



TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

August 2021

TELL ME ABOUT THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

The transfiguration of Jesus is recorded in the gospel accounts in Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; and Luke 9:28-36. However, the only eyewitness account of this event recorded for us is rather brief – “*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain*” (2 Peter 1:16-18). Our study here will draw information from all these accounts without always citing specific verses or peculiarities in each writer’s account. [It is worth noting, though, that, while Matthew and Mark record this event’s having taken place “*after six days*” (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2), Luke says, “*about eight days after*” (Luke 9:28). There is no discrepancy; Luke simply includes the day the previous words were spoken, as well as the day of the transfiguration itself.] So much could be said of this amazing event in the life of Jesus, but here are just a few observations:

It was a magnificent occasion. Matthew and Mark both use the Greek word *metamorphoo*, meaning to change, transform, or alter. Luke simply says His appearance was altered, using the Greek word *heteros*, meaning something is different, altered, other, or another. Some suspect the texts indicate Jesus as changed back into some measure of His pre-incarnate heavenly glory. While this is possible, we cannot be certain. But, we may be certain that this occasion was absolutely magnificent. All three writers use (by inspiration) various terminology to describe that which, to finite human minds, is in a very real way indescribable. Mark’s account (like so much of the book of Mark) reminds us of a child breathlessly recalling some incredible event: “*He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them*” (Mark 9:2,3). Years later, Peter would recall that day, telling Christians how they “*were eyewitnesses of His majesty*” (2 Peter 1:16).

It was a teaching occasion. After Jesus refused to be made an earthly king (John 6:15) and spoke of

His impending death in Jerusalem (Matthew 16:21-23), Jesus’ disciples (perhaps Peter especially) must have felt rather confused and/or discouraged. The disciples’ hopes had likely taken some heavy damage, but the transfiguration assured them again that Jesus is God’s Son, as well as reinforcing that His kingdom is not an earthly one, nor does it depend upon human acceptance or alliance. The transfiguration taught them that, though often rejected by men, Jesus assuredly was not rejected by the Father.

It was a transitional occasion. Moses and Elijah appeared at the scene and talked with Jesus. Peter, not knowing what to say, suggested building a tabernacle each for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Then the Father spoke from heaven, “*This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Mark 9:7). The men fell on their faces, but Jesus came to them, telling them not to fear; when they looked up, they saw only Jesus. The lesson being taught was that Jesus is preeminent. Moses and Elijah represented the law and the prophets. To a Jew, “the law and the prophets” would represent the entire Mosaic covenant (see Matthew 22:40; Acts 24:14; etc.). As Jesus had announced His mission to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17,18), the Father announced at the transfiguration both the superiority and authority of Jesus over all the law and prophets. The Father made it clear: they were transitioning from Moses’ law to the law of God’s beloved Son.

Only Luke tells how Jesus, Moses, and Elijah “*spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:31). The Greek word translated “decease” is *exodos*, which Bible students will recognize as similar to the English word “exodus.” At the transfiguration, the transition from Moses’ law to Jesus’ law is nearing completion. As Moses led the Israelite “exodus” from Egypt, so Jesus soon would die, rise from the dead, and ascend back into heaven, leading the true “exodus” for all mankind from the slavery of sin into the freedom found only in Him. What a magnificent occasion, both for them and us, and what great teaching it holds for all!

-- Chad Dollahite

“AS LONG AS WE ARE SINCERE, GOD DOES NOT CARE HOW WE WORSHIP”

There are many different ways a person can be disobedient to God. However, one common thread that seems to run through those decisions is the idea that we do what we want and do not consider or give preference to what God wants.

Several of the deadly doctrines that have been discussed on this second page in previous months are things that man wants to do, that sound better to us, or in our minds are easier to follow. But just because something is what we want or what we think is easier to do, does not make it correct.

As we consider our specific title this month, it would benefit us to notice, first of all, that it is entirely possible to be sincere, but wrong. Two ideas that correlate with sincerity are the ideas of being genuine and thinking or believing from the heart.

A modern example would be a man who has a family history of colon cancer and begins to have chronic pain. After waiting months to visit a doctor and then refusing a colonoscopy, he finds out too late that he has inoperable colon cancer. Despite his genuine feeling that it could not be cancer or truly believing with all his heart that this could not happen to him, he is now faced with a terminal illness.

In the Bible, we read in Genesis 37:12-36 of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery but presenting Jacob, their father, with Joseph's bloody tunic. This leads Jacob to surmise that Joseph must be dead. And, Jacob genuinely felt as if Joseph were dead. He believed in his heart that this was true and it showed in his fervent mourning (Genesis 37:34, 35). But no matter how strongly Jacob felt, Joseph was not dead.

When it comes to both physical/earthly matters and spiritual matters, a person can be sincere but also be wrong. To be sincere is an admirable characteristic, but as we have noted, that does not matter as we make a determination about whether something is in keeping with God's word.

