QUESTION: On the high mountain where Jesus went to pray with His disciples, why did Moses and Elijah appear to Him and not other Old Testament prophets like Isaiah or Samuel?

ANSWER:

First, their appearance was not primarily for Jesus' sake, but for the sake of the three disciples—Peter, James, and John—who accompanied Him. God orchestrated this moment to fulfill deep theological truths and prophetic expectations. The transfiguration served multiple divine purposes:

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1. To Fulfill Key Messianic Prophecies

a) Jesus as the Prophet Like Moses

God had promised through Moses that He would raise up a Prophet like Moses—one whom the people must hear and obey:

> *Deuteronomy 18:15*
> "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear."

This prophecy created a Messianic expectation among the Jews that one day a new Moses-like figure would arise. When Moses appeared on the mountain, it was a divine confirmation that Jesus is that Prophet—the One foretold in the Law.

The Apostle Peter later affirms this in:

> *Acts 3:22–24*
> "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me…' Yes, and all the prophets… have also foretold these days."

Thus, Moses' appearance validated Jesus' identity as the promised Redeemer under the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6–13).

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b) Jesus as the Fulfillment of Elijah's Forerunner Role

Jewish scribes taught that Elijah would return before the coming of the Messiah (see Malachi 4:5–6). This created confusion among the disciples, who wondered if Jesus could truly be the Messiah if Elijah had not yet come.

When Elijah appeared during the transfiguration, it signified that the Elijah prophecy had been fulfilled—not literally, but through John the Baptist, who came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17).

> *Matthew 17:10–13*
> “And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’
> Jesus answered… ‘Elijah has come already…’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.”

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2. To Demonstrate That Jesus Is Greater Than All the Prophets

Earlier, Jesus had asked His disciples:

> *Matthew 16:13–14*
> “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”
> *They replied,* “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

The people viewed Jesus as just another prophet, albeit a powerful one. But at the transfiguration, Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the Prophets) both stood in submission before Jesus—highlighting that He is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets (cf. Matthew 5:17).

> *Matthew 17:5*
> “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

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3. To Reveal the Nature of Jesus’ Death and Glorification

In Luke’s account, it says that Moses and Elijah were discussing with Jesus “His decease”—meaning His impending death and resurrection:

> *Luke 9:30–31*
> “And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

- Moses represents those who die in faith and await resurrection.
- Elijah represents those who are taken up to God without tasting death.

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4. To Reveal That Glory Is Reserved for the Intimate Few

> *Matthew 17:1*
> "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John... and led them up on a high mountain by themselves."

Not all disciples witnessed this vision—only those closest to Jesus. This illustrates a timeless truth:

Only those who seek Jesus with deep intimacy and spiritual hunger will see His glory.

> *Jeremiah 29:13*
> "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

If you love Jesus, spend intentional time in His presence. There, you will encounter the depths of His glory and truth, just as the disciples did.

> *James 4:8*
> “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Shalom.

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