

# Matthew 17 Commentary

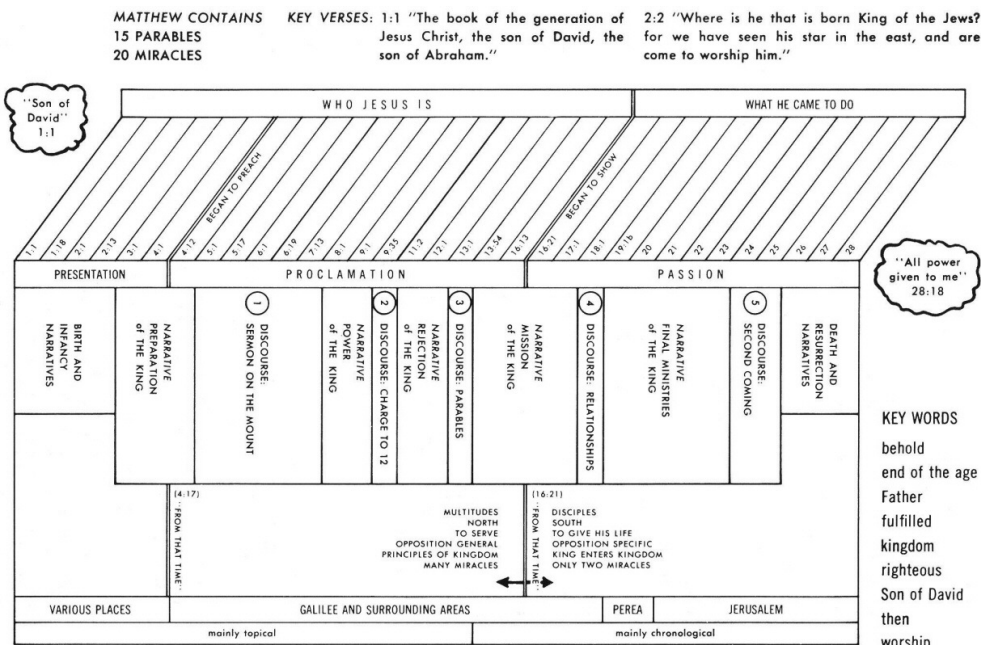
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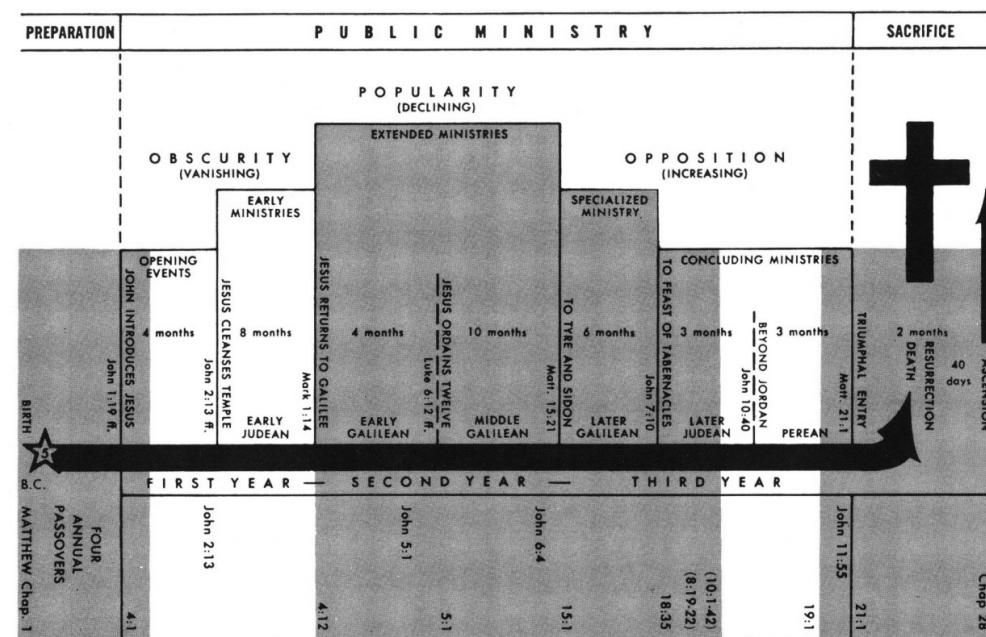
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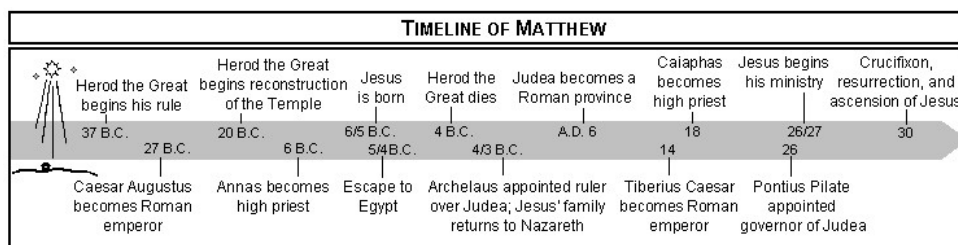


Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Chart from Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#)

**Matthew 17:1 Six days later Jesus \*took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and \*led them up on a high mountain by themselves.**

- Six days later : Mk 9:2-13 Lu 9:28-36
- Jesus \*took with Him Peter and James and John: Mt 26:37 Mk 5:37 Lu 8:51 2Co 13:1
- led them up on a high mountain: 2Pe 1:18
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:1-13+ And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." 2 And six days later, Jesus \*took with Him Peter and James and John, and \*brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them;

Luke 9:28+ And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray.

### THE SETTING OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

This is a poor chapter division ([see note below](#)) because the preceding verse clearly fits with this discussion of the transfiguration. "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death ([see note](#)) until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." (Matthew 16:28+)

**Six days later** Luke, taking in both the day of the preceding discourse and that of the transfiguration, as well as the six intermediate ones, says it was eight days after (Lk 9:28+).

**Jesus \*took ([paralambano](#) - take to oneself) with Him Peter and James and John his brother and \*led them up on a high mountain by themselves** - Jesus called them [Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder](#). The other 9 disciples were excluded. **Peter, James and John** were afforded more access to Jesus' miracles than the other disciples (Mk 5:37+ =Jairus' daughter raised from dead, Mk 13:3+ = Olivet Discourse which makes sense for John who would inscribe the Revelation; Mt 26:37 & Mk 14:33+ = in Garden of Gethsemane) Why did Jesus take 3 disciples? Most likely because they would be able to confirm the events (2 of which were striking miracles - transfiguration and raising Jairus' daughter from the dead) they were allowed to witness (cf Dt 17:6+, Dt 19:15+, 2Co 13:1+ = "confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses"). Mt 17:9 says "And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

The high mountain is not specifically identified but most scholars favor Mount Hermon which was near Caesarea Philippi where Jesus was only a short time earlier (Mt 16:13). Church tradition identifies the **high mountain** with [Mount Tabor](#) which is not as high (1900 feet) as Mt Hermon (9300 feet).

[David Guzik](#) adds that there was a third mount "Mount Miron (about 3,900 feet, 1,190 meters) was the highest mountain in a Jewish area, and is on the way between Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum. Carson favors this location."

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - Were these "six days" a week's quiet interval, in which our Lord prepared himself for the singular transaction upon the "mountain apart"? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favoured to see what none else in all the world might behold. Doubtless our Lord had reasons for his choice, as he has for every choice he makes; but he does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the garden; perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second. The name of the "**high mountain**" can never be known; for those who knew the locality have left no information. Tabor, if you please; Hermon, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lone and lofty hill.

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**Stephen Langton** (ca. 1150–1228) divided the Bible into chapters while serving as a professor at the University of Paris, before becoming the Archbishop of Canterbury. His chapter divisions were later adopted in the Latin Vulgate and eventually in subsequent translations of the Bible, such as the Wycliffe Bible (14th century) and the King James Version (1611). The chapter divisions were designed to make the text easier to reference, memorize, and study, especially in academic and ecclesiastical settings. Before Langton's work, the Bible had other forms of divisions: The Hebrew Bible: Divided into sections called parashot for liturgical readings and verses marked with punctuation. The Greek Septuagint: Used divisions similar to paragraphs. Langton's chapter system became the standard and is the basis for the chapters we use today in most Bible translations.

The division of the Bible into verses came after the chapter division, the Old Testament Verses were arranged by Jewish scribes (the Masoretes whose work resulted in the **Masoretic Text**, the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible, which is the basis for most modern translations of the Old Testament.) in the 9th century CE. The New Testament Verses were introduced by Robert Estienne (also known as Stephanus), a French printer, in 1551. He added verse numbers to the Greek New Testament and later applied them to the entire Bible.

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**McNeill** -MATT. 17:1, 2. Jesus taketh Peter, James and John ... up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them.

Come close to Him. He may take you to-day up into the mountain top, for where He took Peter with his blundering, and James and John, those sons of thunder, who again and again so utterly misunderstood their Master and His mission—there is no reason why He should not take you. You can hardly be farther back than they were. So don't shut yourself out of it and say, "Ah, these wonderful visions and revelations of the Lord are for choice spirits, for an election within the election!" They may be for you. The Lord will come to those that are humble and of a contrite heart and who tremble at His Word.

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**Special Three - J. O. Sanders**, BORROW [Enjoying Intimacy with God](#), Moody, p. 19

G. C. Morgan wrote concerning the special three: "There can be no doubt that these men, Peter, James, and John, were the most remarkable in the apostolate. Peter loved Him; John He loved; James was the first to seal his testimony with his blood. Even their blunders proved their strength. They were the men of enterprise; men who wanted thrones and places of power...Mistaken ideas, all of them, and yet proving capacity for holding the keys and occupying the throne. What men from among that first group reign today as these men?"

On four special occasions, Jesus admitted them to experiences from which they learned precious lessons. On the occasion of the

raising of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:51), they were granted a preview of their Lord's mastery over death ... On the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1), they gained clearer insight into the importance of His impending death ... On the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:3), they marveled at His prophetic discernment ... In the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37), they glimpsed in the sufferings of the Savior something of the cost of their salvation..."

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**Adrian Rogers - Now, does God have favorites?** Well, He does have intimates. He took Peter, James, and John apart so they could see this transfiguration. Why did He do that? Well, there were three witnesses. In the Bible, three is the number of witness. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall a thing be established." (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1) That's what the Bible says. So here are three witnesses. And Peter in 2 Peter chapter 1 says, "We ... were eyewitnesses of his majesty"; "we heard the voice; we saw His glory." (2 Peter 1:16–17) And so He wanted these witnesses there to be a testimony there. So, put it down: three witnesses. And God has given that testimony so we can join those three witnesses and we today can be part of those witnesses and say Jesus is coming, amen? No ifs, ands, or buts about it; no stutter, no stammer, no apology: Jesus is coming again. Beyond any shadow of any doubt, He is coming again. Three witnesses.

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**WE BEHELD HIS GLORY** MATTHEW 16:13–17:9 - Charles Swindoll [Going Places with God: A Devotional Journey Through the ... - Page 25](#)

Jesus' preparation of the disciples for the age of the Church included teaching them that He would die in Jerusalem and rise again (see Matt. 16:21). On the heels of this unthinkable statement, He made another just as fantastic: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (v. 24). The cross exposed the disciples' expectations: their own privileged positions in the Kingdom. But Jesus said discipleship also included the obligation to crucify selfish desires.

Christ didn't remove the hope of His kingdom; He simply relegated it to its proper place. Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James and John from the region of Caesarea Philippi to a "high mountain," probably the nearby snow-capped Mount Hermon (see 17:1). There, Jesus' appearance changed. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became dazzling white—a sight made even more glorious with the snow.

These scenes, side by side, seemed a wild contradiction—Jesus' death and Jesus' glory. But Christ revealed these extremes so that one might strengthen the other. He provided assurance of His coming Kingdom to the disciples He had commanded to take up their cross in the meantime (see 1 Pet. 5:1,10).

As with the disciples, the cross reveals our expectations. How do we respond to the harsh reality of self-sacrifice? Only the promise of heaven provides the stamina to follow a crucified Savior and to put our selfish ambition aside. We can shoulder our cross today only by scaling the mountain and gazing on the glory of One who bore the cross before us . . . and for us.

Lord Jesus, may the cross I bear today not obscure my destination. Thank You for showing me Your glory so that I may have strength and hope for the hard journey home.

*To live without hope is to cease to live.*

—Fyodor Dostoevsky

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**QUESTION - [Was Jesus' statement that "some who are standing here will not taste death" in Luke 9:27 \(also Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1\) incorrect? |](#)**

**ANSWER** - Luke 9:27 says, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God." See also Matthew 16:28 and Mark 9:1 for the parallel quotes. In each of the synoptic Gospels, the next event immediately after this promise from Jesus is the transfiguration. Rather than interpreting Jesus' promise as referring to His coming to establish His kingdom on earth, the context indicates that Jesus was referring to the transfiguration. The Greek word translated "kingdom" can also be translated "royal splendor," meaning that the three disciples standing there would see Christ as He really is—the King of heaven—which occurred in the transfiguration.

The "transfiguration" refers to the event described in the above cited passages when Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of the mountain, where He met with Moses and Elijah—representing the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament—and spoke with them. The disciples saw Jesus in all His glory and splendor, talking with a glorified Moses and Elijah. This is a glimpse of what will occur in Jesus' kingdom. The disciples were dumbstruck at the sight and "fell on their faces" (Matthew 17:6).

It seems most natural to interpret this promise in Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; and Luke 9:27 as a reference to the transfiguration, which "some" of the disciples would witness only six days later, exactly as Jesus predicted. In each Gospel, the very next passage after this promise from Jesus is the transfiguration, which shows Jesus in all His glory which will be seen again in the Kingdom of

#### **QUESTION - [What is the Mount of Transfiguration?](#)**

**ANSWER** - 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 (Mt 16:21). Peter rebukes Him: "Never, Lord!" he says. "This shall never happen to you!" (Mt 16:22). 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. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Jon Courson** - Matthew 17:1 [Jon Courson's Application Commentary: Volume 3, New ... - Page 136](#)

Scripture records three times that Jesus took Peter, James, and John apart from the others to minister to them in very definite and special ways. Interestingly, each of those occasions dealt with death.

The first time Jesus singled out Peter, James, and John, He took them into the house of Jairus, whose daughter had died. After moving out the mockers, Jesus brought the young girl back to life, and Peter, James, and John saw that He was victorious over death.

On a second occasion, Jesus would take them into a garden called Gethsemane. As He prayed, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup



pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done,' Peter, James, and John would understand that He was submitted to death.

And here in Matthew 17, Jesus takes the three up the mountain where they will see Him glorified in death.

I believe Peter, James, and John needed these special times of instruction concerning death because these three apostles would each have very unique encounters with death.

Peter would be the first disciple to be told of his death. In John 21, Jesus said, 'Peter, they're going to stretch out your hands and carry you where you don't want to go.' And that is exactly what happened when Peter was crucified upside down.

James was the first disciple put to death—sawed in half lengthwise by his persecutors.

John was the last of the disciples to die. Banished to the seemingly God-forsaken island of Patmos, it was a 90-year-old John who received the Book of Revelation.

The Lord uniquely prepared Peter, James, and John for what each of them would face. And He will do the same for you. He will prepare you through Bible studies, radio programs, friends, and books for what lies ahead for you personally. It's amazing to me how I'll study something or hear something only to discover a week later that a situation arises in which I need that exact information.

Remain sensitive to His voice and then see the Lord's faithfulness in lovingly preparing you for what lies ahead.

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### **The Withdrawals of Jesus**

- Matthew 4:1: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness....
  - Mark 1:35: Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place, and there He prayed.
  - Luke 4:42: Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place....
  - Luke 6:12: Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.
  - Matthew 14:13: When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself.
  - Luke 5:16: So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.
  - Mark 3:7: But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea.
  - Mark 6:31: And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile."
  - Luke 9:10: Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.
  - Matthew 14:22ff: Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.
  - John 6:15: When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.
  - John 7:53f: And everyone went to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
  - Mark 7:24: From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it....
  - Matthew 17:1: Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves ...
  - Mark 9:30: They departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it....
  - John 10:40: And He went away again beyond the Jordan....
  - John 11:54: Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness....
  - John 12:36: These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.
  - Matthew 26:36: Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane ...
  - Luke 22:41: And He was withdrawn from them....
- 

What are some mountains in Scripture associated with divine encounters?

#### **1. [Mount Sinai \(Mount Horeb\)](#)**

- **Divine Encounter:** God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses.
  - **Key Event:** The mountain was covered with fire, smoke, and the sound of a trumpet as God descended upon it.
  - **Scriptural References:**

- *Exodus 19–20*: Moses receives the Law.
  - *1 Kings 19:8-18*: Elijah encounters God in a “gentle whisper.”
  - **Significance**: A place of covenant and divine instruction.
- 

## 2. [Mount Moriah](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac in obedience to God, but God provided a ram.
  - **Key Event**: Demonstration of faith and God’s provision.
  - **Scriptural Reference**:
    - *Genesis 22:1-14*: Abraham’s test of faith. Ge 22:2 And He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” ....4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.
  - **Significance**: Symbolizes obedience, sacrifice, and God’s provision. Later identified as the site of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1).
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## 3. [Mount Ararat](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: The ark of Noah rested here after the flood.
  - **Key Event**: God renewed His covenant with Noah, promising never to destroy the earth by flood again.
  - **Scriptural Reference**:
    - Genesis 8:4: And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.
    - Genesis 8:1 God remembered Noah....21 And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.
  - **Significance**: A place of new beginnings and covenant renewal. Have you had a Mt Ararat experience in your life?
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## 4. [Mount Carmel](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal and demonstrated God’s power.
  - **Key Event**: Fire came down from heaven to consume Elijah’s sacrifice.
  - **Scriptural Reference**:
    - *1 Kings 18:19-40*: Elijah’s triumph over the prophets of Baal.
  - **Significance**: A place demonstrating God’s sovereign power and supremacy over the false gods and idols of this world.
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## 5. [Mount Zion](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: Often associated with God’s dwelling and the future reign of the Messiah in the Millennium.
- **Key Event**: Location of Jerusalem and the temple.
- **Scriptural References**:
  - *Psalms 2:6*: God’s holy hill. “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

- *Hebrews 12:22-24+*: Mount Zion as a symbol of the heavenly city. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.
  - **Significance**: Represents God's presence, His eternal kingdom, and salvation.
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## 6. [Mount Tabor](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: Traditionally identified (by churches) as the site of the Transfiguration of Jesus, but this is questionable. "The actual "high mountain" where the transfiguration took place is not specified in the New Testament accounts. Scholars who question the traditional assignment of Mount Tabor argue that Mount Hermon is the highest peak in the area and fits better with the events just before and after the transfiguration." ([Gotquestions.org](http://Gotquestions.org)).
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## 7. [Mount of Olives](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: Associated with Jesus' teaching the Olivet Discourse (see comments Mt 24), prayer, and ascension.
  - **Key Events**:
    - Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46+).
    - Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12+).  
"and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, [will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven](#)." (Acts 1:11)
    - Prophecy of Jesus' return to this mountain (Zechariah 14:4+).  
And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.
  - **Significance**: A place of prayer, teaching, and future hope (not "hope so," but "hope sure!")
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## 8. [Mount Nebo](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: Moses viewed the Promised Land from here before his death.
  - **Key Event**: God allowed Moses to see the fulfillment of His promise, though Moses could not enter the land.
  - **Scriptural Reference**:
    - *Deuteronomy 34:1-5+*: Moses views the Promised Land.
  - **Significance**: Symbolizes the faithfulness of God's promises.
  - **Application** - Play [Twila Paris' moving song Mt Nebo](#) and imagine the thoughts that must have gone through Moses' mind as he looked over God's promised land. O beloved, let us not live our lives that we might have regrets for what could have been. Put aside the past. With confession and repentance and our great and merciful God today can be a new day and can be the beginning of the best days of the rest of your life as you live with Vertical Vision, fixing your eyes on Jesus. May we each let the pathos of Moses motivate us to live all the rest of our days in the power of the Spirit for the glory of the Lord all possible through the mighty Name of Jesus our soon coming King of kings. Amen. Redeem the time.
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## 9. [Mount Hermon](#)

- **Divine Encounter**: A mountain associated with blessings and possibly the Transfiguration.



- **Key Events:**
  - *Psalm 133:3*: Hermon symbolizes unity and God's blessings.
  - Some scholars associate it with the site of the Transfiguration.
- **Significance:** A place of life-giving blessing.

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## 10. [Mount Calvary](#) (Golgotha)

- **Divine Encounter:** The crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
  - **Key Event:** Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of humanity.
  - **Scriptural Reference:**
    - *Luke 23:33-46, Matthew 27:33-56*: The crucifixion.
  - **Significance:** The ultimate demonstration of God's love and redemption.

**Matthew 17:2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.**

- **transfigured:** Lu 9:29 Ro 12:2 Php 2:6,7 \*Gr:
- **his face:** Mt 28:3 Ex 34:29-35 Jn 1:14 17:24 Ac 26:13-15 Rev 1:13-17 10:1 Rev 19:12,13 20:11
- **His garments:** Ps 104:2 Mk 9:3
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 9:2b-3+ And He was transfigured before them; 3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

Luke 9:29+ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.

Exodus 34:29-30+ (COMING DOWN FROM MT SINAI) And it came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that **the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him**. 30 So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, **the skin of his face shone**, and they were afraid to come near him.

Acts 26:12-13+ (SAUL'S SIGHT OF SAVIOR LIKE SUN) "While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, **I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun**, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

Malachi 4:2+ "But for you who fear My name the **sun of righteousness** will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

Revelation 10:1+ And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

Revelation 1:14-16+ And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; 15 and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and **His face was like the sun shining in its strength**

Numbers 6:24-26+ (See [What Bible Says about Faces](#)) The LORD bless you, and keep you; 25 The **LORD make His face shine on you**, And be gracious to you; 26 The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.



Raphael's Final Painting

## A REAL MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE: JESUS TRANSFIGURED

Notice that like many pieces of Biblical art, Raphael's famous painting is not Biblically accurate. Can you discern his error? The upshot is never derive your Biblical knowledge from any source but the Bible! The error of course is all the other witnesses depicted, one even pointing to the transfigured Jesus! Another error is that this hardly depicts a high mountain. Another error is Jesus' face hardly appears to be shining like the sun. I'm sure you could find other errors.

**And He was transfigured ([metamorphoo](#)) before ([emprosthen](#)) them; and His face ([prosopon](#)) shone ([lampo](#)) like the sun ([helios](#)), and His garments ([himation](#)) became as white ([leukos](#)) as light ([phos](#))** - The Man Jesus was revealed as the God Man by being transformed before their very eyes. It was not a matter of Jesus changing form, but of having an added dimension of glory physical appearance, of light emanating from within him as His intrinsic divine glory shone out from within so that He e was luminous and radiant. Luke 9:29+ adds that "while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming," but only Matthew describes how it became different when it **shone like the sun** (the Son shone like the sun He had created and did not blind which looking at the sun would do!) The significance of the transfiguration is it demonstrates that Jesus is more than just a human teacher but that He is God, specifically the Son of God. The transfiguration would also be like a preview of coming attractions for believers whose bodies will be glorified. As John says "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, **we shall be like Him**, because we shall see Him just as He is." (1Jn 3:2+).

**Phil Newton** Jesus "did not become something that He was not but He was transformed into something that He had always been, yet obscured in the Incarnation....It prefigured what lay beyond the cross. It unveiled for a brief glimpse what believers shall gaze upon without hindrance in eternity. It foreshadowed the triumphant splendor of Christ the King upon His return to the earth at the consummation of the ages so that "every eye will see Him.""

**D A Carson** - "The verb [metamorphoo](#) ('transfigure,' 'transform,' 'change in form') suggests a change of inmost nature that may be outwardly visible." (as here; cf. Ex 34:29; 2 Bar. 51:3, 5) or quite invisible (Ro 12:2; 2 Co 3:18). That Jesus was transfigured "before them" implies that it was largely for their sakes. (See [Matthew](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - While in prayer, the splendour of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun; and all his dress, like clouds irradiated by that sun, became white as the light itself. "He was transfigured before them": he alone was the centre of what they saw. It was a marvellous unveiling of the hidden nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of John: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." The transfiguration occurred but once: special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in heaven; but we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.

**NET NOTES** - In 1st century Judaism and in the NT, there was the belief that the righteous get new, glorified bodies in order to enter heaven (1 Cor 15:42-49; 2 Cor 5:1-10). This transformation means the righteous will share the glory of God. One recalls the way Moses shared the Lord's glory after his visit to the mountain in Ex 34:29-30. So the disciples saw Jesus transfigured, and they were

getting a sneak preview of the great glory that Jesus would have (only his glory is more inherent to him as one who shares in the rule of the kingdom).

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**Transfigured** (3339) **metamorphoo** from **metá** = denotes change of place or condition + **morphoo** = to form from morphe = form, shape referring to the essential form of a thing) has the basic meaning of changing into another form and is the term from which we get metamorphosis, which in biology denotes the amazing change of a lowly worm into a beautiful butterfly. So the change in view here is not a superficial fluctuation of fashion or conduct but a vital change revealing a new life. **Metamorphoo** describes Jesus' **transfiguration** in which His glory shined through His garments so that what Jesus really was on the inside was made manifest to Peter, John and James (Mt 17:2, Mk 9:2)

**Metamorphoo** describes the process by which that on the inside shows forth to the outside such that that everyone can see. The verb **morphoo** does **not** refer to what is **outward and transient**, but to what is **inward and real** and thus that which produces an outward expression which proceeds from and is truly representative of one's inward character and nature. Hence on the **Mount of Transfiguration** the glory which was Jesus' essential and eternal inner divine nature, shone outward, for a brief time and to a limited degree. In a similar way, the believer's inner redeemed (divine - 2Pe 1:4+) nature is to continually be manifest outwardly in our daily thoughts, words and deeds.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION: Transformation of Believers** (Romans 12:2+): **"Do not be conformed** ([suschematizo present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to this (godless, God hating) world, but **be transformed** (metamorphōō [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) by the renewal of your mind." This great verse (you need to memorize Ro 12:1-2+ so you can daily live it out!) describes a spiritual transformation of the believer's mind and life through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Believers have some responsibility in this process ("[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)") In other words, for this change to occur we must make a continual choice (middle voice) to reject ungodly worldly patterns and continually choose (middle voice) to embrace God's will by daily taking in His Word (the best place to find His will). In other words, metamorphoo describes a supernatural inward renewal of our mind through which our inner spirit is changed progressively into the likeness of Christ (cf Progressive Sanctification).

**Spiritual Growth of Believers** (2 Corinthians 3:18+): "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (metamorphōō) into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Believers are gradually being changed into the likeness of Christ through the Spirit's power. (cf Progressive Sanctification) This transformation reflects God's glory in our lives.

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**QUESTION - [What was the meaning and importance of the transfiguration?](#)**

**ANSWER** - About a week after Jesus plainly told His disciples that He would suffer, be killed, and be raised to life (Luke 9:22), He took Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. While praying, His personal appearance was changed into a glorified form, and His clothing became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus about His death that would soon take place. Peter, not knowing what he was saying and being very fearful, offered to put up three shelters for them. This is undoubtedly a reference to the booths that were used to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Israelites dwelt in booths for seven days (Leviticus 23:34-42). Peter was expressing a wish to stay in that place. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice spoke from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5).

The cloud lifted, Moses and Elijah had disappeared, and Jesus was alone with His disciples, who were still very much afraid. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after His resurrection. The three accounts of this event are found in Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36.

Undoubtedly, the purpose of the transfiguration of Christ into at least a part of His heavenly glory was so that the "inner circle" of His disciples could gain a greater understanding of who Jesus was. Christ underwent a dramatic change in appearance in order that the disciples could behold Him in His glory. The disciples, who had only known Him in His human body, now had a greater realization of the deity of Christ, though they could not fully comprehend it. That gave them the reassurance they needed after hearing the shocking news of His coming death.

Symbolically, the appearance of Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets. But God's voice from heaven – "Listen to Him!" - clearly showed that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. The One who is the new and living way is replacing the old – He is the fulfillment of the Law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament. Also, in His glorified form they saw a preview of His coming glorification and enthronement as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The disciples never forgot what happened that day on the mountain and no doubt this was intended. John wrote in his gospel, "We

have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only" (John 1:14). Peter also wrote of it, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about 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 came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18). Those who witnessed the transfiguration bore witness to it to the other disciples and to countless millions down through the centuries.

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#### Related Resources:

- [What is the Mount of Transfiguration?](#)
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**Beecher** - MATT. 17:2. His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light

If a thing reflects no light, it is black; if it reflects part of the rays, it is blue or indigo or red; but, if it reflects them all, it is white. If we are like Christ, we shall seek, not to absorb, but to reflect, the light which falls upon us from heaven upon others: and thus we shall become pure and spotless; for this is the meaning of the "white robes," which the saints wear in glory.

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**D A Carson** - **Genesis 18; Matthew 17; Nehemiah 7; Acts 17** [For the Love of God \(Vol. 1, Trade Paperback\): A Daily ... - Page 17](#)

*ONE OF THE GREAT FAILURES into which even believers sometimes fall is the tendency to underestimate Jesus*  
(Matt. 17:1–8).

Jesus takes the inner three of his twelve disciples—Peter, James, and John—to a high mountain, just the four of them. "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light" (17:2). Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared, "talking with Jesus" (17:3). It is as if the ultimate identity of the eternal Son is allowed to peep through; the three disciples become "eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). It is hard not to see here also a foretaste of the glory of the exalted Son (cf. Rev. 1:12–16), of the Jesus before whom every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, every tongue confessing "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10–11).

But Peter misunderstands. He rightly recognizes that it is an enormous privilege to be present on this occasion: "Lord," he says, "it is good for us to be here" (17:4). Then he puts his foot in his mouth: "If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." He entirely misunderstands the significance of the presence of Moses and Elijah. He thinks that Jesus is being elevated to their great stature, the stature of the mediator of the Sinai covenant and of the first of the great biblical prophets.

He is utterly mistaken. Their presence signified, rather, that the law and the prophets bore witness to him (cf. 5:17–18; 11:13). God himself sets the record straight. In a terrifying display, God thunders from an enveloping cloud, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (17:5). By the time the three disciples recover from their prostrate terror, it is all over: "When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus" (17:8)—a pregnant conclusion to the account.

Jesus brooks no rivals. There have been, there are, many religious leaders. In an age of postmodern sensibilities and a deep cultural commitment to philosophical pluralism, it is desperately easy to relativize Jesus in countless ways. But there is only one Person of whom it can be said that he made us, and then became one of us; that he is the Lord of glory, and a human being; that he died in ignominy and shame on the odious cross, yet is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having returned to the glory he shared with the Father before the world began.

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**Max Lucado** - **Loved by a Powerful God** [Live Loved: Experiencing God's Presence in Everyday Life \(a ...](#)

Light spilled out of him. Brilliant. Explosive. Shocking. Brightness poured through every pore of his skin and stitch of his robe. Jesus on fire. To look at his face was to look squarely into Alpha Centauri. Mark wants us to know that Jesus' "clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them" (Mark 9:3 MSG).

This radiance was not the work of a laundry; it was the presence of God.

How long since . . . a fresh understanding of Christ buckled your knees and emptied your lungs? Since a glimpse of him left you speechless and breathless? If it's been a while, that explains your fears.

When Christ is great, our fears are not.

As awe of Jesus expands, fears of life diminish. A big God translates into big courage. A small view of God generates no courage. A

limp, puny, fireless Jesus has no power over cancer cells, corruption, identity theft, stockmarket crashes, or global calamity. A packageable, portable Jesus might fit well in a purse or on a shelf, but he does nothing for your fears.

Don't we need to know the transfigured Christ? One who spits holy fires? Who convenes and commands historical figures? Who occupies the loftiest perch and wears the only true crown of the universe, God's beloved Son? . . .

The longer we live in him, the greater he becomes in us. It's not that he changes but that we do; we see more of him. We see dimensions, aspects, and characteristics we never saw before, increasing and astonishing increments of his purity, power, and uniqueness. . . .

