



MOUNTAINS

THE MOUNTAIN OF TRANSFIGURATION

MATTHEW 17:1-13

MAIN IDEA

Christ followers need to see Jesus for who He really is and not just who we think He is.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Many books, TV shows, and movies feature a plot line of a famous, powerful man or woman who seems to be an average person but is later revealed to be a prince, the boss, or some other person of power. Watching people think he or she is just like them only to have their eyes opened and realize the truth is popular entertainment. We have all had some “ah ha” moments in life in which something or someone turned out to be vastly different than our expectations.

- **What show, movie, or book can you think of that has this type of plot twist?**
- **When have you experienced a similar “ah ha” moment in your life?**
- **How did you respond when your expectations were changed?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 17:1-2.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, expectations were challenged and expanded. Imagine being a disciple of Jesus and witnessing His ministry first-hand. These individuals lived out the events of the Gospels without the benefit of hindsight.

- **How do you think the disciples' expectations were limited at this point in following Jesus?**
- **What is dangerous about having wrong expectations of a person or situation?**
- **What words were used to describe the transfiguration in these verses?**

In that moment on the mountain, three disciples got a look at who Jesus really was compared with their expectations of Him. The more time they spent with Jesus, the more their perspective of Him was expanded. The transfiguration was a defining moment in which they saw the deity of Jesus more clearly than ever before.

Although they didn't realize it, this was the exact right moment for their faith to be challenged and expanded. The disciples had no idea what was just around the corner for them and the purpose of God for their lives. But Jesus knew what was ahead and as always, His timing was exactly right. Peter, James, and John needed to be certain of who Jesus was if they were going to fulfill their ministry going forward.

- **Why was it vital for the disciples to see Jesus in His true glory as Lord?**
- **When have your expectations of Jesus been challenged or expanded? Why do we continually need this?**

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 17:3-13.

When Jesus was transfigured, Moses and Elijah stood with Him. Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the prophets. These two together represented the Old Testament, emphasizing that Jesus was the fulfillment of the law and God's plan for redemption.

- **The Scriptures say these three were talking. What might they have been talking about? Read Luke 9:31. What further insight did Luke give?**

When Jesus works among us, we are called to response. It seems as though the three disciples recognized they were in the middle of something big. Sometimes we are not sure how we should react and other times we jump right in. Peter spoke up first.

- **What was Peter's response to what was happening? Why would this have been a wrong response?**

There is some debate over the reasoning behind Peter's offer to build three tents (same word translated as tabernacle). No matter His intention, it was not the response Jesus desired. In our lives, God may also interrupt us to teach us something we need. The disciples were to recognize that Jesus was the

fulfillment of the redemptive plan of God and to stop and listen to what He was saying. When God overshadows your life, pay attention. His desires are more important than our own.

- **How do you respond when God interrupts your life?**

- **Why is it wise to stop talking and listen? How can you know?**

> Have someone in your group read John 8:25-30.

Throughout Jesus's ministry on earth, He faced questions about His authority. Through the transfiguration, God reinforced the authority of Jesus. As we see in John 8, Matthew 17 was not the only time Jesus's authority was affirmed.

The people wrestled with their cultural beliefs and religious backgrounds in an attempt to figure out who Jesus was. People today do the same. Man-made religious teachings and cultural norms often confuse people to the point they miss out on a relationship with God.

- **Why do you think Jesus's authority was such a common topic?**

 - **Why does the authority of Jesus matter today?**

 - **How did Jesus respond to the question of His authority? How do you respond?**
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Jesus answered the question of His authority honestly and clearly. When He did, many people believed. When we point people back to God's Word for the answers they seek, we set them up to believe through God's Word that is living and active.

APPLICATION

- **In what areas of your life have you refused to surrender to the authority of Jesus? Confess those in prayer and ask God for next steps to obey and surrender.**
- **What is one step you'll take this week toward having a meal with a person you are pursuing for gospel impact?**
- **Where have we lowered our expectations of who Jesus is? What do we need to do differently going forward?**

PRAY

Thank the Lord for bestowing His authority on Jesus and giving you the opportunity to be in relationship with Him. Confess where you have lived with low expectations and ask God to open your eyes to see Jesus for who He really is.

MATTHEW 17:1-13

17:1–8. The reference to six days indicates the rapidity of the fulfillment of Jesus’s promise in Mt 16:28, but it also may draw a parallel between Jesus’s transfiguration and God’s revelation of himself to Moses in Ex 24:13–18. Other parallels include the reference to a cloud, a brilliant light, a mountain, and the separation of a small number of men from the larger group. Moses’s face shone brilliantly after he met with God (Ex 34:29–35), so Jesus’s transfiguration serves to identify Him as the new Moses. This seems confirmed by the words listen to Him which echo Dt 18:15, a text from the prophet-like-Moses prophecy (Dt 18:15–19). However, the description of Jesus transcends OT descriptions of the glorified Moses. In Ex 34:29–35, only Moses’s face was radiant and this radiance was concealed by his veil. Jesus’s face had radiance too glorious to conceal and His clothes became as white as the light. The description of Jesus parallels the description of the Ancient of Days in Dn 7:9–10 and shows that Jesus possessed the glory of His Father (Mt 16:27). **Notes:**

The presence of Moses and Elijah indicates that the necessary conditions for Messiah’s coming had been fulfilled (v. 10; Dt 18:15–19; Mal 4:5). Peter’s request to build shelters unjustly suggested equal treatment for Jesus and His guests. The Father’s voice from heaven showed Jesus’s superiority to Moses and Elijah. Jesus is God’s beloved Son and the focus of true disciples. God spoke from heaven only twice in Matthew, both times to express His love for Jesus and His delight in His works (v. 5; 3:17). The disciples’ reaction is understandable, for the OT shows that direct encounters with God inspire fright (e.g., Is 6:1–5).

17:9. The disciples could report the transfiguration only after the resurrection when the nature of Jesus’s messianic reign became clear.

17:10–13. The view of the scribes was prompted by Mal 4:5. John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy since his ministry had many similarities to Elijah’s.