

The Transfiguration

Exodus 34:29-35 2 Peter 1:16-21 Matthew 17:1-9

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Christology is the study of Christ; it's a study of the Who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Christology is some of the most complicated and difficult theology to learn¹.

Today we heard the story of the **Transfiguration of Jesus**. The **Transfiguration**² can help us understand Who Jesus is! In the **Transfiguration**, Jesus the Man, the human being, flesh and blood, the One born in Bethlehem, is shown to be the One, True, and Only God. Brilliant **Transfiguration glory** shines from Jesus – it reveals that He is both God and Man at the same time!

In other words, **Jesus is more than He looks like!** If you bumped into Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem, He would look just like any other Israelite man. But Jesus is more than just a man; He is the Son of God Himself, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

Doctrinally, we say that Jesus is *one person with two natures: He has a human nature and a divine nature*. We see that in the **Transfiguration**. Jesus the *man* reveals to us His *divine* glory. Jesus the human reveals

¹ To give you an example, in Christian Dogmatics, by F. Pieper, the major doctrinal textbook used in LCMS Seminaries, there are 76 pages devoted to “The Doctrine of God.” In comparison, there are 335 pages devoted to the “The Doctrine of Christ”!

² The Greek word that's used for transfiguration in Matthew 17:2 is the basis of the English word “metamorphosis” → a change in outward appearance.

to us that He is also God Himself. The **Transfiguration** is an easy way to remember who Jesus is: He is both True Man and True God at the same time! *One person, with two natures: a human nature and a divine nature.*

God the Father confirms this when He spoke at the **Transfiguration**. “**This is My Son with whom I love,**” the Father said, “**listen to Him!**”

The **Transfiguration** reveals the divine nature of Jesus. That is why *His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.* **It was the Glory of God³!** Jesus really is “*God of God, light of light, very God of very God.*” He is the *the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, Who sustains all things by His powerful Word.* (Hebrews 1:3)• *In Him was life, and that life was the light of the world* (John 1:4)•

Jesus is God in flesh; God *Incarnate*.

Jesus is Emmanuel: God with us!

Jesus is God! This is Who you trust and believe in! This is Who you worship! This is Who you pray to! Remember how Luther says it in the Small Catechism:

I believe that Jesus Christ is **true God**, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also **true man**, born of the Virgin Mary; **and HE IS MY LORD!**

The **Transfiguration** reveals the divine nature of Jesus ... **Jesus is God!**

³ In the Old Testament Scripture lesson for today, Moses, who was in the presence of God (Christ) on Mount Sinai, came down the mountain glowing himself! Being in the presence of God caused him to glow; so much so that the Israelites put a veil on his face. In a similar way, through faith, you “glow”. You are like a city set on a hill; you are to let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5). Christ, the Light of the World, the Transfigured God, ‘metamorphosizes’ you! This will all culminate on the Last Day: “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4) and “we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). You will not become a god, but you will be shown to be holy and righteous in Christ.

What a sight this must have been! Jesus shining with brilliant light, the Father speaking from heaven, and the three disciples, Peter, John, and James trying to make sense of it all! But there's even more! Moses and Elijah appear and they're speaking with Jesus!

Right away we learn about *eternal life*; Moses and Elijah, who died centuries beforehand, *still live*! So do your loved ones who have died in Christ! They are alive and well in the presence of their Lord and God; awaiting the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day.

What's fascinating about Moses and Elijah, who represent the Law and the Prophets and all the people of the Old Testament times, is what they were talking with Jesus about.

Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about His *departure*, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Luke 9:30-31

That word “departure” is the Greek word *exodus*. They were talking about Jesus' *exodus* in Jerusalem. Jesus' work of salvation is described using the great Old Testament story of salvation!

In the Old Testament, Christ rescued His people Israel from slavery to the Egyptians through the *exodus*. He sent Moses to deliver the people from Pharaoh. After the 10 plagues, and the Passover celebration, God's people left Egypt. They walked through the Red Sea on dry ground and they made their way to Mount Sinai to worship the Lord. God had set the Israelites free from slavery and made them His own people!

Jesus would do the same thing in the New Testament times, but in a **far, far** greater way. Jesus would deliver all people from slavery to

sin, guilt, fear, and death by His own death on the cross. He is the true Passover Lamb of God, who is sacrificed on the cross, so that death “passes over” all people. Through faith in Christ you are set free and God makes you His very own. You belong to Him, and are brought into His family. In Holy Baptism, you are given the Name of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Holy Communion, God feeds you the living bread from heaven, the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, resurrection life, and the assurance that God abides in you and you abide in Him.

From the Mt. of Transfiguration, Jesus will make his way to Jerusalem and Mt. Calvary. It is on Calvary where the cross stands, and on that cross God would die for you and for your salvation. On that day there will be no brilliant light that shines from Jesus. Although He remains the one, true God, His glory is not found in brilliant light, but in the darkness of suffering and dying on the cross. Jesus did not come into the world to be transfigured before 3 disciples; He came into the world to die on a cross for every single man, woman, and child ever conceived.

That is your Exodus out of sin! Jesus has set you free from slavery to sin and its destruction! You are no longer a slave to sin, obeying its every temptation. You are no longer burdened down with guilt, or scarred with shame, or paralyzed in fear, or dreading death and dying. You have been set free by God Himself; by Jesus, whose *exodus* took Him to a cross to set you free!

The Transfiguration of Jesus reminds us of who Jesus is; He is *one person with two natures, a human and a divine nature*. He truly is the God-Man.

And He came into the world to set you free.

maybe you should hear that one more time:

He came into the world to SET YOU FREE!

Amen!

Jesus, You are our God and our Lord.

We thank You for showing us Your glory in the Transfiguration. We thank You for faith to know and believe Who You are, that You are God and Man in one Person. We praise You for the faith to know and believe in the freedom You have given to us through Your own death and resurrection. Help us to trust in You and Your work for us, and to live in the freedom of the gospel throughout our lives. As You are the Light of the World, work in us so that we may let our light shine into the lives of other people. Amen!

Matthew 17:1-9

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. 4 Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

2 Peter 1:16-21

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 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.” 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Exodus 34:29-35

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.