

# Jesus Is Transfigured

## Summary and Goal

Before the eyes of Peter, James, and John, something absolutely remarkable took place. Upon the peak of a mountain, this trio of disciples got to witness the transfiguration of Jesus, along with the appearance of the prophets Moses and Elijah. Jesus' face radiated like the sun and His clothes became white as the light. As if that were not remarkable enough, a voice like thunder came from the clouds and declared that Jesus is the Son of God. These disciples experienced the Son of God like few others did; they experienced the Son in unveiled glory and would ultimately experience seeing the Son fulfill His role in God's plan. Similar to what John the Baptist had faced, Jesus would eventually undergo rejection and suffering at the hands of the people.

## Session Outline

1. Experiencing the Son of God's Glory (Matt. 17:1-5)
2. Experiencing the Son of God's Grace (Matt. 17:6-8)
3. Experiencing the Son of God's Plan (Matt. 17:9-13)

*Background Passage: Matthew 17:1-13*

## Session in a Sentence

At the transfiguration, Peter, James, and John beheld Jesus' glory, which gave them a glimpse into the day when Jesus will return in full glory.

## 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.

## Missional Application

Because we have beheld the glory of Christ in our salvation, we live with urgency, sharing the gospel with a dying world, and with anticipation of Christ returning in glory.

# Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

## Introduction

**EXPLAIN:** Use the paragraphs on page 121 in the DDG to establish the way in which majestic things put life into perspective, namely, by leading us to think about the majestic Creator.

Have you ever seen something amazing? Not just something neat or unique but something that left you awestruck? Something so beautiful and so grand that you struggled to find the words to describe it? Something that made you feel the significance of just how small and fragile you are?

Tiptoe toward the edge of the Grand Canyon and you could catch a view of the six-thousand-foot drop. Sail to the middle of the ocean and you will notice there is no land in sight, only water and waves. When we gaze at something as majestic as the Grand Canyon or the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, things are put in perspective. We realize quickly that we are small and fragile individuals in a grand world. Moreover, when our eyes are caught by the majesty of creation, our minds should turn to the majestic Creator.

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.



What is the most breathtaking thing you've ever seen? In that moment, how did you feel? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

**SUMMARIZE:** Before the eyes of Peter, James, and John, something absolutely remarkable took place. Upon the peak of a mountain, this trio of disciples got to witness the transfiguration of Jesus, along with the appearance of the prophets Moses and Elijah. Jesus' face radiated like the sun and His clothes became white as the light. As if that were not remarkable enough, a voice like thunder came from the clouds and declared that Jesus is the Son of God. These disciples experienced the Son of God like few others did; they experienced the Son in unveiled glory and would ultimately experience seeing the Son fulfill His role in God's plan.

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## Point 1: Experiencing the Son of God's Glory (Matt. 17:1-5)

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 17:1-5 (DDG p. 122).

<sup>1</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup> He was transfigured in front of them, and his face shone like the sun; his clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup> Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him. <sup>4</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it's good for us to be here. I will set up three shelters here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

<sup>5</sup> 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!"

**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) to highlight how the passage describes the state of Jesus' face and clothing during the transfiguration.

When Jesus and the three disciples reached the peak of the mountain, Jesus was transfigured in front of them. We don't have every detail about this significant moment, but what we do know is Jesus exploded with light! We can permanently damage our eyes if we look at the sun directly, and it is around 93 million miles away. Here, directly in front of the disciples, Jesus' face shone like the burning star that brightens our days.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 122).

**God's Glory:** The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect **character** through His activity. Another sense of the word is the inherent **beauty** of God, the unbearable **brightness** and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness.

**Essential Doctrine "God's Glory":** The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect **character** through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent **beauty** of God, the unbearable **brightness** and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having "fallen short" of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us—to glorify Him.

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**EXPLAIN:** Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) to provide some explanation for why Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the mountain.

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As if the divine glory of Jesus shining through were not enough, the disciples then saw Moses and Elijah next to Jesus, and the three began to converse. Peter, James, and John would have spent much of their lives hearing and reading about these figures, and here they were right in front of their eyes! But the importance of these figures is greater than just the men themselves, for they signified something crucial—that Jesus is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17).

