



Unit .24

Session .04

Jesus Is Transfigured

Scripture



Matthew 17:1-13

1 After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. **2** He was transfigured in front of them, and his face shone like the sun; his clothes became as white as the light. **3** Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him. **4** Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it’s good for us to be here. If you want, I will set up three shelters here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” **5** While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!” **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown and were terrified. **7** Jesus came up, touched

them, and said, “Get up; don’t be afraid.” **8** When they looked up they saw no one except Jesus alone. **9** As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don’t tell anyone about the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” **10** So the disciples asked him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” **11** “Elijah is coming and will restore everything,” he replied. **12** “But I tell you: Elijah has already come, and they didn’t recognize him. On the contrary, they did whatever they pleased to him. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” **13** Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

What do you imagine the three disciples were thinking and feeling as they witnessed this event before their eyes?

How does the fact that Moses died before reaching the promised land demonstrate that Jesus is greater than Moses?



99 Essential Doctrines

Christ's Exaltation

Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ's exaltation. Christ was exalted when God raised Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He ascended to the Father's right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He returns. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.

Main Point

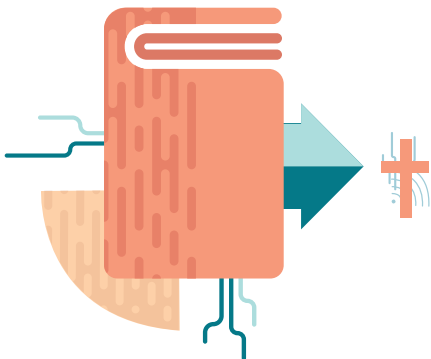
One day Jesus' full glory will be displayed for all to see.

In what ways is it good news that God is different than us?

Do you look forward to Jesus' return? Why or why not?

Christ Connection

At the Transfiguration, the Son of God's glory was revealed more fully to Peter, James, and John. The Transfiguration foreshadowed Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension (Luke 9:31) when He would depart and return to His place of glory. We live with the hope that one day Jesus will return in full glory to make all things new.



How does hearing Jesus' connection between Elijah and John the Baptist help you to see that Jesus is the central character of the Bible's storyline?

In Defense



“When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.’ Had the story been made up by the disciples in order to convince the early Christians that Jesus was really God, it is unlikely that they would have portrayed themselves in such a negative light! The importance of this incident should not be underrated, because years later, Peter referred to it as a key moment in Jesus’ self-revelation [in 2 Peter 1:16-18].”—David Platt, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Matthew* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013), 228-29.



Head

How would you summarize some of the biblical insights from this account?

How could you use this account when explaining to a friend how the Old Testament points to Jesus?



Heart

Why should Matthew 17:7 be a comfort for us today?

What are some fears you are struggling with today? How does it affect you knowing that Jesus is near?

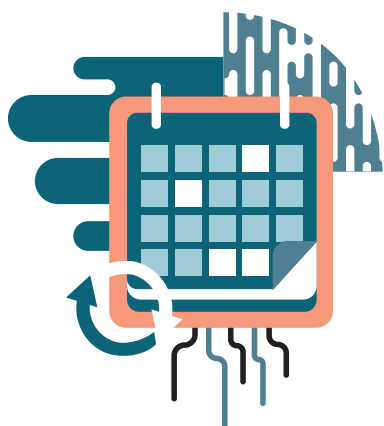


Hands

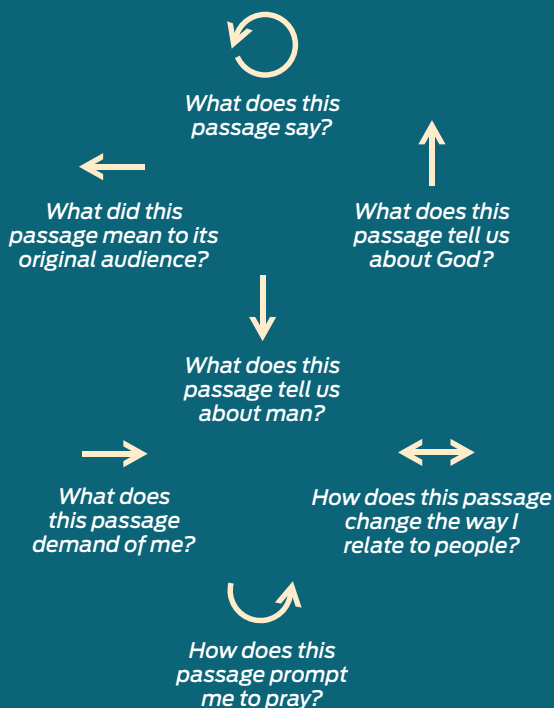
Why should this account motivate us towards missions?

Who are you actively sharing the gospel with in your life now? If you aren't, why not?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day 1

Matthew 17:1-6

In this first verse of the transfiguration account, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain so they can see His glory. This must have been a fantastic and yet terrifying scene to behold. Many of us would love a chance to climb the mountain and get a glimpse of Christ's glory. However, the good news of Christianity is that God brought His glory down the mountain to us. Christianity doesn't call us to trek a mountain in order to see God; it tells us to behold the God who descended from the mountain and makes Himself accessible to us.