A second helpful consideration for us is that we realize that God certainly cares. His care for mankind is shown in that He cares for His creation; and certainly we, being made in His image (Genesis 1:26), are worth more than birds or grass (Matthew 26:30). He showed His care and love by giving “*His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). Or as Peter simply says, “. . . *He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7).

Not only does God care for us in a general sense, but He also cares about what we do. As Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21, emphasis added, *jmd*). The man who built his house on the sand, which then had a great fall, is compared to a person who hears the words of Jesus and does nothing (Luke 6:46-49).

One final consideration that would be helpful to our discussion is to see that when God gives instructions, He expects for them to be followed exactly and completely. In Numbers 20:1-13, Moses learned this lesson when God instructed him to speak to the rock so it would yield water. Moses instead struck the rock and he faced the punishment of not being able to lead the children of Israel into the land of promise.

We have seen that to be sincere, genuine, or heartfelt does not mean a person is acting in accordance with God's will. We've also noticed that God cares what we do and that what we must do is follow His instructions exactly.

Does all of this apply to our worship? Absolutely! If it applies to speaking to a rock, or building an ark (Genesis 6:22), or conquering a heavily fortified city (Joshua 6:1-27), then it most certainly applies to our worship.

Worship is one of the great privileges of being a child of God. As Jesus said, “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24). Our worship is to be directed to God, done with the proper attitude (in spirit) and according to God's word (in truth).

We see in the examples of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-5) and Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3) that God has always given divine instructions for how to worship Him and that He expects for those instructions to be obeyed.

Unfortunately, in this article we do not have the space to properly discuss the attitudes and aspects of our worship to God the Father. However, I do hope that we understand the importance of finding out what God's desire is and obeying it. If God is the object of our worship, it should be about what He says, not what I feel is correct or what I want! We should be sincere in our worship. But our sincerity should be matched with truth.

-- Joel Danley

A World-Wide Need

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), making sin the biggest killer in the world since all have sinned (Romans 3:23). There is only one thing that can separate a human being from the God of heaven, and that is the sin which he/she commits (Isaiah 59:2).

Here is the dilemma: one whose sin separates him from the Creator has no way of getting back to God *on his own* (by his own strength or wisdom). The only way to the Father is through Jesus (John 14:6). The only *remedy* for sin is the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7), and the only way to be *reconciled* to God is by the Christ's death (Romans 5:8-10). The news that such salvation is available through Jesus is revealed in the gospel (Romans 1:16). When one obeys the gospel, he is forgiven of all past sins (Romans 6:17,18). If one has sinned but has not obeyed the gospel, he *remains* lost, and if he dies in that condition, he will be lost *eternally* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). How can lost people learn these truths?

King Jesus said to **go**. He said to **preach**. He said to go **and** preach. He said to go and preach **the gospel**. He said to go and preach the gospel to **every creature**. He said to go into **all the world** and preach the gospel to every creature. You know I am not making this up! It is in your Bible in Mark 16:15.

The need to evangelize the world is a constant. It never changes. It never goes away. It never becomes inconsequential. It never becomes optional.

How many people live in the world today? About 7.87 billion. Brethren, our plans to reach the lost must include all people in all places! The current population of the United States is 332 million [stats taken from www.worldometers.info on 4 June 2021]. That means approximately 4.25% of the world's population is in the USA, while almost 96% of the folks on the planet live outside of our territory. Let that thought sink in . . . 96%! Who will go teach them?

We have the resources to evangelize the world in our generation! Let us not be like the wimpy ten spies, but be like the real giant, Caleb, who exhorted God's people, "*Let us go up at once . . .*" (Numbers 13:30). Indeed, brethren, let us go *now* to largely-populated cities, to the most remote villages, to every university campus, to our neighbors, and let us "*go out into the highways and hedges*" (Luke 14:23) with the great news that Jesus is the world's Savior (1 John 4:14).

We have the manpower to get the gospel to every person. We also have the financial power to send and support workers. May our mighty God help us to have the fire and faith to carry His saving plan to the lost!

-- Roger D. Campbell

Ephesians 4:5 – “One Faith”

Part of the appeal for Christians to endeavor "*to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3) is the reality that the God of heaven has given us "one faith." Not multiple faiths, but one.

"Faith" is from the Greek word "πίστις/pistis," which can refer to one's *personal faith*, one's *faithfulness*, or that which is called "*the faith*." While it is true that there is only one Savior, who is the lone Mediator between God and humans, the meaning of "one faith" is not, "Well, we all believe the same thing: we believe Jesus is God's Son." No, when we observe what is recorded elsewhere in the Bible, it is clear that "one faith" refers to the gospel system of teaching.

Look at what we read in Acts 6:7: ". . . *and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*." That statement identifies what lost people did to be converted: they obeyed "the faith." That is the same thing as "obey the truth," which results in souls being purified (1 Peter 1:22). The "one faith" equals "the faith," which is the gospel.