In the end we . . . fall on our faces and worship. And when we do, the hand of the carpenter extends through the tongue of towering fire and touches us. "Arise, and do not be afraid" (Matthew 17:7). —FEARLESS

Almighty God, we worship and praise you for your mighty and glorious power. We stand in awe of you, the true king of the universe. We bow before the radiance of your holiness and purity. We rest humbly in your presence. This is where we find peace and rest and the right perspective on all that happens in life. Knowing you and living for you is the joy of my

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**Oswald Chambers** - And He was transfigured before them" (Matthew 17:2). Put alongside that moment on the Mount, Jesus standing after the Resurrection on the sea-shore in the early morning with "a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." Thank God for seeing Jesus transfigured, and for the almightiness of the visions He does give, but remember that the vision is to be made real in actual circumstances; the glory is to be manifested in earthen vessels. It has to be exhibited through finger-tips, through eyes and hands and feet; everywhere where Jesus exhibited it. We are so like Peter on the Mount and say, "O Lord, let me stay here." (Borrow [If Ye Shall Ask page 12](#))

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Moses' "face was radiant" (Ex 34:29, 35) because he had been in the presence of God.

Jesus' face "did shine as the sun" when he was transfigured (Matthew 17:2) because He was God!

**THOUGHT** - What effect on our countenance would daily mornings with our King bring about? (That's rhetorical!) Why not try an experiment and spend the next 7 days in His presence each morning. And see if there is any objective and subjective difference in your days. You might even journal your experience.

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### **What the Bible Says about Faces -**

- His face shone like the sun.—Matthew 17:2
  - But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.—2 Corinthians 3:18
  - They looked to Him and were radiant.—Psalm 34:5
  - So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone....—Exodus 34:30
  - So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome."—Judges 13:6
  - And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at [Stephen], saw his face as the face of an angel.—Acts 6:15
  - A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance....—Proverbs 15:13
  - A man's wisdom makes his face shine, / And the sternness of his face is changed.—Ecclesiastes 8:1
  - Smiling faces make you happy.—Proverbs 15:30.
  - Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.—1 Peter 3:3–4
  - For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.—1 Peter 3:5
  - And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.—Genesis 4:5
  - And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before.—Genesis 31:2
  - The look on their countenance witnesses against them.—Isaiah 3:9
  - Why are you cast down, O my soul? / ... Hope in God; / For I shall yet praise Him, / The help of my countenance and my God.—Psalm 43:5
  - ... my face healer ...—Psalm 42:5 (Berkley)
  - He puts a smile on my face. He's my God.—Psalm 43:5 (Peterson)
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To see His face is to get a vision of Jehovah Jesus. What is to be seen in that face?

1. Perfection. "The glory of God in the face of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:6).
2. Consecration. "Look upon the face of Thine anointed" (Psalm 84:9).
3. Determination. "He stedfastly set His face to go up, etc." (Luke 9:51).
4. Substitution. "His visage (face) was so marred more than any man" (Isa. 52:14; Isa. 53:2, 3).
5. Rejection. "They did spit on His face" (Matt. 26:67).
6. Glorification. "His face like the sun" (Rev. 1:16; Matt. 17:2).
7. Consummation. "From whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away" (Rev. 20:11).
8. Salvation. "Cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved" (Psalm 80:3). Seek His face (Psalm 27:8).

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**Max Lucado - Reflecting God's Glory** [Just Like Jesus Devotional: A Heart Like His - Page 64](#)

*Our faces, then, are not covered.*

*We all show the Lord's glory, and we are  
being changed to be like him.*

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

The purpose of worship is to change the face of the worshiper. That is exactly what happened to Christ on the mountain. Jesus' appearance was changed: "His face became bright like the sun" (Matt. 17:2).

The connection between the face and worship is more than coincidental. Our face is the most public part of our bodies, covered less than any other area. It is also the most recognizable part of our bodies. We don't fill a school annual with photos of people's feet but rather with photos of faces. God desires to take our faces, this exposed and memorable part of our bodies, and use them to reflect his goodness.

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**Henry Blackaby - OUR GLORIOUS TRANSFORMATION** [Being Still With God Every Day: Discovering God's Plan for ... - Page 136](#)

We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the LORD, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

It was a divine encounter that Peter, James, and John never forgot. Jesus led them to a high mountaintop, and there the LORD was "transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2).

These three disciples were privileged to observe in a dramatic way that Jesus is "the glory of the LORD," the complete personal expression of God. This unfading, eternal glory radiates through believers who are transformed into God's image and who share in His glory.

The Greek word translated "transformed" or "transfigured" means "changed into another form either externally or internally," but this change is not self-generated. Our remodeling into Christlikeness is God's work in us. It begins at salvation, and it happens by the Spirit as we walk with and abide in Christ.

God, by His Spirit, gradually but assuredly conforms you into His image. So learn to live continuously in God's presence. Yield to every change the Spirit seeks to make. Never let a hurried lifestyle disrupt your abiding in Christ.

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**A. P. STANLEY.**

Master, it is good to be  
Entranced, enrapt, alone with Thee;  
Watching the glistening raiment glow,  
Whiter than Hermon's whitest snow;  
The human lineaments that shine  
Irradiant with a light Divine:  
Till we too change from grace to grace,  
Gazing on that transfigured face.

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FREDERIC DENISON MAURICE. The Transfiguration has lived on through ages, and has shed its light upon all ages. It has brought the past into union with the present. "The decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" has been owned as the bond of fellowship between those who walk the earth and suffer in it, and those who are departed from it. In the light of that "countenance



which was altered, of that raiment which was white and glistening," all human countenances have acquired a brightness, all common things have been transfigured. A glimpse of the Divine beauty has broken through the darkness, and has cheered the humblest pilgrims.

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**Wayne Grudem asks WHAT WILL OUR RESURRECTION BODIES BE LIKE?** (See [Systematic Theology page 726](#))

If Christ will raise our bodies from the dead when he returns, and if our bodies will be like his resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:20, 23, 49; Phil. 3:21), then what will our resurrection bodies be like?

Using the example of sowing a seed and then watching it grow into something much more wonderful, Paul goes on to explain what our resurrection bodies will be like: "What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:42–44, 49).

The fact that our new bodies will be "imperishable" means that they will not wear out or grow old or ever be subject to any kind of sickness or disease. They will be completely healthy and strong forever. Moreover, since the gradual process of aging is part of the process by which our bodies now are subject to "corruption," it is appropriate to think that our resurrection bodies will have no sign of aging but will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever. There will be no evidence of disease or injury, for all will be made perfect.<sup>4</sup> Our resurrection bodies will show the fulfillment of God's perfect wisdom in creating us as human beings who are the pinnacle of his creation and the appropriate bearers of his likeness and image. In these resurrection bodies we will clearly see humanity as God intended it to be.

Paul also says our bodies will be raised "in glory (Gk. *doxa*)." When this term is contrasted with "dishonor," as it is here, there is a suggestion of the beauty or the attractiveness of appearance that our bodies will have. They will no longer be "dishonorable" or unattractive, but will look "glorious" in their beauty. Moreover, because the word "glory" is so frequently used in Scripture of the bright shining radiance that surrounds the presence of God himself, this term suggests that there will also be a kind of brightness or radiance surrounding our bodies that will be an appropriate outward evidence of the position of exaltation and rule over all creation that God has given to us. This is also suggested in Matthew 13:43, where Jesus says, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Similarly, we read in Daniel's vision, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3, in a passage talking about the final resurrection). Now both of these statements could be understood metaphorically, and in that case they would not indicate that an actual brightness or radiance will surround our resurrection bodies. But there is no reason in the context of either of them that would cause us to see them as metaphorical, and other pieces of evidence argue against doing so. The hints of the age to come that were seen in the shining of the glory of God from the face of Moses (Ex. 34:35), and in a much greater way, the bright light that shone from Jesus at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:2), together with the fact that we will bear the image of Christ and be like him (1 Cor. 15:49), combine to suggest that there will actually be a visible brightness or radiance that surrounds us when we are in our resurrection bodies.<sup>5</sup>

Our bodies will also be raised "in power (Gk. *dynamis*)" (1 Cor. 15:43). This is in contrast to the "weakness" that we see in our bodies now. Our resurrection bodies will not only be free from disease and aging, they will also be given fullness of strength and power—not infinite power like God, of course, and probably not what we would think of as "superhuman" power in the sense possessed by the "superheroes" in modern fictional writing, for example, but nonetheless full and complete human power and strength, the strength that God intended human beings to have in their bodies when he created them. It will therefore be strength that is sufficient to do all that we desire to do in conformity with the will of God.

Finally, Paul says that the body is raised a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). In the Pauline Epistles, the word spiritual (Gk. *pneumatikos*) seldom means "nonphysical" but rather "consistent with the character and activity of the Holy Spirit" (see, for example, Rom. 1:11; 7:14; 1 Cor. 2:13, 15; 3:1; 14:37; Gal. 6:1 ["you who are spiritual"]; Eph. 5:19).<sup>6</sup> A clarifying paraphrase of this passage would be, "It is sown a natural body subject to the characteristics and desires of this age, and governed by its own sinful will, but it is raised a spiritual body, completely subject to the will of the Holy Spirit and responsive to the Holy Spirit's guidance." Such a body is not at all "nonphysical," but it is a physical body raised to the degree of perfection for which God originally intended it.

In conclusion, when Christ returns he will give us new resurrection bodies to be like his resurrection body. "When he appears we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2; this statement is true not only in an ethical sense but also in terms of our physical bodies; cf. 1 Cor. 15:49; also Rom. 8:29).

In spite of this strong New Testament emphasis on the similarity between our bodies and Jesus' body after the resurrection, some have objected that we will not have physical bodies because Paul says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:50). This is in the very section in which he has been discussing the

resurrection of the dead. But it is surely a misunderstanding to say that this verse implies that we shall not have physical bodies. When Paul says, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” what he means by “flesh and blood” is our present human nature, particularly our physical bodies, as they are now existing in the likeness of Adam after the fall—that is, subject to weakness, decay, and ultimate death. This is the point he has made in the previous four verses (1 Cor. 15:45–49), in which he has been contrasting Adam with Christ. He explains, “As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust” (that is, we ourselves in this present age, 1 Cor. 15:48). Then he explains, “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49). By “flesh and blood,” Paul means “flesh and blood in the present state of existence with a body like Adam’s after the fall, a body that is subject to decay and death.” He does not mean that we shall exist in a nonphysical state, for the entire heaven and earth will be made new and renewed for us to live in (Rom. 8:18–25), and we ourselves “shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:51–52). We will not cease to exist in physical bodies, but we will be changed and have an imperishable body, “for this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53).

Moreover, the repeated instances in which Jesus demonstrated to the disciples that he had a physical body that was able to be touched, that had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), and that could eat food, show that Jesus’ body, which is our pattern, was clearly a physical body that had been made perfect.<sup>7</sup>

What kind of continuity will there be between our present bodies and our future resurrection bodies? Will our bodies look exactly the same and have exactly the same characteristics? Will they be somewhat different? Or will they be almost entirely different? Will our resurrection bodies be made of the same molecules of which our earthly bodies consist, will they be an entirely new creation from God, or will they be some combination of old and new?

Several passages indicate that Paul expected a considerable measure of continuity between our present earthly bodies and our future resurrection bodies. Paul said, “He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11). He said that Jesus “will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). And when Paul spoke about the nature of the resurrection body, he gave an example of a seed sown in the ground: “What you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body” (1 Cor. 15:37–38). In this example, he draws on common human knowledge that there are differences between what is sown and what is raised (vv. 42–44), but there is also continuity—just as a seed grows into a larger plant, retaining the matter that was in it but taking other materials to itself from the ground as well, so we will have continuity and differences as well. On this analogy we can say that whatever remains in the grave from our physical bodies will be taken by God, transformed, and used to make a new resurrection body. But the details of how that will happen remain unclear since Scripture does not specify—we are to affirm this because Scripture teaches it, even if we cannot fully explain how it can happen.<sup>8</sup>

Another indication of significant continuity between our present bodies and the bodies that we will have is seen in the fact that those believers who remain alive on the day Christ returns will “be changed”—yet their bodies will not be replaced: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:51–53).

We must also clearly note that Christ’s resurrection body, though it differed somewhat from the body he had before he died, so that the disciples did not immediately recognize him in every situation, was similar enough in appearance for the disciples to know who it was rather quickly. There were some instances when they did not immediately recognize him, but this may in part be accounted for by the fact that during his earthly life and ministry he had no doubt aged considerably, since he was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). After his resurrection, Jesus would have been restored to full and perfect strength and youthfulness of appearance. Just as we sometimes do not immediately recognize a friend who has aged considerably since the last time we saw him or her, so the disciples may have had initial difficulty in recognizing Christ because the opposite of aging had occurred.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, significant continuity between Jesus’ body before and after the resurrection is seen in the fact that even the nail prints in his hands and feet and the wound in his side remained in his resurrection body (John 20:20, 27).

Another piece of evidence indicating continuity between our earthly and heavenly bodies is the fact that apparently people will recognize and know one another in heaven. Jesus says that people will come from east and west and “recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11). Moreover, Elijah, who had been taken up to heaven in his earthly body, was somehow recognizable to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:30, 33)—of course, the disciples had not known Elijah or Moses in the flesh, but somehow these men retained their personal identities in such a way that the disciples believed that they were there and that they were just as real as Jesus was (see Luke 9:33). Finally, Matthew tells us that when Jesus died, “the tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matt. 27:52–53). The fact that these people’s actual bodies were raised, as well as the fact that they appeared to many in Jerusalem, indicates again that there was significant continuity between

their dead bodies that were in the graves and the bodies that were raised up. Since they came out of the tombs “after his resurrection,” we may assume that these also were saints who had received resurrection bodies as a kind of foretaste of the final day of glorification when Christ returns.<sup>10</sup> The fact that these people “appeared to many” suggests that they were recognizable—that people knew who they were. This evidence suggests significant continuity between the body that existed before the resurrection and the one that existed after it.

There is today some hesitancy on the part of many evangelicals to affirm clearly that there will be a “resurrection of the body,” or at least that the raised body will be a material, physical body in some way continuous with the body that was placed in the grave. To some measure, this may be due to a sense of inability to understand how God could raise the same bodies from the grave, especially when some of those bodies have been dead for many centuries. Yet some of this hesitancy is probably also due to the continuing skepticism of unbelievers who challenge the Christian view with exactly the kind of problems just presented—does this not seem like a fantastic, unbelievable position? How could God bring about such a thing?

In both cases—whether the hesitancy comes from the honest questioning of the believer or from the hostile skepticism of the unbeliever—we should realize that our inability to understand or explain something should never be a reason for rejecting it if it is clearly taught in Scripture. The many passages cited above indicating that God will raise our mortal bodies from the grave, just as he raised Jesus’ body from the grave, indicate quite conclusively that there will be a definite continuity between our present bodies and the bodies we have in the resurrection. And if that is what Scripture teaches, then, even though we may not understand exactly how God will bring this about in every case, we should still believe it. The God who created the universe and created each one of us, who sovereignly rules over every bit of this creation at every moment, and who carries along all things by his word of power—this God can certainly keep track of the parts of our physical bodies that he wishes to preserve and use as the “seed” from which a new body will be made.

It is important to insist on the resurrection of a real, physical body, not only for the reasons above but also because this provides a clear affirmation of the goodness of God’s physical creation. We will live in bodies that have all the excellent qualities God created us to have, and thereby we will forever be living proof of the wisdom of God in making a material creation that from the beginning was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). We will live as resurrected believers in those new bodies, and they will be suitable for inhabiting the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

**Matthew 17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.**

- **behold:** Mk 9:4 Lu 9:30,31
- **Moses:** Mt 11:13,14 De 18:18 34:5,6,10 Lu 24:27,44 Jn 1:17 5:45-47 2Co 3:7-11 Heb 3:1-6
- **Elijah:** Mt 17:10-13 1Ki 17:1 18:36-40 2Ki 2:11-14 Mal 4:5, Elijah, Lu 1:17 9:33 16:16
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:4+ And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

Luke 9:30-31+ And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

### MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEARED

And **behold** (**idou**) **Moses and Elijah appeared** (**horao**) **to them**, talking (**sullaleo** - present tense) **with Him** - **Behold** (**idou**) conveys dramatic effect, specifically drawing attention to the unexpected appearance of these two OT saints. Luke adds that they “were speaking of His departure (**exodos**) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” (Lk 9:31+) Many think **Moses and Elijah** appear for they are representatives of the Law and the Prophets. Unlike Jesus, they are not described as glorified.

**Spurgeon** - “Saints long departed still alive; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ.”

**R C H Lenski** - The question is inevitable, “Why just these two, Moses and Elijah?” The best answer seems to be, “Moses was the great representative of the law, Elijah the great representative of prophecy. (Borrow [The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel page 654](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - Thus the Law and the Prophets, "Moses and Elias", communed with our Lord, "talking with him"; and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus: they find it heaven to be where they can talk with him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to his decease, by which a new economy would be ushered in. After condescending so long to his ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two master-minds like those of Moses and Elijah. What a sight for the apostles, this glorious trio! They "appeared unto them", but they "talked with him": the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus.

**Spurgeon** - They 'appeared unto **them**' but they 'talked with **him**': the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with the apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus.

**Broadus** - It is not clear whether the disciples heard this conversation; at any rate it was partly designed for the Saviour's own benefit, that he might be supported in view of the sufferings and death to which his mind was now especially turning. (Luke 12:50.)

**Michael Andrus** has an interesting thought about what they were talking about - In Luke 9:31+ it says, "They spoke ([imperfect tense](#) - graphic picture of an ongoing conversation) about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." The Greek word for departure is [exodos](#), or exodus in English. I believe this is a deliberate allusion to the greatest moment in Israel's history. In Moses' day the people of God were delivered by God's power from slavery in Egypt. That was the original Exodus. Now through Jesus the people of God will be delivered by God's power from a far worse bondage, the bondage of sin. This will happen when Jesus dies on a Cross in Jerusalem and is resurrected from the dead three days later. This is the focus of conversation between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. ([Matthew 17:1-8 The Transfiguration of Christ: Preview of the Resurrection](#))

**Robert Stein** - Do these men represent (1) the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah)—cf. Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27; (2) heavenly figures who were expected to return at the end time; or (3) two OT prophetic figures who had not experienced death? The first possibility seems best. The reference to "two men" ties together the transfiguration, resurrection (Lk 24:4), and ascension (Acts 1:10). The presence of Moses and Elijah refutes the incorrect guesses about Jesus' identity given in Luke 9:8, 19. (See [Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#))

**Steven Cole on Moses and Elijah** - Scholars debate the significance of Moses and Elijah appearing with Christ, but it seems to me that the natural connection is that Moses represents the Law and Elijah the Prophets. As such, the entire Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) bears witness to Jesus as Lord and Christ. Beyond this association, Moses also had a mountaintop experience where his face shone (Ex 34:30). In the exodus, he led the people of God out of bondage. Our text states that Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about the exodus (literal Greek transliteration of "departure") that He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Lu 9:31). Elijah is associated with the future coming of Messiah, when he would appear to turn the hearts of the people back to God and to prepare the way of the Lord (Mal 3:1; Mal 4:4-6; Mt 11:9-14). It is also interesting that both Moses and Elijah had unique departures from this earth. Moses died on the mountain and God buried him (De 34:6). Elijah was carried to heaven without dying in a chariot of fire (2Ki 2:11). Jesus also had a unique departure: angels guarded His tomb and then, after His resurrection, He ascended bodily into heaven. But even though Moses and Elijah were two of the greatest men of God in the Old Testament, Jesus is far superior to them. We see this in Peter's inept comment and the response from the heavenly voice. Peter, perhaps to prolong the glorious occasion, suggests celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles by building three booths, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he meant well, Peter's comment was off because it put Jesus on the same footing as Moses and Elijah. The voice from heaven corrects this by removing Moses and Elijah and by stating emphatically, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (Lu 9:35). These words also fulfill De 18:15, where Moses predicts that God will raise up another prophet and commands, "You shall listen to him." Thus, the glory of Christ shows His superiority to and fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. ([Luke 9:27-36](#))

**NET Note** is slightly different on Moses and Elijah - Commentators and scholars discuss why *Moses and Elijah* are present. The most likely explanation is that Moses represents the prophetic office (Acts 3:18-22) and Elijah pictures the presence of the last days (Mal 4:5-6), the prophet of the eschaton (the end times).

**Henry Morris - Moses and Elijah** - It is significant that this experience was said by Jesus to be a vision rather than the actual physical presence of Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:9). Moses was dead, whereas Elijah was still living, having been translated into heaven without dying (Deuteronomy 34:5,6; 2 Kings 2:11). So far as Biblical revelation is concerned, all the souls of the Old Testament saints (except Enoch and Elijah) were still confined in Sheol at this time, and were not released until Christ freed them at His death and resurrection (Ephesians 4:8-10). At that time, "many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (Matthew 27:52), but that great event was still in the future at this time.

**NET NOTES** - Commentators and scholars discuss why **Moses and Elijah** are present. The most likely explanation is that Moses

represents the prophetic office (Acts 3:18–22) and Elijah pictures the presence of the last days (Mal 4:5–6), the prophet of the eschaton (the end times)

**Hall** puts it, "in His highest exaltation to speak of His sufferings; when His head shone with glory, to tell Him how it must bleed with thorns; when His face shone like the sun, to tell him it must be spit upon; when His garments glistened with that celestial brightness, to tell Him they must be stripped and divided; when He was seen between two saints, to tell Him how he must be seen between two malefactors" (Quoted by [Broadus on Matthew](#))

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**Behold** (2400) **idou** is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of *eidon* which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **Idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!"

In 2Cor 5:17 Paul uses **idou**, to get his reader's attention as he introduces the truth that the one who is now **in Christ** is a qualitatively new person. (see also notes above on "behold")

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

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**F B Meyer** -Matthew 17:3 Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.

Luke tells us that they "spoke of his decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses as representing the Law, would remind Him that if as God's Lamb He must die, yet as God's Lamb He would redeem countless myriads. Elijah, as representative of the prophets, would dwell on the glory that would accrue to the Father. These thoughts were familiar enough to the mind of our blessed Master; yet they must have gladdened and strengthened Him, as they fell from other lips: the more so when they conversed together on the certain splendor of the resurrection morning that should follow his decease.

And where could there have been found greater subjects than this wondrous death, and his glorious resurrection? Here the attributes of God find their most complete and most harmonious exemplification. Here the problems of human sin and salvation are met and solved. Here the travail of Creation meets with its answer and key. Here are sown the seeds of the new heavens and earth, in which shall dwell righteousness and peace. Here is the point of unity between all ages, all dispensations, all beings, all worlds. Here blend men and angels; departed spirits and the denizens of other spheres; Peter, James, and John, with Moses and Elijah, and all with the great God Himself, whose voice is heard falling in benediction from the opened heaven.

We, too, must often climb the mount of transfiguration in holy reverie; for the nearer we get to the Cross, and the more we meditate upon the decease accomplished at Jerusalem, the closer we shall come into the center of things; the deeper will be our harmony with ourselves and all other noble spirits and with God Himself.

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Matthew 17:1-13

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. - Matthew 17:5

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

An Awesome Sight - The legendary missionary-explorer David Livingstone was the first European to see Africa's great Victoria Falls, the world's largest waterfalls. Christian History magazine quoted from Livingstone's description of the awesome sight: "'Five columns of smoke [i.e., mist] arose....The whole scene was extremely beautiful...scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.'"

It's hard for us to imagine the scene Livingstone witnessed when he first came upon the mighty waterfalls. He had to borrow heavenly imagery in his attempt to convey the effect the experience had made on him.

In much the same way, the Gospel writers drew on the loftiest language they could think of to describe a scene so dazzling that no earthly experience can compare. Jesus was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John. Something of His eternal nature was revealed as these three disciples saw a preview of Jesus' future glory.

Mark said that Jesus' clothes became dazzling, "'whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them'" (Mark 9:3). Add to this the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the voice of God speaking from heaven, and the disciples were so overwhelmed they fell on

their faces.

For the disciples, the Transfiguration was an unforgettable testimony to the deity of Jesus Christ and the truth of His claims. God knew these men would need this heavenly witness in future days. When Jesus was gone, they would be called to bear witness for Him in the face of suffering and persecution.

It's hard to blame Peter for wanting to stay on this mountain of glory--especially when, as we will see tomorrow, the real world with all its problems waited below.

Years later, Peter drew on the Transfiguration to verify the truth of the message the apostles preached (2 Pet. 1:16-18). This event had to be especially reassuring for him, coming just a few days after Jesus' stinging rebuke (Matt. 16:23, 17:1). As Jesus' disciples, if we learn and grow from His rebukes, we too will be all the more ready to share in His glory.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Every parent knows that rebuke is a painful but necessary part of discipline. The joy comes in the reassurance of love that needs to follow. If you are a parent, does your discipline reflect this balance of correction and affirmation? Too much of either one without the other can leave children either frustrated and uptight or lacking in proper boundaries. Let's pray today for God's help in dealing with children the way He deals with us, balancing firm correction with reassuring love. And if you're not a parent, is there someone in your life who needs a word either of correction or affirmation right now? Ask God to help you meet that need in a way pleasing to Him.

**Matthew 17:4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."**

- **Peter said to Jesus:** Mk 9:5,6 Lu 9:33
- **it is good for us:** Ex 33:18,19 Ps 4:6 16:11 63:1-5 Isa 33:17 Zec 9:17 Jn 14:8,9 Jn 17:24 Php 1:23 1Jn 3:2 Rev 21:23 22:3-5
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:5+ And Peter answered and \*said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Luke 9:32-33+ Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. 33 And it came about, as these were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not realizing what he was saying.

### **PETER'S OFFER TO BUILD "THE TRANSFIGURATION RETREAT CENTER"**

**Peter said to Jesus, "Lord ([kurios](#); Mk 9:5 Rabbi-[rhabbi](#); Lk 9:32 - Master-[epistates](#)), it is good ([kalos](#)) for us to be here** - Only Lk 9:32+ records they were "overcome with sleep" but then were "fully awake" and saw Jesus' glory. It is interesting that there is no record that Moses and Elijah's appearance was glorified. As usual Peter is the lead spokesman. The previous time Peter had called Jesus "Lord" was when he rebuked Him (Mt 16:22) and prior to that when he stepped onto the water and cried "**Lord** save me." (Mt 14:28-31).

*Peter was sidetracked, and the Father had to open heaven and speak to him.*

*"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him."*

*God put the focus where it belonged, on Christ.*

**if You wish ([thelo](#)) , I will make ([poieo](#)) three tabernacles ([skene](#)) here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah** -

One implication of Peter's offer is that it would put the three on basically the same plane, even though neither Moses' and Elijah's face or garments displayed glory. The focus was not to be on three men (two who were great men but sinners) but only on One Man, the only One Who was transfigured! Although Peter had addressed his request for a "building permit" to Jesus, it is not Jesus Who gives an answer, but God the Father in the next verse. The Father would bring the focus of Peter (and the other two disciples) back onto the only One it should be on, the glorified Son of Man.



**Phil Newton** points out that "The writer of Hebrews had to deal with similar mindsets fostered by the Jewish love and admiration for the Law and the Prophets, or in that case, the Priesthood, and blindness to the greater glory of Christ. He proves the greatness of Christ to be far greater than angels, Moses, and the whole Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods. A summary declaration is found in Hebrews 2:1-6. ([Matthew 17:1-13 Transfigured!](#))

**Liefeld** - While the word looks back to the tabernacle in the wilderness, forerunner of the temple, the idea of building "tabernacles" also reflects the Feast of Tabernacles, when Jews built shelters for themselves and lived in them for seven days (cf. Lev 23:42–43). The feast had eschatological overtones. So Peter may have been saying that in gratitude for witnessing Jesus' transfiguration and recognizing the imminent dawn of the Messianic Age, he would build three "tabernacles" one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. (borrow [Expositor's Bible Commentary page 80](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speak: "Then answered Peter." That which is uppermost comes out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have been? Because it was so good, he would fain stay in this beatific state, and get still more good from it. But he has not lost his reverence, and therefore he would have the great ones sheltered suitably. He submits the proposal to Jesus: "If thou wilt." He offers that, with his brethren, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones: "Let us make here three tabernacles." He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John; but he says, "One for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child. He wanders a little; yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, and Elias, and Jesus: what company! But yet how impractical is Peter! How selfish the one thought, "It is good for us"! What was to be done for the rest of the twelve, and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The like might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

**NET NOTES** - Peter apparently wanted to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles or Booths that looked forward to the end and wanted to treat Moses, Elijah, and Jesus as equals by making three shelters (one for each). It was actually a way of expressing honor to Jesus, but the next verse makes it clear that it was not enough honor.

**Daniel Akin** - Mountain top experiences are wonderful and we need them from time to time for spiritual nourishment and the recharging of our spiritual batteries. However, God never intended for us to stay there. He wants us "down here" preaching the gospel to and ministering among the hurting and suffering. He wants us living with and serving real people devastated by the ravages of the Fall and sin. And, as His agents of redemptive love, we go in His Name and with the promise of His presence. To forget this is to open ourselves up to all sorts of difficulty, challenges, and even failure, as 9 of His disciples with pain and humiliation discovered. Peter wanted to stay on the mountain top (Mk 9:5), but Jesus was headed to Jerusalem and the cross (Mk 8:32). He leads them down the mountain (Mk 9:9) to rejoin the other disciples and to minister to the hurting on the way to Jerusalem and His passion (Mk 9:30)

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**QUESTION** - [Was it bad that Peter wanted to make three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah \(Matthew 17:4\)?](#)

**ANSWER** - Sometimes when God shows us something extraordinary, we miss the point entirely. At His [transfiguration](#), Jesus presented His three closest disciples (Peter, James, and John) with a stunning sneak preview of His resplendent glory: "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). Ever the impulsive one, Peter jumped into action, saying, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:4, NKJV).

Peter wanted to honor Jesus, Moses, and Elijah by building three tabernacles—sacred shrines—one for each of them. But God interrupted the well-intentioned, albeit misguided, disciple: "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!'" (Matthew 17:5). Peter had missed the point, and God intended to clear up all confusion.

First and foremost, the disciples needed to understand the superiority of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, far above Moses and Elijah. The presence of Moses and Elijah (who respectively represent the Law and the Prophets) was to signal the arrival of their long-awaited Messiah and the ushering in of the last days. Everything in Israel's history had been pointing to the time when the Messiah would fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:27; Hebrews 1:1–2). God's command, "Listen to him!" exalted the words of Christ above those of Moses and Elijah. Only Jesus was worthy of worship. The focus is not to be Jesus *and* anyone else; it is to be Jesus alone.

When the three disciples heard God's voice, they fell to the ground in terror. Jesus calmed their fears, and when they opened their eyes again, Moses and Elijah were gone. Only Jesus stood in their midst, and their focus was back on Him alone (Matthew 17:6–8). As they walked down from the mountain, Jesus instructed Peter, James, and John, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the

Son of Man has been raised from the dead" (Matthew 17:9).

The news of the transfiguration was reserved for a later time, after the resurrection. If Peter had constructed three tabernacles at the site, keeping the revelation concealed until after the resurrection would have become impossible. And if Jesus' closest disciples struggled to comprehend the significance of the transfiguration, how much more would others exploit and misunderstand it? Jesus knew the spectacle would only distract from His mission as He prepared to suffer and die on the cross.

Peter, James, and John would later testify boldly about the transfiguration after the resurrection. Peter never forgot seeing the "majestic splendor" of God's glory with his own eyes, an experience that inspired him to preach confidently (see 2 Peter 1:12–21, NLT). Many years later, John would write, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Peter wanted to make three tabernacles and stay there for an extended mountaintop experience. He wished to capture God's presence in an earthly tent. But until the time of the future [millennial kingdom](#), God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, separate from the material things of this world (John 18:36; Romans 14:17).

Peter's desire to build three tabernacles revealed a common misconception among the Jews, who thought their Messiah would come and reign on earth as a triumphant king and not a suffering servant. Jesus knew His mission (and the mission of His followers) was to deny Himself and take up His cross. Peter would later preach that the Christian path to glory traverses trials and suffering (1 Peter 1:6–8, 11; 1 Peter 4:12–19). [C. H. Spurgeon](#) expresses it beautifully in his daily devotional *Morning and Evening*, "The cross must be carried before the crown can be worn. We must follow our Lord in his humiliation, or we shall never rest with him in glory" (Evening, November 14).

Indeed, the three men who witnessed Christ's glory would follow in His footsteps. James would die by the sword as the first of the apostles to be martyred for Jesus (Acts 12:1–2). Peter would suffer greatly and eventually give his life for the Lord (John 21:15–19). John would be the last of the three to die, experiencing a life of extreme persecution and exile (Revelation 1:9).

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#### **Norman Geisler - [When Cultist Ask](#)**

MATTHEW 17:4—Does the disciples' encounter with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration indicate that we should pray to the dead?

MISINTERPRETATION: Roman Catholic scholars appeal to the fact that Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration to support their belief that we should pray to the dead.

