

## Treasures From the Original

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### **False Teachers, Prophets, Christs: How to Tell Real From Counterfeit**

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Part one of a three-part series on the New Testament's use of two important Greek words.

**The Bible tells us to beware of false disciples, false teachers, and even false Christs. How can we tell the real from the counterfeit? Two words in the Greek New Testament help us understand the difference.**

Today we hear a lot about transformations. Home remodeling is now "an extreme makeover for your house." Many women (and men) spend lots of money on "makeovers" — a new look — a new hairstyle — a new wardrobe — a new attitude — a *transformation*.

Businesses talk about "reinventing" or "repackaging" themselves. When you think of Western Union, what comes to mind? Probably telegrams. But the telegram is no more. After sending messages around the world for over 150 years, Western Union handled its last telegram in January 2006. The Internet, cell phones, and inexpensive long distance calling made the telegram obsolete. So Western Union had to reinvent itself to survive. The company now advertises itself as the fastest way to send money anywhere in the world. It underwent a *transformation*.

#### **Transformations in the Bible**

Several passages in the Bible speak of transformations. But these transformations aren't the products of Madison Avenue, the health spa, or corporate boardrooms.

- The Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter one about unbelievers who change the glory of the incorruptible God into images of various kinds, and worship them. Man tries to do a "makeover" with God. Man wants to create a god in his own image.
- The Bible also tells us that believers in Christ are undergoing a transformation during the course of our lives, and we shall experience a final transformation when we see the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. That is the "ultimate makeover"!
- The Bible also warns us to beware of false disciples, false teachers, and even false Christs, who *transform* themselves into something they are not.

### **Five Key Passages**

In this series, we'll look at five key passages on the theme of transformations. We'll see that not only does God have the power to transform us, He also has the power to transform Himself. Two of the five passages speak of transformations relating to the Lord Jesus Christ. One deals with the transformation He underwent when He came into this world. The other describes a transformation that took place while He was on this earth.

Two other passages tell us about the transformation of believers in Christ. One deals with the transformation we undergo in this life, and the other speaks of the transformation we will undergo in the life to come.

These first four passages will form the backdrop for the last part of our series. We'll look at a fifth passage that speaks of *counterfeit* transformations carried on by Satan and the false teachers who act as his agents — and how the Bible says we are to discern between the real and the counterfeit.

### **The Bible's Use of Words Is No Accident**

As we begin, we need to understand that in the original language of the New Testament, two different root words appear in the passages we'll consider. These two words are variously translated "form" — "transform" — "conform" — or "transfigure." One is the Greek word *morphe*, and the other is the word *schema*.

The use of these particular words in different passages is no accident. God the Holy Spirit, the Author of every word of the Bible, moved the human writers of Scripture to use exactly the words He intended, to convey exact meaning. Understanding which word is used in each case will help us better understand the meaning of the five passages we'll examine.

**Next: [Vital Lessons From Cups and Caterpillars](#)**

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