

Matthew 17

Matthew 17:1-13 – The King’s Transfiguration!

Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 19:15 - One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

^③ 1 Now after six days ⁺ Jesus took Peter, James,

Notes:

‘after six days’ – Why did Matthew mention the time period? It must mean something, but what does it mean?

Why did Jesus take only Peter, James, and John? Why only three and not all the disciples? This is not the only time they were singled out. It could be because Jesus felt He needed to keep them close. It might also be because they would be used so mightily for His kingdom.

The Bible teaches that you need witnesses to prove something ([Deuteronomy 19:15](#)).

and John his brother, led them up on a high

mountain by themselves;

Scriptures:

Revelation 1:16 - He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Peter 1:16 - For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

⁺ 2 and He was transfigured before them. ^③ His

G3339 –
“μεταμορφόομαι
(metamorphoom
ai)”

Notes:

‘transfigured’ – We get the word ‘metamorphosis’ from this Greek word.

His face shone like the sun’ – John would see that again near the end of his life ([Revelation 1:16](#)).

This is His glory shining out from Him. This is His divine nature shining forth in all its brilliance. John would later write of this glory ([John 1:14](#)). We have not yet been given the privilege of seeing Christ’s glory, but we can by Spirit-filled faith imagine it. And it is important for us to try to do that. The more of Christ’s glory we see by faith in this life, the more we will be filled with awe that He saved us, and this will stir us to love Him that much more.

face shone like the sun, and His ⁺ clothes

became as white as the light.

This is likely what Jesus was referring to in ([Matthew 16:27-28](#)). Peter, James, and John get a glimpse of what Jesus will look like at His Second Coming. This is the King of kings in all His glory. Peter would later write of this vision ([2 Peter 1:16](#)).

Scriptures:

Luke 9:29-31 - As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to

G3700 – to be visible.

³ them, talking with Him.

Notes:

Moses and Elijah – Moses had died almost fifteen hundred years earlier and Elijah was taken up to heaven nine hundred years earlier. This is evidence that there is a resurrection of the righteous dead.

We can guess why they are there? They represent the Law and the Prophets – the whole Old Testament.

Luke adds a couple of details about this event (Luke 9:29-31). First, Jesus prayed. Second, Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus about His upcoming death on the cross. Were they warning Him? Probably not. Were they encouraging Jesus or maybe thanking Him? It is impossible to say.

Moses and Elijah represent all who prepared the way for the first coming of the Messiah. Peter, James, and John represent all who would prepare the world for His second coming.

Scriptures:
1 Corinthians 1:26-29 - For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus,

“Lord, it is good for us to be here; if

G2570 – fitting.

You wish, let us make here three tabernacles:

G2309 – desire.

G4633 – tent.

one for You, one for Moses, and one for

Elijah.”

Notes:

Jesus, just six days earlier, rebuked Peter for suggesting He not go to Jerusalem and die. Here, it seems, he is again stumbling over the cross. Peter doesn't understand how temporary this glory is. He wants to build tabernacles/tents so that the glory can remain and others can come experience it. Jesus' glory is yet to come!

“By wanting to hold on to the glory of the transfiguration Peter has no place for the glory of the gory cross.” (O'Donnell, 2013) page 470

If you ever need proof that is supremely powerful you need look no further than the people He uses to do His will and carry His message into the world. God is all-powerful and doesn't need anyone. He is also perfect in all ways. From a human perspective, it would make more sense for God to pick the very best humans to do His work. To prove His great power, He does the exact opposite (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). That is a great encouragement to those of us who sense God's call on our lives and aren't superstars in the world's eyes.

‘let us make here three tabernacles’ – Humans have a long history of erecting monuments to great moments in time or to people. Unfortunately, those monuments can be a temptation to elevate them to a place of worship and that is idolatry, which God forbids.

The disciples have this radical experience on a high mountain, but Jesus has His eyes set on a low hill – Golgotha or Calvary.

It is unclear exactly what Peter's motivation is, but God's response makes it clear that He does not approve.

It is not wrong to honor great men and women of God, but Christ is the only one who can save us. He is higher than Moses and Elijah as heaven is higher than the earth.

Scriptures:

Psalm 2:7 –

I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten
You.

Isaiah 42:1 -

Behold! My Servant
whom I uphold,
My Elect One in whom
My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon
Him;
He will bring forth justice
to the Gentiles.