At one point in his life, Saul of Tarsus tried to destroy "the faith" (Galatians 1:23). After his conversion, what did he do? He preached "the faith" (Galatians 1:23). Yet, as Paul described his role, he would say that he preached "the gospel" (Romans 1:15). Again, "one faith" is the same as "the faith," which is the gospel system of faith.

Here is great news for mankind: the "one faith" is unchanging. While some cry for a "new" gospel, something that is more "up-to-date," we need to accept this reality: the Lord is not going to give us anything different from "the faith." By God's power and wisdom, the gospel's message is "*the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3). The "one faith" is compared to a seed, an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23-25).

The "one faith" includes *facts* which humans must believe in order to be saved (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). It includes *commands* from God which must be obeyed (Hebrews 5:9). "The faith" also includes *warnings* to be heeded (Matthew 10:28), as well as *promises* of blessings to be received (Acts 2:38). In short, "one faith" is the message that men need for the salvation of their souls . . . it is all-sufficient for every need.

Note some words/terms associated with the "one faith." It is *truth* (John 17:17), it is *power* (Romans 1:16), it is *life* (John 6:63,68), and it is *light* (2 Corinthians 4:4). With God as our Helper, let us keep on studying, living, proclaiming, and defending the "one faith."

-- Roger D. Campbell

What Christians Do — COOPERATE AND WORK TOGETHER WITH ONE ANOTHER

The Lord's church is a body. It is an army. It is a family. As such, the church is at its strongest when her members cooperate and work together for the good of the whole.

Instead of being self-centered, God wants us to be *others*-oriented. Rather than thinking only about what we personally want, the Lord wants us to think about what is good for the church. In contrast to demanding that everyone else comply with our preferences, our God wants us to have a spirit of humility that counts others as better than ourselves and looks out for the needs of others (Philippians 2:3,4).

The Holy Spirit through Paul likened the Lord's *spiritual* body being comprised of individual members to the different members/parts of our *physical* body. He said, "*But now indeed there are many members, yet one body . . . But God composed the body . . . that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually*" (1 Corinthians 12:20,24-27).

As a body, the church functions at its highest level of effectiveness when the members are cooperating and working together. Imagine how hard it would be for us to see if one eye faces one direction and the other eye looks elsewhere. Or, imagine the difficulties we would face if one of our feet tried to go right while the other one at the same time tried to go left. A lack of cooperation would be a disaster, would it not? The same principle holds true among God's people and the work in which we engage for Him.

A second image we mentioned already is the Christ's church being an army/military outfit. Paul implored Timothy to be "*a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3), calling on him to "*fight the good fight of faith*" (1 Timothy 6:12). Yes, all Christians are "soldiers" in the Lord's army. If the soldiers of a nation's military never communicated with one another and each one just went out to do their own thing, the consequences would be devastating, even potentially life-threatening to some. The same is true in God's Cause: a failure to communicate, cooperate, and work together can greatly hinder the work, even be deadly to it.

A third picture is that of the church being God's house/family (1 Timothy 3:15). Jesus said that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25). The broad spiritual application is too plain to miss.

Let us think about some positive cases

from history where God's people cooperated and worked together. God gave the pattern for the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8,9), but in order to collect the materials for it, cut, sew, and put those materials in place, then finally erect the tabernacle, it would have taken tremendous cooperation and working together out there in the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 19:1,2).

When some of the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity to find the city of Jerusalem and its walls in a mess, Nehemiah stepped forward as an outstanding leader of the people. One of his strong suits was his ability to identify the work that needed to be done, then persuade the people to "buy into" the project and put their hearts into it (Nehemiah 2:17-20; 4:6). The Jews' cooperation and working together made that reconstruction project a thing of beauty.

The Holy Spirit *sent*, then Barnabas and Saul *went* (Acts 13:1-4). Paul planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). That is working together with both God and brethren!

Read the closing sections of Paul's letters and you will see him referring to "*fellow workers for the kingdom of God*" (Colossians 4:11), "*my fellow laborers*" (Philemon 24), and those "*who labored much in the Lord*" (Romans 16:12). You cannot put a price tag on a heart that wants to work with others to glorify God and help in His Cause!

In their secular jobs, some Christians hold a high position in large companies. In the church, though, they are on equal footing with all others. Other saints operate their own successful, private business. In the church, though, they have no right to dictate to others what they must do. Some disciples serve as a principal/headmaster of a school, but in the church, they are not bosses. They are on equal footing with all others. Coopering and working together in the church is not about one's secular occupation or social rank. Rather, it is about (1) loving the Lord above all else, (2) having a spirit of humility, and (3) having a heart that wants to work for God's glory.

When the leaders of the local church seek workers, can they count on you and me? When a project is organized, will you and I be ready to cooperate and work together with other saints?

-- Roger D. Campbell

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