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: The disciples never even spoke to Moses and Elijah, let alone prayed to them. Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus (Matt. 17:3) and with each other, not with the disciples.

The text explicitly says, "Peter said to Jesus" (Matt. 17:4), not to Moses or Elijah. This was a miraculous contact, not representing any normal way we can be in contact with the departed.

In addition, it does not follow that, simply because we should serve each other, we must do it by praying for the dead. There are other ways to serve fellow believers than talking to them. We can do many things in honor of the dead and their memory without attempting to communicate with them. The dead may be praying for us (cf. Rev. 6:9–10), but there is nothing in Holy Writ that says we should be praying to them.

Finally, there are good reasons why we should not pray to the dead. The most basic is that only God is the proper object of prayer. Nowhere in all of Scripture is a prayer actually addressed to anyone but God. Prayer is an act of religious devotion, and only God is the proper object of such devotion (Rev. 4:11). We witness prayers from Genesis (4:26) to Revelation (22:20), but not one of them is ever addressed to a saint, angel, or any other creature. Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven." The God of Isaiah the prophet emphatically declared, "Turn to me and be safe, all you ends of the earth, for I am God; there is no other!" Indeed, there is no other person but God to whom anyone anywhere in the Holy Scriptures ever turned in prayer.

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#### **James Smith - PETER**

The Biography of Peter is singularly instructive for every follower of Christ.

- 1 His Call. The first of the Twelve, Matt. 10:2
- 2 His Courage, Matt. 14:28
- 3 His Confession, Matt. 16:15-16
- 4 His Impulsiveness, Matt. 17:4; John 18:10

- 5 His Self-Confidence, Mark 14:29-31
- 6 His Indifference, Mark 14:37
- 7 His Cowardliness, Mark 14:54
- 8 His Denial, Mark 14:68-71
- 9 His Repentance, Mark 14:72
- 10 His Forgiveness, Mark 16:7
- 11 His Faith, John 20:2-4
- 12 His Love, John 21:7
- 13 His Devotion, John 21:15
- 14 His Boldness, Acts 2:14; 4:19-20
- 15 His Power, Acts 3:6, 5:3

He was a man of like passions as we are: Be of good cheer.

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### Seeking Jesus- Henry Blackaby - [Experiencing God Day by Day - Page 5](#)

Simon and his companions went searching for Him.—Mark 1:36

Simon Peter is well known to us for his foolish, extemporaneous statements throughout the Gospels (Matt. 16:22; 17:4; 26:33). But Peter was always seeking after Jesus. Peter followed Jesus from afar during the night of Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 26:58). Peter ran to the tomb when he heard Jesus had risen (Luke 24:12). Peter swam in the sea in his haste to get to Jesus (John 21:7) and even walked on water in order to join Jesus (Matt. 14:29). Peter did not always say or do the right things, but he did constantly seek to be with Jesus. Because of this, he was continually encountering his Lord and growing to be a more faithful disciple.

Whenever we see Peter coming to Jesus he is always accompanied by others. Because Peter was seeking Jesus, others sought Him too. What are you known for by those who know you best? Do they see you searching for fame, power, success, or happiness? Are you known as a person who seeks after Jesus? God promises: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Did you begin today intent on encountering Jesus? Is your search for Him halfhearted, or are you seeking Him with all your heart? Have others grown closer to Jesus because they followed your example and sought Jesus? If your heart is set on pursuing Jesus, you will always find Him. "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come" (Rev. 22:17).

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### John Butler - PETER'S COMMENTS Matthew 17:4 ([Butler's Sermon Starters](#))

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias [Elijah]" (Matthew 17:4).

Our text is a record of the comment that Peter made after he witnessed the transfiguration and Moses and Elijah speaking with Christ.

#### FIRST—THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE COMMENTS

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here." The first part of what Peter said is okay. We note three things about this first part that made it a good comment.

- Men. "It is good for us [he and the other two disciples] to be here." The association of the three disciples with Jesus, Moses and Elijah was indeed "good." Unfortunately few people value such company as "good." They prefer the bunch at the bar to the godly men on the mount. Who you prefer will predict your eternal fellowship.
- Manifestation. "It is good for us to be here." Peter, James and John were given a very special spiritual privilege in viewing the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. With the crucifixion and Christ's utter rejection by the people on the horizon, it was a privilege to know Christ in all His glory. It was, therefore, good for them to be at this event.
- Message. "It is good for us to be here." In Luke's account of the transfiguration, we learn that the conversation of Moses, Elijah and Jesus was about the crucifixion. It is always good to hear such a message. When Christians get together today, they are more likely to speak about carnal matters (sports, business, weather, politics) than spiritual matters. So it was good for Peter and his fellow disciples to be present where the conversation was on spiritual matters.

#### SECOND—THE PROPOSAL IN THE COMMENTS

"If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias [Elijah]." This part of Peter's comments we could do without. We note some observations of his comments.

- Defining. “Tabernacles.” This means booths, tents, houses, for each of the three (Moses, Elijah, and Christ) to dwell in.
- Deference. “If thou wilt.” This was the best thing Peter said in the proposal. We should always seek to do God’s will. Oftentimes we become very enthused about some project, but never check with God to see if He was for the project or not.
- Dishonor. “One for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias [Elijah].” Peter’s proposal put Christ on the same level as Moses and Elijah. It is true that Moses and Elijah were great giants spiritually, but at their best they were not equal to Christ. Christ is far superior.
- Dumbness. “If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias [Elijah].” This proposal would keep Moses and Elijah from a better abode and would end the ministry of Christ. It was a totally worthless proposal, like some of the impractical proposals made in church business meetings.

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**Patrick Morley - IMPULSIVENESS: GOOD IDEAS VERSUS GOD IDEAS** - Borrow [Devotions for the man in the mirror : 75 readings to cultivate a deeper walk with Christ - page 116](#)

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Matthew 17:4

The natural inclination in Christian living is to act on the impulse of a good idea. Not every good idea is from God. Sometimes good ideas get in the way of God ideas.

Where does your inspiration come from? The vision of the transfigured Christ inspired Peter: “‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah’” (Matthew 17:4). Our natural impulse is to do something good for Him. We make a plan to do something good for God and suggest it to Him.

The tendency of the well-meaning person is to prepare a plan to do some good idea, and then pray, “Jesus, this is my plan. It is a good plan. It hurts no one, and I want it to please You. Lord, please bless my plan.” It is plan, then pray.

So many of our ideas are impetuous. They are not what the Lord wants to do. They do not resemble in any way the things which concern Him. We have good ideas, but they are not God ideas. His agenda and our agenda conflict. We want to build Him a shelter, but that is not what He wants. “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them” (Matthew 17:5, emphasis added), and God spoke, ignoring Peter as though he were not even there. Peter’s idea was so impetuous that God interrupted Peter—didn’t even let him finish.

When Peter, James, and John heard the voice of the Lord, “they fell facedown to the ground, terrified” (Matthew 17:6). They abandoned their inventive-but-self-made idea. The presence of the Lord magnified, and His holiness brought them to their senses. Jesus gained their attention, not by subduing them with a stern scolding, but by magnifying His presence until all the genius of their human ideas was bleached out by His refulgent face.

When they abandoned their good idea and fell facedown before the Lord, He could work with them again. “But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid’” (Matthew 17:7).

When you and I abandon our good idea and fall to our face before the Lord, then He will come and touch us, too. When we pursue our own plan, He cannot use us. We must abandon our good idea and fall face down before Him. Then He will be able to use us again. Then He will reveal what He is doing—a God idea. “As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them” (Matthew 17:9). It is pray, then plan. Through prayer, Jesus instructs of His plan, a God idea.

Prayer removes the impulse of the good idea, the good idea born of human ingenuity but not of God. Pray, then plan. It is the habit of the surrendered saint.

**I SURRENDER** Lord, I must confess that my way has been “plan, then pray.” I have wanted to do good things for You; my motives have been to please You. But I realize that I have built shelters You didn’t need and never used. I have wasted so much valuable time on matters that don’t matter. I surrender all my plans to You, Lord. I will forget them. I will pray, then plan. I will pray and wait for You to come and touch me and say, “Get up. Don’t be afraid.” I am listening now, Lord. Instruct me with Your plan. Amen.

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**David Rudolph - [The Voice of the Lord: Messianic Jewish Daily Devotional](#)**

Kefa (ED: PETER) said to Yeshua, “It’s good that we’re here, Lord. I’ll put up three shelters if you want—one for you, one for Moshe and one for Eliyahu” (Matt. 17:4).

It’s encouraging to see that even Kefa (Peter) could come up with a bad idea. After all, who could blame him for wanting to help? There he was, standing before Moshe (Moses), Eliyahu (Elijah) and the glorified Messiah. I certainly would have been at a loss for something interesting to say, wouldn’t you? What could any earthly person say in conversation with these three men? Perhaps I would have asked Moshe where his body was secretly buried. Or Eliyahu, “Why did you panic after the Mount Carmel victory?” I

would have sounded more foolish than Kefa.

Kefa's suggestion was a terrible idea because these men were in the heavenly realm; they needed shelters about as much as a fish needs a raincoat.

God's advice to Kefa, after the dust of his mistake cleared, coincides with advice he gave earlier to mankind in general, "Even a fool, if he stays silent, is thought wise" (Prov. 17:28). To Kefa, he said, "This is my Son, whom I love.... Listen to him!" (Matt. 17:4). Sometimes, the last thing needed is for us to say something.

Thank God for Kefa. He walked on water; yes, but he also had moments of glorious fallibility. There is hope for us all!

Today I Will

... let go of perfectionism and allow the human errors of the godly ones in Scripture encourage me.

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**L B E Cowman - Matt. 17:1-2, 4** [Spirings in the Valley: 365 Daily Devotional Readings - Page 68](#)

*The mariner does not expect to see the sun and stars every day,  
but when he does, he takes his observations  
and sails by their light for many days to come.*

It is good to be the possessor of some mountaintop experience. Not to know life on the heights is to suffer an impoverishing incompleteness.

Those times when the Lord's presence is marvelously manifest to you—the moments of self-revelation—do not despise them. But beware of not acting upon what you see in your moments on the mount with God!

Horizons broaden when we stand on the heights. There is always, we find, the danger that we will make of life too much of a dead-level existence; a monotonous tread of beaten paths; a matter of absorbing, spiritless, deadening routine.

Do not drop your life into the passing current, to be steadily going you scarcely know where, or why.

Christian life, writes one, is not all a valley of humiliation. It has its heights of vision.

Abraham saw in the glorious depths of the starry firmament visions that no telescope could ever have revealed! Jacob's stony pillow led up to the ladder of vision!

Joseph's early dreams kept him in the hours of discouragement and despair that followed!

Moses, who spent one-third of his life in the desert, we find crying out: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory!"

Job's vision showed him God and lifted him out of himself!

The mariner does not expect to see the sun and stars every day, but when he does, he takes his observations and sails by their light for many days to come.

God gives days of special illumination that we may be able to call to memory in the days of shadow, and say: "Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

In the life of Paul, we find a few of these blessed interludes—when the Lord gave to him words of promise to remember in his days of trial that followed.

*If these special experiences came too often  
they would lose their flavor!*

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On the back of the pulpit in the church I used to attend were printed these words: **'Sir, we would see Jesus!'** They were a reminder to the minister that he must never allow anything--no matter how good or interesting--to distract him from focusing on the Savior. Peter, James, and John needed this reminder too when they witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and the appearance of Moses and Elijah. Commenting on this account, J.B. Nicholson suggests that when Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us," he was focusing on the wonderful experience. Nicholson then says, "Peter was sidetracked, and the Father had to open heaven and speak to him. He said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.'" God put the focus where it belonged, on Christ. Sin diverts some believers from focusing on Jesus. Too much study and feverish activity distracts others. Such things as doctrines and church attendance, good as they are, must not become our main concerns. We are to keep Jesus at the center of our spiritual attention. Is

the Lord Jesus Christ the primary object of your love and devotion?

Let's keep Jesus at the center of our spiritual attention.—H. G. Bosch (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

UNLESS CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF INTEREST, YOUR LIFE WILL BE OUT OF FOCUS.

WITHOUT A HEART FOR GOD, WE CANNOT HEAR HIS WORD.

**Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; **listen** to Him!"**

- **behold**: Ex 40:34,35 1Ki 8:10-12 Ps 18:10,11 Lu 9:34 Ac 1:9 Rev 1:7
- **a voice**: Ex 19:19 De 4:11,12 5:22 Job 38:1 Ps 81:7 Jn 5:37 12:28-30 Ac 9:3-6
- **This**: Mt 3:17 Mk 1:11 9:7 Lu 3:22 9:35 Jn 3:16,35 5:20-23 Eph 1:6 Col 1:13 \*marg: 2Pe 1:16,17
- **in whom**: Mt 12:18 Isa 42:1,21 Jn 15:9,10
- **hear**: Dt 18:15,19 Ac 3:22,23 7:37 Heb 1:1,2 Heb 2:1-3 Heb 5:9 Heb 12:25,26
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:6-7+ For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. 7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, **listen** ([akouo](#) - [present imperative](#)) to Him!"

Luke 9:34-35+ And while he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; **listen** ([akouo](#) - [present imperative](#)) to Him!"

Matthew 3:17+ and **behold**, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Deuteronomy 18:15+ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

Acts 3:22-23+ "Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED in everything He says to you. 23'And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

Acts 7:37+ "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.'

### **PETER'S SPEECH CUT SHORT BY THE FATHER'S PROCLAMATION**

**While he was still speaking, a bright**(shining, full of light) **cloud** ([nephele](#)) **overshadowed** ([episkiazo](#)) **them, and behold** ([idou](#)), **a voice out of the cloud** ([nephele](#)) **said**, "**This is My beloved** ([agapetos](#)) **Son, with whom I am well-pleased** ([eudokeo](#)) **listen** ([akouo](#) - [present imperative](#) - keep listening) **to Him** - Peter's speech is interrupted by God the Father! Only Matthew describes the cloud as **bright** which reminds one of the [Shekinah glory cloud](#), which always symbolized the very presence of God (cf Ex 13:21–22; Ex 34:5–7; 1Ki 8:10–13). God the Father directly affirms Jesus' identity as His **beloved Son**, reiterating His declaration at Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:17+), and in essence placing Him above Moses and Elijah, both revered by the Jews. The Father does not say "listen to Me," but "listen to Him!" The command to **listen** ([akouo](#) - [present imperative](#)) **to Him** recalls the Messianic prophecy in Dt 18:15+ which said "you shall listen to him." The disciples would likely have recognized that Jesus was indeed the OT Prophet foretold by Moses. When **bright cloud overshadowed them** only the transfigured Lord remained standing, emphasizing the perception that Jesus was superior to Moses and Elijah. We cannot be certain if the cloud was simply over them all or whether Jesus, Moses and Elijah were enveloped by the cloud.

The fact that the voice came **out of the cloud** a voice out of the cloud suggests that the disciples were not within the cloud. As an



aside there will be three more cloud appearances - At the ascension of Jesus into Heaven (Acts 1:9+), at the rapture of the saints (1Th 4:17+), and at the Second Coming (Mt 24:30+, Rev 1:7+, Mk 13:26+, Lk 21:27+) Da 7:13 also describes Son of Man with the clouds of heaven.

**Ligon Duncan** calls this "the first step forward in the Christian life," listening to Christ. In his sermon Duncan says "Now when the Father says to Peter, 'Listen to what the Son is saying,' He is saying, 'Peter, the first act of a disciple of My Son, in view of His glory, is to listen to what He says, to trust what He says, to believe what He says, and to obey what He says.' Now Peter, you rebuked My Son for telling you that He was going to die. You listen to My Son. You stop talking, you be quiet for a moment, and you listen to My Son. The Father Himself reinforces the importance of the disciples listening to the truth which Christ was teaching, however uncomfortable it was, about His mission, because it was at the very center of His work on their behalf. God says in effect, this is who My Son really is, this is what He looks like, and so you listen to His teaching about the cross, and about His suffering, about the exodus He is going to accomplish, about the resurrection from the dead. And of course, these words are a striking lesson to the whole church. We all have a tendency to want to speak ourselves, or to listen to what men have to say. Here is God the Father saying, 'No, you listen to what the Son has to say.' That is the first step forward in the Christian life." ([The Transfiguration](#))

**Spurgeon** on the **cloud** - "When God draws near to man it is absolutely necessary that his glory should be veiled. No man can see his face and live. Hence the cloud, in this instance, and in other cases."

**D A Carson** - The Transfiguration was largely for the disciples (Jesus brought the inner three to it; he was transfigured before "them"; the Voice spoke to "them". ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - "While he yet spake." Such wild talk might well be interrupted. What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. "A bright cloud overshadowed them." It was bright, and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it, and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience; yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness, and "a voice out of the cloud"? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with his favoured ones.

The voice was clear and distinct. First came the divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, "This is my beloved Son," and the Father's declaration of delight in him,—“in whom I am well pleased.” What happiness for us that Jehovah is well pleased in Christ, and with all who are in him! Then followed the consequent divine requirement, "Hear ye him." It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest.

The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of his glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the lustre of light could communicate through the eye. The audible part of the transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible; in fact, it would seem, from the next verse, to have been more so.

**NET NOTES** - This cloud is the cloud of God's presence and the voice is his as well. Grk **'my beloved Son,'** or "my Son, the beloved [one]." The force of ἀγαπητός (agapētos) is often "pertaining to one who is the only one of his or her class, but at the same time is particularly loved and cherished" (L&N 58.53; cf. also BDAG 7 s.v. 1). The expression **listen to him** comes from Deut 18:15 and makes two points: 1) Jesus is a prophet like Moses, a leader-prophet, and 2) they have much yet to learn from him.

**Spurgeon** - "If the Father says, 'This is my Son,' observe the graciousness of our adoption! With such a Son the Lord had no need of children. He did not make us his children because he needed sons, but because we needed a father." (cf 1Jn 3:1+)

**Adrian Rogers** - three disciples, two participants, but only one Jesus. Don't forget that: only one Jesus. And if you miss that, you're going to miss the impact of everything that He's saying: "This is my beloved Son ... hear ye him." Peter must have been a Baptist: he wanted to start a building program up there on the mountaintop. But the Lord was not interested in that right then. There's nothing wrong with a building program. But that wasn't the time. God's plan for this world can be put into two words; God's plan for your life can be put into two words: Jesus only—verse 8—"Jesus only." If you miss that, you miss the whole thing. You see, Jesus only is the clue to everything. You want to understand the meaning of things? It's in these words: Jesus only. It's true in creation. All creation was made by Him, all creation was made for Him, and all creation returns back to Him. And the tiniest electrons or the mightiest planet that has ever been swung into space has just one reason for existence. Do you want me to tell you what it is? Jesus only—Jesus only. It's true, dear friend, in redemption and in salvation. The gospel is simply good news about Jesus: that's all it is. You see, the gospel is not a program; the gospel is not a plan; and it is not a philosophy that saves. It is Jesus—one person—Jesus only. It's true in the Bible. Do you want to understand the Bible? Do you want me to give you the key to the Bible? The key to the Bible is Jesus only. You have to understand the Bible in the light of Christ, and understand Christ in the light of the Bible. Jesus only is the clue to the Bible. It's true in prophecy. You want me to tell you the meaning of prophecy? Why, we're not looking for something to happen; we're waiting for Someone to come. Jesus only is true in the Church. The Bible says, "Unto him be glory in the church" (Ephesians 3:21). What does the Church exist for? Jesus only, and that's it. "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him" (Matthew 17:8). ([See page 1312](#))

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**Overshadowed** (1982) [episkiazo](#) from **epi** = upon + **skia** = shadow) "literally, as darkening by partially blocking out a source of light" (Friberg) and so to throw a shadow upon as in Acts 5:15. To cover as with a cloud as in the cloud of Shekinah glory (Exodus 40:34). Even as the Shekinah glory cloud was a visible manifestation of the glory and holy, powerful presence of God, this same divine power which was with Moses and others in the Old Testament was now going to do a unique work in the life of Mary! The more common literal use of **episkiazo** is used in all three accounts of the [transfiguration](#) where a cloud formed (probably the [Shekinah glory cloud](#) from Hebrew = [shakan](#)) and overshadowed Jesus and the 3 disciples Peter and John and James (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34). Then the voice came out of heaven identifying God's Son, but here an angel identified Him. **John MacArthur** comments that **episkiazo** "means "to surround," "to encompass," or in a metaphorical sense, "to influence." The creative influence of the Spirit of God would **overshadow** Mary to produce a child in her womb."....This was a creative act of the Holy Spirit, not the sort of divine-human cohabitation sometimes seen in pagan mythology. Morris adds that "This delicate expression rules out crude ideas of a 'mating' of the Holy Spirit with Mary." **Bengel** adds "Denoting the mildest and most gentle operation of divine power, that the divine fire should not consume Mary, but make her fruitful."

**EPISKIAZO - 5V** - Matt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 1:35; Lk. 9:34; Acts 5:15

**Well-pleased** (take pleasure, be well pleased) (2106) [eudokeo](#) from **eu** = well, good + **dokeo** = to think) means literally to think well of and so to be well pleased, to take pleasure or delight in (This is the sense in which eudokeo is used in He 10:38). The idea is to find satisfaction in something or someone or to view with approval.

To **delight** means to take great pleasure, to give keen enjoyment, to provide a high degree of gratification.

In this regard it is notable that five of the first six uses (the Gospels) refer to the Father's taking pleasure in His Son (in Whom He was "well pleased") (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; cp 2Pe 1:17).

A related sense is to be well pleased with some object and thus to like, prefer or approve of (1Th 3:1, 2Th 2:12). Be content, pleased, delighted (2Co 12:10)

**Eudokeo** means to consider something as good and thus worthy of choice (Lk 12:32, 1Cor 1:21, Gal 1:15). To be glad to do. To be willing. The sense is to take pleasure in doing, eg, in Lk 12:32 God expressed His pleasure by His willingness to grant His kingdom to His children. In 1Cor 1:21, God was "well pleased" or willing to save those who believe the Gospel.

**EUDOKEO - 21V** - Matt. 3:17; Matt. 12:18; Matt. 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22; Lk. 12:32; Rom. 15:26; Rom. 15:27; 1 Co. 1:21; 1 Co. 10:5; 2 Co. 5:8; 2 Co. 12:10; Gal. 1:15; Col. 1:19; 1 Thess. 2:8; 1 Thess. 3:1; 2 Thess. 2:12; Heb. 10:6; Heb. 10:8; Heb. 10:38; 2 Pet. 1:17

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### Spurgeon - Voices from the excellent glory (Full sermon [Voices from the Excellent Glory](#))

'And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Matthew 3:17

'and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' Matthew 17:5

'Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.' John 12:28

God has three times with audible voice spoken out of heaven to bear witness to Jesus. These are historical facts. Then receive with assured conviction the truth to which God bears witness. The Man of Nazareth is the Son of the Highest; the Son of Mary is the Saviour appointed to bear human sin; he is the way of salvation, the only way. Doubt not this truth; accept the Saviour, for God declares that he is well pleased in him. Hear him then with profound reverence, accept the teaching and invitations of Jesus not as the mere utterances of fallible men, but as the instructions and the loving expostulations of God. Respect every word and command of Christ. Listen to him as spirits listen to the voice of the Most High when they bow before the throne; he says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest', hear him and lovingly obey the command. Hear him with unconditional obedience. God attests him as being sent from heaven. 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.' Since he bids you believe him, be not unbelieving. He has told us to say in his name, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' Despise not that double command. Attend, sinner, for the Son of God speaks to you. Trust and be baptized, and you will be saved. There stands the gospel stamped with the authority of deity; obey it now. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so. Hear him, lastly, with joyful confidence. If God has sent Jesus, trust him; if he bears the glory of God's seal upon him, joyfully receive him. You who have trusted him, trust him better from this day forth. Leave your souls confidently in the hand of him of whom Jehovah, thrice speaking out of heaven, declares that he is the only Saviour.

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**Spurgeon Study Bible** - Mt 17:5 "Suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said: 'This is my beloved Son,

with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!" There was a question among the Jews about who the Messiah would be. They believed in the Messiah, but they did not know when he would come, or where, or how. Therefore, when he did come, they made a mistake and missed him. The Father pointed to Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary as to his flesh, and said that this one is his Son. It was a statement of demonstration and distinction, by which the Father marked Jesus out from all others as his own nearest and dearest one. By this he also identified him as being present then and there, not as yet to come but as actually with them, their Master and friend. The Father did not look back into history but laid a hand on the true Messiah, who in flesh and blood stood before them, and three of them witnessed this (see v. 1; 2Pt 1:17–18). They could have made no mistake whatever about whom the Father meant since the word of the Lord so distinctly pointed to him. While it thus pointed to him personally as being present, it also separated him from all others and set him apart as the one and only Son. Moses and Elijah were his servants; only Jesus was his Son. By his being called Son, we are taught that Jesus is of the same nature as God and is indeed God. A man is the father of a man; a man is not the father of that which he makes with his own hands, such as a statue or a painting. But a man is the father of another who is of the same nature as himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ is of the same nature as God in all respects—a true Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is equal in nature to the Father and receives the same honor and worship as the Father.

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## TODAY IN THE WORD

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. - Matthew 17:5

An Awesome Sight - The legendary missionary-explorer David Livingstone was the first European to see Africa's great Victoria Falls, the world's largest waterfalls. Christian History magazine quoted from Livingstone's description of the awesome sight: "'Five columns of smoke [i.e., mist] arose....The whole scene was extremely beautiful...scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.'"

It's hard for us to imagine the scene Livingstone witnessed when he first came upon the mighty waterfalls. He had to borrow heavenly imagery in his attempt to convey the effect the experience had made on him.

In much the same way, the Gospel writers drew on the loftiest language they could think of to describe a scene so dazzling that no earthly experience can compare. Jesus was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John. Something of His eternal nature was revealed as these three disciples saw a preview of Jesus' future glory.

Mark said that Jesus' clothes became dazzling, "'whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them'" (Mark 9:3). Add to this the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the voice of God speaking from heaven, and the disciples were so overwhelmed they fell on their faces.

For the disciples, the Transfiguration was an unforgettable testimony to the deity of Jesus Christ and the truth of His claims. God knew these men would need this heavenly witness in future days. When Jesus was gone, they would be called to bear witness for Him in the face of suffering and persecution.

It's hard to blame Peter for wanting to stay on this mountain of glory--especially when, as we will see tomorrow, the real world with all its problems waited below.

Years later, Peter drew on the Transfiguration to verify the truth of the message the apostles preached (2 Pet. 1:16-18). This event had to be especially reassuring for him, coming just a few days after Jesus' stinging rebuke (Matt. 16:23, 17:1). As Jesus' disciples, if we learn and grow from His rebukes, we too will be all the more ready to share in His glory.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Every parent knows that rebuke is a painful but necessary part of discipline. The joy comes in the reassurance of love that needs to follow. If you are a parent, does your discipline reflect this balance of correction and affirmation? Too much of either one without the other can leave children either frustrated and uptight or lacking in proper boundaries. Let's pray today for God's help in dealing with children the way He deals with us, balancing firm correction with reassuring love. And if you're not a parent, is there someone in your life who needs a word either of correction or affirmation right now? Ask God to help you meet that need in a way pleasing to Him.

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**P G Matthew** - This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!—Matthew 17:5

Just before Jesus' transfiguration, Peter had told Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). This revelation was given to Peter by God the Father. In response to Peter's confession, Jesus taught his disciples that he was soon going to Jerusalem to suffer many things, be killed, and on the third day be raised to life again. All of this had been eternally ordained by God, and Jesus knew it was God's will for him.

Peter, however, could not bear the thought of a suffering Messiah. In rebellion against God's plan, he rebuked Jesus for speaking about his death. Jesus, in turn, reproved Peter severely and said his disciples must deny themselves, take up the cross daily, and

follow him to death, losing their lives in order to gain them when he returns in power and great glory.

So in Matthew 17, Jesus did something to encourage his disciples. He took Peter, James, and John to a high mountain and gave them a preview of the glory that was to follow his suffering on the cross. There, for a brief time, Jesus' body shone with the light and resplendence of his heavenly divinity.

Once again, Peter spoke without thought: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (v. 4). He preferred basking in the glory of God on the mountaintop to going down to Jerusalem with Jesus and resuming a life which, in time, would lead also to his own death. So God commanded him, "Listen to my Son!"

The disciples had to learn that glory comes after death, not before. Hebrews 12:2 says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The transfiguration gave to Jesus and to the disciples, and also to us now, a foretaste of the joy and glory that awaits those who obey God.

This understanding of the transfiguration helped the disciples face the hardships of the days ahead. And it is this understanding of the glory that is to come which ought to motivate us also to persevere as we take up our cross and follow Christ.

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#### **Charles Stanley - On the Mountain with Jesus [Into His Presence: An In Touch Devotional - Page 288](#)**

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 9:1–9

KEY VERSE: Matthew 17:5

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 I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

Peter, James, and John followed Jesus up the high mountain. They must have been mystified, knowing somehow it was a journey during which something important would happen.

Suddenly, Jesus was transformed before their eyes into a dazzling figure, "Shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3). And to add to their astonishment, Elijah and Moses appeared beside Jesus, talking with Him.

Peter's reaction was much as ours would probably be: "He did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid" (Mark 9:6). He wanted to build the radiant figures tabernacles right there on the mountain, to preserve the beautiful moment and keep the vision before their eyes. But Jesus did not answer the request, and the heavenly spectacle was over almost as soon as it had begun. In fact, Jesus even told them not to speak about it until after He had risen from the dead.

When God gives you a special glimpse of His holiness—an intimate view of Himself—He doesn't let you remain in that place indefinitely. He wants you to come back down from the mountain and let His glory fill your heart as you go about the business of daily living. A deeper understanding of His greatness will give you encouragement and energy, and He wants His glory to shine forth from your life as you draw closer to Him.

Father, help me reflect in the valleys of everyday life what I receive in the mountaintop experiences with You.

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#### **[Halley's Bible Handbook \(page 1316\)](#) - What Others Said About Jesus -**

- Mark called Jesus "the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).
- John called Jesus "the Son of God" (John 3:16, 18; 20:31).
- John the Baptist called Jesus "the Son of God" (John 1:34).
- Nathanael called Jesus "the Son of God" (John 1:49).
- Peter called Jesus "the Son of God" (Matthew 16:16).
- Martha called Jesus "the Son of God" (John 11:27).
- The disciples called Jesus "the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).
- The angel Gabriel called Jesus "the Son of God" (Luke 1:32, 35).
- God Himself called Jesus His own "beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17 KJV; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35).
- Evil spirits called Jesus "the Son of God" (Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:41).
- It was commonly recognized that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God:
  - "If you are the Son of God ..." (Matthew 4:3, 6).
  - "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).
  - "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40 KJV).

- "He said, 'I am the Son of God' " (Matthew 27:43).
- "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54).
- "He claimed to be the Son of God" (John 19:7).
- The Rock on which Jesus said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18) was the truth that He is the Son of God.
- Jesus Himself called God (John 1:1; 10:33; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:16; 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20; Jude 25).

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**J C Ryle - The best of men are only men at their very best** (J. C. Ryle, "The Gospel of Matthew" 1856)

While He was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" Matthew 17:5

Let us see in these words a striking lesson to the whole Church of Christ. There is a constant tendency in human nature to "hear man" . . .

bishops,  
priests,  
deacons,  
popes,  
cardinals,  
councils,  
preachers,  
and ministers,

are continually exalted to a place which God never intended them to fill, and made practically to usurp the honor of Christ.

Against this tendency let us all watch, and be on our guard. Let these solemn words of the vision ever ring in our ears, "Listen to Christ!"

The best of men are only men at their very best . . .

patriarchs,  
prophets,  
apostles,  
martyrs,  
church fathers,  
reformers,  
puritans;

all, all are sinners, who need a Savior.

They may be holy, useful, honorable in their place; but they are sinners after all. They must never be allowed to stand between us and Christ.

He alone is the Son, in whom the Father is well pleased.

He alone is sealed and appointed to give the bread of life.

He alone "hold the keys of death and the grave" in His hands.

Let us take heed that we hear His voice, and follow Him.

Let us value all religious teaching just in proportion as it leads us to Jesus. The sum and substance of saving religion is to "listen to Christ!"

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**Oswald Chambers** —Matthew 17:5 [Devotions for a Deeper Life](#)

WE MUST NOT SUPPOSE THAT we are left with the great revelation of our Lord and the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, without any interpretation of what they mean for our lives. The Bible is the interpretation, and our Lord's work is never understood apart from the Bible.

