples collapsed in terror.



In what ways is it good news that God is different than us?

The only way the disciples were going to move out of terror at the thunderous voice from the clouds was if God Himself stepped in to invoke their courage through His grace. So Jesus said, "Rise, and have no fear." He was speaking particularly for that moment, but there is a day coming when He will utter the same exhortation and mean it for all eternity. Those who have trusted in Jesus alone through faith alone by grace alone for their salvation will enter into a rest in which fear will be no more.



How has Jesus addressed our fears so that we can stand in God's holy and glorious presence?



Voices from Church History

"Once more; Never think that you can live to God by *your own* power or strength; but always look to, and rely on *him* for assistance, yea for all strength and grace. There is no greater truth than this, that 'we can do nothing of ourselves.'"¹

—David Brainerd (1718-1747)

Point 3: Experiencing the Son of God's Plan (Matt. 17:9-13)

⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." ¹⁰ And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹¹ He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

After His display of glory in His transfiguration, Jesus told the disciples that He later would be raised from the dead, which implied His coming death, but the disciples wanted to talk about a prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah. So Jesus made the connection for them between Elijah and John the Baptist. Then He connected the abuse, mistreatment, and execution of John the Baptist with how He would soon be treated as He headed toward the cross.

No doubt the disciples knew about John the Baptist's gruesome and unfortunate death, but what they did not fully realize was that Jesus was on His way to be tortured and killed as well. He would be beaten by strangers, betrayed by His friends, and have His body nailed to a cross. But by the broken body of this righteous Man, God would bring about the redemption of sinners. And just three days later, the darkest day in human history—the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God—would be eclipsed by the most glorious day in human history—the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God!

Christ's Exaltation: Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the _____ of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ's exaltation. Christ was exalted when God raised Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He _____ to the Father's right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He _____. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His _____ in rescuing sinners.



How should God's plan involving Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection shape the way we live as Christians?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Matthew 17:1-5

In the first verse of this terrific transfiguration account, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain so they can see His glory. This must have been a fantastic and yet terrifying scene to behold. Many of us would love a chance to climb the mountain and get a glimpse of Christ's glory. However, the good news of Christianity is that God brought His glory down the mountain to us. Christianity doesn't call us to summit a mountain in order to see God; it tells us to behold the God who descended from the mountain and makes Himself accessible to us.

Beyond just coming down from a mountain, Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven by taking on flesh and meeting us in our mess. Ultimately, He will "come down the mountain" again when He comes back for His bride—the church—at the end of all things.



Why should we regularly reflect on the lengths to which God went to meet with us in the person of His Son, Jesus?

Day 2: Read Matthew 17:6-8

When the disciples heard the thunderous voice from heaven proclaim that Jesus is God's beloved Son, they fell on their faces because they were terrified. Yet Jesus did not leave them in their terror. Rather, He went to them and comforted them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear" (Matt. 17:7).

This call for courage is found throughout Scripture. In Deuteronomy 31:7-8, Moses told Joshua to be "strong and courageous" because the Lord would go before him and the Israelites into the promised land. In Isaiah 43, God encouraged the people of Israel with the words "fear not" (v. 5) by promising to protect them even through fire and flood. In 1 John 4:18, the apostle John writes, "Perfect love casts out fear."

God does not call His people to a life of fear but to one of courage. The fear of the Lord casts out all other fears because we know with Him on our side, there is nothing left worthy of our fear. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).



How do God and His gospel bring you courage and drive away your fears?

Day 3: Read Matthew 17:9-13

At various points in the Gospels, we come across Jesus instructing certain people *not* to tell others about Him or what He did (Matt. 16:20; Mark 7:36; Luke 8:56). However, this certainly seems counterintuitive to us today who are charged with heeding the Great Commission. Doesn't Jesus want His followers to tell the entire world that He is King? Well, He does, but timing is everything.

As the Gospel of Matthew records in its closing lines, Jesus stated that His authority over heaven and earth was *given* to Him by the Father (Matt. 28:18). Sure, Jesus as the eternal Son of God possessed authority over the world as its Creator, but He was also sent to rule as the true *human* king, the Last Adam and Messiah, which required Him to succeed in taking proper dominion over the world *as a human being* (see Heb. 2:5-9). Unlike the disciples who were alive prior to Jesus' resurrection and exaltation, we have been freely and unambiguously charged to announce to everyone everywhere that Jesus is the risen and rightful King because His conquest was completed at the cross.



Living this side of Jesus' resurrection, do you find the expectation to proclaim the gospel to others burdensome or invigorating? Why?

Day 4: Read Malachi 4:4-6

The lights along the aisle dim and the screen widens. That's what often happens in a movie theater once the succession of trailers has finally come to an end and it becomes time for the main feature to begin. The audience responds accordingly, ready to settle in for what they came to see. We encounter a similar dynamic at work in Malachi's prophesying a "second coming" of Elijah. The return of Elijah was the last of the previews to appear before the main feature would begin.

Indeed, Jesus confirmed that "the great and awesome day of the LORD" (Mal. 4:5) had come, Elijah being symbolically represented by John the Baptist: "Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him" (Matt. 17:12). By affirming that Malachi's prophecy had been fulfilled in John the Baptist's preaching, Jesus was signaling to His hearers that the time of mere trailers and previews had ended; the main feature was imminent, namely, Jesus Himself and His death and resurrection.