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- Moses and Elijah, perhaps the two most esteemed prophets of ancient Israel, stand here as figures representing the Law and the Prophets, a twofold way of referring to the entirety of what we now call the Old Testament.
- Moses was regarded as the prototypical prophet of Israel (Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:5-8; Deut. 18:15-22), and Elijah was perceived as a “new Moses” and forerunner to the Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6). Given the comparatively large amount of signs and wonders that occurred during their ministries, these two prophets were especially associated with God’s miraculous activity. Furthermore, both of these men had their own special encounters with God on a mountain (see Ex. 34:1-9; 1 Kings 19:8-18). So while these men had ministries somewhat comparable to Jesus’ ministry, they themselves served the Lord as their own ministries pointed forward to Jesus’.

**Commentary:** There are a number of parallels with and allusions to Moses in particular in this passage. **First**, Jesus took the disciples and ascended the mountain, as did Moses when he traveled up Mount Sinai to receive the law (Ex. 24). **Second**, during Jesus’ transfiguration, Jesus’ face shone like the sun. Similarly, after Moses had received the law from God in Exodus 34, his face was described as shining, and the people were afraid of him (Ex. 34:29-30). **Third**, in Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses himself said that God would raise up a prophet like him after him to whom the people must listen. And after the Father called Jesus His well-pleasing Son, He instructed the disciples to listen to Him (Matt. 17:5). This is a direct allusion to what Moses stated about the prophet to come. So from Matthew’s standpoint, that time was now!

Though we can see multiple parallels and allusions to Moses in the passage, the Book of Hebrews states explicitly that Jesus is greater than Moses (Heb. 3:3). Ultimately, we will see that Jesus is greater than Moses since Moses delivered the law of the Lord, but Jesus embodied and fulfilled the law of the Lord on our behalf. Moreover, Moses couldn’t lead his people to the promised rest because he died on account of his disobedience before entering the promised land, but Jesus will successfully deliver His followers to their promised rest because He is fully obedient on their behalf.

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**PACK ITEM 14: HEAR HIM:** Reference the **Jerome quote** on this poster as you ask the following question.

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How does Moses and Elijah’s purpose at the transfiguration relate to our chief purpose in life? (we are to be servants of Jesus, not serving ourselves; we are to give glory to Jesus through our words and actions; we are to point others to Jesus so that He alone is glorified; we are to live in such a way that we do not distract others from hearing the voice of Jesus)

## Point 2: Experiencing the Son of God's Grace (Matt. 17:6-8)

**READ** Matthew 17:6-8 (DDG p. 123).

<sup>6</sup> When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown and were terrified.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus came up, touched them, and said, "Get up; don't be afraid." <sup>8</sup> When they looked up they saw no one except Jesus alone.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 123) to emphasize the difference between the Creator and the creature and to show how this difference was manifested in God's speaking and the disciples' response at the transfiguration of Jesus.

God is different than us; we are the creature and He is the Creator. This isn't a case of God being like us, just bigger—as if we have knowledge, He just has more of it, or as if we have power, He just has more of it. No, He isn't just a bigger version of us. He is altogether different—He is transcendent and incomprehensible by us. At the mere sound of the thunderous voice of God from a bright cloud, the three disciples collapsed in terror.

- Terror often is the reaction from humans when they come into the presence of God. We can see this all throughout the Bible; God's presence is so incomprehensibly glorious that we can't even be around Him without His aid. For example:
  - In Exodus 33–34, God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock so that he wouldn't die when God passed by in all His glory (see Ex. 33:19-23).
  - During a vision, Isaiah saw God seated on a throne in the temple as the seraphim proclaimed His supreme holiness, to which the prophet, recognizing his sin, confessed the following words: "Woe is me for I am ruined" (Isa. 6:1-7).
  - John recorded his response to Jesus' majestic appearance as the Son of Man: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man" (Rev. 1:17).
- The reality is that God is glorious and grand, and in His presence we become intensely aware of our frailty and failures. Without His grace shown to us, no one could endure His holy and glorious presence (see Ps. 24:3-6).

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.