5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright

cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a

voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is

My beloved Son, in whom

G27 -

I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

G2106 -

G191 – heed, pay
attention to.

Scriptures:

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on

their faces and were greatly afraid.

Notes:

God interrupts Peter’s thoughtless ramblings to correct Him.

‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ – This is the second of two times God the Father speaks in Matthew’s gospel. The same thing is found in the Old Testament, ‘My Son’ (Psalm 2:7) and ‘My soul delights’ (Isaiah 42:1).

‘My...Son’ means they are of the same nature – they are one!

Mankind has rejected, despised, mocked, minimized, and denied Christ for two-thousand years. Some consider Him to be fiction. Others claim He was nothing more than a good teacher or a prophet. God says He is My Son, and I am well-pleased with Him. Who is wrong if your idea of who Jesus is differs from God’s declaration of who Jesus is?

‘Hear Him!’ – When the disciples lift their eyes and Moses and Elijah are gone. The inferred message is, ‘Listen to Jesus and Him alone.’

God will send men and women to give messages to His people and to the world. We should respect them and listen to them. But only as they lead us to a deeper understanding of Christ. There are too many who claim to be spokesmen for God who are drawing a following after themselves. If you must choose between listening to a man or a woman and listening to Christ – ‘Hear Him!’

Notes:

‘fell on their faces’ – Confronted by the pure holiness of God, this is always the right response.

Scriptures:

7 But Jesus came and touched them and

Notes:

said, "Arise, and do not be afraid."

Scriptures:

8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw

Notes:

Peter had made the mistake of putting Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah are important in God's plan, but Jesus is infinitely more important. Moses and Elijah had completed the tasks God gave them. Moses and Elijah represent the whole of the Old Testament. For centuries the Jews had looked to them for guidance and instruction. But their primary role was to point people to Jesus. Once Jesus arrived, they are to look to Jesus only.

no one but Jesus only.

Scriptures:

^③ 9 Now as they came down from the mountain,

Notes:

They have just seen Jesus in His glorified state. Jesus doesn't want them telling this part of the story until the rest of the story has played out – His resurrection. And before the resurrection is the cross. The gospel message is not just about the glory of heaven – it is also about the cross of atonement for sin. No one will experience the glory of heaven without first visiting the cross and having their sins forgiven. And to do that they must place their trust in Christ who died for their sins.

Jesus ⁺ commanded ^③ them, saying, "Tell the

vision to no one until the Son of Man ⁺ is risen ^{↑↑}

G450 -

from the ^D dead."

Scriptures:
Malachi 4:5-6 - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why

Notes:
Why do they ask this question? The answer is found in the last words of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:5-6). The scribes taught that the return of Elijah was one of the primary signs of the coming Messiah and deliverance from their enemies. Some believed that Jesus was Elijah returned.

then do the scribes say that Elijah must come

They just saw Elijah, but he didn't stay, and he didn't do anything. They are beginning to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, but they don't understand how everything fits together.

first?"

Scriptures:

11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed,

Notes:

Elijah is coming first and will restore all

things.

Scriptures:

John 16:33 - These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Matthew 16:24-25 - Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

12 But I say to you that Elijah has come

already, and they did not know him but did to

G1921 - recognize.

him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son

of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."

G3958 -

Notes:

John the Baptist came in the type and spirit of Elijah. The religious establishment rejected him and then Herod had him beheaded. In a similar way, Jesus would be rejected by the religious establishment and Pilate would have Him crucified.

Within this account we see the paradox of Christ. On this high mountain the glorified Christ is flanked by two spiritual giants of the past. As they head down from that high mountain, Jesus wants them to focus on the low hill outside Jerusalem where Jesus will be flanked by criminals as they hang on crosses. The glory is coming but not until He has kept His appointment on the cross.

Most normal people resist the idea of suffering. Even as Christ-followers we would like to believe that our faith can keep us from suffering. Suffering is part of living in a world that has been broken by sin (John 16:33). The apostle Paul tells us to not let that reality discourage us (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Glory is the future of all Christ-followers, but that glory may include a life that is touched by suffering. Christ suffered on our behalf - we should be willing to endure suffering from time to time as we wait for the glory of heaven. Jesus said that very thing (Matthew 16:24-25).

Scriptures:

13 Then the disciples understood that He

spoke to them of John the Baptist.

Notes:

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