A final court of appeal, in matters of the spirit, is given us in the Bible. It is not a question of the infallibility of the Bible; that is a side issue. What matters is the finality of the Bible.

Just as our Lord is the final revelation of God incarnate, so the Bible is the final revelation that interprets the meaning of God incarnate. I can understand the two by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who identifies me with both.

Such a revelation as our Lord Jesus Christ ought to have a corresponding revelation to interpret Him. In the Bible we have that corresponding revelation, and it is final.

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Arranged for family devotions, for every day in the year. By [Favell Lee Mortimer](#) (1802—1878)

Matthew 17:5-9. The voice of God on the Mount.

In the Old Testament, we read of God speaking to Israel from the top of Mount Sinai. On that occasion there was blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" and so terrible was the sound, that Israel entreated that they might hear the voice of God no more. (Deut. 5:25.)

In how different a manner God spoke to the three favored apostles on the summit of Mount Tabor! And what was the reason of this difference?

The words that the Father spoke tell us why he laid aside his terrors, and arrayed himself in the mildest beams of celestial glory. He was well pleased in his beloved Son. His wrath against a guilty world was displayed upon Mount Sinai; his delight in his righteous Son was manifested upon Mount Tabor. Neither was his favor shown to his Son alone, but to those three trembling apostles who loved that Son; for they also entered into the bright cloud. Why then were they so sore afraid? Why did they fall on their faces? Because, since man became a sinner, he has never been able to bear the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. The smoke and the torments of hell are not the only sights that would overwhelm a mortal man; the brightness and the joys of heaven would be more than he could bear to behold. Now Peter perceived how unwisely he had spoken when he had requested always to abide on that mountain top. But God, who knew the weakness of his dying creatures, did not prolong the glorious scene. In a little while the apostles were left alone with Jesus. Though they felt his familiar hand, and heard his well-known voice, yet at first they could hardly believe that the heavenly vision was past. Mark records that they "looked round about, and saw no man any more, save Jesus, with themselves."

Who can conceive the feelings with which those three apostles descended the mount! They had seen heaven come down to earth; how could they return to earth again! They had beheld glorified saints; they had heard the voice of the eternal Father; they had witnessed the glories of their beloved, yet despised Master. Who can doubt that their hearts were burning with the desire to describe the wonderful scene to their brethren at the foot of the mount, and perhaps even to declare it to the proud enemies that continually assailed them with taunts and reproaches. But Jesus imposed silence upon them. He said, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." He knew that at this time they would have been disbelieved, if they had related what they had seen. It was enough for these blessed disciples that they themselves had enjoyed a glimpse of celestial glory. The recollection would help to sustain their faith when they should behold their Lord agonizing and bleeding in the garden; for it is remarkable that Jesus chose the same men to be witnesses of his glory and of his agony.

And why did he distinguish these three above their brethren? Was it not because they were appointed to endure peculiar trials? The Lord foretold that James and John would drink of his cup of bitterness, and be baptized with his baptism of suffering; and he prepared Peter for the painful and ignominious death of the cross. Jesus knows beforehand what sufferings each of his servants will be called to endure, and he knows who most needs bright displays of his present glory, and near views of his past agonies. In acute suffering of any kind, the thoughts that most sustain the mind are the remembrance of Christ crucified, and the anticipation of beholding Christ glorified. How many have said, when in great pain, "What are my sufferings compared to the sufferings of Jesus for my sins!" How many when pressed down with sorrow have felt, "How soon will the sight of my glorious Redeemer make my present grief appear light as air!"

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**Henry Blackaby** - "This Is My Beloved Son . . . Hear Him!"—Matthew 17:5 [Experiencing God Day by Day: Daily Devotional - Page 57](#)

Peter and the other disciples were continually disoriented to God. While Jesus was concerned about one thing, it seems that the disciples were always distracted by something else. In order to help his three closest disciples better focus on His imminent sacrifice on the cross, Jesus took them up to the Mount of Transfiguration. There, Jesus was transfigured into a glorious state and was joined by Moses and Elijah, two of history's mightiest men of God. The disciples, however, were asleep! At one of the most profound moments in history, the disciples were more interested in sleep than they were in praying with the Son of God.

When the disciples awakened, they became distracted again. This time, Peter announced his plans to build three tabernacles. The



disciples were more concerned with what they could do for God than the incredible work of redemption God was about to accomplish through His Son. Finally, God removed everything from the disciples' sight but Jesus. "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

It is so easy to become spiritually distracted. Do you find yourself focusing on everything else but Christ and the work He is doing around you? Are you so eager to "get to the work" that you have not yet clearly heard what is on God's heart? Does the Father need to remove from your life those things that are proving to be a distraction to you? Do you need to refocus on Jesus?

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**Robert Hawker** - the moment of those blessed manifestations which Jesus was making to them, and when, to heighten their felicity, several of the inhabitants of glory came, and spake to Jesus in the view of his disciples, yet so sudden was the change, that even while Jesus spake, a cloud intervened and obscured all. Somewhat of the same change thou hast thyself known. How often hast thou been made like the chariots of Amminadib, by the overpowering grace that Jesus hath shown thee! And how often have those blessed moments been followed by a dark and long night! And what ought to be thy improvement of these dispensations? Look still to Jesus under all. Whatever changes are induced, never forget that his person is the same, and his love the same. Mark this down. Next look up to Jesus, and tell him, that as his visits are so sweet, so gracious and blessed, entreat the dear Lord, to be often coming, often blessing thee with his love, and making his abode with thee. And see that thou art improving every occasion, and making the most of those hallowed seasons; for they are most blessed and precious; while thy Lord is with thee, and feasting thee with his love, and showing thee his secret: mark the Bethel-places, made sacred by his presence, and the Bethel-communications, made pleasant in coming from him. And do not forget to interest Jesus for Zion. Tell him that Zion is his own, and thou knowest that he loves her. Then, on the ground of this love, tell him how she languisheth, in the present awful day of much profession, with but little vital godliness. And while "the King is held" by thee "in the galleries" of his grace, bring in the arms of thy faith all thou wouldst seek a blessing for; thy children, if thou hast any, thy family, the Church at large, the nation; and do, as did the patriarchs, wrestle, plead, hold fast, and take no refusal, but say, "Lord, thou comest to bless, and a blessing I must have; neither will I let thee go, except thou bless me."

**Matthew 17:6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified.**

- Lev 9:24 Jdg 13:20,22 1Ch 21:16 Eze 3:23 43:3 Da 8:17 10:7-9 Da 10:16,17 Ac 22:7 26:14 2Pe 1:18

#### Related Passages:

Daniel 10:7-9+ Now I, Daniel, alone saw the **vision**, while the men who were with me did not see the **vision**; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. 8S So I was left alone and saw this great **vision**; yet **no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength**. 9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Exodus 19:16+ So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

Deuteronomy 5:5+ while I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain. He said,

Hebrews 12:18-19+ For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them.

### DISCIPLES FALL DOWN AT SOUND OF GOD'S VOICE

**When the disciples ([mathetes](#)) heard this, they fell ([pipto](#)) face down ([prosopon](#)) to the ground and were terrified ([phobeo](#) + [sphodra](#) = greatly)** - It is interesting that they did not hit the ground at the sight of Jesus' transfigured, but when the Father spoke from Heaven. Of the synoptic accounts only Matthew describes them falling **face down**. While falling **face down** may have had some component of reverential awe and devotion, it likely had a significant component of sheer terror (as when Daniel saw the vision in Da 10:7-9+, cf effect of Mt Sinai on the Israelites in Heb 12:18,19+).

*Deeper impression was produced by the words*

of the Lord than by the blinding light

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - Yes, the voice overcame them. Deeper impression was produced by the words of the Lord than by the blinding light. "When the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid." They were in the immediate presence of God, and listening to the Father's voice: well might they lie prostrate and tremble. Too clear a manifestation of God, even though it related to Jesus, would rather over-power than empower us. The three disciples said no more about building tabernacles, but as one man, "They fell on their face." Awe is the end of talk: in this case it looked as if it were the end of consciousness; but this was only a temporary swoon, from which they would recover, and be all the more joyous.

**NET NOTES** - Grk "they fell down on their faces." BDAG 815 s.v. πίπτω 1.has "fall down, throw oneself to the ground as a sign of devotion, before high-ranking persons or divine beings."

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**Disciples** (3101) **mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*" - see **matheteuo**) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Another sources says mathetes is from from **math**- which speaks of "mental effort that thinks something through" and thus describes is a learner; a follower who learns the doctrines and the lifestyle of the one they follow. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf **inductive Bible study**) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher. As discussed below **mathetes** itself has no spiritual connotation, and it is used of superficial followers of Jesus as well as of genuine believers. The Lord calls everyone to grow as a disciple (a learner of Christ; cf. also Mt 11:29,30), one who lives in faith, who lives in and by His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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The Old and New Testaments tell of those who fell to the ground when they encountered the presence of God.

### Abraham

Context: When God appeared to reaffirm His covenant with Abraham.

Response: Abraham fell on his face before God.

Reference: "Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him..." — Genesis 17:3+

### Moses

Context: At the burning bush, when God revealed His name and mission for Moses.

Response: Moses hid his face and bowed, recognizing the holy presence of God.

Reference: "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." — Exodus 3:6+

### Joshua

Context: When the commander of the Lord's army (likely a **Christophany**) appeared before Joshua before the conquest of Jericho.

Response: Joshua fell on his face to the ground in worship.

Reference: "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No, rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" — Joshua 5:13-14+

### Ezekiel

Context: During a vision of God's glory.

Response: Ezekiel fell facedown in awe and reverence in recognition of God's sovereignty.

Reference: "When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking." — Ezekiel 1:28+

So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face. — Ezekiel 3:23+

### Daniel

Context: When he encountered angelic visions and God's glory.

Response: Daniel fell prostrate, overwhelmed by the vision.

Reference: "So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me... I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground." — Daniel 10:8-9+

### **The Disciples at the Transfiguration**

Context: When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain and His divine glory was revealed.

Response: Peter, James, and John fell facedown, terrified at the voice of God.

Reference: "When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified." — Matthew 17:6

### **Saul (Paul) on the Road to Damascus**

Context: When Saul encountered the risen Jesus in a blinding light.

Response: He fell to the ground, struck by the power of Jesus' presence.

Reference: "And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" — Acts 9:4+

"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' — Acts 26:14+

### **John on the Island of Patmos**

Context: When John saw the glorified Jesus in his vision recorded in Revelation.

Response: John fell at Jesus' feet as though dead.

Reference: "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead." — Revelation 1:17+

### **The Guards at Jesus' Arrest**

Context: When the guards came to arrest Jesus, He declared, "I am He."

Response: They drew back and fell to the ground at the power of His words.

Reference: "When Jesus said to them, 'I am He,' they drew back and fell to the ground." — John 18:6

### **The Lord Jesus Christ**

Context: When faced with the nearness of the Cross.

Response: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane fell on His face surrendering His will to His Father's will, giving us His example to follow in difficult circumstances.

Reference: And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." — Matthew 26:39+

### **The Apostle Peter**

Context: When Peter witnessed the miraculous catch of fish and recognized Jesus' divine power.

Response: Peter fell at Jesus' knees, overwhelmed by his own sinfulness.

Reference: "But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" — Luke 5:8+

### **The Canaanite Woman**

Context: The Canaanite woman's daughter is cruelly demon-possessed

Response: She knelt before Jesus, pleading for her daughter's healing expressing her total dependence.

Reference: "But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" — Matthew 15:25+

### **Spiritual Themes**

#### **1. Reverence and Awe:**

- Falling to the ground reflects the overwhelming glory and holiness of God.

#### **2. Fear of the Lord:**

- Encounters with God or His messengers often evoke fear, highlighting human frailty in the presence of divine majesty.

### 3. **Worship and Submission:**

- Falling prostrate signifies surrender and acknowledgment of God's sovereignty.

### 4. **Transformation:**

- These encounters often lead to profound spiritual change, such as Saul's conversion to Paul.

## **Application**

- These Biblical accounts remind us of the **majesty and holiness of God**, calling believers to approach Him with reverence and humility.
- These Biblical accounts encourage a posture of **submission and worship**, recognizing our dependence on God and His greatness.
- These Biblical accounts also highlight that divine encounters often lead to **transformation and purpose** in the lives of those who experience them.
- Physical Posture Reflects Heart Posture: While falling on your face or kneeling isn't mandatory, it can reinforce a spiritual attitude of humility, dependence, and reverence.
- Let falling on your face before God remind you of your unworthiness apart from His grace and your complete dependence on His mercy.
- Even when unable to physically bow, approach God in your heart with the same humility and awe.
- Use moments of physical surrender during prayer or worship to deepen your connection with God.
- Have you ever fallen on your face before the Lord?
- The thought of falling on my face before Jesus always brings to mind the great worship song by Mercy Me, [I Can Only Imagine](#). Take a moment and listen to it as you contemplate that coming day when we will see Him in His glory just as Peter, James and John saw Him on the wonderful day in Israel.

### [I can only imagine](#)

What it will be like  
 When I walk by Your side  
 I can only imagine  
 What my eyes would see  
 When Your face is before me  
 I can only imagine  
 Yeah

Surrounded by Your glory  
 What will my heart feel?  
 Will I dance for You Jesus  
 Or in awe of You be still?  
 Will I stand in Your presence  
 Or to my knees, will I fall?  
 Will I sing hallelujah?  
 Will I be able to speak at all?  
 I can only imagine  
 I can only imagine

I can only imagine  
 When that day comes  
 And I find myself  
 Standing in the Son  
 I can only imagine  
 When all I will do  
 Is forever, forever worship You  
 I can only imagine, yeah  
 I can only imagine

Surrounded by Your glory  
 What will my heart feel?  
 Will I dance for you Jesus

Or in awe of You be still?  
Will I stand in your presence  
Or to my knees will I fall?  
Will I sing hallelujah?  
Will I be able to speak at all?  
I can only imagine, yeah  
I can only imagine

Surrounded by Your glory  
What will my heart feel?  
Will I dance for you Jesus  
Or in awe of You be still?  
Will I stand in your presence  
Or to my knees, will I fall?  
Will I sing hallelujah?  
Will I be able to speak at all?

I can only imagine, yeah  
I can only imagine  
I can only imagine, yeah-yeah  
I can only imagine  
I can only imagine  
I can only imagine

I can only imagine  
When all I will do  
Is forever, forever worship You  
I can only imagine

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**A W Tozer - THE WONDER, THE MYSTERY, THE MAJESTY** [Tozer on the Almighty God: A 365-Day Devotional - Page 16](#)

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. —Matthew 17:6

“Awesome wonder and overpowering love” in the presence of that ancient Mystery, that unspeakable Majesty, which the philosophers call the Mysterium Tremendum, but which we call our Father which art in heaven....

The evangelical rationalism which tries to explain everything takes the mystery out of life and the mystery out of worship. When you have taken the mystery out you have taken God out, for while we may be able to understand Him in some measure, we can never fully understand God. There must always be that awe upon our spirits that says, “Ah, Lord God, Thou knowest!”—that stands silent and breathless or kneels in the presence of that awful Wonder, that Mystery, that unspeakable Majesty, before whom the prophets used to fall, and before whom Peter and John and the rest of them fell down as if dead, before whom Isaiah recoiled and cried, “I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). WMJ005-006

Lord, the disciples heard Your voice and fell on their faces before You, as did Isaiah when he caught a glimpse of Your glory. May I be overwhelmed today with a glimpse of the Mysterium Tremendum. Amen.

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**Stephen Olford -** [According to Your Word: Morning and Evening Through the New ...](#)

“When they... saw the young Child... [they] fell down and worshiped Him.”—Matthew 2:11

Paul says, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). “The young Child”—God manifest in the flesh!

Is it any wonder the wise men worshipped? They “fell down and worshipped Him.” Notice how often men fell at the feet of Jesus:

- “They... fell down” at His birth (v. 11).
- “They fell on their faces” at His Transfiguration (Matt. 17:6).
- They fell down and “held Him by the feet” at His Resurrection (Matt. 28:9).
- “I fell at His feet as dead”—at His Glorification (Rev. 1:17).

There are even more occasions, but at each they fell in worship, wonder, and awe.

Lord, give me these visions by faith, that I may similarly worship.

- **touched:** Da 8:18 9:21 10:10,18 Rev 1:17
- **Arise:** Lu 24:5 Ac 9:6
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Revelation 1:17+ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “**Do not be afraid**; I am the first and the last,

### NO FEAR JESUS IS HERE

And Jesus came to ([proserchomai](#)) them and touched ([hapto/haptomai](#)) them and said, “**Get up** ([egeiro](#) - [aorist imperative](#)), and **do not be afraid** ([phobeo](#) - [present imperative with a negative](#))” - Only Matthew reports that Jesus **touched** the disciples and gave two commands, first to arise and then to cease being afraid. John would surely have remembered Jesus touch at the transfiguration when he encountered the risen, glorified Christ in the Revelation and was touched and told not to fear.

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - Jesus had seemed to go away from them, lost in a cloud of brightness; but now he “came and touched them.” His communings with pure spirits did not make him disdain the touch of feeble flesh. Oh, the sweet comfort of that gentle touch! It aroused, consoled, and strengthened his amazed and trembling disciples. The touch of the manhood is more reassuring to poor flesh and blood than the blaze of the Godhead. The voice from heaven casts down; but the word from Jesus is, “Arise.” The Father's voice made them sore afraid, but Jesus says, “Be not afraid.” Glorious God, how much we bless thee for the Mediator!

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Jesus Frequently Gave the Command **Do not fear** or **Do not be afraid.**

#### 1. When Calling the Disciples

- **Luke 5:10:** “**Do not be afraid; from now on you will catch men.**”
  - **Context:** After the miraculous catch of fish, Jesus reassured Peter, who felt unworthy, and called him to become a “fisher of men.”

#### 2. During the Storm on the Sea

- **Matthew 14:27:** “**Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.**”
  - **Context:** Jesus walked on water to the disciples' boat during a storm. They were terrified, thinking He was a ghost, but He calmed their fears with these words.
- **Mark 6:50:** “**Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.**”
  - **Context:** Mark's account of Jesus walking on water.
- **John 6:20:** “*It is I; do not be afraid.*”
  - **Context:** Similar reassurance during the storm as recorded in John's Gospel.

#### 3. After the Resurrection

- **Matthew 28:5-10:**
  - The angel at the tomb said to the women: “**Do not be afraid**, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.”
  - Later, Jesus appeared to the women and said: “**Do not be afraid.** Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”



- **Context:** Jesus reassured the women after His resurrection, calming their shock and giving them a mission.

#### 4. To Jairus Regarding His Daughter

- **Mark 5:36:** *“Do not fear, only believe.”*
  - **Context:** When Jairus was told his daughter had died, Jesus encouraged him to trust in His power to heal and restore life.
- **Luke 8:50:** *“Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.”*
  - **Context:** Luke's account of Jairus and his daughter.

#### 5. To the Disciples Regarding Persecution

- **Matthew 10:26-31:**
  - *“Therefore **do not fear** them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 27 “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28 “And **do not fear** those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear** Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 “Therefore **do not fear**; you are of more value than many sparrows..*
  - **Context:** Jesus prepared His disciples for persecution, reminding them of God's care and sovereignty. Jesus instructed His disciples to fear God alone, not human threats, as they faced persecution.
- **Luke 12:4-7**
  - *“And I say to you, My friends, **do not be afraid** of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: **fear** the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, **fear** Him! 6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **Do not fear**; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

#### 6. At the Transfiguration

- **Matthew 17:7:** *“ And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “**Arise**, and **do not be afraid**.”*
  - **Context:** When Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and were terrified at the voice of God, Jesus touched them and reassured them.

#### 7. Before His Crucifixion

- **John 14:27:** *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. **Let not** your heart **be troubled**, nor **let it be fearful**.”*
  - **Context:** During the Last Supper, Jesus comforted His disciples as He prepared them for His departure and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

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### Themes in Jesus' Words “Do Not Be Afraid”

1. **Assurance of His Presence:**
  - Jesus reassured His followers that His presence brings peace and protection, even in the face of fear.
2. **Encouragement of Faith:**
  - He often linked “Do not fear” with an invitation to trust in Him, as in the stories of Jairus and Peter.

### 3. Preparation for Mission:

- Jesus encouraged His disciples to be courageous in their calling, knowing He was with them.

### 4. Hope Beyond Death:

- In the resurrection accounts, Jesus reminded His followers that His victory over death eliminates the ultimate cause of fear.

**Matthew 17:8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.**

KJV Matthew 17:8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save **Jesus only**.

BGT Matthew 17:8 π ραντες δ το ς φθαλμο ς α τ ν ο δ να ε δον ε μ α τ ν η σο ν μ νον.

NET Matthew 17:8 When they looked up, all they saw was Jesus alone.

CSB Matthew 17:8 When they looked up they saw no one except Him-- Jesus alone.

ESV Matthew 17:8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

NIV Matthew 17:8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

NLT Matthew 17:8 And when they looked, they saw only Jesus.

NRS Matthew 17:8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

NJB Matthew 17:8 And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus.

NAB Matthew 17:8 And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

YLT Matthew 17:8 and having lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus only.

MIT Matthew 17:8 When they raised their eyes, they saw no one else—only Jesus.

GWN Matthew 17:8 As they raised their heads, they saw no one but Jesus.

BBE Matthew 17:8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, but Jesus only.

RSV Matthew 17:8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

NKJ Matthew 17:8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

ASV Matthew 17:8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only.

DBY Matthew 17:8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus alone.

NIRV Matthew 17:8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

- **they saw:** Mk 9:8 Lu 9:36 Ac 12:10,11
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 9:8+ And all at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

Luke 9:36+ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

**JESUS ONLY  
HE IS ENOUGH!**

**And lifting up ([epairo](#)) their eyes ([ophthalmos](#)), they saw ([horao](#)) no one except Jesus Himself alone** - Moses and Elijah were gone and there is no note that Jesus was glorified, so His appearance must have returned to "normal!" The phrase **Jesus Himself alone** underscores that He is sufficient and supreme. The disciples are to fix their eyes on Him as their guide, teacher, and Savior. These 3 men would never see Him as only a Man for the remainder of their days. God give us each a vision of Jesus as we see Him

in His word, so that it might have a life transforming effect on us to passionately pursue holiness and His glory. Amen

One thought to ponder if one assumes Moses symbolizes the Law and Elijah the Prophets is that when only Jesus remains it depicts Him as the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. In Mt 5:17 He declared "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill."

Matthew 17:8KJV ends with **JESUS ONLY** which encapsulates the heart of the Christian faith as the singular focus on Jesus as the sufficient Savior and the ultimate revelation of the Father (Jn 1:18+). The disciples' experience challenges us to center our lives on Him, trusting that in all things "Jesus only" is enough.

*Oh, that we also may have the eye of our mind so fixed on the Lord  
as our one object, that HE may fill the whole field of our vision,  
and we may see **Jesus only!***

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - Closed were their eyes, because of "the too transporting light"; and they dared not open them till they felt the touch of Jesus. Then they lifted up their eyes. What did they see? Moses, and Elias, and the exceeding brightness had all gone, and they had come back to the common-places of their life with Jesus. "They saw no man," but they had lost nothing, since Jesus remained. They had gained by the vanishing of the shining ones, since they could see Jesus all the better, and their attention was not divided. The vision of his transfiguration had blinded them, had stupefied them; but to see "Jesus only" was to come back to practical life, and to have the best of all sights still left to them. Oh, that we also may have the eye of our mind so fixed on the Lord as our one object, that HE may fill the whole field of our vision, and we may see **Jesus only!**

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## **JESUS ONLY**

Upon the mount, the glory shone,  
A glimpse of heaven's radiant throne.  
With Moses near and Elijah too,  
The Law and Prophets came into view.

Yet when the cloud had cleared away,  
And fear gave way to dawning day,  
No voice remained, no figures stayed—  
But **Jesus only**, there displayed.

**Jesus only**, Sovereign King,  
The one to whom the angels sing.  
No greater truth, no higher call,  
Than Christ alone, the All in All.

**Jesus only**, hope and light,  
The guide through storms, the end of night.  
When other voices fade or flee,  
It's **Jesus only** Who carries me.

The world may offer fleeting dreams,  
Bright promises in golden gleams,  
But as they dim, one truth will stay:  
That Jesus leads the narrow way.

Not wealth, nor fame, nor power's pride,  
But Christ alone, the crucified.  
His grace sufficient, love unbound,  
In **Jesus only**, life is found.

So lift your eyes to Him above,  
Embrace His mercy, trust His love.  
When doubts arise or trials fall,  
Remember Him Who is your all.

For on that mount or in the plain,  
Through joy or sorrow, loss or gain,

The heart's true peace, its melody—  
Is found in **Jesus only**.

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Listen to Casting Crown's song [ONLY JESUS](#).

Make it count, leave a mark, build a name for yourself  
Dream your dreams, chase your heart, above all else  
Make a name the world remembers  
But all an empty world can sell is empty dreams  
I got lost in the light when it was up to me  
To make a name the world remembers  
But Jesus is the only name to remember

And I, I don't want to leave a legacy  
I don't care if they remember me  
Only Jesus  
And I, I've only got one life to live  
I'll let every second point to Him  
Only Jesus

All the kingdoms built, all the trophies won  
Will crumble into dust when it's said and done  
'Cause all that really mattered  
Did I live the truth to the ones I love?  
Was my life the proof that there is only One  
Whose name will last forever?

And I, I don't want to leave a legacy  
I don't care if they remember me  
Only Jesus  
And I, I've only got one life to live  
I'll let every second point to Him  
Only Jesus

Jesus is the only Name  
Jesus is the only Name  
Jesus is the only name to remember, oh  
Jesus is the only Name  
Jesus is the only Name  
Jesus is the only Name to remember

And I, I don't want to leave a legacy  
I don't care if they remember me  
Only Jesus  
And I, I've only got one life to live  
I'll let every second point to Him  
Only Jesus

I don't want to leave a legacy  
I don't care if they remember me

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*And when they had lifted up their eyes,  
they saw no man, save **Jesus only**.*  
-- Matthew 17:8KJV

**ILLUSTRATIONS - The Lens of a Telescope:** A telescope helps you focus on distant stars by blocking out everything else. Without the telescope, the stars are overshadowed by the surrounding light. The Transfiguration served as a "telescope moment" for the disciples, allowing them to see Jesus' divine glory clearly. When the vision ended, **Only Jesus** remained—He was the focus, just as He should be for believers today.

**Clearing the Stage** - In a theater production, supporting actors and props set the stage, but when the spotlight falls, it focuses on the main character. All other elements fade into the background. Moses and Elijah "set the stage" for the Transfiguration, pointing to Jesus as the culmination of their OT ministries. When the moment ended, **Jesus Only** remained in the spotlight, showing His centrality.

**The Last Voice in a Symphony** - In a symphony, various instruments play, but the final note belongs to the lead instrument. That note lingers, leaving the audience with the central theme. Moses and Elijah's appearance was like a symphony leading to the final and most important note: **Jesus Only**. The message is clear—Jesus is the One we are to "Listen to" and follow (cf Mk 8:34-36+).

**A Pilot's Compass** - A pilot relies on their compass when navigating through clouds. The compass provides the focus they need to avoid distractions and reach their destination. The disciples were reminded to keep their focus on **Jesus Only** as their "compass," guiding them through confusion, fear, and doubt (cf Heb 12:2+).

**The Mountain and the Valley** - After a mountain hike, you descend into the valley where daily life continues. The mountain may have offered a stunning view, but you carry its perspective with you into the valley. The Transfiguration was a mountain-top moment where the disciples saw Jesus' glory. As they descended into the challenges of life, they were left with "Jesus only," reminding them that His presence is enough. In a world full of distractions, **Jesus Only** reminds us to center our lives on Him, trusting His sufficiency in all things (Phil 4:13+). Like the disciples, we may face fear and uncertainty, but Jesus' presence reassures us. He is with us always (Matthew 28:20).

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**Warren Wiersbe** - The Transfiguration revealed four aspects of the glory of Jesus Christ the King.

**The glory of His person.** As far as the record is concerned, this is the only time Jesus revealed His glory in this way while He was on the earth. The word translated transfigured gives us our English word "metamorphosis." A metamorphosis is a change on the outside that comes from the inside. When a caterpillar builds a cocoon and later emerges as a butterfly, it is due to the process of metamorphosis. Our Lord's glory was not reflected but radiated from within. There was a change on the outside that came from within as He allowed His essential glory to shine forth (Heb. 1:3).

Certainly this event would strengthen the faith of the disciples, particularly Peter who had so recently confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. Had Peter made his confession after the Transfiguration, it would not have been so meaningful. Peter believed, confessed his faith, and then received assurance (see John 11:40; Heb. 11:6).

Many years later, John recalled this event as the Spirit guided him to write: "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In his Gospel, John emphasized the deity of Christ and the glory of His person (John 2:11; 7:39; 11:4; 12:23; 13:31–32; 20:31).

Jesus Christ laid aside His glory when He came to earth (John 17:5). Because of His finished work on the cross, He has received back His glory and now shares it with us (John 17:22, 24). However, we do not have to wait for heaven to share in this "transfiguration glory." When we surrender ourselves to God, He will "transfigure" our minds (Rom. 12:1–2). As we yield to the Spirit of God, He changes (transfigures) us "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). As we look into the Word of God, we see the Son of God and are transfigured by the Spirit of God into the glory of God.

**The glory of His kingdom.** At the close of His sermon about cross-bearing, Jesus promised that some of the disciples would see "the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). He selected Peter, James, and John as witnesses to this event. These three friends and business partners (Luke 5:10) had been with Jesus in the home of Jairus (Luke 8:51), and they would go with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion (see Matt. 26:37).

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan has pointed out that these three occasions all had to do with death. Jesus was teaching these three men that He was victor over death (He raised Jairus' daughter) and surrendered to death (in the Garden). The Transfiguration taught them that He was glorified in death.

The presence of Moses and Elijah was significant. Moses represented the Law and Elijah the prophets. All of the Law and Prophets point to Christ and are fulfilled in Christ (Luke 24:27; Heb. 1:1). Not one word of the Old Testament Scriptures will be unfulfilled. The promised kingdom would be established (Luke 1:32–33, 68–77). Just as the three disciples saw Jesus glorified on earth, so God's people would see Him in His glorious kingdom on earth (Rev. 19:11–20:6).

Peter caught this message and never forgot it. "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty ... And so we have the prophetic word made more sure" (see 2 Peter 1:12ff). The experience Peter had on the mount only fortified his faith in the Old Testament prophecies. The important thing is not seeing wonderful sights, but hearing God's Word. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. 17:5).

All who are born again belong to the kingdom of God (John 3:3–5). This is a spiritual kingdom that is separate from the material things of this world (Rom. 14:17). But one day, when Jesus returns to this earth, there will be a glorious kingdom for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1–7) with Jesus Christ reigning as King. Those who have trusted Him shall reign on the earth with Him (Rev. 5:10).

**The glory of His cross.** The disciples had to learn that suffering and glory go together. Peter had opposed His going to Jerusalem to die, so Jesus had to teach him that, apart from His suffering and death, there could be no glory. Peter certainly learned the lesson, for in his first epistle he repeatedly emphasized “suffering and glory” (1 Peter 1:6–8, 11; 4:12–5:11).

Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about His “exodus” that He would accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). His suffering and death would not be an accident, but an accomplishment. Peter used the word exodus in describing his own impending death (2 Peter 1:15). For the believer, death is not a one-way street into oblivion. It is an exodus—a release—from the bondage of this life into the glorious liberty of the life in heaven.

Because Jesus died and paid the price, we have been redeemed—purchased and set free. The two Emmaus disciples had hoped that Jesus would set the nation free from Roman bondage (Luke 24:21). What He died to accomplish was not political freedom, but spiritual freedom: freedom from the world system (Gal. 1:4); freedom from a vain and empty life (1 Peter 1:18); and freedom from iniquity (Titus 2:14). Our redemption in Christ is final and permanent.

**The glory of His submission.** Peter could not understand why the Son of God would submit to evil men and willingly suffer. The Transfiguration was God’s way of teaching Peter that Jesus is glorified when we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. The world’s philosophy is “Save yourself!” but the Christian’s philosophy is “Yield yourself to God!” As He stood there in glory, Jesus proved to the three disciples that surrender always leads to glory. First the suffering, then the glory; first the cross, then the crown.

Each of the three disciples would have a need for this important truth. James would be the first of the disciples to die (Acts 12:1–2). John would be the last of the disciples to die, but he would go through severe persecution on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). Peter would experience many occasions of suffering and would, in the end, give his life for Christ (John 21:15–19; 2 Peter 1:12).