In what ways is it good news that God is different than us? (God cannot be tempted and He cannot sin, so He is always faithful and trustworthy; when we confess our sin, God is always faithful and just to forgive us, never holding our sin against us again; God is sovereign over all circumstances as the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator and Sustainer of His creation)

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**EXPLAIN:** Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 123) to highlight the implications of Jesus' words of comfort—"Get up; don't be afraid"—for our eternal comfort, when fear will be no more for those who have trusted in Christ.

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The only way the disciples were going to move out of terror at the thunderous voice from the clouds was if God Himself stepped in to invoke their courage through His grace. So Jesus said, "Get up; don't be afraid." He was speaking particularly for that moment, but there is a day coming when He will utter the same exhortation and mean it for all eternity. Those who have trusted in Jesus alone through faith alone by grace alone for their salvation will enter into a rest in which fear will be no more.



### Voices from Church History

"Once more; Never think that you can live to God by *your own* power or strength; but always look to, and rely on *him* for assistance, yea for all strength and grace. There is no greater truth than this, that 'we can do nothing of ourselves.'"<sup>1</sup>

—David Brainerd (1718-1747)

- In His glorious grace, God calls believers to not be afraid, just as Jesus spoke to His disciples in their frightened state following His transfiguration. Though by rights we should be afraid in the presence of God and His Son and His Spirit because we deserve judgment for our sin, Jesus says, "Get up; don't be afraid" (see also Isa. 6:7; Matt. 14:27; Rev. 1:17).
- Another parallel between the narrative in these verses and our salvation is that the temporal courage of the three disciples stemmed from Jesus' touch. This is important to notice because we neither muster up our courage nor bring about our salvation in our own strength. The disciples would have remained in their fear—as we would have remained in our sin—had Jesus not first touched us in His glory and grace.
- When the Lord Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, His presence is going to have a similar effect on humankind as the voice of God did to the disciples on the mountain. Many will fall in fear as Jesus returns as a judge; yet others will rejoice at the same event as they see Jesus as a husband coming for His bride, the church. What separates those who will meet Jesus as Judge and those who will meet Him as Savior is union with Christ. Those who have been united to Christ by faith and therefore found "in Him" will meet Him with the greatest rejoicing imaginable. On the last day, those who are in Christ will not have to fear the wrath of God, for God's wrath for their sin has already been poured out on Jesus on the cross.

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**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

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How has Jesus addressed our fears so that we can stand in God's holy and glorious presence? (He gave His life on the cross to die for our sins in our place so we could have His righteousness; Jesus rose from the dead so we can have eternal life in Him, free from the fear of death and hell; He commands us to be holy as His heavenly Father is holy, and He has given us the Holy Spirit so that we can grow toward fulfilling this command in joyful obedience)



### Point 3: Experiencing the Son of God's Plan (Matt. 17:9-13)

**READ** Matthew 17:9-13 (DDG p. 124).

<sup>9</sup> 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."

<sup>10</sup> So the disciples asked him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" <sup>11</sup> "Elijah is coming and will restore everything," he replied. <sup>12</sup> "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." <sup>13</sup> Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

**EXPLAIN:** Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 124) as you explain the connections between **John the Baptist and Elijah** and **John the Baptist and Jesus**.

After His display of glory in His transfiguration, Jesus told the disciples that He later would be raised from the dead, which implied His coming death, but the disciples wanted to talk about a prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah. So Jesus made the connection for them between Elijah and John the Baptist. Then He connected the abuse, mistreatment, and execution of John the Baptist with how He would soon be treated as He headed toward the cross.

#### John the Baptist and Elijah

- The New Testament mentions John the Baptist and Elijah in connection with one another multiple times. This happens as early as the promise of John the Baptist's birth, when the angel told his father, Zechariah, that John would have the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:13-17).
- In Matthew 11:7-15, Jesus spoke about the greatness of John the Baptist and explicitly declared that John was the fulfillment of the prophecy that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah and the Day of the Lord (see Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6).

#### John the Baptist and Jesus

- Though the Jewish people were looking for the coming of Elijah, they missed his coming in John the Baptist and instead made him suffer (Matt. 17:12). Jesus here referred to the beheading of John the Baptist by Herod at the request of Herodias and her daughter while he was in prison (Matt. 14:1-12). Jesus stated that John the Baptist's persecution and execution foreshadowed Jesus' coming suffering and crucifixion.