Beyond just coming down from a mountain, Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven by taking on flesh and meeting us in our mess. Ultimately, He will "come down the mountain" again when He comes back for His bride—the church—at the end of all things.

Why should we regularly reflect on the lengths to which God went to meet with us in the person of His Son, Jesus?

Matthew

17:7-8

When the disciples heard the thunderous voice from heaven proclaim that Jesus is God's beloved Son, they fell on their faces as they were terrified. Yet, Jesus did not leave them in their terror. Rather He went to them and comforted them, saying, "Get up; don't be afraid" (v. 8).

This call for courage is found throughout Scripture: "don't be afraid." In Deuteronomy 31:7-8, Moses told Joshua to be "strong and courageous" because the Lord would go before him and the Israelites into the promised land, not abandoning them but rather ensuring their success. In Isaiah 43, God encouraged the people of Israel with the words "do not fear" (v. 5) by promising to protect them even through fire and flood in light of prospective exile. In 1 John 4:18, the apostle John writes, "Perfect love drives out fear."

God does not call His people to a life of fear but one of courage. The fear of the Lord casts out all other fears because we know with Him on our side, there is nothing left worthy of our fear. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

How does God and His gospel bring you courage and drive away your fears?

Matthew

17:9-13

At various points in the Gospels, we come across Jesus instructing certain people not to tell others about Him or what He did (Matt. 16:20; Mark 7:36; Luke 8:56). However, this certainly seems counter-intuitive to us who are charged with heeding the Great Commission. Doesn't Jesus want His followers to tell the entire world that He is King? Well, He does, but timing is everything.

As the Gospel of Matthew records in its closing lines, Jesus stated that His authority as king over heaven and earth was given to him (Matt. 28:18). Sure, Jesus as the eternal Son of God possessed authority over the world as its Creator, but He was also sent to rule as humanity's true king, the Messiah, which required Him to succeed in taking proper dominion over the world as a human being (Heb. 2:5-9). Now, we no longer live during Jesus' humble period of obedience on earth when He had to keep things quiet for a time. Instead we live during His exalted reign from heaven. Therefore, we have been charged to announce to everyone everywhere that Jesus is the risen and rightful King.

When it comes to sharing the gospel with others, do you find it burdensome or invigorating? Why?

Malachi

4:4-6

The lights along the aisle dim and the screen widens. That's what often happens in a movie theater once the succession of trailers has finally come to an end and it becomes time for the main feature to begin. The audience responds accordingly, ready to settle in for what they came to see. We encounter a similar dynamic at work in Malachi's prophesying a "second coming" of Elijah. The return of Elijah was the last of the previews to appear before the main feature would begin.

Indeed, Jesus confirmed that "the great and terrible day of the LORD" (Mal. 4:5) had come, Elijah being symbolically represented by John the Baptist: "Elijah has already come, and they didn't recognize him" (Matt. 17:12). By affirming that Malachi's prophecy had been fulfilled in John the Baptist's preaching, Jesus was signaling to His hearers that the time of mere trailers and previews had ended; the main feature was imminent, namely, His own death and resurrection.

How does looking at Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah help us to see Jesus as the central figure of the Bible's storyline?

Matthew

17:22-23

Though we all know death is coming for each of us, including our loved ones, there is still only so much we can do to prepare ourselves when we face death firsthand. The loss of anyone close to us will inevitably lead to our being stunned and perplexed on some level. We should therefore sympathize with Jesus' original disciples who, during His mock trial and temporary burial, didn't seem to recall immediately the times Jesus had foretold of His death and resurrection in front of them (Matt. 16:21-22; 17:12,22-23; 20:17-19). Even the prospect of His death distressed them (v. 23).

On the other hand, Christians who have been alive since those days have the distinguished benefit of being able to look back on the Gospel narratives that specifically highlight this event. More than likely, we would have been slow on the uptake, too, concerning the necessity and significance of Jesus' looming crucifixion. We should thus humbly thank God for providing and preserving these inspired, well-designed accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.

How does the changed lives of the disciples—moving from cowards who were afraid to associate with Jesus during His trial to faithful and bold preachers post-resurrection—strengthen our faith and increase our boldness in the gospel?

Use the following thoughts and questions to have a spiritual conversation as a family. Don't emphasize having the right answer, but focus on spending time discussing the Word as a family.

Scripture

Matthew 17:1-13

Session Summary

Jesus and three disciples went up a high mountain and none of the disciples could have imagined what they were about to see. When they reached the peak of the mountain, Jesus was “transfigured in front of them” (v. 2). While we can't know every detail about this significant moment, the passage states that “his face shone like the sun” and “his clothes became as white as light.” When the disciples heard the thunderous voice of God from a bright cloud, Matthew tells us that they fell face down and were terrified. This passage makes it clear why Jesus is far greater than Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist.

Conversation Questions

- What would it have been like to be in the disciples' shoes for the transfiguration?
- How is Jesus completely different than anyone from earth?
- When was the last time we were in awe over who Jesus is?
- How does this passage lead us to share about Jesus with others?

Family Challenge

Give each person a sheet of paper and set a timer for thirty seconds. When the timer starts, ask everyone to write down as many people in the Bible as they can remember. Whoever has the most (and accurate) names listed wins! After the game, discuss how Jesus is far greater than even the best people on your lists like Elijah, Moses, and John the Baptist.