Peter opposed the cross when Jesus first mentioned His death (Matt. 16:22ff). In the Garden, he used his sword to defend Jesus (John 18:10). In fact, even on the Mount of Transfiguration Peter tried to tell Jesus what to do. He wanted to build three booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah so that all of them could remain there and enjoy the glory! But the Father interrupted Peter and gave other directions: “Hear Him!” The Father will not permit His beloved Son to be put on the same level as Moses and Elijah. “Jesus only” (Matt. 17:8) is God’s pattern.

As Jesus and His three disciples came down from the mountaintop, He cautioned them not to reveal what they had seen, not even to the other nine disciples. But the three men were still perplexed. They had been taught that Elijah would come first to prepare for the establishing of the kingdom. Was the presence of Elijah on the mountain the fulfillment of this prophecy? (Mal. 4:5–6)

Jesus gave a twofold answer to their question. Yes, Elijah would come as Malachi 4:5–6 promised. But spiritually speaking, Elijah already came in the person of John the Baptist (see Matt. 11:10–15; Luke 1:17). The nation permitted John to be killed, and would ask for Jesus to be slain. Yet God’s program would be fulfilled in spite of the deeds of sinful leaders.

When will Elijah come to restore all things? Some people believe that Elijah will be one of the “two witnesses” whose ministry is described in Revelation 11. Others believe that the prophecy was fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist so that there will be no future coming of Elijah. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

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**Spurgeon - Jesus only** (See full sermon [Jesus Only](#))

‘And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.’ Matthew 17:8

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives and acts may be ‘Jesus only.’ I believe that whenever our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but ‘Jesus only.’ I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, rich, rare and celestial, they are always connected with ‘Jesus only’; other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the most sublime and divine of all joys must be found in ‘Jesus only.’ In short, I find if I want to labour much, I must live on ‘Jesus only’; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on ‘Jesus only’; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead ‘Jesus only’; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of ‘Jesus only’; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of ‘Jesus only.’ I believe that anything which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our souls become, the



more nearly like what they are to be when they shall enter into the region of the perfect, the more completely everything else will sink and die out; and Jesus, 'Jesus only', will be first and last, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian!

**Matthew 17:9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."**

ESV Matthew 17:9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

NIV Matthew 17:9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone **what you have seen**, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

NLT Matthew 17:9 As they went back down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Don't tell anyone **what you have seen** until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

MIT Matthew 17:9 While they were descending the mountain, Jesus issued orders to them, "Make no reference **to this phenomenon** until the human one has been raised from the dead."

GWN Matthew 17:9 On their way down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen. Wait until the Son of Man has been brought back to life."

BBE Matthew 17:9 And when they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus gave them orders, saying, Let no man have word of what you have seen, till the Son of man has come again from the dead.

RSV Matthew 17:9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead."

- Jesus: Mt 16:20 Mk 8:30 9:9,10 Lu 8:56 9:21,22
- until: Mt 17:23 16:21 Lu 18:33,34 24:46,47
- [The Transfiguration - James Hastings](#) (The Setting, The Significance, The Suggestions)
- The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim
- [Matthew 17 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:9+ And as they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead.

Luke 9:36+ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

### KEEP SILENT REGARDING THE MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE

As they were coming down ([katabaino](#)) from the mountain ([oros](#)), Jesus commanded ([entellomai](#)) them, saying, "Tell the vision ([horama](#)) to no one until (marks end of something and beginning of something else, in this case testifying to the transfiguration after) **the Son of Man has risen** ([egeiro](#)) **from the dead** ([nekros](#)) - They had just witnessed the **Son of God** in His glory. Luke records their obedience to Jesus' command for they "they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen." (Lk 9:36+) Jesus' is pointing out that the resurrection is central to understanding His life and mission and not until the resurrection would the three disciples understand the vision well enough to speak about it intelligently. While we cannot be absolutely certain why Jesus commanded silence, it is very possible that if the three disciples had described the transfiguration, there would have been attempt to crown Jesus King

**THOUGHT-** Jesus calls for the disciples to obey despite not having full understanding. We too must obey God's commands even when His plan is not obvious in our present circumstances and we do not understand what He is doing in our life. And this means that often, like the disciples, we too will have to wait on God, relying on His perfect wisdom and timing, to reveal His full purpose for our current circumstances. We need a Pr 3:5-6 mindset "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." Psalm 46:10 adds "Be still and know that I am

God," which calls for us to rest in the assurance that He is in full control and will be faithful to fulfill all of His promises to us (including Ro 8:28).

The idea of God coming down (the God-Man Jesus) reminds us of Moses' in Exodus...

Exodus 3:8+ "So **I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians** and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

**Comment:** Little did the crowd or the disciples for that matter comprehend that this is indeed what Jesus had come down to do, to deliver sinners from the power of sin, Satan and self! Thank You Lord!

**David Guzik** has an interesting thought on the transfiguration writing that "Essentially this was not a new miracle, but the temporary cessation of an ongoing one. The real miracle was that Jesus, most of the time, could keep from displaying this glory. Yet John said, We beheld His glory (Jn 1:14+). Peter wrote, We were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

**D A Carson** on why Jesus commanded silence - The command must have been in some ways disappointing and its lifting a delight. Why did Jesus impose it? Probably for two principal and complementary reasons: 1. The story would only stir up superficial political messianism, already a menace. If Jesus' closest disciples found it hard to understand a suffering and dying Messiah, how would the crowds fare until after the resurrection? 2. The strongest evidence for Jesus' messiahship would be his resurrection, by which he "was declared with power to be the Son of God" (Ro 1:4). Premature self-disclosure in a direct fashion, without the supreme "sign of Jonah," the resurrection (see comments at 12:40), would not only foster false expectations but also quickly disillusion those who held them. Thus, with his prospective converts in mind, Jesus knew it was better for their sakes to wait until after the resurrection before allowing Peter, James, and John to tell what they had seen. (See [Matthew](#))

Peter obeyed Jesus' command to be silent, but then recalled this event in his Second Letter writing "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" (cf Mt 17:5)– 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:16-19+)

**THOUGHT** - As revelatory as the transfiguration was, Peter says the inspired, written Word is even more sure and therefore deserving of our attention until the end of this age and the King returns. Are you paying attention daily to God's sure prophetic Word for it alone will guide us in this dark place that is daily becoming darker! When the day dawns we will no longer know in part, but then we shall know fully. Maranatha!

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - What they had seen would confirm their own confidence, and remain a secret spring of delight to them; but as it would require great faith in others to believe it, they were to "tell the vision to no man." The transfiguration would be as hard to believe as the incarnation itself; and there could be no practical use in making demands upon a faith which scarcely existed. Until the greatest confirmation of all was given in our Lord's resurrection, the vision on the Holy Mount would be rather a tax upon faith than a support of it in the case of those who did not themselves personally see it, but only heard the apostles' report of it. It is wise not to overload testimony. There is a time for making known the higher truths; for out of season these may burden, rather than assist, enquiring minds. What a secret these men had to keep! They did keep it; but they never forgot it, nor ceased to feel its influence. Now that **the Son of man is risen again from the dead**, no doctrine needs to be kept back. In bringing life and immortality to light, our Lord has rent away the veil which had long concealed the higher mysteries of the gospel. His coming out of the grave has set free all buried truth. It is idle, not to say sinful, to be silent about the deep things of God now that "the Lord is risen indeed." Yet some preachers we could name never mention election, the covenant, or final perseverance by the year together.

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**Vision** (3705) **horama** from **horāō** = to see, behold; English - **panorama**) describes literally that which is seen, as opposed to a figment of one's imagination (Mt 17:9; Ac 7:31; 10:3, 17, 19; 18:9). It is something that is viewed with one's eye. It describes a supernatural vision used to give divine communication and is distinct from a dream. In Matthew's use Jesus refers to His transfiguration commanding Peter, John and James "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." (Mt 17:9) Uses of Jesus appearing to Ananias in a vision and told to go to Saul who had seen Ananias in a vision (Acts 9:10, 12). Of the vision of Cornelius at God begins to open the Gentiles to the Gospel (Acts 10:3) by showing Peter a vision (Acts 10:17, 11:5). Classical writers understood **horama** to mean "that which is seen, visible," "a sight." It did not usually refer to a supernatural vision, although it could. A "dream" could also be called horama (Liddell-Scott). In the Septuagint the word is used for (1) a "vision" by which God revealed himself to Abraham (Genesis 15:1); (2) a "great sight" of a bush which burned with fire and was not consumed (Exodus 3:3); and (3) "night visions" through which God revealed to Daniel things in the future (Daniel 7:13,15).

**Horama** is the word used by Luke to describe the Gospel going from Asia to the European continent

A **vision** appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the **vision**, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:9-10<sup>+</sup>)

**Son of Man** in Matthew - 31x/29v- Matt. 8:20; Matt. 9:6; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 11:19; Matt. 12:8; Matt. 12:32; Matt. 12:40; Matt. 13:37; Matt. 13:41; Matt. 16:13; Matt. 16:27; Matt. 16:28; Matt. 17:9; Matt. 17:12; Matt. 17:22; Matt. 18:11; Matt. 19:28; Matt. 20:18; Matt. 20:28; Matt. 24:27; Matt. 24:30; Matt. 24:37; Matt. 24:39; Matt. 24:44; Matt. 25:31; Matt. 26:2; Matt. 26:24; Matt. 26:45; Matt. 26:64

**John Broadus** on **Son of Man** - This remarkable expression was no doubt founded on Da. 7:13, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man," Rev. Ver., a passage which the Jewish writers agree in referring to the Messiah. The so-called "Book of Enoch" frequently speaks of the coming Messiah as the Son of man. We learn from John 12:34 that the Jews understood this phrase to mean the Messiah; and from Luke 22:69f. that they saw little difference between calling him the Son of man and the Son of God. Our Lord's frequent use of the phrase (more than seventy times) constitutes an oft-repeated claim to be the Messiah (e. g., Mt 24:30; 26:64); it was also probably designed to render prominent the great fact that He was genuinely and thoroughly a man, a fact which believers in His divinity sometimes fail to appreciate. The phrase is never applied to Him by any other than Himself, except in Acts 7:56, and perhaps in Rev. 1:13; 14:14. As the Hebrew phrase originally suggested human feebleness and frailty (as in Ps 8:4; 146:3), it may have seemed on that account less appropriate to the now exalted and glorified Redeemer. The many attempts to explain the phrase 'Son of man' in some other sense than as denoting the Messiah, are well stated and briefly refuted in Meyer,

**QUESTION** - [What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of Man? | GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/What-does-it-mean-that-Jesus-is-the-Son-of-Man?) - [WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus is referred to as the "Son of Man" 82 times in the New Testament (NIV and ESV). In fact, Son of Man is the primary title Jesus used when referring to Himself (e.g., Matthew 12:32; 13:37; Luke 12:8; John 1:51). The only use of Son of Man in a clear reference to Jesus, spoken by someone other than Jesus, came from the lips of Stephen as he was being martyred (Acts 7:56).

**Son of Man is a title of humanity.** Other titles for Christ, such as [Son of God](#), are overt in their focus on His deity. *Son of Man*, in contrast, focuses on the humanity of Christ. God called the prophet Ezekiel "son of man" 93 times. In this way, God was simply calling Ezekiel a human being. *Son of man* is simply a periphrastic term for "human." Jesus Christ was truly a human being. He came "in the flesh" (1 John 4:2).

**Son of Man is a title of humility.** The Second Person of [the Trinity](#), eternal in nature, left heaven's glory and took on human flesh, becoming the Son of Man, born in a manger and "despised and rejected by mankind" ([Isaiah 53:3](#)). The Son of Man had "no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). The Son of Man ate and drank with sinners (Matthew 11:19). The Son of Man suffered at the hands of men (Matthew 17:12). This intentional lowering of His status from King of Heaven to Son of Man is the epitome of humility (see [Philippians 2:6–8](#)).

**Son of Man is a title of deity.** Ezekiel may have been a son of man, but Jesus is *the* Son of Man. As such, Jesus is the supreme example of all that God intended mankind to be, the embodiment of truth and grace (John 1:14). In Him "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" ([Colossians 2:9](#)). For this reason, the Son of Man was able to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath ([Mark 2:28](#)). The Son of Man came to save lives (Luke 9:56; 19:10), rise from the dead ([Mark 9:9](#)), and execute judgment ([John 5:27](#)). At His trial before the high priest, Jesus said, "I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" ([Matthew 26:64](#)). This statement immediately ended the trial, as the court accused the Lord of blasphemy and condemned Him to death (verses 65–66).

**Son of Man is a fulfillment of prophecy.** Jesus' claim before the high priest to be the Son of Man was a reference to the prophecy of [Daniel 7:13–14](#), "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed" (NKJV). Daniel saw glory, worship, and an everlasting kingdom given to the Messiah—here called the "Son of Man"—and Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself. Jesus also spoke of [His coming kingdom](#) on other occasions ([Matthew 13:41](#); [16:28](#)). The author of [Hebrews](#)

used a reference to the “son of man” in the Psalms to teach that Jesus, the true Son of Man, will be the ruler of all things (Hebrews 2:5–9; cf. Psalm 8:4–6). The Son of Man, in fulfillment of [Old Testament prophecy](#), will be the King.

Jesus was fully God (John 1:1), but He was also fully human (John 1:14). As the Son of God and the Son of Man, He is deserving of both titles.

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#### **ILLUSTRATIONS** - Matthew 17:9

**The Unfinished Painting** - Imagine seeing an unfinished painting by a master artist. Without the final strokes, it is difficult to grasp the full vision of the masterpiece. The artist might say, "Wait until it's complete before you show it to others." Jesus' glory revealed on the mountain was a "preview," but the complete picture of His mission would only be understood after His resurrection.

**The Surprise Ending** - A filmmaker creates a suspenseful movie and tells the cast not to reveal the twist ending. The story only makes sense once the surprise is unveiled. Jesus' resurrection was the "twist ending" that made sense of His life, death, and divine glory. The disciples were told to wait before sharing the Transfiguration so the full story could be revealed.

**The Seed and the Plant** - A gardener plants a seed and explains that its beauty will only be evident once it grows and blooms. Until then, it's hard to understand its potential. The Transfiguration was like the seed—beautiful, but its full meaning was revealed in the resurrection, when Jesus' glory and purpose "bloomed."

**A Confidential Plan** - A CEO announces a groundbreaking project to their inner circle but says, "Keep this confidential until the launch date." Sharing too soon could lead to misunderstanding or derail the plan. Jesus' command to keep the vision private ensured that the disciples wouldn't share incomplete or misunderstood truths. The resurrection was the "launch" that clarified everything.

**The Puzzle with Missing Pieces** - If you show someone a puzzle with many pieces missing, they may not understand the image. The puzzle must be completed to see the full picture. The Transfiguration was a piece of the puzzle, but the resurrection was the key to seeing the entire story of Jesus' mission.

**The Teacher's Lesson** A teacher explains part of a lesson to the class but asks them not to share it with others until they've learned the entire concept. Sharing too soon could lead to confusion. The disciples needed time to understand the significance of the Transfiguration in light of Jesus' resurrection before they could teach others.

**The Blueprint and the Building** An architect shows a blueprint to a small group and says, "Wait until the building is complete before revealing this." The blueprint only makes sense when the final structure is visible. The Transfiguration was a glimpse of God's "blueprint" for redemption, but the resurrection was the completed structure that brought the plan to life.

#### **Matthew 17:10 And His disciples asked Him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”**

- Why: Mt 17:3,4 11:14 27:47-49 Mal 4:5,6 Mk 9:11 Jn 1:21,25

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 11:14 “And if you care to accept it, he (JOHN THE BAPTIST) himself is Elijah, who was to come.

### **THE DISCIPLES PUZZLE OVER ELIJAH**

**And His disciples ([mathetes](#)) asked Him, “Why then do the scribes ([grammateus](#)) say that Elijah must ([dei](#) - compelling divine necessity to) **come first** ([protos](#))** - Next in Mt 17:10-13 we drop in on a "Bible Study" entitled "Will the Real Elijah Please Stand Up!" Elijah's presence in the Transfiguration prompted their question. While **scribes** (basing their teaching on Mal 4:5-6) taught Elijah **must come first**, the prophet Malachi had taught this same thing declaring "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. “And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.” (Mal 4:5-6+) Malachi's prophecy led the scribes to believe that **Elijah** had to **come first**, that is before the Messiah Who would usher in the Messianic Age. Now that the disciples had no doubt Jesus was the Messiah, they were confused as to why Elijah had not come before Him.

[John Broadus](#) explains that "The thought of **Elijah** had been suggested by his appearance on the Mount. The Scribes were

accustomed to teach that Elijah in proper person would come before the Messiah, and prepare the way for Him by a new work of reformation—thus interpreting literally the prediction of Mal. 4:5 (cp. [notes](#) on Mt 16:14). Some of the Jews held that Elijah would anoint the Messiah. But here is Messiah present beyond question, and no such preparatory ministry of Elijah has occurred. They ask him therefore to explain why the Scribes say that Elijah must come before the Messiah; and this he proceeded to do"

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 10. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

One by one the difficulties of the disciples are stated to their Lord, and their solution is soon given. One of these concerned Elijah; and as he had been just now before them, they were led to mention it. "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" This is the report of men who have studied our Scriptures, that Elias comes before the Lord's appearing. No doubt it staggered their minds when they had it put in some such logical fashion as this,—

Messiah cannot come till Elijah has appeared;

Elijah has not appeared;

Therefore Jesus is not the Messiah

**Matthew 17:11 And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things;**

- **and restore:** Mal 4:6 Lu 1:16,17 3:3-14 Ac 3:21

#### **Related Passage:**

Malachi 4:6+ Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. "And he will **restore** (Lxx = [apokathistemi](#)) the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."

Mark 9:12+ And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and **restore** (Lxx = [apokathistemi](#)) all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?

Luke 1:17 And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

### **FIRST PART OF ANSWER YES ELIJAH MUST COME**

**And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming ([erchomai](#) - present tense) and will restore ([apokathistemi](#)) all things** - In answer to the disciples' question about Elijah, He first says that the prophet Elijah would come and "restore the hearts of the fathers to their children" just as Malachi had prophesied in Mal 4:6+. Some writers think that **Elijah** will return as one of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 (see pros and cons regarding this interpretation).

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 11, 12. "Jesus answered": he has an answer for all questions, and we shall do well to bring our difficulties to him to hear his replies. Our Lord admits that Elias must come before the Messiah: "Elias truly shall first come"; but he asserts that the person intended by the prophecy "is come already," and that the evil ones "have done unto him whatsoever they listed." This cleared up the doubt at once. Then Jesus went on to say that what had been done to the true Elias would also be done to himself, the Messiah. Jesus himself must die by a cruel death: "Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." How simple the explanation of the difficulty! How often has it happened that we have been looking for that which has already come, or have been perplexed by a doctrine which, when it has been opened to us by the Holy Spirit, has proved full of instruction and comfort. Without divine teaching we drown in the shallows; but with it we swim the fathomless deeps

**Restore** (600) [apokathistemi](#) from **apo** = from + **kathistemi** = to set in order, appoint) means literally to restore to an earlier condition. Meanings include to restore, to give or bring back, to reinstate. To return to a former condition, place or position. **Apokathistemi** in secular Greek was a medical technical term for restoring to health (to cure) (Mt 12:13, Mk 3:5, 8:5, Lk 6:10) In Mt 17:11 and Mk 9:12 Jesus told His disciples that "Elijah is coming and will restore all things."

**APOKATHISTEMI - 8V** - Matt. 12:13; Matt. 17:11; Mk. 3:5; Mk. 8:25; Mk. 9:12; Lk. 6:10; Acts 1:6; Heb. 13:19

**Matthew 17:12 but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they**



wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”

- and they: Mt 11:9-15 21:23-25,32 Mk 9:12,13 11:30-32 Lu 7:33 Jn 1:11 Jn 5:32-36 Ac 13:24-28
- but: Mt 11:2 14:3-10 Mk 6:14-28 Lu 3:19,20 Ac 7:52
- Likewise: Mt 16:21 Isa 53:3-12 Lu 9:21-25 Ac 2:23 3:14,15 4:10

#### Related Passage:

Malachi 3:1+ “**Behold**, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.

## SECOND PART OF ANSWER ELIJAH HAS COME

**But** (term of contrast) - Jesus had just stated that Malachi 4:5-6 would be fulfilled in the future, but now speaks about Elijah in the present. Are you confused?

**I say to you that Elijah already came** ([erchomai](#) aorist tense - past tense - at a point in time) - Indeed, this can be somewhat confusing. Jesus had just said the disciples were correct that **Elijah** must come before the Messiah. Jesus was speaking of the prophecy in Malachi that had not yet been fully fulfilled. Now He throws a curve stating that **Elijah** had **already come** (aorist tense) in the past. The solution to this puzzle is that Jesus identified the ministry of John the Baptist with the ministry of Elijah. Two passages give shed light on how to explain Elijah future and Elijah present. How can Elijah be partially fulfilled in John and fully fulfilled in a future Elijah?

First, Luke 1:17+ prophesied that John the Baptist would "go as a forerunner before Him (Messiah) **in the spirit and power of Elijah**." In other words, he would have an "Elijah-like" ministry. This explains Jesus' statement that **Elijah already came** in the past when John the Baptist began his ministry.

Second, in Mt 11:10, 14+ Jesus explained that John the Baptist was "the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU (Mal 3:1+)....And if you care to accept it, he (JOHN THE BAPTIST) himself is Elijah, who was to come.'" As explained below the Jews did not accept that John the Baptist was an Elijah-like figure.

**And they** ([ou](#) - absolutely) **did not recognize** ([epiginosko](#)) **him, but did to him whatever they wished** - **They** in context is the Jews, the Jewish nation as a whole and the Jewish religious leaders. They **did not recognize** John as Elijah. If John the Baptist had been recognized as Elijah, the prophecy of Elijah would have been fulfilled. In other words, if Israel had responded in saving faith to John the Baptist's call of repentance, everything necessary to bring in Messiah's kingdom would have accomplished. In that setting all Israel would have had to do was accept Messiah as her rightful King, which of course they did not do. By the statement **did to him whatever they wished** Jesus means they imprisoned and then beheaded John the Baptist. **They wished** speaks of their own will -- they did what they did to John because they wanted to do to!

One question that is raised regarding Jesus' interpretation of John as Elijah is the fact that Elijah himself flatly stated he was not Elijah (Jn 1:21+). **MacArthur** explains it this way -- "He denied being Elijah because, although he knew of the prophecy of Luke 1, like Jesus, he realized the question was about a literal, reincarnated Elijah. And, though John did not share Jesus' omniscience, he doubtlessly also realized that the questioning of the priests and Levites originated from unbelief, not sincere faith. They were not interested in learning the truth but of finding a way to discredit John, just as they would later seek ways to discredit the One Whose way he came to prepare." ([Matthew Commentary, 72](#))

**So also the Son of Man is going to suffer** ([3958](#) [pascho](#)) **at their hands** - **So** means in the same way. Jesus declares that just as the Jews had killed John the Baptist, they would do the same to the Messiah, **the Son of Man**. **At their hands** (literally "under them") lays the responsibility squarely on the Jews, especially the Jewish religious leaders. These men were not innocent spectators but evil perpetrators!

**John MacArthur** adds "Because they rejected the restoration work of Messiah's Elijah-like precursor and then rejected the Messiah Himself, the messianic kingdom was postponed. In the last days, the Lord will send still another like Elijah, and the Messiah Himself will return, this time to establish His eternal kingdom in power, righteousness, and glory." (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 72](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - "Then the disciples understood": our Lord's instructive word opened their understandings. When he teaches, the dullest scholars learn. Now they see that John the Baptist was Elijah redivivus. He was a stern admonisher of kings,



and preached repentance to Israel. He had come to restore all things: and so the Messiah had not appeared without being preceded by the true Elias. This was plain enough to them when once their Lord had made them understand. Lord, evermore, not only speak with us, but cause us to comprehend thy word!

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[David Guzik](#) summarizes how John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah...

1. Elijah was noted as being full of zeal for God; so was John the Baptist.
2. Elijah boldly rebuked sin in high places; so did John the Baptist.
3. Elijah called sinners and compromisers to a decision of repentance; so did John the Baptist.
4. Elijah attracted multitudes in his ministry; so did John the Baptist.
5. Elijah attracted the attention and fury of a king and his wife; so did John the Baptist.
6. Elijah was an austere man; so was John the Baptist.
7. Elijah fled to the wilderness; John the Baptist also lived there.
8. Elijah lived in a corrupt time and was used to restore failing spiritual life; so was it true of John the Baptist.

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**Matthew 17:13 Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.**

- the disciples: Mt 11:14

### JESUS' EXPLANATION CLARIFIES CONFUSION

**Then the disciples understood ([suniemi](#)) that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist** - Jesus' explanation enabled the disciples to put the pieces of the "Elijah puzzle" together and understand why Jesus had called John an Elijah-like figure.

**Ligon Duncan** summarizes the Elijah puzzle - Now if you will look at the very first words of verse 12, you will notice that Jesus uses the same juxtaposition here that He uses in the Sermon on the Mount. You remember when Jesus says, "You have heard...but I say. You have heard, but I say." Well, here again, the scribes teach Elijah is coming and will restore all things, but I say Elijah has already come. So what Jesus is saying is this. The scribes were right to think that Malachi predicted that Elijah would come to prepare the way for the Lord, but they were wrong in not recognizing that John the Baptist was the Elijah predicted by Malachi. They rejected his teachings, just like they rejected My teaching; they put him to death just like they are going to put Me to death. He is saying to His disciples, 'Don't think because you have seen Elijah in the flesh today, that this means now that I am going to reign in glory apart from the cross for now. The true Elijah predicted by Malachi, he was beheaded. I'm going to be crucified, because the way to glory is the way of the cross. Martin Luther once said "There is not a word in the Bible which is *extra crucem*, there is not a word in the Bible which can be understood apart from the cross," and this is precisely what Jesus is pressing home again here. There can be no appreciation of His glory apart from the understanding of the cross. This glorious Christ is the crucified Christ. That is the Christ we proclaim, that is the Christ we trust in. May God enable us to believe in Christ as He is offered in the gospel, and that is the glorious Christ who was crucified. ([The Transfiguration](#))

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**Understood** (4920) [suniemi](#) from [sun/syn](#) = with + [hiemi](#) = send) (Related noun [sunesis](#)) literally means to send together or bring together. The idea is to put together "pieces of the puzzle" (so to speak) and to exhibit quick comprehension. **Suniemi** describes the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them. **Suniemi** means to put together, grasp or exhibit quick comprehension. **Suniemi** is the manifestation of the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them and thus describes the exercise of the faculty of comprehension, intelligence, acuteness, shrewdness. The noun **sunesis** was originally used by Homer in the Odyssey to describe the running together or a flowing together of two rivers. **BDAG** says that **suniemi** means to "to have an intelligent grasp of something that challenges one's thinking or practice

**SUNIEMI - 25V** - Matt. 13:13; Matt. 13:14; Matt. 13:15; Matt. 13:19; Matt. 13:23; Matt. 13:51; Matt. 15:10; Matt. 16:12; Matt. 17:13; Mk. 4:12; Mk. 6:52; Mk. 7:14; Mk. 8:17; Mk. 8:21; Lk. 2:50; Lk. 8:10; Lk. 18:34; Lk. 24:45; Acts 7:25; Acts 28:26; Acts 28:27; Rom. 3:11; Rom. 15:21; 2 Co. 10:12; Eph. 5:17

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**Matthew 17:14 When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying,**

- **when:** Mk 9:14-29 Lu 9:37-43

- **falling on his knees:** Mk 1:40 10:17 Ac 10:25,26

## Related Passages:

Mark 9:14-17+ And when they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15 And immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed, and began running up to greet Him. 16 And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" 17 And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute

Luke 9:37-43+ And it came about on the next day, that when they had come down from the mountain, a great multitude met Him. 38 And **behold** ([idou](#)) a man from the crowd shouted ([boao](#)), saying, "Teacher ([didaskalos](#)), I beg ([deomai](#)) You to look at ([epiblepo](#)) my son, for he is my only boy ([monogenes](#))

## DISCIPLES DESCEND FROM A MOUNTAIN HIGH TO A VALLEY LOW

This next section Matthew 17:14–20 covers and deals with the cure of the demon possessed boy which shows that with God all things are possible. This section has parallels in Mark 9:14-29+ and Luke 9:37-43a+. All the [Synoptic Gospels](#) place this event immediately after the transfiguration. Mark's account is much more detailed and twice the length of the parallel passages.

**When** - What time? The parallel account in Luke 9:37+ says "**The next day.**" Remember that [time phrases](#) (even words like "when") beg the question **when**? In context it is the **day after Jesus' transfiguration** on the mountain. As **Wiersbe** wisely reminds us "We dare not stay on the glorious mountaintop when there are battles to fight in the valley below." Luke alone mentions this descent **the next day** and it serves to highlight the difference between the future glorious kingdom and the fallen world to which the quartet returned. These three men had seen the King of glory. They had received a preview of coming attractions, the Messianic Kingdom on earth. They saw something no other men had ever seen. So they were coming down in elevation, but surely they were coming down in elation! But they would never forget this time of Jesus' transfiguration.

**They came to the crowd** - Who is they? The "**they**" refers to Jesus, Peter, James, and John, who were descending from the mountain after the Transfiguration. Talk about descending to the "lowlands of reality." Luke says there was "a large **crowd** around them, and some scribes arguing with" the 9 disciples (Mk 9:14+).

**A man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees** ([gonupeteo](#)) **before Him and saying** - KJV has "kneeling down." A man **falling on his knees** (father of a falling son - falling into fire) is a not just a picture of his physical posture but reflects his heart's posture, in this case his acknowledgement of Jesus' authority and reflecting his desperate need for deliverance for his only son ([monogenes](#) - Lk 9:38+), the same word used for God's only begotten Son (Jn 1:14, 18+).

**John MacArthur** notes the seven striking contrasts between the **mountain top** experience and that in the **valley** - The contrasts between the two incidents are striking. (1) One happened on a mountain, the other in a valley. (2) There was glory on the mountain, tragedy in the valley. (3) On the mountain Jesus Christ displayed His glorious majesty, while in the valley Satan displayed his ugly, cruel violence. (4) Two sons are in view, one God-possessed, the other demon-possessed; one in whom His Father was well pleased, the other whose father was tortured with displeasure over his condition. (5) One Son fulfilled the glorious plan of the ages, confirmed by both Old Testament and New Testament saints; the other son was disassociated, disconnected, demented, and chaotic, without purpose or value to anyone. (6) One Son was the destroyer of demons; the other son was destroyed by demons. (7) Both sons were given back to their fathers. The demon-possessed son was delivered and returned to his father; the Son of God was killed, rose from the dead, and ascended back to His Father. (See [The MacArthur Commentary](#)) (Numbers in parentheses added)

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 14–16. Down from communion with saints, and the confirmation of his claims by the Father's voice, our Lord comes to give battle to the devil. Our Moses descends from the mount, and finds evil exultant in the multitude below. During his absence, the enemy had triumphed over his feeble followers. In the midst of jeering adversaries, the disciples had tried in vain to cast out an evil spirit from a youth who had been rendered lunatic by its horrible possession. The poor disappointed father appeals to the Lord at once most humbly, states the case clearly, and pleads most fittingly. His epileptic son was a lunatic, sore vexed with pain, and in grievous peril through sudden falls. The case was a shocking one to have in one's presence: the cries and contortions which attend epilepsy are frequently terrible to hear and see. The disciples had evidently done their very best; and as they had on other occasions cast out devils, they were surprised to find themselves defeated; but defeated they were, for the despairing father truthfully cried, "I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him." Alas, poor man, thou didst but speak as all have done since, when they have trusted in disciples, and not alone in their Master! Wise was it on thy part to hasten to Jesus, kneeling down to him, and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son."

How often does sin drive men to one extreme or the other! "Ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water." Certain men are moonstruck and pained at one time, yet hard and callous at another; for a season raving with excitement, and soon afterwards dead as a stone. When sin reveals itself in connection with wildness of mind, it is hard to deal with. How often have anxious soul-winners been obliged to confess concerning a certain individual that "they could not cure him"! We have been foiled by a person of a singular temperament, and the passion which possessed him has been peculiarly ungovernable. Possibly he had no link towards better things but an aged parent, whose pleadings piteously held us in deep anxiety for the half-lunatic and altogether depraved young man. Willing as we were to reform and restore the wretched rebel, we were altogether unable to help. It needed in our case that Jesus should come, even as in the narrative before us. Lord, do not leave us; for if apostles could do nothing without thee, poor weaklings are we!