**Commentary:** Not only is Jesus greater than Moses, He is also greater than Elijah. In Matthew 16, Jesus asked His disciples about who others said He was. They replied with a plethora of possibilities, one of whom was Elijah. As Peter pointed out, however, Jesus is greater than Elijah, for He is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Elijah prophesied, but Jesus is the One prophesied about. Elijah was a prophet; Jesus is *the* Prophet whom "Elijah," or John the Baptist, preceded.

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**EXPLAIN:** Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 124) to recall Jesus' statement about His coming resurrection, which required His coming crucifixion to save sinners.

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No doubt the disciples knew about John the Baptist's gruesome and unfortunate death, but what they did not fully realize was that Jesus was on His way to be tortured and killed as well. He would be beaten by strangers, betrayed by His friends, and have His body nailed to a cross. But by the broken body of this righteous Man, God would bring about the redemption of sinners. And just three days later, the darkest day in human history—the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God—would be eclipsed by the most glorious day in human history—the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God!

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**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 124).

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**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.

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**Essential Doctrine "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.

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**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

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How should God's plan involving Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection shape the way we live as Christians? (we should live in gratitude to God that He would plan and send His only Son to die in our place; we should live by faith that death and resurrection are part of God's plan for our lives as well; we should trust that all suffering for the sake of Christ is part of God's plan and therefore for our good; we should boldly proclaim the gospel so people can hear and believe, even though it may cost us our lives, because we will receive our lives once again in the resurrection)



# My Mission

**EXPLAIN:** The scene of Jesus' transfiguration is one of glory and might. In it we get a peek at just how incomprehensible Jesus really is. Though we can't comprehend everything about Jesus, we can learn at least three things from His transfiguration: **First**, we see that Jesus is better and greater than both Moses and Elijah because He fulfilled both the Law and the Prophets. **Second**, we have reason for encouragement as the same God at work in the transfiguration has touched us with His grace and has commanded us not to be afraid. **Third**, we learn that this glorious Son of God revealed in the transfiguration was heading toward His own suffering and death in our place but would be raised again and one day will come in glory on a permanent basis.

**READ** the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 125), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because we have beheld the glory of Christ in our salvation, we live with urgency, sharing the gospel with a dying world, and with anticipation of Christ returning in glory.

- **As you listen in faith to the Lord Jesus, what step of faith is He calling you to obey?**
- **How can your group serve the Lord Jesus in your community and point people to His glory and grace?**
- **How will you follow in the steps of the well-pleasing Son of God and help others to see and believe in His glory and salvation?**



## Voices from Church History

"Our Lord Jesus is ever giving, and does not for a solitary instant withdraw His hand ... the rain of His grace is always dropping; the river of His bounty is ever-flowing, and the well-spring of His love is constantly overflowing. As the King can never die, so His grace can never fail."<sup>2</sup>

—Charles Spurgeon  
(1834-1892)

**CLOSE IN PRAYER:** Father, You have revealed Yourself in Your only Son, Jesus, the image and glory of God. Thank You for demonstrating Your justice and mercy in the cross, where sin was condemned and sinners were forgiven. Having tasted of Christ's glory, help us in the power of the Holy Spirit to share the gospel with others as we anticipate Christ's return in glory. Amen.

**INSTRUCT:** As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 126-128), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 129) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

# Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 129) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

## Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 1** as a part of point 1 in the session: **Christianity doesn't call us to summit 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.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 3:** "We have been freely and unambiguously charged to announce to everyone everywhere that Jesus is the risen and rightful King."
- **Day 5:** "We should humbly thank God for providing and preserving the Gospels—these inspired, well-designed accounts of Jesus' life and ministry."



