

## What is the Mount of Transfiguration?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Mount-of-Transfiguration.html>

The Mount of Transfiguration is the mountain upon which Jesus was transfigured (Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9). The actual location of the mountain is unknown.

In Matthew 16, Jesus tells the disciples that He will be killed and raised to life (verse 21). Peter rebukes Him: “Never, Lord!” he says. “This shall never happen to you!” (verse 22). Jesus has to rebuke Peter and goes on to explain that whoever will be His disciple must “take up his cross,” that is, be willing to die also. In the final verse of chapter 16, Jesus makes a rather enigmatic statement: “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (see also Luke 9:27).

In the next event recorded in Matthew and Luke, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him up to a “high mountain.” This unnamed mountain is what we call the Mount of Transfiguration today, because of what takes place next: “There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus” (Matthew 17:2-3).

The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain is significant, for it gave those three disciples a glimpse of the glory that Jesus had before the Incarnation and that He would have again. Perhaps it was also the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy that some of the disciples would see Him coming in the kingdom before they died (Matthew 16:28).

What happened on the Mount of Transfiguration has parallels to what happened on Sinai. Moses went up to a mountain to meet the Lord and came back with his face shining (Exodus 34). In the New Testament, Jesus goes up a mountain and meets with Moses; however, a voice from heaven makes it clear that Jesus is the primary character, not Moses: "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid.' When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus" (Matthew 17:5-8). Just as the meeting on Sinai between Moses and the Lord signified a new era in God's dealing with His people, so this meeting between the Lord and Moses signifies a new era in redemption history.

The "high mountain" that we call the Mount of Transfiguration is never clearly identified in Scripture. Both Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon have been identified as the Mount of Transfiguration by various traditions. Mount Tabor is a little less than 2,000 feet, but it stands alone in the area. The earliest tradition identifies Mount Tabor as the Mount of Transfiguration, and it is the location of the Church of the Transfiguration, which is built on the ruins of fourth-century church. Mount Hermon is a much higher mountain, almost 10,000 feet, and it is closer to Caesarea Philippi where the previous events in Matthew 16 took place. For these reasons, some scholars feel that Mount Hermon is a more likely candidate to be the Mount of Transfiguration.

In the final analysis, we simply do not know what mountain is the Mount of Transfiguration. It could be Tabor or Hermon or another mountain that no one has suggested. The fact that the transfiguration happened on a mountain is an important point in the recapitulation of Moses' meeting on Mount Sinai. However, the importance of

the transfiguration is not bound to what mountain it occurred on.

Years later, Peter refers to this event: “For we did not follow cleverly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice from the Majestic Glory came to Him, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we ourselves heard this voice from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Unfortunately, there are too many “cleverly devised fables” that try to identify specific locations in the Holy Land, such as the site of the Mount of Transfiguration, while losing sight of the more important issues.