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**Falling on his knees** (1120) **gonupeteo** from **gonu** = knee + **pipto** = fall) fall on one's knees, kneel down before someone. Falling down on one's knees before someone used culturally as an indication of asking for help, acknowledging another's superiority, or expressing honor for someone. **Zodhiates** - To fall down on the knees or kneel before another in supplication (Matt. 17:14; Mark 1:40); in reverence (Mark 10:17); in mock homage (Matt. 27:29). To kneel down in prayer or supplication (Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5); in mockery by the soldiers who were crucifying Jesus (Matt. 27:29). In Luke 5:8, the expression, "fell down at Jesus' knees," means embraced them by way of supplication (see also Rom. 11:4; Eph. 3:14; Phil. 2:10). To bend the knee or knees to someone, means to kneel in homage, adoration (Ro 14:11 quoted from Isa. 45:23). 4x in NT - falling on his knees before(2), knees before(2), knelt before(1), knelt down(1). Matt. 17:14; Matt. 27:29; Mk. 1:40; Mk. 10:17. No uses in the Septuagint.

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**Lawrence Richards** - They could not heal him" Matt. 17:14–21. borrow [The 365 day devotional commentary page 664](#)

When Jesus returned to the valley, He found the nine disciples left behind had tried to heal an epileptic boy and failed.

Jesus healed the boy, and rebuked His disciples for their "little faith" (v. 20). The Greek word, *oligopistia*, is better understood as poor or defective faith. A number of failures of the disciples' faith are mentioned in this section of Matthew (14:26–31; 15:16, 23, 33; 16:5, 22; 17:4, 10–11). It was not the size of the faith, but a flaw in the faith that was to blame.

How do we know this? Because immediately Jesus said that "faith as small as a mustard seed" can move mountains! (v. 20)

What then was the flaw? Here the flaw was in the object of the disciples' faith: "Why couldn't we drive it out?" The disciples had begun to trust the power Jesus had earlier given them, and to think of it as their own. Actually any power they had, flowed from Jesus, and Him alone.

This is actually an encouraging story for us. Often we hesitate to reach out to help others, dreadfully aware of our inadequacies. It's then we need to remember that our faith is in Jesus, not in our own strengths or resources. The flawed faith of the disciples serves as a reminder that even mustard-seed sized faith in Christ is enough to work miracles!

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## Down From The Mountain

When they had come down from the mountain, . . . a great multitude met Him. —Luke 9:37

Years ago our family lived in Switzerland. I'll never forget one idyllic afternoon I spent on a mountaintop. The only thing I heard was the sound of silence. The air was clean and sweet. As I lay on the grass, I became still and sensed God's presence in a special way. It was good, even glorious, being there away from people and alone with Him. I longed to cling to this experience and resisted going back down to civilization. I recalled Peter's similar reaction on another mountain when Jesus was transfigured before his eyes.

No wonder Peter wanted to stay there. Although his mountaintop experience far exceeded mine, I knew what my response needed to be. Like Peter, I needed to come down from the mountain and return, refreshed, to a multitude of needy people.

I once heard a preacher say, "Great experiences must bring us back to everyday life. They must be related to the heartbreaks of people. Mountaintops don't mean anything without the valleys."

If you're weary from your labors in the valley, the Lord may be saying to you, "Come aside . . . and rest a while" [Mk. 6:31](#)). But if you're on a mountaintop, don't stay there. God wants to work through you in other people's lives. By Joanie Yoder

Go up to the mountain of blessing and share  
Alone with your Savior and Master in prayer,  
Then go to the work in the valley below,  
Your face with the love-light of Jesus aglow.  
—Anon.

The closer you are to God, the more you'll have a heart for people.

## True Greatness

Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. —Luke 9:37

On the 50th anniversary of Sir Edmund Hillary's historic ascent of Mt. Everest, a television newsman said that much of Hillary's status as a hero in Nepal was "not about what he did when he stood on top of the world, but what he did when he came back down." After conquering the world's highest mountain with his climbing companion Tenzing Norgay in 1953, Edmund spent the next five decades helping to build schools, hospitals, and bridges for the Sherpa community.

The contrast between Edmund Hillary's moment on the mountain and his service in the valley brought to mind Jesus' experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). It was a pinnacle of blessing when our Lord's appearance became radiant and the Father said, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (v.35).

But Jesus didn't stay on the mountain. He came down to the crowd, where He freed a boy from an evil spirit. He was determined to go to Jerusalem and fulfill His mission, where He would willingly die on the cross for our sins.

Jesus told His disciples, "He who is least among you all will be great" (v.48). Our Lord's life shows us that true greatness is found in humbly serving God and others in the valley of need. By David C. McCasland

Whether on the mountaintop  
Or the valley down below,  
True greatness is in serving  
Wherever we may go.  
—D. De Haan

In God's eyes, true greatness is serving others.

**Matthew 17:15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water."**

KJV Matthew 17:14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

BGT Matthew 17:15 καὶ ἰσχυρῶς ἐλεῖ, ὁ ἱσχυρὸς υἱός μου, ὅτι σελήνι ζεῖται καὶ κακῶς πίνει· πολλὰ γὰρ πίπτει εἰς τὸ πῦρ καὶ πολλὰ εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ.

NET Matthew 17:15 and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, because **he has seizures** and suffers terribly, for he often falls into the fire and into the water.

CSB Matthew 17:15 "Lord," he said, "have mercy on my son, because **he has seizures** and suffers severely. He often falls into the fire and often into the water.

ESV Matthew 17:15 said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for **he is an epileptic** and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.

NIV Matthew 17:15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "**He has seizures** and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.

NLT Matthew 17:15 "Lord, have mercy on my son. **He has seizures** and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.

NRS Matthew 17:15 and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for **he is an epileptic** and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

- have: Mt 15:22 Mk 5:22,23 9:22 Lu 9:38-42 Jn 4:46,47
- for: Mt 4:24 Mk 9:17,18,20-22
- for often into the water: Mt 8:31,32 Job 1:10-19 2:7 Mk 5:4,5

## Related Passages:

Mark 9:18+ and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out. And I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it."

Luke 9:39-40+ and **behold** (*idou*), a spirit seizes (*lambano*) him, and he suddenly (*exaiphnes*) screams (*krazo*), and it throws him into a convulsion (*sparasso*) with foaming at the mouth, and as it mauls him, it scarcely leaves him. 40 "And I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not."

## DESPERATE FATHER'S DERANGED SON

**Lord** (*kurios*), **have mercy** (*eleeo* - *orist imperative*) **on my son** - **Lord** (*kurios*) in this context has more of the sense of "Master," one who is full control of things. Note that the desperate father gives Jesus a command in the *orist imperative* meaning in essence "Just do it!" When it is used in the context of a prayer request, the imperative conveys earnestness, urgency, fervor or intensity in appealing to God (e.g., Mt 6:11 "**Deliver** us from evil" in *orist imperative*). In such cases, it does not imply commanding God but reflects the deep dependence and confidence of the person praying. While the imperative cry from this desperate father may sound like a command, in it is actually a humble expression of his reliance on God and acknowledgment of His sovereignty over the demons. One is reminded of the tax collector's humble appeal "God, **be merciful** (*hilaskomai* - *orist imperative*) to me, the sinner!" (Lk 18:13+)

*At the transfiguration, fallen men were in holy wonder;  
in this story, there was a fallen son in unholy horror.*

-- John MacArthur

**For he is a lunatic** (*seleniazomai*) **and is very ill** (*kakos*); **for** (term of explanation) **he often falls** (*pipto*) **into the fire** (*pur*) **and often into the water** (*hudor*) - In place of **lunatic** most of the versions render it either "he has seizures" or "he is an epileptic." Mark 9:18+ gives more detail, the father explaining that "whenever (ANY TIME, ANY PLACE) it (DEMON - NOT MENTIONED IN MATTHEW BY FATHER - Mark notes that the demon had made the boy deaf and mute Mk 9:17, 25+, and that it had afflicted him since he was a child Mk 9:21+) seizes (*katalambano*) him, it dashes (*rhengnumi*) him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds (*trizō*) his teeth, and stiffens out (*xeraino*)." As a physician my medical diagnosis would have been an epileptic seizure. In this case the seizures are initiated in some way by a demon in possession of his son's body. It is important to note that most seizures have a medical cause and are not demonically related as in this case. Doctor Luke's record of the father's description gives some additional detail noting "**behold**, a spirit seizes (*lambano*) him, and he suddenly (*exaiphnes*) screams (*krazo*), and it throws him into a convulsion (*sparasso*) with foaming (*aphros*) at the mouth, and as it mauls (*suntribo*) him, it scarcely leaves him." (Lk 9:39+) Use your imagination at the pain this scene must have caused this father! This scene had apparently transpired before the 9 disciples and they were powerless to relief the boy's suffering.

**John MacArthur** notes that "How, why or at what age his son had become demon possessed is not revealed, so it is futile to speculate. God ultimately permitted it to happen, as He did in the case of the man born blind (John 9:1-3+), for His glory in demonstrating Christ's power. The boy's condition also illustrates the reality that everyone who is outside the kingdom of God is under the power of Satan (Eph. 2:2+). It is only a question of degree." (See [MacArthur Commentary](#))

**POSB** notes that as the story unfolds "The man lacked personal knowledge and faith in Jesus' power, but He cried for the compassion of Jesus—if Jesus really did have the power to help. There was no way Jesus would turn away from the man's cry for mercy (see Lu. 18:13).....It is not so much our faith as it is our cry for mercy and compassion that arouses God to help us." (See [The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible](#))

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, is not this story a picture of the effect of the Evil One on the lives of so many people today who are caught in the grips of the power of the demons, especially in the drug culture where drugs open their minds to demonic oppression if not even overt possession. The answer for this boy was Jesus and **He is still the answer for all men caught in the grips of sin, Satan and self**. Are you boldly speaking forth the Gospel, telling men and women about the Great Physician? **He is their only Hope for deliverance!** (Play this great song by Rich Mullins [My Deliverer](#) and pray it for any of your loved ones ensnared in the devil's deceptive drugs! I have 4 children, and my 2 youngest were ensnared by the devil's drugs for over 20 years each. I cannot count the times I was on my face crying out for My Deliverer to set them free. And Praise His Holy Name, I am now 78 and My Deliverer has mercifully answered my often very weak cries and set them both free from drugs. And He kept both of them alive including my Aderall addicted daughter's slashing her throat and foaming at the mouth as we kept pressure on the bleeding and called 911. I pray now for any

reading this note that Jesus the Great Deliverer will intervene in your loved one's life and set them free and when the Son sets them free, they will be free indeed! Amen!)

**NET NOTES** - Greek "he is moonstruck," possibly meaning "**lunatic**" (so NAB, NASB), although now the term is generally regarded as referring to some sort of seizure disorder such as epilepsy (σεληνιαζομαι).

**Daniel Akin** - There is an old hymn entitled **Just When I Need Him Most**. ....The disciples have a ways to go before they learn this lesson. A father with a suffering son, on the other hand, is about to plumb the depths of this marvelous truth

Just when I need Him, Jesus is near,  
Just when I falter, just when I fear;  
Ready to help me, ready to cheer,  
Just when I need Him most.

*Refrain:*

*Just when I need Him most,  
Just when I need Him most,  
Jesus is near to comfort and cheer,  
Just when I need Him most.*

Just when I need Him, Jesus is true,  
Never forsaking, all the way through;  
Giving for burdens pleasures anew,  
Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, Jesus is strong,  
Bearing my burdens all the day long;  
For all my sorrow giving a song,  
Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, He is my all,  
Answering when upon Him I call;  
Tenderly watching lest I should fall,  
Just when I need Him most.

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**Lord** (2962) (**kurios**) primarily means the possessor, owner, master, the supreme one, one who is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership rights and uncontested power. **Kurios** is used of the one to whom a person or thing belonged, over which he has the power of deciding, the one who is the master or disposer of a thing, the same word used by the Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:28+.

**Lunatic** (4583) selēniazomai (selene = moon) means to be moonstruck, especially to be epileptic supposedly influenced by the moon, the symptoms becoming more aggravated during certain lunar periods. This disease in the NT and elsewhere is ascribed to the influence of unclean spirits or demons. Only found in Mt 4:24 and Mt 17:15. A common ancient belief linked certain phases of the moon with various irrational actions and central nervous system disorders including epilepsy.

Gilbrant - In Matthew 4:24 selēniazomai occurs in a list of four different kinds of sick people healed or delivered by Jesus during His great Galilean ministry. Included in the list are: (1) those who suffered from "divers diseases and torments"; (2) those who were "possessed with devils"; (3) those who were "lunatic" (selēniazomai); and (4) those "that had the palsy." Here the word selēniazomai is especially distinguished from **daimonizomai**, "demon possessed." By this distinction Matthew clearly showed that epilepsy and demonic possession are not one and the same. Although similar convulsions may be manifested in each, the cause is definitely different. Selēniazomai is a purely physical disorder, while daimonizomai finds its source in demons.

The other New Testament occurrence of selēniazomai is in Matthew 17:15. It is obvious in this passage that the boy who was brought to Jesus and said to be selēniazomai, "lunatic," was in reality demon possessed (cf. Matthew 17:18). Matthew did not try to correct the mistake by using the word **daimonizomai** but simply quoted the boy's father, who used the word selēniazomai. Although the father of the boy did not understand the difference between selēniazomai and daimonizomai, Jesus certainly did. In the parallel passages Mark 9:14-27 provides an accurate picture of "idiopathic epilepsy," while Luke 9:37-42 employs the term sparassō, "convulse," a technical medical term employed by Hippocrates and others (Harrison, "Epilepsy," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 2:123). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))



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## QUESTION - [Is epilepsy mentioned in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - An account of a boy with epileptic-like seizures is recorded in three of the four Gospels (Matthew 17:14–18; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:38–42). Only in Matthew’s account (in the ESV and NKJV) is the word *epileptic* used to describe the boy; the NASB and KJV say “lunatic,” based on the original Greek word’s meaning of “moonstruck.” The NIV says, “He has seizures.” In Mark and Luke, the father of the boy states that his son is “possessed by a spirit” and “a spirit seizes him.” Comparing the three accounts in the Gospels, the boy’s symptoms included sudden screaming, foaming at the mouth, lack of speech, falling, rigidity, and self-harm.

Matthew 17:14–18 says, “When they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, ‘Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.’ And Jesus answered, ‘O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.’ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly” (ESV).

It is important to note that epilepsy was the *father’s* assessment of his son’s situation. Jesus, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all call it a demon, and Jesus cast it out as He did other demons. The seeming discrepancy in the three biblical accounts is probably due to the fact that the father said a *lot* of things in trying to get Jesus’ attention. He was distraught, desperate for help, and at a loss to describe what was happening to his son. The fact that the father speaks of epilepsy in Matthew’s account and calls it a “spirit” in the other two Gospels does not create an irreconcilable difference. The father could easily have said all of the above as he described his son’s condition. He did not know what was wrong. He only knew that he needed help.

The term *epileptic* is used only twice in the New Testament, in Matthew 17:15 and Matthew 4:24. The word translated “epileptic” comes from the Greek word for “lunatic.” In those days, the term could be applied to any type of seizures or behavior that resembled insanity. In New Testament times, people had no way to differentiate between brain disorders and demonic possession. Little was known about the causes or treatment of epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, or dementia, so it is understandable that the father in Matthew 17 would describe his son’s behavior as epilepsy. But we know from Jesus’ treatment of this boy that the child was in fact demon possessed (Mark 9:26).

However, the Bible does mention epilepsy as a condition separate from demon possession. Matthew 4:24 says, “So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, **epileptics**, and paralytics, and he healed them” (emphasis added). Here epilepsy is listed with other physical ailments, indicating that epilepsy is a medical condition that can cause symptoms similar to demonic possession. Jesus healed epileptics, and He also cast out demons. The two conditions were not synonymous.

Although many inexplicable behaviors that affect the personality can be attributed to demonic oppression, we should never rush to judgment. Demons are still active and can [possess and oppress people](#). Prayer and spiritual warfare can enable us to help those who are oppressed (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:12–17). But brain abnormalities or injury can also affect human behavior and can respond to medical treatment. Jesus always treated the individual, and He rarely healed the same disease in the same way. This shows us that we should also respond to individuals with sensitivity and discernment, using everything at our disposal to help and heal any way we can.

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## QUESTION - [Can a Christian today perform an exorcism? WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Exorcism (commanding demons to leave other people) was practiced by various people in the Gospels and the Book of Acts—the disciples as part of Christ’s instructions (Matthew 10); others using Christ’s name (Mark 9:38); the children of the Pharisees (Luke 11:18-19); Paul (Acts 16); and certain exorcists (Acts 19:11-16).

It appears that the purpose of Jesus’ disciples performing exorcisms was to show Christ’s dominion over the demons (Luke 10:17) and to verify that the disciples were acting in His name and by His authority. It also revealed their faith or lack of faith (Matthew 17:14-21). It was obvious that this act of casting out demons was important to the ministry of the disciples. However, it is unclear what part casting out demons actually played in the discipleship process.

Interestingly, there seems to be a shift in the latter part of the New Testament regarding demonic warfare. The teaching portions of the New Testament (Romans through Jude) refer to demonic activity, yet do not discuss the actions of casting them out, nor are believers exhorted to do so. We are told to put on the armor to stand against them (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are told to resist the devil (James 4:7), be careful of him (1 Peter 5:8), and not give him room in our lives (Ephesians 4:27). However, we are not told how to cast him or his demons out of others, or that we should even consider doing so.

The book of Ephesians gives clear instructions on how we are to have victory in our lives in the battle against the forces of evil. The

first step is placing our faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9), which breaks the rule of “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). We are then to choose, again by God’s grace, to put off ungodly habits and to put on godly habits (Eph 4:17-24). This does not involve casting out demons, but rather renewing our minds (Eph 4:23). After several practical instructions on how to obey God as His children, we are reminded that there is a spiritual battle. It is fought with certain armor that allows us to stand against—not cast out—the trickery of the demonic world (6:10). We stand with truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer (Eph 6:10-18).

It appears that as the Word of God was completed, the Christians had more weapons with which to battle the spirit world than the early Christians did. The role of casting out demons was replaced, for the most part, with evangelism and discipleship through the Word of God. Since the methods of spiritual warfare in the New Testament do not involve casting out demons, it is difficult to determine instructions on how to do such a thing. If necessary at all, it seems that it is through exposing the individual to the truth of the Word of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

#### Related Resources:

- [Can a Christian be demon possessed?](#)
- [How are Catholics able to perform exorcisms if many of their beliefs are unbiblical?](#)
- [Can demons attach themselves to non-living/inanimate objects?](#)
- [What are unclean spirits? Are unclean spirits demons?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about demonic oppression?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about demon possession / demonic possession?](#)
- [How do we distinguish a psychological disorder from demon possession?](#)
- [What does it mean that the name of the demon was Legion?](#)
- [Who were the seven sons of Sceva?](#)
- [How much emphasis should be given to demonic deliverance in the Christian life?](#)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Years ago a seagoing captain had his family on board as his ship crossed from England to America. One night, when everyone was asleep, a sudden squall hit and the ship rocked violently. The passengers woke up, frightened by the storm. The captain’s eight-year-old daughter also woke up. At first she was scared as she asked her mother what was happening. Her mother explained that there was a sudden storm. The girl asked, “Is father on deck?” “Yes,” her mother replied, “father is on deck.” Hearing this, the little girl snuggled back under her covers and in a few minutes was sound asleep. The winds still blew and the waves still hit the ship, but she could rest peacefully because she knew her father was at the helm (in “Our Daily Bread,” 1985).

Whatever our needs and however strong the enemy, we know that our Heavenly Father is even more powerful. Even if we face death itself, we know that our mighty Savior went to the cross and was victorious over sin and death there. In our great need, we can lay hold of God’s mighty power through faith. If this distraught father had not had this problem with his son, he might never have trusted in the Lord Jesus. While the problem was not pleasant, it was the means that God used to deliver the man from that unbelieving and perverted generation. If you let your problems drive you to Christ, you also will be delivered from this unbelieving and perverted generation. We are needy people, but Christ is a mighty Savior! - Steven J. Cole

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**Matthew 17:16 “I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.”**

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- **they could not cure him:** Mt 17:19,20 2Ki 4:29-31 Lu 9:40 Ac 3:16 19:15,16

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:18+ and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out. And I told Your disciples to cast it out, **and they could not do it.** 20 And they brought the boy to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth. 2 And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 “And it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” 23 And Jesus said to him, “‘If You can!’ All things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the boy’s father cried out and began saying, “I do believe; help my unbelief.

## THE DISCIPLES' FAITH

## FAILED TO CURE THE BOY

I brought him to Your disciples ([mathetes](#)), and they could ([dunamai](#)) ([ou](#) - absolutely) not cure ([therapeuo](#)) him - Lk 9:40+ adds that the father even "begged ([deomai](#))" the disciples. Recall that in Mt 10:1+ says "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them **authority** ([exousia](#) = the right and the might) over unclean spirits, to cast them out (Mk 3:15+), and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." This divine authority is reiterated in Mt 10:7-8+ when Jesus declared to the 12 disciples "as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, **cast out demons**; freely you received, freely give." And they had experienced previous success casting out demons (Mk 6:13+) As the drama unfolds we see that the disciples had a "faith failure" and that the disciples' lack of ability would highlight Jesus' greater ability. In 2 Kings 4:31 [Gehazi's failure](#) to bring about a miracle in a child's life, set the stage for Elisha's miracle much like the nine disciples' failure in the "Demon Casting Out Test" set the stage for Jesus to once again demonstrate His supreme authority over the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places and in people. (Lk 9:42+) And as we soon learn that the reason they could not cast the demon out was a deficiency of their faith (Mt 17:19-20). Mark adds there was also a shortage of prayer (Mk 9:28-29+). I wonder sometimes when I pray if I truly believe God hears and can answer the prayer. We are all more like these first disciples than we would like to admit.

**John MacArthur** points out that "Jesus was not present when the incident began, so the disciples were challenged to walk by faith, not by sight—and failed miserably. They were a work in progress, characterized by lack of understanding and shallow faith. In Mark 8:17+ Jesus had chided them, "Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?" and reiterated in Mk 8:21, "Do you not yet understand?" (See [MacArthur Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** - Little faith can accomplish great things; but great faith can accomplish even greater things. What matters most is what our faith is in, the object of our faith. "The eye cannot see itself. Did you ever see your own eye? In a mirror you may have done so, but that was only a reflection of it. And you may, in like manner, see the evidence of your faith, but you cannot look at the faith itself. Faith looks away to itself to the object of faith, even to Christ."

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**Could** ([1410](#))([dunamai](#)) conveys the basic meaning of that which has the inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end. Thus **dunamai** means to be able to, to be capable of, to be strong enough to do or to have power to do something. It is usually translated **able** (50x), **can** (61x) and **cannot** (58x) or **could**.

**Matthew 17:17 And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me."**

- **You unbelieving and perverted generation:** Mt 6:30 8:26 13:58 16:8 Mk 9:19 16:14 Lu 9:41 24:25 Jn 20:27 Heb 3:16-19
- **how long shall I be with you:** Ex 10:3 16:28 Nu 14:11,27 Ps 95:10 Pr 1:22 6:9 Jer 4:14 Ac 13:18

### Related Passages:

Mark 9:19, 23-24+ And He \*answered them and \*said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? **Bring** him to Me!".....23 And Jesus said to him, "'If You can!' All things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

Luke 9:41+ And Jesus answered and said, "O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you, and put up with you? Bring your son here." 42 And while he was still approaching, the demon dashed him to the ground, and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples

Acts 2:40+ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Acts 13:18+ "For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.

Mark 6:6+ And He wondered at their **unbelief**. And He was going around the villages teaching.

Numbers 14:27+ "**How long** shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me.

## JESUS CASTIGATES THE GENERATION

And Jesus ([Iesous](#)) answered and said, “You unbelieving ([apistos](#)) and perverted ([diastrepho](#) - twisted, crooked) generation ([genea](#)), how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up ([anechomai](#)) with you? - Note the order - first unbelieving and then the fruit of unbelieving which is perversion. Luke 9:41 adds **how long shall I be with you and put up with ([anechomai](#)) you?** Since Jesus used the designation **generation ([genea](#))**, He is addressing the entire nation, but in the present context He is also clearly alluding to the “littleness” of the faith of His 9 disciples. Why was their faith so little? First, they had been clearly told they had power to cast out ALL demons (Lk 9:1+), with no qualifications about whether it was a stronger (like the present case) or weaker demon. Second, they themselves had experienced the power. They had believed Jesus’ bestowal of power and authority (Lk 9:1) and they had acted with faith on that word as described in Mt 10:8+. **Perverted** is in the [perfect tense](#) which describes their state or abiding condition of unbelief, in this case, most in total unbelief but others like the father and the 9 disciples (Peter, James and John get a pass on this one since they were on the mount of transfiguration!) with some degree of unbelief.

**How long...how long?** Not long at all! These two questions are an allusion to the Cross which is soon to become His reality. Jesus expresses His exasperation. Other places He says “You of little faith!” (Mt. 6:30; Mt 14:31) and, “You men of little faith! (Mt. 8:26; Mt 16:8).

**Hiebert** - the repeated **how long**, “until when,” indicates His disappointment and weariness. He questions until what time it will be necessary for Him to remain “with you” in a relationship of intimacy and fellowship before His mission is realized. **Put up with** gives the picture of holding one’s self up under a load to support another; it indicates that their spiritual dullness was a heavy load to the Lord. ([Gospel of Mark - An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Leon Morris** on **how long** - “The question, **how long?** (cf. [Nu. 14:27](#)), shows that Jesus was concerned at the lack of faith and purpose of which He speaks. People were seeing the miracles as wonders, but not as signs of God’s presence and of His demand for repentance.” (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**D A Carson** - “The contrast between the glory of the Transfiguration and Jesus’ disciples’ tawdry unbelief (see v. 17) is part of the mounting tension that magnifies Jesus’ uniqueness as he moves closer to his passion and resurrection.” (See [Matthew](#))

**Osborne** on to whom **unbelieving** refers - The antecedent of the “faithless” (apistos [NIV: “**unbelieving**”]) is quite difficult to determine. It could be the crowd and the scribes who were debating with the disciples, or the disciples who were unable to cast out the demon, or everyone present then as emblematic of the unbelief of the nation. I believe that it is both the disciples and the people as a whole, but the nearest context describes the failure of the disciples (“I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not” [v. 18]), so Jesus is especially exasperated with the “unbelief” (= “hardness of heart” in Mk 6:52; 8:17) of his own followers. ([Teach the Text - Mark](#))

**MacArthur** - O unbelieving generation,” was aimed primarily at the disciples (ED: IN HIS [LUKE COMMENTARY](#) HE SAYS “encompassed the entire nation of Israel, whom He denounced on other occasions”). It reveals that the cause of their inability to cast out the demon was their failure to believe. The interjection **O** expresses emotion on Jesus’ part (cf. Luke 13:34; 24:25), revealing that the disciples’ weak faith was painful to Him. His rebuke was harsh; Luke 9:41 adds that He also called them a “perverted generation” (cf. Mark 8:38; Deut. 32:5, 20). After all the time they had spent with Him, such lack of trust was inexcusable. (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**Hiebert** - feels that Jesus’ declaration “seems to embrace the crowd as a whole, including all the faithless elements represented. **But the nine disciples** (ED: Peter, James and John get a pass on this one since they were on the mount of transfiguration!) **seem to be specifically in view**, since it was **their lack of faith** that had caused the painful situation. It showed that they too must be ranked as belonging to that faithless generation among which He found Himself. The historical present saith takes the reader to the very scene as Jesus uttered His lament. In Greek the **O** is seldom used with direct addresses; its use here points to His deep emotion. ([Gospel of Mark - An Expositional Commentary](#))

**NET NOTES** - The rebuke for lack of faith has OT roots: Nu 14:27; Deut 32:5, 30; Isa 59:8.

**William Hendriksen** calls our attention to the striking contrast “between The Twelve (the three plus the nine), on the one hand; and Jesus, on the other: As to The Twelve, on the mountain we found the **slumbering** three (Luke 9:32a); and now, in the valley we see the **bumbling** nine. Meanwhile on the mountain Jesus was fully awake, steadfast, and loyal; and now, in the valley He is signally alert, strong, and loving. Let us therefore heed Heb. 4:14-16+. (Borrow [Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#))

In the OT we read a similar rebuke of the nation of Israel in the Song of Moses (Dt 32:1-43) for her lack of faith...

Deuteronomy 32:5+ “They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect;

But are a **perverse and crooked generation**.

Deuteronomy 32:20<sup>+</sup> "Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; For they are a **perverse generation**, Sons in whom is no **faithfulness** (Lxx uses [pistis](#) = faith, faithfulness and modifies it with the Greek adverb "ouk" signifying strong negation)

**Wiersbe** - When you analyze this section...you can better understand why Jesus spoke those words: *He was grieved over the failures of His followers*. He had given His Apostles authority over Satan (**Ed**: cf Lk 9:1<sup>+</sup>), yet they were too weak to cast out a demon (Luke 9:37-45). In feeding the 5,000, Jesus gave them an example of compassion, yet they persisted in manifesting selfishness and lack of love (Luke 9:46-56). He taught clearly what it meant to follow Him, yet the volunteers turned out to be "me first" disciples (Luke 9:57-62). No wonder He was grieved! (Borrow [Be compassionate](#))

**Bring** ([present imperative](#)) **him here to Me** - Command in [present imperative](#). Jesus will now rectify what His disciples were unable to handle. "the command was a promise. Fully conscious of His power, He indicated that He would act where weakness had failed. The present imperative bring, "be bringing," has a plural subject; it was directed to the crowd generally. The boy was now not with the father; he had been taken to a place of safekeeping not far away." (Hiebert [Gospel of Mark - An Expository Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 17. The whole generation among whom he lived caused the Saviour suffering by their want of faith, and the absence of that straightforward confidence in God which would have secured them the greatest blessings. His own disciples—he had been with them, and yet they had not learned to have faith in him. The scribes and Pharisees—he had suffered from them many times already, and now they must make a poor lunatic the centre of conflict with him. He had been in fellowship with heaven, and it was a terrible jar to his heart to come down among such an unruly and unbelieving company. They were both "faithless and perverse", the two things commonly go together: those who will not believe will not obey.

What a trial was all this to our Lord's holy and gracious mind! "How long shall I be with you?" Must I continue in such unworthy company? "How long shall I suffer you?" Must I always be thus tried by your ill manners? It was a moment when his triumphant foes and unbelieving friends alike deserved rebuke. But the word once spoken, Jesus will not leave the poor sufferer before him to endure the malicious attacks of the evil spirit.

See how our royal Captain turns the tide of battle with a word! He transferred the fight from the disciples to himself: "Bring him hither to me." Once in the circle of our Lord's own power, all is done. "Bring him hither to me." Never let us forget this precept. When most self-despairing, let us be Christ-confiding.

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**Put up with** (430) ([anechomai](#) from **aná** = in, up + **echomai**, the [middle voice](#) of **echo** = to have, to hold) means literally to hold one's self up, erect, upright and by extension firm against a person or thing. Thus **anechomai** means to put up with, to bear with (equanimity or evenness of mind especially under stress), to tolerate, to forbear, to be patient with.

**Unbelieving** (571) [apistos](#) from **a** = without + **pistos** = believing, faithful) means lacking in faith, without faith, disbelieving, unbelieving. Most NT uses describe those without faith, not trusting, unfaithful. In secular Greek use **apistos** described reports, etc as *incredible*. **BDAG** gives an example of an ancient secular use of **apistos** in the description of "a patient (who) sneers in disbelief at healings recorded in a shrine of Asclepius and subsequently receives the sobriquet (a descriptive name) : "*Apistos*"

**APISTOS** - 21v - Matt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41; Lk. 12:46; Jn. 20:27; Acts 26:8; 1 Co. 6:6; 1 Co. 7:12; 1 Co. 7:13; 1 Co. 7:14; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 10:27; 1 Co. 14:22; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:24; 2 Co. 4:4; 2 Co. 6:14; 2 Co. 6:15; 1 Tim. 5:8; Tit. 1:15; Rev. 21:8

**Perverted** (1294) ([diastrepho](#) from **dia** = separation, in two, throughout + **strépho** = turn, English = diastrophism = the process of deformation that produces in the earth's crust its continents and ocean basins) is literally to twist throughout or to distort thoroughly. To turn different ways. To twist about. **Diastrepho** is used metaphorically in the NT meaning to pervert or to distort. The idea is to cause one to depart from an accepted standard of oral or spiritual values. In the [perfect tense](#) it describes a permanently distorted condition (literally the perfect tense pictures permanently "turned aside") (see parallel description in Mt 17:17; See Paul's uses in Acts 20:30<sup>+</sup>; Php 2:15<sup>+</sup>). As an aside, the verb [epistrepho](#) which means "be converted" uses the same root, but the different prefix makes it mean "to turn" around instead of "to be twisted". the perverted need to be converted! The twisted are going in the wrong direction (to hell) and need to be turned around (toward heaven) by the Gospel!

