

# How to Prepare for Hard Times

## Lesson from the Transfiguration of Jesus



- When was there a time you saw something so impressive that it left a lasting impression on you?

The disciples of Jesus were headed for hard times. In Matthew 16:21-28, Jesus began the first of several announcements of his arrest, suffering, death, and resurrection (see Matt. 16:21). The Life Application Study Bible explained, “The phrase ‘From then on’ marks a turning point.... Here it points to his new emphasis on his death and resurrection.... This is the first of three times that Jesus predicted his death (see 17:22, 23; 20:18 for others).”

When Jesus was arrested, a series of events began that turned the lives of the disciples upside down. (1) All the disciples deserted Jesus (Matt. 26:56). (2) Peter denied Jesus three times because of fear (Matt. 26:69-75). (3) Judas hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-10). (4) The disciples hid from fear behind locked doors (John 20:19). (5) The disciples are sent out by the resurrected Jesus to tell the world the Gospel message (Matt. 28:18-20). (6) The disciples proclaim the Gospel of Christ throughout the world experiencing hardship, persecution, and even death (Acts).

### Why the Transfiguration?

The big question concerning the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-9) is, *why the transfiguration?* What was Jesus seeking to accomplish? The answer: **Jesus was preparing his disciples for coming hardship.** He revealed himself in all his glory so they would never question who they served. For three plus years they had seen him as a miracle working human. But at the transfiguration, they saw him in his heavenly glory, in his deity, as God in human form. This would sustain them in hardship, embolden them in the face of intimidation, and encourage them to run their race with perseverance.

The story of the transfiguration can teach us important life lessons that will prepare us for present and future hardship. We must make a hard look at Christ and his Word to be prepared for life's hard times.

### Central Lesson:

**A hard look at Christ and his Word prepares us for hard times.**

### 1. Look Hard at the **DEITY** and Glory of Christ.

*“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” (17:2 NLT).*

If there was any question about the identity of Jesus among the disciples, the transfiguration settled it. After they saw him in his heavenly glory, there was no doubt that he was God in human form, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

John MacArthur wrote, “Here is the greatest confirmation of His deity yet in the life of Jesus. Here, more than on any other occasion, Jesus revealed Himself as He truly is, the Son of God.” (MacArthur N.T. Commentary, Matthew 16-23, p.63). He added, “In His human form Jesus was veiled, but when He comes again to earth He will come in His full divine majesty and glory, a glimpse of which Peter, James, and John witnessed on the

mountain. There could henceforth be no doubt in their minds that He was God incarnate, and there should have been no doubt that He would come some day in the fullness of glory.” (p.64).

The radiant glory of Jesus is also displayed in Revelation 1:13-16. **When you face the hardships of life, keep your eyes on Jesus, who is your Savior, helper, and source of strength and wisdom.**

### 2. Look Hard at the Reality of the **AFTERLIFE.**

*“3 Suddenly, **Moses and Elijah** appeared and began talking with Jesus.” (17:3).*

People have many questions about the afterlife. Is there an afterlife or do people cease to exist after death? If there is an afterlife, what is that life like? Are people unconscious in a soul-sleep, are they just consciousness without shape or form, or is their form, shape, etc.?

The story of the transfiguration gives us a glimpse into the afterlife. Moses and Elijah appear and are talking with Jesus. Notice that an afterlife does exist. There is recognizable appearance, human form, the ability to communicate, think, see (all senses). Moses and Elijah seem to be just as they were in this life but with improvements - eternal, ability to appear and disappear, etc. **When you face life's hardships, remember that this life is NOT all there is. There is eternal existence. The best is yet to come.**

### 3. Look Hard at the **AUTHORITY** of Christ and His Word.

*“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.**’” (17:5 NLT).*

There are many voices in the world telling us how to live, what to believe, how to think, what is right and wrong. God has spoken through all the noise and clutter. He has said, *“This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. **Listen to him.**”* **When you face life's hardships, look hard to Jesus and his Word.**

### 4. Look Hard at the **IMPACT** Christ Makes on People's Lives.

*“6 The disciples were **terrified** and **fell face down on the ground.** 7 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.” (17:6-8 NLT).*

The disciples were never the same after meeting Jesus. They were changed forever. John's life was impacted, *“So the Word became human and made his home among us... And we have **seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.**”* John 1:14 NLT. Also, *“We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have **heard** [Gk. Perfect tense “and still hear”] and **seen** [Gk. Perfect tense “and still see”]. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.”* 1 John 1:1 NLT

Peter was impacted and made reference to the transfiguration - 2 Peter 1:17. Also, Jesus foretold that he will return to earth in all his glory - Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31. **When you face life's hardships, look hard at Jesus.**

### Central Lesson:

**A hard look at Christ and his Word prepares us for hard times.**

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.