

## *Jesus' transfiguration*

### **Matthew 17**

#### *The transfiguration (Matthew 17 v 1 to 13)*

“He was transfigured before them” (v 2). The word ‘transfigured’ translates the Greek word μεταμορφωθη (*metemorphothe*), which is related to the word *metamorphosis*, and means ‘changed into another form’. The word only occurs four times in the New Testament: in the parallel account of the transfiguration in Mark 9 v 2; and in Romans 12 v 2 and 2 Corinthians 3 v 18 where it is translated “transformed”.

- What is the significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the voice from the cloud? When the disciples grasped what was going on, how did they react (v 6)? Compare with similar reactions in Isaiah 6 v 5 and Revelation 1 v 17, but remember that if we ‘abide in Jesus’ we can have confidence before God (1 John 2 v 28). How would this experience have encouraged Peter, James and John?

Why Moses and Elijah? There are three possible explanations: (a) they represent the Law and the Prophets; (b) Moses ‘died’ in the ordinary sense (despite Jude v 9) and represents the ‘dead in Christ’, whereas Elijah was ‘caught up’ to God (2 Kings 2 v 11) and thus represents the ‘raptured’ Church (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16, 17); (c) they are in fact the two witnesses that appear in Revelation 11 v 3 to 6. They were talking with Jesus (v 3), but what were they discussing?

According to Luke they “spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9 v 31), but they may also have talked about his Second Coming in glory, as suggested by 2 Peter 1 v 16 to 19...

- What question did the scene on the mountain raise in the minds of the three disciples (v 10)?
- How did Jesus reply? How closely did John the Baptist resemble Elijah?

Elijah’s return was expected to immediately precede the inauguration of the glorious Messianic kingdom (Malachi 4 v 5), and Gabriel prophesied that John the Baptist would go before Jesus “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1 v 17). Yet what happened to Elijah (and John the Baptist) (v 12) is a pattern for what must also happen to Jesus...

#### *Jesus heals a boy with a demon (Matthew 17 v 14 to 21)*

- Why couldn’t the disciples heal the boy? Why were they unable to cast out that demon?

The faith that counts has more to do with what *kind* of faith it is, than with *how much* faith there is. A small amount of faith, as small as a mustard seed (v 20), can accomplish great things, if that faith is placed in a great and mighty God. In fact Jesus goes so far as to say, “nothing will be impossible for you” (v 20)...

**[MORE OVER...]**

### ***Jesus again foretells his death and resurrection (Matthew 17 v 22 to 23)***

Jesus rarely told his disciples about his coming death without also telling them about his resurrection. We know that the disciples didn't really understand about the resurrection, because they were "greatly distressed" (v 23). It was not until after the event that they finally understood (see Luke 24 v 1 to 9)...

### ***The temple tax (Matthew 17 v 24 to 27)***

- "Then the sons are free" (v 26) – Jesus explains that he is not liable to pay this temple tax, because the Father does not require it of his own Son. Yet he pays it anyway – why?

This story is told only in Matthew's gospel. There is a species of fish, indigenous to the Sea of Galilee, that has the characteristic of picking up a bright object from the sea floor and carrying it in its mouth. Nowadays locals call this 'St Peter's Fish'. Jesus used the fish as a way of demonstrating to Peter that he is the Lord of creation...