Visit [www.GospelProject.com/Blog](http://www.GospelProject.com/Blog) for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

## Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 129) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to consider some practical ways they can help one another live in greater anticipation of Christ's future glory.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

# Additional Commentary

## Point 1: Experiencing the Son of God's Glory (Matt. 17:1-5)

“These disciples accompanied Jesus *up a high mountain* (17:1b), which was probably in the Hermon range. The scene that followed was reminiscent of Moses’ conversation with the Lord on the mountain (Ex. 24:15-18). Here, too, there is a mountain, bright cloud, Moses, and the voice of the Lord. Jesus’ face shone *like the sun* (17:2). Moses’ face had also shone after he was with God (Ex. 34:29-35). But Moses’ face showed only a reflected glory, whereas Jesus’ brightness came from within. Jesus is thus shown to be greater than Moses, for he shares the very nature of God. The presence of both *Moses and Elijah* was significant (17:3). Both men had met God on Mount Sinai (also known as Mount Horeb—Ex. 34:27-28; 1 Kings 19:8-9), both were expected to return in the messianic age (Deut. 18:15; Mal. 4:5), and both had mysterious deaths. Elijah did not die, but was taken directly to heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Moses died, and no one but God knows where he was buried (Deut. 34:5-6). Together they represent the Law and the Prophets, meaning the whole of the OT. In their pursuit of the will of God, both had also suffered persecution, as would Jesus within a short time ... Instead of giving Peter permission to build *three shelters* (17:4). God covered them with a *cloud* (17:5). This cloud is the same glory that filled the Tent of Meeting (Ex. 40:34-35) and the Holy Place in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:10-11).”<sup>3</sup>

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“Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets, indicating that all that has preceded in God’s Word and redemptive history leads to Christ. He is thus shown to be the apex of redemptive history and the fulfillment of God’s promises of redemption. The Christ-centrality of all the Scripture is most evident visually in this text as the transcendent glory of the incarnate Word of God is confirmed by the witness of the most significant representatives of the inscripturated Word of God.”<sup>4</sup>

## Point 2: Experiencing the Son of God's Grace (Matt. 17:6-8)

“In light of Jesus’ reply in verse 7, the disciples’ fear in verse 6 ... will be more terror than reverence, though this term, like their posture, may suggest an element of worship as well. The disciples’ reaction and Jesus’ response closely resemble the closing episodes of the two sea rescue miracle stories (8:25-27; 14:26-33) and may have been inspired by Daniel 10:18-19. Both reaction and response appear only in Matthew. When the disciples look up again, Moses and Elijah have disappeared. “They saw no one except Jesus’ reads more literally, *They did not see anyone but Jesus only*. The word *only* (*monos*) comes at the end of the sentence for emphasis. The disciples must focus on Christ alone. He will prove sufficient for their needs.”<sup>5</sup>

“The disciples were overcome with awe and fear and lay face down on the ground until Jesus came to them and encouraged them to *get up* (17:6-8). What is the significance of the incident? Did it take place for Jesus’ benefit, or for that of the disciples? In answering this question, it is worth noting that the Greek word translated *what you have seen* can also be translated as ‘the vision’ (17:9a). From the disciples’ point of view, they had seen a vision that gave them a glimpse of who Jesus really was and of his future glory. This encouraged them to accept the new teaching he was giving them about suffering and loss.”<sup>6</sup>

### Point 3: Experiencing the Son of God’s Plan (Matt. 17:9-13)

“The disciples could report the transfiguration only after the resurrection when the nature of Jesus’s messianic reign became clear ... The view of the **scribes** was prompted by Malachi 4:5. John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy since his ministry had many similarities to Elijah’s.”<sup>7</sup>

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“[John’s] desert-surroundings were significant, as of old connected with the preparation for repentance (Hos. 2:14,15; Isa. 40:1-4). He was a reproduction of Elijah, that great prophet of repentance (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13). In the first passage the words ‘if ye will receive it’ indicate that some doubted the character of John as fore-runner Elijah, and also that Jesus accepted it. But there was a difference, perhaps, between the conception that Jesus attached to the reappearance of Elijah and that of the Jews. The latter seem to have expected a literal resurrection of Elijah. Thus we can explain the statement of John about his not being Elijah (John 1:21). He disclaimed being Elijah in that realistic Jewish sense, but would not have denied being so in the symbolic sense affirmed by Jesus, as little as he would have disclaimed that the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi were being fulfilled in him ... We thus see that John’s fore-running of Jesus was to all intents a fore-running of the entire Old Testament with reference to the Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

