

**The Character of Jesus 36**  
**The Transfiguration**  
**Matthew 17:1 – 13, Mark 9:2 – 13, Luke 9:28 – 36**  
**Pushing for greater understanding**

- Characteristic: Pushing for greater understanding
  - Following the Matthew account
  - (1) The identity of the mountain is not given. However, previously they had been in Caesarea Philippi, which is north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of Mount Hermon. So, it could Mount Hermon, which ascends to 9400 feet.
  - (2) Verse 9 reveals that Peter, James, and John had a simultaneous vision. The transfiguration was not physical. Other passages using the same word (vision): Acts 7:31, 9:10, 9:12, 10:3, 10:17, 10:19, 11:5, 12:9, 16:9, 16:10, 18:9.
  - (3) Something in the vision let them know who Moses and Elijah were.
  - Luke includes that Moses and Elijah “spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” His departure could include both His physical death and His ascension. Departure is not a common figure of speech for death.
  - Luke includes that the disciples had been asleep and, in the vision, felt that they had been awakened.
  - (4) Peter’s use of “tabernacles” probably referred to something like a brush arbor as were used as dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles. The statement has little to do with the context, illustrating Peter’s confusion over what it meant.
  - (5) God has used this cloud technique several times (*e.g.*, Exodus 13:21 – 22, 19:9, 19:18, 24:16, 40:34 – 35, 1 Kings 8:10). God played off of Peter’s tabernacle comment to emphasize that Jesus was superior to the heroes of the past.
  - (6) Mark mentions that the disciples were frightened by the enveloping cloud, not just the booming voice.
  - (7 – 8) This seems to mark the end of the vision and their return to reality.
  - (9) Despite this plain statement about His resurrection, the disciples forgot it when Jesus died.
  - (10) Apparently, at least these disciples made the connection that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They also knew that Malachi 4:5 – 6 (Elijah) must come before the Messiah. Yet, Jesus had already identified this returned Elijah as John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14).
  - (11 – 12) Jesus re-identified John the Baptist (although not by name here, but they got it: verse 13) and repeated the point that He would die soon.
- Application: Pushing for greater understanding
  - How are modern Christians like the disciples in this scene?
    - Falling asleep instead of praying – low expectations
    - Connecting the wrong dots (tabernacles) – culture and tradition
    - Fear of what? Failure? The unknown? The supernatural?
    - Neglecting to connect dots at all – lack of a big picture
  - What similar topics might we push people to understand?
    - Hear ye Him. Omit complex theology and charismatic speakers.
    - Bring people along slowly; build carefully. Not everyone can handle the whole thing at once.