

STORY

The Transfiguration - Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Father in Heaven, this lesson reminds us again of Your amazing love toward us, that Your beloved Son, would humble Himself, even to the death on the cross, in order to save us sinners from what we deserve. We thank and praise You and Jesus Your Son for this amazing act of love for us. Jesus endured the shame of the cross with the goal of our redemption in His sight. Set before our eyes, His cross and the certainty of heaven which it gives us so that, when we face those tough tests of faith, or walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will know Your love and the goal You have in mind for us. For our times are safely in Your hands, so we must trust in Thee. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Transfigure - change appearance

Tabernacles - special temporary shelters made of branches or tents used for worship such as in the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles.

Rabbi - "teacher" and used as a title or form of address.

Decease - in Greek, literally "departure." His death would soon take place and, after His resurrection,

Jesus would leave them.

Scribes - originally simply men who copied the scriptures by hand. But as their knowledge of the Scriptures grew from their work, they were considered authorities of it and would be regarded as Professors of Theology today. They held high positions in the religious government of the Jews. (See Rupprecht pp. 47-48)

OUTER AIM

Jesus shows the disciples He is the true God.

INNER AIM

Jesus shows us He is our God and our Savior.

BACKGROUND

(*Rupprecht Bible History References Vol.2, pp. 221-225*)

During His ministry, Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant (Phil. 2:4-6) and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. But at this one point in Jesus' ministry, God revealed the glory that rightfully belonged to Jesus. This reveals a striking contrast for us and the three disciples who would also see Jesus at the most humiliating point in His work from the Garden of Gethsemane to

His death on the cross.

Matthew 17:1

- ▶ Six days before, Peter had confessed that He believed that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Note: Luke reports eight days, perhaps by including the day of Peter's confession and the day of the Transfiguration.)
- ▶ After that, Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must soon suffer and die in Jerusalem. (Mt 16:21)
- ▶ Jesus often chose these three particular disciples to be witnesses of special events in His ministry.
- ▶ This time they went up on a mountain to watch Jesus while He prayed, as Luke tells us.



v. 2

- ▶ While praying (Luke), Jesus' appearance was altered to reveal His holiness and glory as God.
- ▶ The disciples and thus the Gospel writers struggled to describe it for human eyes.
- ▶ His face shone as the sun, and His clothes were white and glistening, as snow, whiter than any launderer on earth can achieve, white as light itself.

v. 3

- ▶ Moses, wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, including the transmission of God's Law for His people.
- ▶ Elijah powerfully represented all the prophets of the Old Testament.
- ▶ So, these two men symbolized the entire Old Testament. Moses had been buried by God (Deut 34:6) and then resurrected afterwards, and Elijah had been carried by God into heaven (2 Kings 2:10-11).

Luke 9:30-31

- ▶ The two men also appeared in the glory of their resurrected bodies Phil 3:21 (see Rupprecht p.223).
- ▶ They talked with Jesus about the events surrounding His death or departure which would be completed in Jerusalem. (Please see: 1 Peter 1:10-12)
- ▶ The Old Testament has many passages that speak of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

v. 32

- ▶ This eyewitness' testimony (1 Peter 1:16-18ff) describes not only the event but also what the disciples experienced. They were at first sleepy, as in Gethsemane, but woke up when they saw Jesus in His glory talking with the two men who, they realized, were Moses and Elijah.

Matthew 17: 5

- ▶ God the Father in effect, replied to Peter's babbling. as a bright cloud came and overshadowed them so that they entered it (Luke).
- ▶ The voice of God the Father came from the cloud, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"
- ▶ What a testimony: a) Jesus is God's Son, b) God's beloved Son, c) Who has pleased the Father with His entire life and ministry to this point (and beyond John 10:17-18).
- ▶ And also a command: a)Hear the Prophet of whom Moses had spoken (Deut 18:15) and the b) Messenger of the covenant (Mal 3:1b), the Lord about to enter His temple to establish the covenant of grace.

v. 6

- ▶ The actual voice of God the Father caused the three disciples to fall down on their faces in worship, honor, and fear.
- ▶ Seeing the awesome glory of Jesus and then hearing God the Father speak overwhelmed these sinful mortals.

v. 7

- ▶ Yet Jesus took away their fear with his comforting touch and His command not to be afraid.

v. 8

- ▶ Recovering, they saw only Jesus, appearing once again in His human form with His glory hidden.

