

Study Questions – Matthew 17:1–13 (NKJV)

The Transfiguration reveals both **the identity of Jesus** and **the necessity of listening to Him**. It also connects glory with suffering—showing that God’s plan includes both.

Parallel Passages:

- **Mark 9:2–13** – Parallel account of the Transfiguration and Elijah discussion.
- **Luke 9:28–36** – Adds detail about Jesus praying and the content of the conversation.
- Reflections: **John 1:14**; **2 Peter 1:16–18** (Peter later testifies to witnessing this glory).

Study Questions and Responses

1. What is the significance of the timing (“after six days”) and the setting of the mountain?

(Matthew 17:1)

The phrase “after six days” connects this event to Jesus’ prior teaching about His death and discipleship (Matthew 16:21–28). The Transfiguration serves as a confirmation of who Jesus is after the difficult teaching about the cross.

Mountains in Scripture are often places of divine revelation (Exodus 24:15–18; 1 Kings 19:8–13). Here, the disciples are given a clearer understanding of Jesus’ identity.

Everyday Application: God often provides encouragement or clarity after challenging seasons. When obedience feels costly, He may strengthen our faith through reminders of His presence and promises.

2. What does the Transfiguration reveal about Jesus’ nature? *(Matthew 17:2)*

Jesus’ face shines “like the sun,” and His clothes become “white as the light” (Matthew 17:2), revealing His divine glory. This is not a new glory but a revealing of who He already is (John 17:5).

This moment affirms that Jesus is more than a teacher—He is the divine Son of God. It also anticipates His future glory (Revelation 1:16).

Everyday Application: It’s easy to reduce Jesus to a role that feels comfortable—teacher, helper, or example. This passage reminds us to approach Him with reverence, recognizing His authority over every area of life.

3. Why do Moses and Elijah appear, and what does their presence communicate? *(Matthew 17:3)*

Some commentators believe Moses represents the **Law** and Elijah the **Prophets**, together summarizing the Old Testament (Luke 24:27). Their presence would evidence that Jesus fulfills both (Matthew 5:17).

Luke adds that they spoke about Jesus’ “departure” (literally “exodus”) which He would accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31), linking His death to God’s redemptive plan.

Everyday Application: **The Bible is not a collection of disconnected stories**—it points consistently to Christ. Understanding this helps believers trust that God is intentional and faithful in His plan for their lives as well.

4. What is the significance of the cloud overshadowing them, and how is this imagery used elsewhere in Scripture? (Matthew 17:5)

The “bright cloud” that overshadowed them represents the presence and glory of God. In the Old Testament, God often revealed Himself through a cloud:

- Exodus 13:21–22 – God led Israel by a pillar of cloud
- Exodus 24:15–18 – God’s glory rested on Mount Sinai
- 1 Kings 8:10–11 – The cloud filled the temple, symbolizing God’s presence

This same imagery appears here, showing that the disciples are witnessing a direct manifestation of God’s glory. From the cloud, God speaks and affirms Jesus’ identity and authority, connecting Jesus to—and placing Him above—these earlier revelations (Hebrews 1:1–2).

Everyday Application: God’s presence is not always dramatic or visible, but it is real. This passage reminds us that God is actively present and involved, even when we do not experience something extraordinary. Faithfulness means trusting His presence in both ordinary and significant moments.

5. What is the full significance of God’s statement, “Hear Him”? (Matthew 17:5)

God affirms Jesus as His Son and commands, “Hear Him!” This echoes **Deuteronomy 18:15**, where Moses foretold a prophet whom the people must hear.

The command places Jesus above the Law and the Prophets, not in opposition to them, but as their fulfillment (Hebrews 1:1–2).

Everyday Application: Believers are constantly influenced by competing voices—culture, emotions, and opinions. This passage calls us to prioritize Jesus’ words above all else, especially when His teaching challenges our preferences.

6. Why do the disciples respond with fear, and what does Jesus’ response teach us about His character? (Matthew 17:6–7)

The disciples fall on their faces in fear when they hear God’s voice (Matthew 17:6), reflecting the common biblical response to God’s holiness (Isaiah 6:5; Exodus 20:18–19).

Jesus then touches them and says, “Do not be afraid” (Matthew 17:7), showing both His authority and compassion.

Everyday Application: A right view of God includes both reverence and relationship. Jesus does not remove God’s holiness but makes it approachable. In moments of fear or uncertainty, believers can come to Him with confidence (Hebrews 4:15–16).

7. Why must the vision remain hidden until after the resurrection? (Matthew 17:9)

The Transfiguration could be misunderstood without the context of the cross and resurrection. Jesus' mission included suffering (Matthew 16:21), and revealing only His glory might lead to false expectations of immediate victory.

Understanding comes in stages, as seen when the disciples later fully grasp these events after the resurrection (Luke 24:45–46).

Everyday Application: We often want immediate clarity, but God sometimes reveals truth progressively. Trusting Him includes accepting that understanding may come later, not all at once.

8. How does Jesus' explanation about Elijah deepen our understanding of God's work and human response? (Matthew 17:10–13)

Jesus explains that Elijah has already come in the person of **John the Baptist** (Matthew 17:12–13), fulfilling **Malachi 4:5** in a preparatory sense (Luke 1:17).

However, people did not recognize him and rejected him—just as they would reject Jesus. This shows that spiritual blindness can prevent people from recognizing God's work (Matthew 13:13–15).

Everyday Application: God may be at work in ways we don't expect. If we rely only on our assumptions, we can miss what He is doing. Staying grounded in Scripture helps us remain open and responsive to His leading.