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“Jesus answers that question in Matthew 17:12 by pointing out that John the Baptist, the Elijah to come, had already come. But that simply leads to a deeper theological question: How is John the Elijah who would restore all things if John had been beheaded? John didn’t usher in a great restoration, or so the disciples thought. Jesus had to help the disciples understand that the kingdom of God was not being ushered in the way they thought it would be. They expected a messianic forerunner and then a Messiah who would together usher in a kingdom on this earth marked by triumph and power. However, God’s kingdom was coming in a very different way.”<sup>9</sup>

### References

1. David Brainerd, in *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd* (New-Haven: S. Converse, 1822), 125.
2. C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1866), 137.
3. Joe Kapolyo, “Matthew,” in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1170.
4. Frank Thielman, “Matthew,” in *Gospel Transformation Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 1296, n. 17:1-13.
5. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003) [Wordsearch].
6. Brian Wintle, “Matthew,” in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1257.
7. Charles L. Quarles, “Matthew,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 1532, n. 17:9; n. 17:10-13.
8. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2012), 314-15.
9. David Platt, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Matthew* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013), 228-29.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

<b>Fall 2018</b>	<i>In the Beginning</i>	Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job) God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis) God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)
<b>Winter 2018-19</b>	<i>Out of Egypt</i>	God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus) God Provides for His People (Exodus) God Receives Worship from His People (Exodus; Leviticus)
<b>Spring 2019</b>	<i>Into the Promised Land</i>	God Guides His People (Numbers; Deuteronomy) God Gives His People a Home (Joshua) God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)
<b>Summer 2019</b>	<i>A Kingdom Provided</i>	God Provides a King (1 Samuel) God Provides a Godly King (1–2 Samuel; Psalms) God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Ecclesiastes)
<b>Fall 2019</b>	<i>A Nation Divided</i>	God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings) God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets) God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chronicles; Prophets)
<b>Winter 2019-20</b>	<i>A People Restored</i>	God Sustains His People (Daniel) God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets) God Prepares His People (Nehemiah; Esther; Malachi)
<b>Spring 2020</b>	<i>Jesus the Messiah</i>	Jesus Comes into the World (Luke) Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels) Jesus Among the People (Gospels)
<b>Summer 2020</b>	<i>Jesus the Servant</i>	Jesus the Healer (Gospels) Jesus the Teacher (Gospels) Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)
 <b>Fall 2020</b>	<i>Jesus the Savior</i>	Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels) Jesus the Savior (Gospels) Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)
<b>Winter 2020-21</b>	<i>The Mission Begins</i>	The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles) Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles) New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)
<b>Spring 2021</b>	<i>The Church United</i>	Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews) The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles) Don't Forget (Acts; Epistles)
<b>Summer 2021</b>	<i>All Things New</i>	Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles) Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles) Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)



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### Brian Dembowczyk

Managing Editor—*The Gospel Project*  
AUTHOR OF *Gospel-Centered Kids Ministry* AND  
*Cornerstones: 200 Questions and Answers to Learn Truth*

Jesus was born to die—a jarring statement indeed, but one that is quite true. Christmas and Easter are fused together, linked hand-in-hand in such a way that each is dependent on the other for its meaning. The theology of such a statement is solid but incomplete, for Jesus was not born to die immediately but rather some thirty years later. Jesus' life, then, was not utilitarian—existing just so it could be taken away and picked up again—it had greater meaning and purpose. What Jesus did during those thirty years of walking the earth mattered; He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. He satisfied the demands of righteousness that we could not so He might take away our sin when we trust in Him and so His righteousness might be credited to us, making us fully pleasing to the Father (2 Cor. 5:21).

In this volume we delve deeper into the marvelous truth of the incarnation to see still further glimpses of Christ's glory on earth. His righteousness did not occur in a vacuum but rather among people, ordinary people like you and me. In each unit of this volume, we will look at Jesus' interactions with people as through a prism, making slight turns to see different yet equally brilliant perspectives of Jesus' works. In Unit 22, we will see Jesus' power to heal coupled with His deep compassion for people, even those who were marginalized in society. In Unit 23, we will see Jesus' riveting teachings empowered by His divine authority. And finally, in Unit 24, we will see Jesus' miraculous power over nature, revealing His identity as Creator God.

Each ray of light we will see points to the same truth: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God given for our salvation. Jesus was indeed born to die, but He lived so that we too might live.

# EDITOR