**DIASTREPHO** - 7v - **make crooked(1), misleading(1), perverse(1), perverse things(1), perverted(2), turn...away(1)**. Matt. 17:17; Lk. 9:41; Lk. 23:2; Acts 13:8; Acts 13:10; Acts 20:30; Phil. 2:15

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**POSB - Power, Lack of:** What happens when the servants of God have no power? What are the results of a powerless life and ministry?

- ⇒ No power causes embarrassment and shame.
- ⇒ No power causes the world to question and ridicule and belittle.



- ⇒ No power questions the deity (validity) of Christ and God.
  - ⇒ No power causes the questioning of God and His ability to deliver. (See [The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible](#))
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### **C H Spurgeon - Morning and Evening - "Bring him unto me."**

Despairingly the poor disappointed father turned away from the disciples to their Master. His son was in the worst possible condition, and all means had failed, but the miserable child was soon delivered from the evil one when the parent in faith obeyed the Lord Jesus' word, "Bring him unto me." Children are a precious gift from God, but much anxiety comes with them. They may be a great joy or a great bitterness to their parents; they may be filled with the Spirit of God, or possessed with the spirit of evil. In all cases, the Word of God gives us one receipt for the curing of all their ills, "Bring him unto me." O for more agonizing prayer on their behalf while they are yet babes! Sin is there, let our prayers begin to attack it. Our cries for our offspring should precede those cries which betoken their actual advent into a world of sin. In the days of their youth we shall see sad tokens of that dumb and deaf spirit which will neither pray aright, nor hear the voice of God in the soul, but Jesus still commands, "Bring them unto me." When they are grown up they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God; then when our hearts are breaking we should remember the great Physician's words, "Bring them unto me." Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives.

The Lord sometimes suffers his people to be driven into a corner that they may experimentally know how necessary he is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the strong for strength, and this is a great blessing to us. Whatever our morning's need may be, let it like a strong current bear us to the ocean of divine love. Jesus can soon remove our sorrow, he delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to him while he waits to meet us

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### **Spurgeon** excerpt from his sermon [A Desperate Case – How to Meet it](#)

How different the spirit of Moses and Jesus! When Moses comes down from the mountain, it is to purge the camp. He seems to grasp the fiery sword; he breaks the golden calf; he smites the idolaters; but when Jesus comes down from the mountain, he finds a strife in the camp, as Moses did; he finds his own apostles worsted and beaten, just as Aaron had been defeated by the clamours of the people; but he has not a word of cursing; there is a gentle rebuke—"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" His actions are actions of mercy—no breaking in pieces, but healing; no cursing, but blessing: love sits smiling on his brow, as he touches the poor wretch who is almost dead with diabolical possession, and restores him to life and health. Go you then, to Jesus; leave the law and your own self-righteousness, for these can do nothing but curse you. Fly to Jesus, for be you whomsoever you may, there are pardons on his lips; there are blessings in his hands; there is love in his heart; and he will not disdain to receive even you.

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### **Spurgeon - Hope in hopeless cases** (Full sermon [Hope in Hopeless Cases](#))

'Bring him hither to me.' Matthew 17:17

How is it that Satan has the impudence to make men despair? Surely it is a piece of his infernal impertinence that he dares to do it. Despair, when you have an omnipotent God to deal with you? Despair, when the precious blood of the Son of God is given for sinners? Despair, when God delights in mercy? Despair, when the silver bell rings, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'? Despair, while life lasts, while mercy's gate stands wide open, while the heralds of mercy beckon you to come, while 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool'? I say again, it is infernal impertinence that has dared to suggest the idea of despair to a sinner. Christ unable to save? Never can it be. Christ outdone by Satan and by sin? Impossible. A sinner with diseases too many for the great Physician to heal? I tell you that if all the diseases of men were met in you, and all the sins of men were heaped on you, and if blasphemy, murder, fornication, adultery and every sin that is possible or imaginable had all been committed by you, yet the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, 'cleanseth us from all sin.' If you will but trust my Master, who is worthy to be trusted and deserves your confidence, he will save you even now. Why delay, why raise questions, why debate, why deliberate, mistrust and suspect? Fall into his arms; he cannot reject you, for he has himself said, 'him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' Yet, I do despair of converting you unless the Master does it. It is mine to tell you this, but I know you will not hear it, or, hearing it, will reject it unless Christ shall come with power by his Spirit. O may he come today.

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### **Walter Kaiser - Faith Moves Mountains?** (See [Hard Sayings of the Bible - scroll to page 406](#))

Of these sayings, or varieties of an original saying, emphasizing the limitless possibilities open to faith, Mark's form (followed in Mt 21:21) has a life setting in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, during Holy Week; Luke's form may be from the Q collection, in which case the form in Matthew 17:20 (an amplification of Jesus' words to the disciples after the healing of the epileptic boy at the foot of



the mountain of transfiguration) combines features from Mark and Q.

In any case, Jesus illustrates the power of faith by analogies from the natural world. If faith is present at all, even if it is no bigger than a mustard seed, it can accomplish wonders: think what a large plant springs from something as tiny as a mustard seed. “We are not afraid when the earth heaves and the mountains are hurled into the sea”—so Psalm 46:2 (NEB) describes a convulsion of nature that leaves men and women of God unshaken because he is their refuge and strength. It may be that Jesus is using such a form of words figuratively to describe the incalculable effects of prevailing faith.

But in Mark’s account there may be some more explicit point in the form of words. In that account the words are addressed to the disciples after the incident of the cursing of the fig tree. There may not seem to be much to connect that incident with a lesson on the power of faith. The connection, however, may be provided by the place where, according to Mark, the words were spoken. They were spoken in the morning, as Jesus and his disciples made their way from Bethany to Jerusalem, crossing the Mount of Olives. So, in Mark’s account, “this mountain” in the saying would be the Mount of Olives.

Now, in current expectation regarding the time of the end, the Mount of Olives played a special part. It would be the scene of a violent earthquake on the day of the Lord. “On that day,” said one of the prophets (referring to the day when the God of Israel would take final action against the enemies of his people), “his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south” (Zech 14:4). If Jesus had this and related Old Testament prophecies in mind on his way across the Mount of Olives, his meaning might have been, “If you have sufficient faith in God, the day of the Lord will come sooner than you think.”<sup>17</sup>

- See [Hard Sayings of the Bible \(scroll to page 383\)](#) for discussion of the related topic - **How Much Faith Do We Need?**

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### **Oswald Chambers** - Discernment of faith

Faith as a grain of mustard seed.... Matthew 17:20

We have the idea that God rewards us for our faith, it may be so in the initial stages; but we do not earn anything by faith. Faith brings us into right relationship with God and gives God His opportunity. God has frequently to knock the bottom board out of your experience if you are a saint in order to get you into contact with Himself. God wants you to understand that it is a life of faith, not a life of sentimental enjoyment of His blessings. Your earlier life of faith was narrow and intense, settled around a little sun-spot of experience that had as much of sense as of faith in it, full of light and sweetness; then God withdrew His conscious blessings in order to teach you to walk by faith. You are worth far more to Him now than you were in your days of conscious delight and thrilling testimony.

Faith by its very nature must be tried, and the real trial of faith is not that we find it difficult to trust God, but that God’s character has to be cleared in our own minds. Faith in its actual working out has to go through spells of unsyllabled isolation. Never confound the trial of faith with the ordinary discipline of life. Much that we call the trial of faith is the inevitable result of being alive. Faith in the Bible is faith in God against every thing that contradicts Him—‘I will remain true to God’s character whatever He may do.’ “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him”—this is the most sublime utterance of faith in the whole of the Bible.

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### **Bring The Boy To Me** - [Jesus] answered him and said, “. . . Bring him to Me.” —Mark 9:19

“I don’t believe in God and I won’t go,” Mark said.

Amy struggled to swallow the lump in her throat. Her son had changed from a happy boy to a surly and uncooperative young man. Life was a battleground, and Sunday had become a day to dread, as Mark refused to go to church with the family. Finally his despairing parents consulted a counselor, who said: “Mark must make his own faith journey. You can’t force him into the kingdom. Give God space to work. Keep praying, and wait.”

Amy waited—and prayed. One morning the words of Jesus that she had read echoed through her mind. Jesus’ disciples had failed to help a demon-possessed boy, but Jesus had the answer: “Bring him to Me” (Mark 9:19). The sun shone through the window at Amy’s side, making a pool of light on the floor. If Jesus could heal in such an extreme situation, then surely He could also help her son. She pictured herself and Mark standing in that light with Jesus. Then she mentally stepped back, leaving her son alone with the One who loved him even more than she did.

Every day Amy silently handed Mark to God, clinging to the assurance that He knew Mark’s needs, and would in His time and in His way, work in his life. By Marion Stroud (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Father, I lift my beloved to You, knowing that You love him even more than I do and You understand just what to do to meet his need. I commit him to Your care.

Prayer is the voice of faith trusting that God knows and cares.

**Matthew 17:18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.**

- **And Jesus rebuked him:** Mt 12:22 Mk 1:34 5:8 9:25-27 Lu 4:35,36,41 8:29 9:42 Ac 16:18 19:13-15
- **the demon came out of him:** Mt 9:22 15:28 Jn 4:52,53

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:25+ And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." 26 And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

**And Jesus ([lesous](#)) rebuked ([epitimaō](#)) him** - Mark 9:25+ says "He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." Mark 9:25-27+ adds detail - "When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again. After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up." **Rebuked ([epitimaō](#))** also conveys the sense of to command or warning which includes an implied threat. We again see the compassion of Christ as in Luke 7:15+ where "The dead man sat up and began to speak. **And Jesus gave him back to his mother.**" The devil tried one last throw (a wrestling term in the Greek), but Jesus **rebuked** the demon and cast him out." ([Wiersbe](#))

**MacArthur** commenting on Jesus' power over the demon says "It's always so matter of fact in the Scripture. No fanfare, just absolute matter of fact simple language describing what He did." ([Luke 9:42-43 The Significance of Faith, Part 2](#))

**And the demon ([daimonion](#)) came out ([exerchomai](#)) of him** - Mark 9:26+ = "And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!"

**And the boy ([pais](#)) was cured ([therapeuo](#)) at once** (ESV - instantly) - Mark 9:27+ - "But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up." Luke 9:43+ adds that "they were all amazed ([ekplesso](#)) at the greatness ([megaleiotetos](#) - majesty) of God."

**MacArthur on demon** - Demons have been actively doing Satan's bidding in the world ever since the fall. They do not usually make their presence known, choosing rather to operate covertly by disguising themselves as **angels of light** (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14+). During Jesus' earthly ministry, however, they launched an all-out assault against Him, manifesting themselves more often openly and to some degree more willingly than is their normal practice. But Jesus unmasked them, forcing them to reveal themselves even when they were unwilling to do so. This demon would likely have preferred to have remained undiscovered in the boy. Although his father had discerned that his son's condition was the result of demonic activity, others may have diagnosed him as having some kind of a mental disorder. (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**Grant Osborne** - Demons possess people not because they wish they had a body but rather to torture and kill those who are made in God's image. This is a central element in their war against God. The details (convulsions, foaming at the mouth, gnashing of teeth, paralytic rigidity) are descriptive of epileptic seizures. Yet the source of the epilepsy for Mark is demonic. Evil spirits often utilize human illness as part of their wicked repertoire. ([Teach the Text - Mark](#))

**MacArthur** adds that "This seems to be an especially strong demon regarding which **MacArthur** writes "Evidently demons vary in strength just as humans do. For example in Daniel 10:12-14+, a holy angel sent with a message for Daniel was held up by a stronger fallen angel until Michael the archangel intervened.) Having discerned the strength of the demon inhabiting this boy, the apostles should have sought God's help in believing prayer (Mark 9:29+). If they had done so with even a tiny amount of faith—"faith the size of a mustard seed" (Matt. 17:20)—they could have handled even extreme difficulties (symbolized by the Lord's metaphorical statement, "you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move"). The word had been spoken, the promise given, the will of God made manifest. All the apostles needed to have done was to believe and ask God for the power. Unfortunately, in this instance they did not." (See [MacArthur Commentary](#)) ([Click here](#) for more on demons)

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 18. "Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed." One word from Christ, and Satan flees. Mark calls this evil spirit "dumb and deaf", but he heard Jesus, and answered to his voice with a cry; and rending the child terribly, came out of him, never to return. "The child was cured from that very hour"; that is to say, at once and for ever. God grant us faith to bring our boys and girls to the Lord Jesus with confidence in his power to cure them, and cure them for all future life! Even though young people may have become violent in temper, and precocious in vice, the Lord can at once subdue the evil power. There was no need for the

boy to wait till he grew up. He was under the power of the devil while a child, and he was cured as a child. Let us seek the salvation of children as children.

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**Rebuked** (2008) **epitimao** from **epi** = upon + **timao** = to honor) means literally to put honor upon and then to mete out due measure and so then to find fault with, to censure severely, to rebuke, to express strong disapproval of, or to denounce (cp the incredible example in Mt 16:22). **Epitimao** also conveys the sense of to command or warning which includes an implied threat (Lk 8:24; Mt 16:20) **Wuest** notes that **epitimao** "In classical Greek its predominating sense is that of severe, strenuous reproach for unworthy deeds or acts. In this sense, the word carries at bottom, a suggestion of a charge under penalty." **Epitimao** is stronger than the word **reprove** (**elegcho**) implying more authority and less argument

**EPITIMAO - 30V** - Matt. 8:26; Matt. 12:16; Matt. 16:20; Matt. 16:22; Matt. 17:18; Matt. 19:13; Matt. 20:31; Mk. 1:25; Mk. 3:12; Mk. 4:39; Mk. 8:30; Mk. 8:32; Mk. 8:33; Mk. 9:25; Mk. 10:13; Mk. 10:48; Lk. 4:35; Lk. 4:39; Lk. 4:41; Lk. 8:24; Lk. 9:21; Lk. 9:42; Lk. 9:55; Lk. 17:3; Lk. 18:15; Lk. 18:39; Lk. 19:39; Lk. 23:40; 2 Tim. 4:2; Jude 1:9

**Demon** (1140) **daimonion** is used most often to describe demons or fallen angels under the dominion of the head fallen angel, Satan! Daimonion is an evil spirit, regarded as a supernatural and independent being neither human nor divine.

**DAIMONION - 55V** - Matt. 7:22; Matt. 9:33; Matt. 9:34; Matt. 10:8; Matt. 11:18; Matt. 12:24; Matt. 12:27; Matt. 12:28; Matt. 17:18; Mk. 1:34; Mk. 1:39; Mk. 3:15; Mk. 3:22; Mk. 6:13; Mk. 7:26; Mk. 7:29; Mk. 7:30; Mk. 9:38; Mk. 16:9; Mk. 16:17; Lk. 4:33; Lk. 4:35; Lk. 4:41; Lk. 7:33; Lk. 8:2; Lk. 8:27; Lk. 8:29; Lk. 8:30; Lk. 8:33; Lk. 8:35; Lk. 8:38; Lk. 9:1; Lk. 9:42; Lk. 9:49; Lk. 10:17; Lk. 11:14; Lk. 11:15; Lk. 11:18; Lk. 11:19; Lk. 11:20; Lk. 13:32; Jn. 7:20; Jn. 8:48; Jn. 8:49; Jn. 8:52; Jn. 10:20; Jn. 10:21; Acts 17:18; 1 Co. 10:20; 1 Co. 10:21; 1 Tim. 4:1; Jas. 2:19; Rev. 9:20; Rev. 16:14; Rev. 18:2

See also [What does the Bible say about demons? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE DEVIL-POSSESSED SON** (note on Mark 9:17-29 but parallels Matthew's account)

On the platform of this narrative we see the characteristics of Heaven, earth, and hell. (1) Compassion and power; (2) Doubt and weakness; (3) Hate and misery. But the power of the compassionate Christ can overcome the weakness of His disciples and the work of the devil. We have here—

**I. Satanic Influence.** The Lord Jesus Christ believed in personal wicked spirits. We think lightly of them, but He had to face them and overcome. This evil influence had—

1. AN EARLY BEGINNING. "Of a child" (Mk 9:21). Being born in sin, the natural soil of the heart is at once favourable to the seeds of evil. The Psalmist says, "We go astray as soon as we be born" (Psa. 58:3), and we keep going astray like lost sheep until we are born again.

2. AN OVERPOWERING MASTERY. "He teareth him, and oft-times casteth him into the fire, and into the waters" (Mk 9:18, 22). He was simply led captive by this devil, having no power at all to resist him. His purpose was to kill and to destroy. Such is the power of sin. Has sin dominion (mastery) over you? Are you dominated by principles you know to be contrary to your conscience and your God? Are you under law or grace? (Rom. 6:14).

3. A FEARFUL EFFECT. Mark's pen is graphic here. What a terrible catalogue of evils, "Teareth, foameth, gnasheth, pineth, wallowing, foaming, cast him into the fire, into the water, and rent him sore" (Mk 9:20). Just one thing wanting, the awful "for ever," to make his hell complete. Those under the power of the devil, if they escape the tearing, the gnashing, the wallowing, and fire in this life, will not escape in the next (Matt. 13:40–42; Rev. 20:15).

**II. Disciples' Failure.** "I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not" (Mk 9:18). Great things are expected from those who belong to Christ, and justly so (Phil. 4:13). Peter and John said to the lame man, "Look on us" (Acts 3:4). They knew what possibilities were within their reach through faith in the risen Saviour.

They could not because of—

1. FAILURE IN FAITH. The Lord rebuked them with, "O faithless generation, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk 9:23). Their lack of faith brought dishonour upon the Name of their Master. "Abraham was strong in faith, giving God the glory" (Rom. 4:20). Yes, strong faith glorifies God. Our unbelief is a stumbling-block in the way of others. "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

2. FAILURE IN PRAYER. "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mk 9:29). Prayer means communion with God; communion means power for service. Those who have only fixed times for prayer may be often caught napping in weakness and inability. The spirit of prayer is better than seasons of prayer.

3. FAILURE IN FASTING (Mk 9:29). Prayer and fasting forms the two-edged sword that gets the victory. It is questionable if we really pray as we ought, unless we esteem it better than our daily food. If preaching and feasting would cast out devils, then there would be a general exodus. This overcoming power does not belong to us merely as disciples. There are many powerless disciples. This Christ-honouring authority can only abide with those who abide in fellowship with Him by continual prayer and hearty self-denial for His sake. This is one of the things that are hidden from the worldly-wise, but revealed to the humble, trustful babes.

**III. Christ's Victory.** The disciples having failed him, the young man's father carried his request to Jesus Himself, saying, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion and help us." If the followers of Christ have disappointed you, try the Lord Himself. Don't be discouraged by the powerlessness of His professing people. He who wept over Jerusalem will compassionate your case Notice the order of deliverance—

1. THE INVITATION. "Bring him unto Me." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Let there be an entire yielding up of ourselves in all our helplessness and misery into His hands. As a physician He had never failed. Is there anything tearing your heart and causing your life to pine away? Bring it to Him. Any wayward son possessed with a deaf and dumb spirit toward God and the things of eternity? "Bring him to Me," says the Redeemer of men.

2. THE WORD OF POWER. Jesus said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him" (Mk 9:25). He speaks and it is done. He sent His Word and healed them. The deliverance was complete, the evil spirit must enter no more into him. In obeying His invitation we shall find His Word to be with power. He can separate between you and your sins. He can give us the victory over all our enemies.

3. THE UPLIFTING HAND. "Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up" (Mk 9:27). When the veil is cast out we are lifted up into newness of life. Made a new creation by Christ Jesus. The Word and the hand of Christ work together for the salvation of those who flee to Him for refuge. The Word of grace, the hand of power, both moved by a heart of love.

**Matthew 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?"**

■ Mk 4:10 9:28

#### **Related Passages:**

Mark 9:28+ And when He had come into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"

### **THE DISCIPLES PUZZLED BY THEIR IMPOTENCE**

**Then the disciples ([mathetes](#)) came to ([proserchomai](#)) Jesus ([lesous](#)) privately ("by Himself") and said, "Why could ([dunamai](#)) we not ([ou](#) - absolutely not) drive it out ([ekballō](#))** - The **disciples** refers to the nine who Jesus did not take to the mountain and they readily admit their impotence and inability to cast out the evil spirit.

**ESV Study Bible** - Besides lacking understanding (Mk 8:17-18, 21; 9:5), the disciples lack the ability to fully carry out their commission from Jesus (cf. Mk 6:7, 13; 9:18). Their failure is an occasion for encouragement to more prayer (cf. Mk 4:10; 7:17; 10:10), implying that more time and effort in prayer (and therefore in closer fellowship with God) leads to growth in faith." (Borrow [ESV Study Bible](#))

*No matter what spiritual gifts we may have,  
their exercise is never automatic.*

**Warren Wiersbe** - When you study all three reports (Matt. 17; Mark 9), you discover what was lacking in their lives. First on the list was *faith* (Matt. 17:19-20); they were part of an unbelieving generation and had lost the confidence that they needed in order to use

their power. But *prayer* and *fasting* were also lacking (Mark 9:29), which indicates that the nine men had allowed their devotional disciplines to erode during their Lord's brief absence. No matter what spiritual gifts we may have, their exercise is never automatic. (Borrow [Be compassionate](#))

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - This was a very proper question. When we make a failure, let us own that we have failed, take the blame of it to ourselves, and apply to our Lord for his gracious intervention. When we are beaten, let it be said of us, "Then came the disciples to Jesus." Let us make a private, personal matter of it: "They came to Jesus apart." Let us sit humbly at our Lord's feet to receive rebuke or instruction as he sees fit.

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**Andrew Murray** - from his book [With Christ in the School of Prayer](#) - Chapter 13 "Prayer and fasting;" or, The Cure of Unbelief

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to you. **Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting**—MATT. 17:19–21. (ED NOTE: MOST TRANSLATIONS DO NOT INCLUDE THE VERSE IN BOLD BECAUSE IT IS NOT FOUND IN THE BEST MANUSCRIPTS. HOWEVER MARK'S PARALLEL ACCOUNT DOES HAVE THIS PASSAGE - "And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."." Mark 9:29)

WHEN the disciples saw Jesus cast the evil spirit out of the epileptic whom "they could not cure," they asked the Master for the cause of their failure. He had given them "power and authority over all devils, and to cure all disease." They had often exercised that power, and joyfully told how the devils were subject to them. And yet now, while He was on the Mount, they had utterly failed, That there had been nothing in the will of God or in the nature of the case to render deliverance impossible, had been proved; at Christ's bidding the evil spirit had gone out. From their expression, "Why could we not?" it is evident that they had wished and sought to do so; they had probably used the Master's name, and called upon the evil spirit to go out. Their efforts had been vain, and, in presence of the multitude, they had been put to shame. "Why could we not?"

Christ's answer was direct and plain: "Because of your unbelief." The cause of His success and their failure, was not owing to His having a special power to which they had no access. No; the reason was not far to seek. He had so often taught them that there is one power, that of faith, to which, in the kingdom of darkness, as in the kingdom of God, everything must bow; in the spiritual world failure has but one cause, the want of faith. Faith is the one condition on which all the Divine power can enter into man and work through him. It is the susceptibility of the unseen; man's will yielded up to, and moulded by, the will of God. The power they had received to cast out devils, they did not hold in themselves as a permanent gift or possession; the power was in Christ, to be received, and held, and used by faith alone, living faith in Himself. Had they been full of faith in Him as Lord and Conqueror in the spirit world, had they been full of faith in Him as having given them authority to cast out in His name, this faith would have given them the victory. "Because of your unbelief" was, for all time, the Master's explanation and reproof of impotence and failure in His Church.

But such want of faith must have a cause too. Well might the disciples have asked: "And why could we not believe? Our faith has cast out devils before this; why have we now failed in believing?" The Master proceeds to tell them ere they ask: "This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer." As faith is the simplest, so it is the highest exercise of the spiritual life, where our spirit yields itself in perfect receptivity to God's Spirit, and so is strengthened to its highest activity. This faith depends entirely upon the state of the spiritual life; only when this is strong and in full health, when the Spirit of God has full sway in our life, is there the power of faith to do its mighty deeds. And therefore Jesus adds: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer." The faith that can overcome such stubborn resistance as you have just seen in this evil spirit Jesus tells them, is not possible except to men living in very close fellowship with God, and in very special separation from the world in prayer and fasting. And so He teaches us two lessons in regard to prayer of deep importance. The one, that faith needs a life of prayer in which to grow and keep strong. The other, that prayer needs fasting for its full and perfect development.

Faith needs a life of prayer for its full growth. In all the different parts of the spiritual life there is such close union, such unceasing action and re-action, that each may be both cause and effect. Thus it is with faith. There can be no true prayer without faith; some measure of faith must precede prayer. And yet prayer is also the way to more faith; there can be no higher degree of faith except through much prayer. This is the lesson Jesus teaches here. There is nothing needs so much to grow as our faith. "Your faith groweth exceedingly," is said of one Church. When Jesus spoke the words, "According to your faith be it unto you," He announced the law of the kingdom, which tells us that all have not equal degrees of faith, that the same person has not always the same degree, and that the measure of faith must always determine the measure of power and of blessing. If we want to know where and how our faith is to grow, the Master points us to the throne of God. It is in prayer, in the exercise of the faith I have, in fellowship with the living God, that faith can increase. Faith can only live by feeding on what is Divine, on God Himself.

It is in the adoring worship of God, the waiting on Him and for Him, the deep silence of soul that yields itself for God to reveal

Himself, that the capacity for knowing and trusting God will be developed. It is as we take His word from the Blessed Book, and bring it to Himself, asking Him to speak it to us with His living loving voice, that the power will come fully to believe and receive the word as God's own word to us. It is in prayer, in living contact with God in living faith, that faith, the power to trust God, and in that trust, to accept everything He says, to accept every possibility He has offered to our faith, will become strong in us. Many Christians cannot understand what is meant by the much prayer they sometimes hear spoken of: they can form no conception, nor do they feel the need, of spending hours with God. But what the Master says, the experience of His people has confirmed, men of strong faith are men of much prayer.

This just brings us back again to the lesson we learned when Jesus, before telling us to believe that we receive what we ask, first said, "Have faith in God." It is God, the living God, into whom our faith must strike its roots deep and broad; then it will be strong to remove mountains and cast out devils. "If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you." Oh! if we do but give ourselves up to the work God has for us in the world, coming into contact with the mountains and the devils there are to be cast away and cast out, we should soon comprehend the need there is of much faith, and of much prayer, as the soil in which alone faith can be cultivated. Christ Jesus is our life, the life of our faith too. It is His life in us that makes us strong, and makes us simple to believe. It is the dying to self which much prayer implies, in closer union to Jesus, that the spirit of faith will come in power. Faith needs prayer for its full growth.

And prayer needs fasting for its full growth: this is the second lesson. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible; fasting, the other, with which we let loose and cast away the visible. In nothing is man more closely connected with the world of sense than in his need of food, and his enjoyment of it. It was the fruit, good for food, with which man was tempted and fell in Paradise. It was with bread to be made of stones that Jesus, when an hungered, was tempted in the wilderness, and in fasting that He triumphed. The body has been redeemed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit; it is in body as well as spirit, it is very specially, Scripture says, in eating and drinking, we are to glorify God. It is to be feared that there are many Christians to whom this eating to the glory of God, has not yet become a spiritual reality. And the first thought suggested by Jesus' words in regard to fasting and prayer, is, that it is only in a life of moderation and temperance and self-denial that there will be the heart or the strength to pray much.

But then there is also its more literal meaning. Sorrow and anxiety cannot eat: joy celebrates its feasts with eating and drinking. There may come times of intense desire, when it is strongly felt how the body, with its appetites, lawful though they be, still hinder the spirit in its battle with the powers of darkness, and the need is felt of keeping it under. We are creatures of the senses: our mind is helped by what comes to us embodied in concrete form; fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God. And He who accepted the fasting and sacrifice of the Son, knows to value and accept and reward with spiritual power the soul that is thus ready to give up all for Christ and His kingdom.

And then follows a still wider application. Prayer is the reaching out after God and the unseen; fasting, the letting go of all that is of the seen and temporal. While ordinary Christians imagine that all that is not positively forbidden and sinful is lawful to them, and seek to retain as much as possible of this world, with its property, its literature, its enjoyments, the truly consecrated soul is as the soldier who carries only what he needs for the warfare. Laying aside every weight, as well as the easily besetting sin, afraid of entangling himself with the affairs of this life, he seeks to lead a Nazarite life, as one specially set apart for the Lord and His service. Without such voluntary separation, even from what is lawful, no one will attain power in prayer: this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.

Disciples of Jesus! who have asked the Master to teach you to pray, come now and accept His lessons. He tells you that prayer is the path to faith, strong faith, that can cast out devils. He tells you: "If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you;" let this glorious promise encourage you to pray much. Is the prize not worth the price? Shall we not give up all to follow Jesus in the path He opens to us here; shall we not, if need be, fast? Shall we not do anything that neither the body nor the world around hinder us in our great life-work,—having intercourse with our God in prayer, that we may become men of faith, whom He can use in His work of saving the world.

"LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY."

O Lord Jesus! how continually Thou hast to reprove us for our unbelief! How strange it must appear to Thee, this terrible incapacity of trusting our Father and His promises. Lord! let Thy reproof, with its searching, "Because of your unbelief," sink into the very depths of our hearts, and reveal to us how much of the sin and suffering around us is our blame. And then teach us, Blessed Lord, that there is a place where faith can be learned and gained,—even in the prayer and fasting that brings into living and abiding fellowship with Thyself and the Father.

O Saviour! Thou Thyself art the Author and the Perfecter of our faith; teach us what it is to let Thee live in us by Thy Holy Spirit. Lord! our efforts and prayers for grace to believe have been so unavailing. We know why it was: we sought for strength in ourselves



to be given from Thee. Holy Jesus! do at length teach us the mystery of Thy life in us, and how Thou, by Thy Spirit, dost undertake to live in us the life of faith, to see to it that our faith shall not fail. O let us see that our faith will just be a part of that wonderful prayer-life which Thou givest in them who expect their training for the ministry of intercession, not in word and thought only, but in the Holy Unction Thou givest, the inflowing of the Spirit of Thine own life. And teach us how, in fasting and prayer, we may grow up to the faith to which nothing shall be impossible. Amen.

NOTE At the time when Blumhardt was passing through his terrible conflict with the evil spirits in those who were possessed, and seeking to cast them out by prayer, he often wondered what it was that hindered the answer. One day a friend, to whom he had spoken of his trouble, directed his attention to our Lord's words about fasting. Blumhardt resolved to give himself to fasting, sometimes for more than thirty hours. From reflection and experience he gained the conviction that it is of more importance than is generally thought. He says, "Inasmuch as the fasting is before God, a practical proof that the thing we ask is to us a matter of true and pressing interest, and inasmuch as in a high degree it strengthens the intensity and power of the prayer, and becomes the unceasing practical expression of a prayer without words, I could believe that it would not be without efficacy, especially as the Master's words had reference to a case like the present. I tried it, without telling any one, and in truth the later conflict was extraordinarily lightened by it. I could speak with much greater restfulness and decision. I did not require to be so long present with the sick one; and I felt that I could influence without being present."

**Matthew 17:20 And He \*said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.**

- **Because of the littleness of your faith:** Mt 17:17 14:30,31 Heb 3:19
- **if you have faith the size of a mustard seed:** Mt 21:21 Mk 11:23 Lu 17:6 1Co 12:9 13:2
- **seed:** Mt 13:31 Mk 4:31
- **nothing:** Mk 9:23+ Lu 1:37 18:27

#### Related Passages:

Mark 9:23+ And Jesus said to him, "'If You can!' All things are possible to him who believes."

Luke 17:6+ And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.



Tiny Mustard Seeds

## THE PROBLEM - LITTLE FAITH THE SOLUTION - MUSTARD SEED FAITH

**And He \*said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith([pistis](#)) the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move** - Jesus diagnoses their exorcism failure as due to a faith failure. [Gotquestions](#) sums this up noting "Faith that can move mountains is not meant to imply a faith that can literally move literal mountains. The point Jesus was making is that even a little bit of faith—faith the size of a tiny mustard seed—can overcome mountainous obstacles in our lives."

