



HELPS Word-Studies

An excerpt from *The Discovery Bible* by HELPS Ministries.

3339 *metamorphóō* (from [3326/metá](#), "change after being with" and [3445/morphóō](#), "form changed in keeping with inner reality") – properly, transformed *after* being *with*; *transfigured*.

[3339 (*metamorphoō*) is the root of the English terms "metamorphosis" and "metamorphize."]

1. 3339/*metamorphoō* ("transfigured") is used of Christ's glory *manifested with (after)* He revealed the splendor of His deity ([Mt 17:2](#); [Mk 9:2](#)) to the apostles.
2. 3339 (*metamorphoō*) is also used of the Lord *transforming (changing) believers* as they walk *in faith* ("His inbirthed *persuasion*," [4102/pístis](#)). Accordingly, the two terms occur directly together.

[Ro 12:2,3](#): "2And do not [routinely] be conformed to this world, but be [constantly] *transformed* (3339/*metamorphóō*) by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will ([2307/thélēma](#)) of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. 3For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, *as God has allotted to each a measure of faith* ([4102/pístis](#))" (NASB).

Reflection: Constant change for *us* is needed to keep on becoming more like the Lord . . . who never does! *Ongoing* sanctification is a great honor to our humanity (not an insult!) – bringing us into deeper communion with God that *impacts Him forever* because He never changes ([Heb 13:8](#)).

Key quotes

- A. T. Robertson, "The root of 3339/*metamorphóō* (*morphē*) really presents the essence of a thing as separate from the [4976/sxēma](#) ('fashion'), the outward accident. So in [Ro12:2](#) Paul uses both verbs ([4964/sysxēmatízō](#),

'be not fashioned' and 3339/*metamorphōō*, 'be ye transformed in your inner life'). So in [1 Cor 7:31](#) 4976 (*sxēma*) is used for the fashion of the world while in [16:12](#) 3444 (*morphē*) is used of the form of Jesus after his resurrection. The false apostles are described by [3345](#) (*metasxēmatízō*) in [2 Cor 11:13-15](#). In [Phil 2:6](#) we have *en morphēi* used of the Preincarnate state of Christ and *morphēn doulou* of the Incarnate state ([2:7](#)), while *sxēmati hōs anthrōpos* emphasizes his being found 'in fashion as a man'" (*WP*, 1, 139).

- K. Wuest, "3339 (*metamorphōō*) means to change one's outward expression by giving expression to one's inner being, that expression coming from and being truly representative of one's inner nature.' That word is rendered in the AV, ([Ro 12:2](#)) by the single word 'transform.' Notice, if you will, that the words, *metaschēmatizō* and *metamorphoomai*, while alike in that they both speak of a change of outward expression, are diametrically opposed as to the source of that expression, a fact which a standard translation fails to bring out" (*Word Studies*, 2, *Pastoral Epistles*, 18).

[3339 (*metamorphōō*) focuses on the inherent (*abiding*) *quality* that *remains after* the change (R. Trench).]

K. Wuest, "This word is translated by the single word 'transform' in [2 Corinthians 11:13-15](#). But, it takes thirty five English words to bring out the total meaning of the Greek word. Manifestly, one could not hope to offer that in a standard translation" (*Word Studies*, 2, *Pastoral Epistles*, 17,18).

Reflection: To become what we never were after communing with the Lord (who never changes) is the heart of sanctification.

George MacDonald (1824-1905), "God's thoughts, His will, His love, His judgments are all man's *home*. *To think His thoughts, to choose His will, to love His loves, to judge His judgments*, and thus to know that He is in us, *is to be at home*."

In brief

3339 (*metamorphoō*) conveys being *transfigured* (of Christ), which is specifically applied to believers being *transformed* (*trans-formed* by the Holy Spirit). Believers are *progressively transformed* by communing with the Lord as a life-long process in sanctification to *become more and more like the Lord* (share in His holiness).

[2 Cor 3:18](#): "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being *transformed* (3339/*metamorphōō*) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (NASB).

The believer is transformed (3339/*metamorphōō*) by receiving the Lord's thoughts in their *renewed mind* ([Ro 12:2](#)). By this, they *progressively participate in God's nature* and hence share more and more in *His likeness* (cf. [2 Pet 1:4](#)).

[Accordingly, [Ro 12:2,3](#) emphasizes the close connection between God's work of 3339 (*metamorphōō*) and *in faith* ([4102/pístis](#), "the Lord's inwrought persuasion").]

Reflection: The Lord's power *transforms* (3339/*metamorphōō*) the believer from being *like the world* to being *like Him* – which is the ultimate "*after-change*" ([3326/metá](#))!

3339 (*metamorphoō*) is a compounded term using the prefix [3326/metá](#) ("after, with") with *morphē* ("form embodying inner nature") to express to God "*metamorphizing*" believers. This transforms them into conformity with the inner reality of the Lord's indwelling glory, i.e. causing "the new man" to *grow in likeness of nature with God* ("*reflecting the Lord*").

Commentary

([Mk 9:2](#)) *transfiguration* – A. M. Ramsey, "It stands as a gateway to the saving events of the Gospel, and is as a mirror in which the Christian mystery is seen in its unity. Here we perceive that the living and the dead are one in Christ, that the old covenant and the new are inseparable, that the Cross and the glory are of one, that the age to come is already here, that our human nature has a

destiny of glory, that in Christ the final word is uttered and in Him alone the Father is well pleased. Here the diverse elements in the theology of the New Testament meet" (*The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 1949, 144).

([2 Cor 3:18](#)) *transformed* – See [2 Cor 4:15,16](#) and important notes on the Greek terms used there by Murray Harris.