v. 9

- ▶ This was to be a private event, meant only for those three disciples until after Jesus had risen from the dead. Until then, they alone could draw strength from it.
- ▶ Jesus' command for silence may have been to help prevent Satan from misusing their telling of it to interfere in Christ's work.
- ▶ After Jesus had risen from the dead, John and Peter (and probably James too) told of that special piece of heaven that they witnessed. (John 1:14, 1 Peter 1:16-18)

- ▶ The disciples still had questions and didn't understand about Jesus' resurrection until after it happened Mark 9:10f. (Cf John 20:8 and the Emmaus disciples Luke 24:13-27)
- ▶ The purposes: The transfiguration and the conversation took place both for Jesus' sake and for the disciples' sakes.
- ▶ For Jesus: the revelation of His glory reminded Jesus, the man of the glory, that would be His when He had successfully completed His work. The prophets' words may have reminded Him of the prophecies describing, not only His suffering and death, but also the results that would come from them. (Hebrews 12:2)
- ▶ For the disciples: They saw that Jesus was indeed God, just as they had come to believe Him to be. Soon they would witness from "front-row seats" the coming horrible conclusion of Jesus' work and this memorable glimpse of heaven would strengthen them. Eventually, they would also understand how the events that would shortly take place were according to God's plan as described in the Old Testament. But the disciples weren't to talk of these things until after Jesus' death and resurrection had completed the picture of Jesus' victory.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, our imaginations try to grasp in a limited way what You must look like in all Your glory. We know that as sinners we would be terrified of Your holiness and how we have failed to be holy. But we also know Your great love, for You laid aside Your glory to come to this earth as a human being and give Your holy life as payment for our sins. By faith, we glimpsed Your great love for us as we see You preparing for that expensive sacrifice for us. As You prepared and strengthened Your disciples to face the difficult months ahead, so strengthen our faith before and as we face the many tests in our lives so that our Faith in You doesn't waver. Keep the image of Your Love and the heavenly goal You have won for us before our eyes. As You have nourished us in faith, in the end we will see Your glory without the fear of our sins and may worship You for all eternity. We pray trusting in Your name, and in all You have revealed to us. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Briefly review the previous story as time allows. Make links to the new story when possible.

Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. When scripture records the story in more than one place, you may want to harmonize the accounts (including extra details found in each account). Let the students know where they can find the additional details in the Bible.

Discuss the story: While reviewing the major events of the story, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the story and show that they understand the story.

ACTIVITY

Try this ahead of time so you know the correct size for the cloud. You may want to make copies of clouds of the correct size.

- Cut a large cloud shape out of a piece of paper.
- Tape it to the picture so you can show how the cloud dropped down to cover Jesus and the disciples. One piece of tape at the top works well.
- Have the children retell the story, using the picture and cloud.

APPLICATIONS

1. We need to take with us into life this lesson's picture of Jesus. He is not simply a human being who could do great things and taught important truths, He is God Himself with all the glory and holiness and awesomeness that God possesses. Yet, (Phil 2:5-8) for our sakes, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. He knew exactly what He MUST suffer until and including the cross, yet He went forward, for us! John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." If we can begin to understand what this really means for us, we will have done well. To do this, discuss why Jesus, who here shows He is God, had to lay aside His glory and had to suffer and die for us.
2. The three disciples witnessed Jesus' glory, the glorified Moses and Elijah, and heard God's powerful testimony. God strategically prepared them before they witnessed the terrifying events of Jesus' fall from popularity, betrayal, arrest, trials, sufferings, crucifixion, death, and burial. Those would be trying days for the disciples as they struggled to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Promised One who would save His people. At this point Jesus was very popular, but from here on out His enemies would be allowed to take Him to do what they wanted with Him. God will also give us opportunities to strengthen our faith by hearing His Word and learning of His gracious plans to carry us through the difficult times of life until we reach eternity. If we use those times to strengthen our faith, we will be prepared also when we face the really difficult challenges to our faith. Discuss in what ways God prepares us with glimpses of His glory and heaven before those times when it's difficult to see the final goal ahead.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

John 15:13 - Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Matthew 17:5 - Suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

Middle any of the above and...

John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 10:17-18 - Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

Upper any of the above and...

Matthew 16:15-16 - He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Philippians 2:5-8 - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

HYMN CHOICES

"Tis Good, Lord, to be Here" (TLH 135 all, esp 6)

"Come Unto Me, Ye Weary" (TLH 276)

"O Savior, Precious Savior" (TLH 352 all)

"Jesus and Shall It Ever Be," (TLH 346 all)