How does looking at Malachi's prophecy about Elijah's coming help us to see Jesus as the central figure of the Bible's storyline?

Day 5: Read Matthew 17:22-23

Though we all know death is coming for each of us, including our loved ones, there is still only so much we can do to prepare ourselves when we face death firsthand. The loss of anyone close to us will inevitably lead to our being stunned and perplexed on some level. We should therefore sympathize with Jesus' original disciples who, during His mock trial and temporary burial, didn't seem to recall immediately the times Jesus had foretold of His death and resurrection (see Matt. 16:21-22; 17:12,22-23; 20:17-19). Even the prospect of His death distressed them (17:23).

On the other hand, Christians who have lived during the centuries following the days of Jesus' ministry have the distinguished benefit of being able to look back on the Gospel narratives curated specifically to highlight these sorts of things. More than likely, we too would have been slow on the uptake concerning the necessity and significance of Jesus' looming crucifixion. We should thus humbly thank God for providing and preserving these inspired, well-designed accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.



How does the Gospel record of Jesus' predicting His own death and resurrection reinforce for you the meaning and significance of His ministry?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Experiencing the Son of God’s Glory (Matt. 17:1-5)
- Experiencing the Son of God’s Grace (Matt. 17:6-8)
- Experiencing the Son of God’s Plan (Matt. 17:9-13)



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



What does it look like for Christians to reflect the glory of God in Christ through our words and actions?



How should the prospect of Jesus’ return in glory inform the way we minister to those going through a season of suffering?

Notes

UNIT 22**SESSION 1**

1. Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke, in Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009) [Wordsearch].
2. Charles H. Spurgeon, "'Where Are the Nine? Where?' in *The Complete Works of C. H. Spurgeon: Volume 51, Sermons 2916 to 2967* (Delmarva Publications, Inc., 2013) [eBook].

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2. "John," in *Africa Study Bible* (Oasis International LTD, 2016), 1546.
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2. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "The Salt of the Earth," November 30, 2019, www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/salt.html.
3. Frank Thielman, "Matthew," in *Gospel Transformation Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 1275, n. 5:13–16.

SESSION 2

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1959), 87.
2. J. C. Ryle, "What It Costs to Be a True Christian," December 4, 2019, www.the-highway.com/cost_Ryle.html.

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2. John Onwuchekwa, *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 43.

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1. Leo the Great, Sermon 90.4.1, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr., vol. III in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
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UNIT 24**SESSION 1**

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AND *Cornerstones: 200 Questions and
Answers to Learn Truth*

Jesus was born to die—a jarring statement
indeed, but one that is quite true.

Christmas and Easter are fused together,
linked hand-in-hand in such a way that each is dependent on
the other for its meaning. The theology of such a statement is
solid but incomplete, for Jesus was not born to die immediately
but rather some thirty years later. Jesus' life, then, was not
utilitarian—existing just so it could be taken away and picked
up again—it had greater meaning and purpose. What Jesus
did during those thirty years of walking the earth mattered; He
lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. He satisfied the
demands of righteousness that we could not so He might take
away our sin when we trust in Him and so His righteousness
might be credited to us, making us fully pleasing to the Father
(2 Cor. 5:21).

In this volume we delve deeper into the marvelous truth of the
incarnation to see still further glimpses of Christ's glory on
earth. His righteousness did not occur in a vacuum but rather
among people, ordinary people like you and me. In each unit
of this volume, we will look at Jesus' interactions with people
as through a prism, making slight turns to see different yet
equally brilliant perspectives of Jesus' works. In Unit 22, we
will see Jesus' power to heal coupled with His deep compassion
for people, even those who were marginalized in society. In
Unit 23, we will see Jesus' riveting teachings empowered
by His divine authority. And finally, in Unit 24, we will see
Jesus' miraculous power over nature, revealing His identity as
Creator God.

Each ray of light we will see points to the same truth: that Jesus
is the Messiah, the Son of God given for our salvation. Jesus
was indeed born to die, but He lived so that we too might live.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

Fall 2018

In the Beginning

Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)



Winter 2018-19

Out of Egypt

God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)
God Provides for His People (Exodus)
God Receives Worship from His People (Ex.; Lev.)



Spring 2019

Into the Promised Land

God Guides His People (Num.; Deut.)
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)



Summer 2019

A Kingdom Provided

God Provides a King (1 Samuel)
God Provides a Godly King (1-2 Sam.; Psalms)
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Eccl.)



Fall 2019

A Nation Divided

God Speaks to His People (1-2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)



Winter 2019-20

A People Restored

God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Neh.; Esth.; Mal.)



Spring 2020

Jesus the Messiah

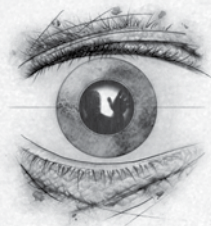
Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)
Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)



Summer 2020

Jesus the Servant

Jesus the Healer (Gospels)
Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)



Fall 2020

Jesus the Savior

Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)
Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)

Winter 2020-21

The Mission Begins

The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)
Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)
New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)

Spring 2021

The Church United

Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)
The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)
Don't Forget (Acts; Epistles)

Summer 2021

All Things New

Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)
Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)
Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)