

The Transfiguration

(Matthew 17:1-9)

Pre-Session Warm Up

If I were to ask you, “*Who is Jesus?*” What would you say? [Teacher, let the children respond.] When Jesus was on the earth, He claimed He was God the Son. Is there proof that what He said is true? Let’s be like detectives today as we listen to our Bible lesson. Listen for evidence that Jesus is God the Son.

Opening Prayer

Father, if there is anyone here this morning that isn’t sure that You are God the Son, convince them, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that You are the Almighty One, the Creator of the universe. That You have all power and all wisdom and that You have the power to forgive them of their sins. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. (Rom 12:2a NLT)

Lesson

In our lesson today we will learn that the closer we get to the Lord Jesus, the better we understand who He is.

One day Peter, James and John, the disciples who were Jesus’ closest friends, went with the Lord to a private place and a very special thing happened.

Matthew 17:1-2

Six days later Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. (2) As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.

Jesus took Peter, James and John to a high mountain and there was transformed or changed before them. His face was changed and His robe became white and glistening — bright as a flash of lightning. This gives us an idea of what we will look like after we die and go to heaven.

Ask: Why did Jesus take the disciples to a high mountain?

He wanted to be alone with them in a private place so they would not be distracted by other people. Jesus wanted to show them His glory so they would know that He was truly God and that it was important for them to listen to Him.

Ask: Do you make an effort to spend time alone with the Lord?

Ask: Why did Jesus take only Peter, James and John up the mountain?

They were His closest friends; He wanted them to be totally convinced that He was God.

The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus “*being in the form of God*” came in the “*likeness of man*” (Philippians 2:6,7) He was both God and man. He had left His home in heaven to come to this earth and take on a human body. Although He did many miracles and some people recognized Him as the Messiah, the Christ (the sent One from God), most saw Jesus as just another man.

But now, the glory He had had forever with His Father in heaven was no longer hidden. Jesus’ true nature as God shone through His human body. His face and body were changed so that beams of light made His clothes white as light. When Jesus transformed Himself before their very eyes, they were getting a glimpse of His glory.

Suddenly two others appeared with Jesus.

Matthew 17:3

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus.

Moses and Elijah also appeared to them in their heavenly bodies.

[Teacher, Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets signifying that the whole Bible reveals Jesus (see Luke 24:25-27).]

Ask: What do you think they talked about? (Turn to Luke 9:30-31)

Luke 9:30-31

Suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. (31) They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

Luke tells us that they were talking about His coming death. They were probably encouraging Jesus to stay strong and faithful during His final week on earth, knowing how hard it would be for Him.

Ask: What does this tell you about Moses and Elijah? (Though they had died, they were still alive in heaven with God the Father!)

Death has no power over a believer. Jesus said *“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies.”* (John 11:25) When you put your faith in God, He gives you eternal life.

Now Peter was so bewildered, he didn’t know what to say or do.

Matthew 17:4

Peter exclaimed, “Lord, it’s wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I’ll make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

No doubt, the disciples could hardly believe their eyes! Peter was probably very excited and, not knowing quite what to say or do, he suggested that he make tents for them to live in.

Ask: If you had been there that day, how would you have reacted?

Matthew 17:5

But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.”

While Peter was speaking, the shekinah glory of God came over the disciples and they heard a voice speaking from the cloud.

Ask: Who was speaking out of the cloud? (Yes, this was God the Father!)

This must have been terrifying for them!

Ask: What did God tell them to do? (God was telling them to stop talking and listen to Jesus.)

Matthew 17:6

The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground.

The awesome voice of God terrified the disciples and they fell on their faces! Hearing God’s voice from the heavens convinced the disciples that Jesus was truly God the Son!

Today we seldom hear the voice of God out loud, but we do have the Bible. It is the way God speaks to us. The Bible tells us everything we need to know for life and godliness.

God wants us to read His Word to find out how we are to live. As we read His word and obey it, our lives are transformed. We learn to live our lives in a way the pleases God.

Poor Peter, James and John, when they heard God’s voice they were so afraid they fell to the ground and hid their faces. And, as they were lying there, Jesus comforted them.

Matthew 17:7-8

Then Jesus came over and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” (8) And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

When Jesus told the disciples to get up, they were suddenly alone with Him. This was a night they would never forget; there was no doubt in their minds that Jesus truly was the Christ, God the Son!

Matthew 17:9

As they went back down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after He had risen from the dead. [Teacher, see note at end of lesson.]

Ask: Do you think they obeyed Jesus?

It would have been hard not to want to tell others of the marvelous event they had just seen, but look at Luke 9:36

Luke 9:36

And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

Because they knew that God Himself told them not to tell anyone, they were obedient. Wouldn't you be?

But, later, after Jesus had been raised from the dead, Peter did talk about this experience. Turn to 2 Peter 1.

2 Peter 1:16-18

For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes (17) when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” (18) We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

The disciples witnessed Christ's glory on the mountain. They had a peek into the heavenlies of the wonderful things that await us and their faith was strengthened.

Ask: What wonderful things has God done for you in your life?

Just as Peter shared this experience, we, too, should be sharing our stories of how God has revealed His glory to us in our lives.

Closing Prayer

Father, today You have given us a glimpse of the heavenlies. Just as You were transformed in the very sight of Peter, James, and John, so You can transform our lives from sinners into saints when we place our hope in Your finished work on the cross. We look forward to the time when we can see You in glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Note for teacher: Why did Jesus tell His disciples not to tell others what they had seen at the Transfiguration? Jesus' primary purpose in allowing those disciples to see His glory was to strengthen their faith in His divine nature before they experienced the shock of the difficult days ahead. Keeping silent about His Transfiguration reduced sensational public acclaim which would only distract people from knowing Him and the redemptive work He came to do. He knew that if word spread about His supernatural power, many would come to Him for short-term solutions to their disease and miss the long-term solutions to their sin.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Have children draw pictures of what they think Jesus, Moses and Elijah looked like in their glorious bodies.

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. Which disciples were Jesus' closest friends? (Peter, James and John.)
2. What does it mean that Jesus was “transformed” before them? (His appearance changed.)

3. What was different about Jesus when his appearance changed? (His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.)
4. When Jesus was transformed, who were the other two men that the disciples saw in their glorified bodies? (Moses and Elijah.)
5. What were Moses and Elijah probably talking to Jesus about? (His death.)
6. What crazy thing did Peter say when he saw Jesus and Moses and Elijah in their glorified bodies? (Shall I make three shelters for you?)
7. What happened when the bright cloud overshadowed them? (Suddenly God's voice came out of the cloud, saying "*This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him!*")
8. What did the disciples do when they heard God's voice from the cloud? (They fell on their faces in fear.)
9. How did this change in Jesus change Peter's, James' and John's understanding of who He was? (Jesus' true nature as God shone through His human body. They realized that He was God the Son.)
10. How do you hear God's voice? (Through reading His Word, the Bible.)
11. As the disciples were lying on the ground in fear, what did Jesus do to comfort them? (He touched them and said, "*Get up. Don't be afraid.*")
12. What did Jesus tell them to do as they came down the mountain? (Not to tell anyone what happened until after He rose from the dead.)
13. Has your relationship with Jesus changed your life?