

Jesus asked his disciples what they thought about his identity. Read Peter's response and a conversation that followed afterward.

Peter's Confession**Matthew 16:16-17 (NIV)**

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

Peter's Rebuke**Matthew 16:21-23 (NIV)**

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. ²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" ²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Do you see any contrasts between Peter's two responses to Jesus?

In the first response Peter's response was inspired by God and defined Jesus as the promised the Messiah, the king who would rule over all Israel with wisdom, power and might.

In the second response Jesus defines Peter's response as being inspired by Satan. Peter reacted against Jesus' statement about his upcoming death as if Jesus lacked wisdom and understanding about life. Jesus' statement conflicted with Peter's expectation about Jesus being the king of the Jews and therefore Jesus needed to be corrected.

In what way did Peter have in mind the things of men?

There was no room for suffering in Peter's theology and therefore he felt Jesus must be missing something with regard to God's plan and purpose. Peter was focused on Jesus coming to a position of power and rule, and the setting up of an earthly kingdom. Jesus had a much more significant mission on his mind. He came to restore people to relationship with God through his death and resurrection. Peter could not even begin to grasp the depth of God's plan and the role that suffering needed to play. A desire for comfort would have precluded any path that might be unpleasant.

In what ways might we similarly lose perspective about what our lives should focus on?

How does having "the mind of men" sometimes cause us to miss out on what God wants to accomplish through our lives?

Jesus' Transfiguration**Luke 9:28-36 (NIV)**

About eight days after Jesus said this [Peter's confession of Jesus being the Christ], he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure [exodus], which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) ³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

What do you think was the point of this whole experience?

Why did Jesus' appearance change?

In his humanity the glory of God was concealed, but at this moment, the true nature and glory of Jesus is unveiled. Sometimes the glory of Christ was displayed through signs and wonders. At other times it was displayed as a brilliant, blinding light (i.e. Saul on the road to Damascus).

Moses & Glory**Exodus 34:29-35 (NIV)**

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. ³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. ³² Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

³³ When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, ³⁵ they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.



What are some similarities and contrasts between Moses' radiance and that of Jesus?

Similarities:

Both shone with radiance that terrified the onlookers.

Both Moses and Jesus veiled God's glory before the people.

Contrasts:

Moses' face shone by being in the presence of God.

Jesus' whole body shone because he was God, with his glory temporarily unveiled.

Moses reflects - Jesus emits

What was the significance of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on the mountain?

What was unique about the ministry of these two men?

Moses: Presenter of the Covenant

Moses was the one through whom God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. Through Moses, the Israelites received the LAW or the terms of the COVENANT relationship with God.

The Mosaic Covenant became the foundation of Israel in their understanding of how to remain in relationship with God.

Moses is representative of the LAW

Elijah: Call to Return to Covenant

During the time of Elijah, Israel had wandered in its faith and, under the influence of Queen Jezebel, started embracing the worship of Baal. Through Elijah, God performed great and mighty signs with the goal of calling Israel to return to their covenant relationship with him.

1 Kings 18:21 (NIV)

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Elijah became representative of a whole series of prophets who warned Israel to return their covenant relationship or risk being rejected by the God who created them as a nation.

Elijah is representative of the PROPHETS

Matthew 5:17 (NIV)

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

God authenticated both of these men's ministries through miraculous signs.

Miracles occurred frequently in the Old Testament only during the ministry of these men and their immediate successors. It was not until the time of Jesus that miraculous signs once again became frequently evident.

What was the topic of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah?

They discussed Jesus' upcoming departure.

Departure: Literal word = "Exodus"

Why did Luke refer to Jesus' departure as an "exodus"?

Jesus was initiating a new exodus – the real exodus!

Everything Moses did was a foreshadowing of the real exodus Jesus would need to lead. The true exodus is the one that leads us from bondage to sin and death and gives us true life through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:1 (NIV)

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Colossians 2:17 (NIV)

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

What are some ways the story of Moses and the Israelites' exodus foreshadowed Jesus' ministry and our spiritual journey?

Examples:

People were trapped in bondage with no possible means of self-deliverance
People were set freed by the shedding of a substitute, sacrificial lamb
God's people were cut off from the old life through a baptism (Red Sea)
People were called to a covenant relationship with God
God's people were led through the wilderness by the presence of God
God revealed his glory through his representative
Every need was faithfully provided for miraculously by God
God's people were finally led to the Promised Land
Their faith was tested along the way

Even at this point, Moses and Elijah would understand that their personal spiritual freedom rested solely on what Jesus was about to do. They would have been in a waiting place waiting for the day Jesus would conquer sin and death. Everything they accomplished in their ministries merely looked forward to this ultimate time of redemption. It must have been a tremendous experience and privilege for them to meet with Jesus on this mountain.

If you had been there with Peter, James and John on that mountain, how do you think you might have reacted?

Luke 9:33 (NIV)

³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

Why do you think Peter blurted out his response about building shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah? What was wrong with his response?

It was a nervous reaction, not a consideration of the events.

He equated Moses and Elijah with Jesus in stature and importance.

It was a desire to hold on to the past when Jesus came to create a future. In other words, Peter just wanted to camp out with these biblical heroes as opposed to turning back to the mission at hand.

It missed the whole point of the discussion of Jesus' "exodus". Jesus wasn't interested in maintaining the status quo; he came to die to bring freedom for all.

Why did the Father speak at this point in time?

It was a confirmation of Jesus' identity and his mission, which Peter kept misunderstanding. It was a statement to Peter, James and John of, "Do not instruct Jesus; be instructed by Jesus."

Have there been times when you felt you needed to instruct God on what he should do? Share.

At these times when we want to give advice to God, what does he recommend we do and why?

Let's return to the question of why this scenario needed to have been played out? What was the point?

This was all for the benefit of Peter, James and John. Peter had just confessed his understanding that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and was then thrown off balance by Jesus' discussion about being killed by his enemies. All the disciples found it hard to reconcile these two truths. It left them in a state of confusion trying to understand the identity and the mission of Jesus.

By revealing the glory of God in Jesus and having affirmation from the Father in Heaven, it solidified both Jesus' true identity and his mission in the eyes of these three disciples. Without this experience the disciples would not have been able to grasp the remaining days of Jesus' ministry and all that he was about to endure. The suffering of Jesus would have been too far from their preconceived ideas. Even though they may not have understood all that was about to take place, they now knew that Jesus was truly God and that he had a clear mission that he must accomplish, involving in some mysterious way, his death.

It also maximized the teaching time that was left. In the remaining days of Jesus' life, it was important that they be attentive to everything Jesus had to tell them. It was important that they begin to understand his teaching in light of what he was about to go through.

What role did this experience play in Jesus' ministry?

This experience was a confirmation of Peter's confession. It revealed that Jesus was in union with the message of the Old Covenant which was promoted by Moses and Elijah. From this point forward, Jesus started heading toward Jerusalem and the cross. The experience was a confirmation of God's plan, in light of Jesus' talks about his death. The transfiguration would become a landmark event for Peter, James and John that would shape their perspective until the day they died.

John 1:14 (NIV)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling [tabernacled] among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Peter 1:16-18 (NIV)

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

How do you think this experience might have impacted Peter, James and John?

If we had an experience such as this, how would it change our life?

It forces us to ask the question "who is Jesus and what did he come to accomplish?"

It encourages us to take Jesus and his mission seriously.

It encourages us to follow his lead instead of our own each day.

Have any of you had powerful, personal experiences with God? How did it affect and change your life?

Why do encounters with God always seem to have an impact on mission and how we reach out to others?

*"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; **listen to him**"*