*Little faith, like a little mustard seed, can be effectual;  
poor faith, like that of the disciples' here, is ineffectual*  
-- D A Carson

**David Turner** - The disciples' ability to do miraculous works (Mt 10:8) was evidently conditioned upon their faith in the power of God, so Jesus challenged them in that area by using hyperboles for both the minuscule size ("as small as a mustard seed;" cf. Mt 13:31) and the huge potential (moving mountains; Mt 21:21; 1 Cor 13:2) of their faith (cf. Mt 17:1, 9). (See [The Gospel of Matthew Page 232](#))

*Faith is measured by quality, not quantity.*

*It's not how much faith we have that counts, but where we put our faith.*

-- [Henry Blackaby](#)

**Wiersbe on faith the size of a mustard seed** - "Faith as a grain of mustard seed" suggests not only size (God will honor even a little faith), but also life and growth. Faith like a mustard seed is living faith that is nurtured and caused to grow. Faith must be cultivated so that it grows and does even greater exploits for God (1 Thes. 3:10; 2 Thes. 1:3). Had the nine disciples been praying, disciplining themselves, and meditating on the Word, they would have been able to cast out the demon and rescue the boy. (See [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament - Page 51](#))

**Wiersbe** - Jesus compared faith to a mustard seed, one of the smallest seeds known (Matt. 17:20). But the size of the seed is immaterial; it's the life within the seed that counts. Plant the seed and eventually you will have a large plant (Mt 13:31–32). Faith is like that tiny seed: if the seed is planted in the heart and nurtured, it will produce the plant. The Bible is "the words of faith" (1 Tim. 4:6), and the more we feed on God's truth, the stronger our faith will become. As we claim God's promises in prayer, our faith will mature. "According to your faith let it be done to you." Matthew 9:29 TNIV (See [New Testament Words for Today: 100 Devotional Reflections](#))

**And nothing will be impossible (adunateo) to you** - With God and faith, in Him an impossibility can become a "Him-possibility!" Be careful here. This is not a "carte blanche" promise that you can do anything or get anything you ask for. Everything we ask for is ultimately governed by the good, and acceptable and perfect will of God (cf 1Jn 5:14-15).

*Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?*

*Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?*

*God specializes in things that seem impossible.*

*He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you.*

—OSCAR C. ELIASON

**D A Carson** - Removal of mountains was proverbial for overcoming great difficulties (cf. Isa 40:4; 49:11; 54:10; Matt 21:21–22; Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6; 1 Cor 13:2). Nothing would be impossible for them—a promise that, like its analogue in Philippians 4:13, is limited by context, not by unbelief. Here it refers to the accomplishment of the works of the kingdom for which they had been given authority.....At a superficial level the disciples did have faith: they expected to be able to exorcise the demon. They had long been successful in this work, and now they are surprised by their failure. But their faith is poor and shoddy. They are treating the authority given them (Mt 10:1, 8) like a gift of magic, a bestowed power that works *ex opere operato*. In Mark, Jesus tells them that this case requires prayer—not a form or an approved rite, but an entire life bathed in prayer and its concomitant faith. In Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples that what they need is not **giant faith** (tiny faith will do) but **true faith**—faith that, out of a deep, personal trust, expects God to work. (See [Matthew](#))

**Charles Swindoll** addresses a dangerous teaching related to the phrase **nothing will be impossible to you** noting that "Jesus' promise in Mark 9:23 (All things are possible to him who believes.)" is often misquoted by false teachers of the ["Word of Faith" movement](#). This heretical system of teaching declares that God has given the power to believers to **"name and claim"** virtually anything, including health and prosperity, and that people only need to exercise enough belief in order for their wish to come to pass. But this is not what Jesus taught. Here, the object of faith is crucial. He calls us to believe in God's power and goodness. Regardless of what we desire to have, we surrender our will to His, trusting that God knows what we need better than we do. Trust in His power and goodness means we trust that God will do everything He desires to do in us and through us. Very few of us doubt God's ability to do anything He pleases to do; we more often struggle with His willingness to be kind or merciful because, in our selfishness, we think that getting what we want is a sign of God's kindness and that being denied our desires indicates God's displeasure. Personally, I have lived long enough to thank God for unfulfilled requests! Gaining the benefit of twenty-twenty hindsight has often revealed that what I thought I wanted would have been disastrous for me. (See [Insights on Mark](#)).

**John MacArthur** comments - Jesus did not usually call for faith in those He healed. In this case, however, He intended to use this man as an illustration for the apostles of what even imperfect faith in Him can accomplish. In brutal honesty "the boy's father cried out and said, 'I do believe; help my unbelief'" (v. 24). Desperately, he pleaded for Jesus to give him whatever was lacking in his faith...."All things are possible to him who believes," is the lesson Jesus intended to teach. This was not the first time He had spoken of the importance of faith (cf. Mark 5:34-36; 6:5-6), nor would it be the last (cf. Mark 10:27; 11:22-24). The lesson that faith is essential to access the power of God applied to all the unbelieving crowd, the father, who was struggling to believe, as well as to the disciples, whose faith was weak and wavering. The disciples especially needed to learn this lesson, since after Christ's death, they would need to access divine power through believing prayer (Matt. 7:7-8; 21:22; Luke 11:9-10; John 14:13-14; 15:7; 16:24; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15). (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

*Like a seed, faith grows  
as it is watered with Scripture,*

**Faith the size of a mustard seed:** That is, as Bishop Pearce well remarks, a thriving and increasing faith, like a grain of mustard seed, which, from being the least of seeds, becomes the greatest of all herbs.

*A mustard seed-sized faith works  
because it rests in God's infinite power, not human effort.*

**Ron Dunn on faith and mountains** - In the Bible, mountains are used to symbolize barriers and hindrances. They represent immovable objects, insurmountable problems that block the path of God's people, making progress impossible. For instance, Isaiah the prophet speaks of the time when the people will be released from their captivity and return to their homeland. But standing between them and their destination are mountains, towering barricades shouting like Amalek, "This is as far as you go." Speaking through the prophet, God says, "I will make all My mountains a road" (Isa. 49:11). God promises to turn the mountains into a freeway; in other words, the mountains will be cast into the sea, leaving the path open and clear. A mountain is anything that threatens to halt or hinder our God-appointed journey. It is anything that prevents us from doing what God has commanded, or becoming what God has promised. Jesus is telling us that if we can believe, there is nothing that can keep us from doing what God has commanded us to do or becoming what God has saved us to be. And that, dear friend, is good news. An Amazing Promise: "All Things Are Possible" To the questioning father of the demon-possessed boy, Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" ([Mark 9:23](#)). Whatever obstacle stands between us and the will of God can be uprooted by the command of faith. Just think of it. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can keep us from doing the will of God—if we believe. Behind the will of God is thrown the power of God. When God commands us to be or do something, he places at our disposal all the resources of heaven. And faith is the key that releases those resources into our situation. If I know God's will in a given circumstance, I can be assured that he stands ready to supply whatever is needed to accomplish that will.

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 20 -Want of faith is the great cause of failure among disciples, both as to themselves and their work for others. There may be other specific maladies in certain cases, but this is the great and main cause of all failure: "Because of your unbelief." If there had been true faith, of the real and living kind, the disciples could have wrought any miracle, even to the moving of a mountain. Whatever faith we may have, we shall not work a miracle, for this is not the age of prodigies. Is our faith therefore limited in its sphere? Far from it. We can now by faith accomplish that which is fit and right without miracles. Our faith may be small "as a grain of mustard seed," but if it be living and true it links us with the Omnipotent One. Still is it true, "Ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." Mountains shall move before our faith by means as sure as if they were miraculous; by means even more wonderful than if the course of nature had been changed. Comparatively speaking, the suspension of natural law is a coarse expedient; but for the Lord to work the same result without violating any of his laws is an achievement not less divine than a miracle. This is what faith obtains of the Lord at the present hour: her prayer is heard, and things impossible to herself are wrought by divine power. Spiritually and symbolically, the mountain is removed. Literally, at this hour the mountain stands, but faith finds a way round it, through it, or over it; and so in effect removes it. In the mission field, mountains of exclusiveness which shut out missionaries have been removed. In ordinary life, insurmountable difficulties are graciously dissolved. In a variety of ways, before real faith hindrances disappear, according to the word of the Lord Jesus—"Nothing shall be impossible unto you."

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**Littleness of faith** ([3640](#)) oligopistia from **oligos** = little + **pistis** = faith. Oligopistia occurs only in Christian writings (Bauer) and in the NT only in Matthew 17:20. (cf oligopistos - Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk 12:28 always with reference to the disciples) Despite the etymology of the word, it probably does not refer so much to the littleness of their faith as to its poverty (Bonnard)

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### [What Does It Mean to Have Mustard Seed Faith?](#)

Faith is so vital to the Christian life that Scripture tells us without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). And yet faith is such a powerful gift from God (Ephesians 2:8–9) that with just a tiny measure of it, the size of a mustard seed, Christ told His disciples they could move mountains. So, what does it mean to have "mustard seed faith"?

We see the reference to "mustard seed faith" twice in Scripture. First, in Matthew 17:14–20, we see Christ's disciples unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy, even though Jesus had previously given them the authority to do this very thing (Matthew 10:1). When they inquired of Jesus why they were not able to drive the demon out, the Master replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move; Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:14–20). Next, in Luke 17:6, Jesus tells His disciples: "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." By using the uncommonly small mustard seed as an example, Jesus is speaking figuratively about the incalculable power of God when

unleashed in the lives of those with true faith.

We know that this statement about moving mountains and uprooting trees by faith is not to be taken literally. The key to understanding the passages is the nature of faith, which is a gift from God. The power of faith reflects the omnipotent nature of the God who bestows faith on His own. The mustard seed is one of the tiniest seeds found in the Middle East, so the conclusion is that the amount of faith needed to do great things is very small indeed. Just as in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32), Jesus uses rhetorical hyperbole to make the point that little is much when it comes from God. The mustard seed in the parable grows to be a huge tree, representing the tiny beginnings of Christianity when just a few disciples began to preach and teach the gospel. Eventually, the kingdom grew to huge proportions, encompassing the entire world and spreading over centuries.

So, too, does the tiniest bit of faith, when it is true faith from God, grow to immense proportions in the lives of believers and spreading out to influence all they come into contact with. One has only to read histories

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

**The Small Key that Opens the Door:** A tiny key can open a massive door, granting access to something much larger and more significant than the key itself. Faith, even as small as a mustard seed, unlocks the power of God to accomplish things far beyond human ability.

**The Unstoppable Snowball** -- A small snowball, when rolled down a snowy hill, gathers momentum and grows into something much larger than it began. Faith starts small, but as it is exercised and nurtured, it grows and can have a far greater impact than we expect.

**The Power of Yeast:** In baking, a small amount of yeast causes an entire lump of dough to rise. Like the mustard seed, small faith can produce significant results, transforming circumstances beyond what seems possible.

**The Light in the Darkness:** A single candle may seem insignificant in a large, dark room, but its light can push back the darkness and guide others. A small faith can make a big difference, shining in difficult times and showing the way to others.

**The Domino Effect:** A single domino can topple another, larger domino. With the right alignment, this small push can set off a chain reaction that moves massive objects. Even a little faith, like a mustard seed, can set in motion events far greater than we can imagine, as God amplifies its impact and receives the glory. (cf Eph 3:20)

**The Seed that Grows Against Odds:** A tiny seed falls into a crack in the pavement. Despite its size and seemingly impossible circumstances, it grows into a strong plant, even breaking through the concrete. Faith, no matter how small, can thrive and overcome impossible obstacles when rooted in God's word and promises.

**The Tiny Spark that Starts a Blaze:** A single matchstick can ignite a massive forest fire, even though the spark is small. Like the tiny mustard seed, even a small amount of faith has the potential to grow and accomplish great things when God is involved. (This reminds me of the old song "[Go Light Your World](#).")

These illustrations emphasize that the size of our faith isn't as important as the **object of our faith—God Himself**. Even a small faith placed in a great God can achieve miraculous results.

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**C H Spurgeon** - Brethren, why do you think that the Lord allows his servants to be beaten at all? Well, of course, the chief reason in this case was—and of that we will speak presently,—because God gives the victory to faith, and if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we fall, as those disciples probably had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value, and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures. We shall be like Samson, who went out and shook himself as he had done aforetime; but the Spirit of God had departed from him; and the Philistines soon overcame him,—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter. If we are to do the Lord's work, and to do it successfully, we must have faith in him, we must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit, and by faith we must hang upon the living God from day to day.

- Excerpt from his sermon [The Secret of Failure](#) (Recommended)

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## Nothing Is Impossible with God

When shadows loom and doubts arise,

When hope seems dim beneath the skies,  
Remember this, both near and broad:  
Nothing is impossible with God.

The mountains high, the oceans deep,  
The promises He swore to keep,  
Are held by Him, the staff, the rod,  
For nothing is impossible with God.

A barren womb, a parted sea,  
A shepherd boy with victory.  
A stone rolled back, a Savior awed—  
Yes, nothing is impossible with God.

When chains of fear your soul confine,  
When paths are dark, no clear design,  
Look up! The way the saints have trod—  
Proclaims: Nothing is impossible with God.

He speaks, and worlds are brought to be,  
He calms the storms, commands the sea.  
His hand creates, His voice unflawed,  
Declares, "Nothing is impossible with God."

So trust Him in the fiercest fight,  
He turns the wrong to make it right.  
With faith, step forward, ground unshod—  
For nothing is impossible with God.

Let this truth echo in your soul,  
When life feels broken, hard, not whole.  
Through every trial, every prod,  
Believe: Nothing is impossible with God.

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**FEED YOUR FAITH AND STARVE YOUR DOUBT!** - Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Mark 9:24.

This father of a demonized boy had both faith and unbelief, but he took sides with his faith against his unbelief. Whatever we feed grows stronger. What we starve dies eventually. Your faith may be small, even as a grain of mustard seed, but feed it on the Word and exercise it unto godliness and it will gain strength by the day. Pay no attention to your doubts, no matter how feelings may clamor, and they will grow weaker. It is as simple as that. I did not say as easy as that, for Christian maturity is not reached easily, but it is as plain as that if we but follow it. (Vance Havner)

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**J J Knapp - Faith that Moves Mountains** Mt. 17:20

What a contrast: a mustard seed and a mountain! Elsewhere Jesus called the mustard seed the smallest of all herb seeds, and a mountain belongs to the imposing and great things of the earth. The smallest is here contrasted with the greatest. Yet, the grain of seed, that is taken along by the wind, is more than the anchored majestic mountain, if it is only a grain of a mustard seed of faith. Spiritual power is contained in faith and the slightest amount of spiritual power shall finally triumph over all material powers, even if they are as immovable as a deep-rooted mountain.

Mountains of objections arise before us in connection with God's providential government. As long as everything in our lives goes according to our wish, we usually can accept the thought that the Almighty One holds the reigns of government. However, how do matters stand when God makes us to walk in riddles? Then the questions pile up as high as a mountain. Why do the godly go so often in black while the godless have no bonds until death? Why is there in our lives so much bitter sorrow? Why are we chastised so severely? Why does God allow so much unrighteousness, while He has the power to stop it? Why is there so much misery and sickness in the world?

Mountains of objections also arise before us in connection with the redemption by Christ, even if we have found a place of rest in the redeeming blood of the cross. What a number of questions of little faith! If it became apparent that we sinned against duty and light,... and then not to doubt grace? If we have fallen into sins that we had renounced in solemn earnest, ... and then still to flee to Christ as a penitent?

Behold, here applies the admonishing word of Christ: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you!" The true faith in God's providence, even if it is as small as a grain of seed, has such a trust in God that it calls the most crooked paths straight and the darkest nights day. True faith in the redeeming grace of Christ casts all the listed objections to the side; yes, even if our own conscience would raise mountains and close off access to the throne of grace, saying that there was no hope for us to be accepted again after so many stumblings,—we would not allow us to be withheld by these hurdles; we would remove all those mountains into the heart of the sea; we would make them move by the living trust in Him who does not reject the penitent, even if he had sinned seven, yes, even seventy times seven times.

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**Henry Blackaby - Genuine Faith** - Borrow [The experience : a devotional and journal : day by day with God page 78](#)

"I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20

Faith is measured by quality, not quantity. It's not how much faith we have that counts, but where we put our faith. Sometimes we put our faith in faith, instead of in God. We think if we just believe hard enough we'll get whatever we want. That's trusting in ourselves rather than in God. Faith by itself is as worthless as a solar-powered flashlight or an inflatable dartboard. The power to move mountains is in God, not in our faith.

When the disciples asked why they'd been unable to cast a demon out of a boy, Jesus pointed to their faith. The disciples had false confidence in their own faith. Jesus explained that they had grown to believe in themselves and their ability to do things for God, instead of believing in God's ability to work through them. They were treating their faith like a magic wand that they pulled out whenever they needed another miracle. They had placed their faith in faith rather than in God.

Be careful you don't fall under that same misconception. Don't even try to work up enough faith, thinking that at some point God will say, "You've reached the minimum faith requirement; now you can move a mountain." Instead, put your faith where it belongs: not in yourself, but in God. Then stand aside and watch him move the mountain!

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#### **Matthew 17:20**

A Woman of Little Faith - A woman who was known for her deep trust and calmness of soul was asked by a person who wanted to learn her secret, "Are you the woman with the great faith?" "No," she replied, "I am the woman with the little faith in the great God!"

Most Christians admit that frequently their faith is weak. Often they try to generate its power from within their own hearts. This is a mistake. Faith can grow only as it reaches out to the Lord and His Word. A friend and I were discussing this subject one day. "Henry," he said, "I've just been reading Matthew 17, where Jesus compares our faith to a grain of mustard seed. As I studied this, I discovered an interesting fact. A mustard seed has a small amount of nourishment within itself to support the germ of life. Therefore, it must be planted near the surface in rich, fertile ground if it is to flourish. As soon as a tiny shoot emerges, it must immediately obtain food and strength from another source. The moist, loamy soil around it and the sunlight from above must work their miracle if the plant is to survive." The same is true with our faith. Because it is so weak, it must reach beyond itself for sustenance and growth. It "should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). - H.G.Bosch (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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#### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Walk - THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS**

"Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed nothing shall be impossible unto you."-- Mt 17:20.

THE GRAIN of mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, but Jesus says that it is a fitting emblem of the Kingdom of God, and the unostentatious beginnings of the Christian era. The number and social position of the disciples was insignificant in the extreme. And the first germ of truth sown in the heart of man, woman, or child, is sometimes equally insignificant. It may be just a sentence, a text, a passing remark which results in a mighty harvest (Mark 4:30-32).

What is it that enables this tiny seed to make such a prodigious increase? It lies in its receptive power, as it receives into its nature the mighty forces which slumber in the soil, the effect of sunbeams, moisture, and air. So long as a little aperture is kept open, there is no limit to the fertility and usefulness of the plant. You may be but a child, and your life seem weak and ineffective, but if you will open your heart to God by faith, He will pour in His mighty fullness, and the tiny seed become a great tree of strength and usefulness, grace and beauty.



Let us not despise the day of small things. Faith may be as a grain of mustard seed, but as it is used it will grow. Your effort to do good may seem so insignificant that it would be hardly missed, if it were discontinued, and yet out of it may emanate some mighty work which will bring help and comfort to thousands. How many orphanages, schools, and philanthropic efforts have owed their origin to the most infinitesimal beginnings. One destitute child cared and ministered to for Christ's sake has led to another, until finally thousands of little ones have received a good start in life. What could be more insignificant than the beginnings of the Gospel message in many a heathen country. Do not be discouraged. Like Gideon, you may be only a cake of barley bread, but by faith you may overturn the tents of Midian. Like the little lad, you may only be able to place five tiny loaves and two small fish in the hands of Jesus, but He will bless them and make them sufficient to feed the multitude. A stone may bring Goliath to the dust; an arrow may pierce through the armour of the mailed warrior. Have faith in God; Reckon on God's faithfulness to you!

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### **Small Faith In A Big God**

Read: Matthew 17:14-21

If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there, and it will move." -  
-Matthew 17:20.

Jesus didn't say to His disciples, "Have more faith in God." He simply said, "Have faith in God" (Mk. 11:22).

Bible teacher Stuart Briscoe writes, "Faith is only as valid as its object. You could have tremendous faith in very thin ice and drown . . . You could have very little faith in very thick ice and be perfectly secure."

Many Christians have faith in faith rather than faith in God. When facing trials, they agonize to attain mountain-size faith. But Jesus taught that faith the size of a mustard seed is sufficient, if planted in the soil of God's greatness.

What is your mountain today? As soon as you plant your mustard seed of faith in God, your mountain becomes His responsibility--and you can rest in His faithfulness. --J E Yoder (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Have faith in God, the sun will shine,  
Though dark the clouds may be today;  
His heart has planned your path and mine,  
Have faith in God, have faith alway.  
--Agnew

Have faith in God--  
not faith in faith.

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### **Vance Havner - Sand Or Seed**

Faith as a grain of mustard seed. Matthew 17:20.

If you would develop a living faith, not like a grain of sand but like a grain of seed, do not read too many books on faith. One dear brother will tell you that you must agonize and strive to enter, while another would have you "take it by faith." Both are right: you must mean business and be in dead earnest, but beyond that you must, like Hudson Taylor, quit working at your faith and rest in the Faithful One. (**ED**: NOT "LET GO, LET GOD" BUT "LET'S GO, LET GOD!" AND YOU "REST IN THE FAITHFUL ONE" BY IMMERSING YOURSELF IN HIS FAITHFUL WORD!)

Books on faith are colored by the author's temperament, theology, experience, style of expression. You can become more concerned about the quantity and quality of your faith than about its object. You never will get your experience to suit you. You will never pray just as you want to, or feel or preach or live just as you want to. Perfection is found only in Him.

Real faith stops studying itself and is occupied with Him. Quit digging in the ashes of your poor heart for satisfaction. Consider Him—not your faith—"lest ye be weary and faint in your minds."

The Word does not stress the quality of it (except to say that a little will work wonders, Mt. 17:20) but the object of faith, and since Christ was the object here (Mt 9:18-26), the blessing followed—as it always does.

**ED COMMENT - THE BEST BOOK TO READ ON FAITH IS THE BOOK! THE BIBLE! Ro 10:17**

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## SHIFTING THE WINDS

Topics: Dependence on God; Divine Power; Help from God; Miracles

References: Joshua 10:1–14; Matthew 17:20

The prevailing winds in the Persian Gulf area blow from northeast to southwest. So if you attack from the southwest, your enemy can release biological weapons into the air, and the chemicals will blow right into your face. That was a tremendous concern for the military during operation Desert Storm and the subject of many prayers in the Gulf and back home in the United States.

On February 21, 1991, American forces attacked from the southwest at 4:00 a.m. Only three hours before, the prevailing winds had shifted from southwest to northeast, exactly 180 degrees from the direction the prevailing winds normally blow. The winds blew in that direction for four days, the duration of the war. Within thirty minutes of the surrender, the winds shifted back. That is the unbelievable power of prayer.

—General Charles Krulak, in a message given at the Leadership Prayer Breakfast, Wheaton, Illinois, October 2000

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### Warren Wiersbe - Faith is the Glue See: Jeremiah 17:5-8; Matthew 17:20.

The people who jest about faith don't realize how big a part it plays in everyday affairs. It takes faith to get married because marriage vows are basically promises. It takes faith to send children off to school. It takes faith to get a prescription filled. It takes faith to eat in a restaurant, deposit money in a bank, sign a contract, drive on the highway, or get on an airplane or an elevator. Faith isn't some kind of religious experience for the elite; it's the glue that helps hold people's lives together.

But remember, faith is only as good as its object. If we trust people, we get what people can do; if we trust money, we get what money can do; if we trust ourselves, we get what we can do; if we trust God, we get what God can do.

—Warren Wiersbe, author and speaker. BORROW [Men of Integrity PAGE 78](#)

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### Vance Havner - According to Your Faith

Because of unbelief:

Israel was set aside nationally (Rom. 11:20).

The generation that came out of Egypt failed to reach the Promised Land (Heb. 3:19).

Christ could do no mighty works in Nazareth (Matt. 13:58).

Christians and churches are powerless before a demonized world (Matt. 17:20).

O Ye of Little Faith

Faith and care (Matt. 6:30).

Faith and fear (Matt. 8:26).

Faith and doubt (Matt. 14:31).

Faith and spiritual stupidity (Matt. 16:8).

"...Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

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### Streams in the Desert - "Nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matt. 17:20.)

IT is possible, for those who really are willing to reckon on the power of the Lord for keeping and victory, to lead a life in which His promises are taken as they stand and are found to be true.

It is possible to cast all our care upon Him daily and to enjoy deep peace in doing it.

It is possible to have the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts purified, in the deepest meaning of the word.

It is possible to see the will of God in everything, and to receive it, not with sighing, but with singing.

It is possible by taking complete refuge in Divine power to become strong through and through; and, where previously our greatest weakness lay, to find that things which formerly upset all our resolves to be patient, or pure, or humble, furnish today an opportunity—through Him who loved us, and works in us an agreement with His will and a blessed sense of His presence and His power—to make sin powerless over us.

These things are DIVINE POSSIBILITIES, and because they are His work, the true experience of them will always cause us to bow lower at His feet and to learn to thirst and long for more.

We cannot possibly be satisfied with anything less—each day, each hour, each moment, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit—than to WALK WITH GOD.—H. C. G. Moule.

We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank, and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor? Whose fault is it that Christian people generally have such scanty portions of the free riches of God?—McLaren.

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#### **Adrian Rogers - John 11:40**

Jesus said to His disciples that the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. He said to them, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20). If you want your faith to be strong, do not put your faith in the size, amount, or strength of your own faith. Put your faith in God. That's the way to grow a strong, living, vibrant, and enduring faith. As you find out more and more who God is, your faith will know no bounds.

See his sermon on Mt 17:20 - [Mustard Seeds and Mountains—Learning to Think Small \(scroll down to page 1343\)](#)-- I'm speaking today to some people who have some difficulties; I mean, some mountains: mountains of heartache, mountains of debt, mountains of despair, mountains of satanic opposition. And you say, "Oh, God, what am I going to do with this mountain that is facing me?" Well, today, we're going to have a lesson in how to remove mountains.

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**Ron Dunn** - Borrow his book [Don't just sit there - have faith!](#) to read the entire sections quoted below.

#### **EXCERPT - An Amazing Promise: "All Things Are Possible"**

To the questioning father of the demon-possessed boy, Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). Whatever obstacle stands between us and the will of God can be uprooted by the command of faith. Just think of it. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can keep us from doing the will of God—if we believe.

Behind the will of God is thrown the power of God. When God commands us to be or do something, he places at our disposal all the resources of heaven. And faith is the key that releases those resources into our situation. If I know God's will in a given circumstance, I can be assured that he stands ready to supply whatever is needed to accomplish that will. (ED COMMENT - NOTE THE REPETITION OF GOD'S WILL - 6 TIMES IN THIS SHORT EXCERPT)

#### **ANOTHER EXCERPT - A Surprising Requirement: "To Him Who Believes"**

This kind of power, power to move mountains, is released only by faith. The father of the demon-possessed boy cried out to Jesus, "If You can do anything..." to which Jesus replied, "'If You can'? All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:22-23). The question is not, "Can God do it?" but, "Can I believe?" It is never a question of his ability but of our faith.

Let's take a closer look at the incident involving the boy and his father. Jesus, you remember, was on the Mount of Transfiguration with three of his disciples. The other nine waited in the valley below. While they waited, a father appeared with his son and asked them to deliver the boy from his tormented condition. It was not a far-fetched or surprising request, for since Jesus had bestowed upon them the power to cast out demons they had seen many such spirits flee at the mention of that name. But now something was wrong. In spite of all their efforts, they were powerless to free the boy.

When Jesus returned, the father reported the disciples' failure; and Jesus, taking charge of the situation, commanded the demon to leave the boy. Afterwards the puzzled disciples came to Jesus privately (I don't blame them for coming privately—they must have been terribly embarrassed by their public failure) and asked why they had been unable to deliver the boy. Why were they suddenly unable to do what Jesus plainly promised them they could do (Matt. 10:1)?

It was a good question, for them and for us. Does it ever bother you—this terrible discrepancy between what God says we are and what we really are? God has promised us power; yet we are weak. He has promised to supply all our needs; yet we are forced to beg at the world's back door for money to keep our religious machines running. He promised that sin would not have dominion over us; and yet we are being delivered again into bondage. He promised that we would reign in life through Christ; yet we live like slaves, imprisoned by the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Isn't it time we got alone with Jesus and asked why?

What is the answer? What reason did Jesus give? I was more than mildly shocked by the explanation put forth by a well-known theologian. Commenting on this incident in one of his books, he claimed that the gift to cast out demons bestowed upon the disciples by Jesus was a temporary one. The only thing wrong with that explanation is it is wrong. That was not the reason given by Jesus. He didn't say, "You know, men, I knew there was something I forgot to tell you. That was a temporary gift and it expired yesterday at noon."

Nor did he explain their failure by saying, "Well, fellows, demons are tougher than they used to be. Why, I remember the time when just a snap of the fingers would send them running for cover. But times have changed."

Forgive me if I sound irreverent. I don't intend to be; but some of the reasons we offer for our tragic impotence are just as irreverent—and just as wrong.

What did Jesus say? **"Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you"** (Matt. 17:20). In Mark's account Jesus answered, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" (Mark 9:29). There is no real contradiction in the two answers, for prayer and faith are two sides of the same coin. Faith encourages us to pray, and prayer is the true expression of our faith (Mark 11:23- 24.)

Jesus' answer is unmistakably clear—the secret of the disciples' failure was their lack of faith. No other reason is given, for no other reason exists. This calls to mind Matthew's comment concerning Jesus' ministry in his hometown of Nazareth: "And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief (Matt. 13:58).

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**J Oswald Sanders - Unanswered Prayer** Matthew 17:20 (See [J. Oswald Sanders: Three Spiritual Classics in One Volume](#))

Our Lord's brother gives one reason for unanswered prayer: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (James 4:3). God does not attempt to answer every self-centered petition, but He does promise to answer every prayer that is according to His good and perfect will.

It may be that our prayer was not the prayer of faith but only the prayer of hope. Jesus said, "According to your faith will it be done to you" (Matthew 9:29), not according to your hope. Are many of your prayers only prayers of hope?

Or we may have been substituting faith in prayer for faith in God. We are not told anywhere to have faith in prayer but to "have faith in God," the One who answers the prayer. This is more than a matter of semantics. Sometimes we sigh, "Our prayers are so weak and ineffective!" or "My faith is so small!" Jesus anticipated this reaction when He said, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

The naked eye sees little difference between a grain of sand and a mustard seed, but there is a world of difference between the two. In the mustard seed is the germ of life. It is not the size of our faith that is important, but whether it is a living faith in a living God.

Mature disciples will not become discouraged because of a delay in the answer to their prayer. They know that a delayed answer is not necessarily a denied answer.

God's timing is infallible. He takes every factor and contingency into account. We often want to pluck unripe fruit, but He will not be pressured into premature action.

If He in His wisdom delays the answer to our prayer, that delay will in the long run prove to be for our good. (See Hebrews 12:10.) It will be either because He has some better thing for us or because there is something He desires to achieve in our lives that can come about in no other way. (SD

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**Rob Morgan** - Two or three years ago, when I was deeply troubled over a problem that seemed to have no solution, I looked up verses in the Bible on this subject and jotted them down for myself. I'd like to quote them for you now, for they bolster and confirm the words Gabriel speaks in Luke 1:37 (See his full sermon *Nothing is Impossible*)

- Is anything too hard for the LORD?—Genesis 18:14
- The LORD is able.—2 Chronicles 25:9
- Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.—Jeremiah 32:17
- Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?—Jeremiah 32:27
- And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You."—Mark 14:36
- I know that You can do everything.—Job 42:2
- God is able.—Matthew 3:9
- The things which are impossible with men are possible with God—Luke 18:27
- Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible."—Mark 10:27
- Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."—Mark 9:23
- Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.—Matthew 17:20
- For with God nothing will be impossible.—Luke 1:37

It has been so encouraging to my faith and to my soul to review these verses during times of anxious worry. Missionary Amy Carmichael once said, "When you are facing the impossible, you can count on the God of the impossible." One of my favorite writers, J. Oswald Sanders, said, "(God) encourages us to ask as freely for the impossible as for the possible, since to Him all difficulties are the same size—less than Himself." And evangelist Michael Guido once said, "You cannot bring a burden too heavy for God to lift or a problem too hard for Him to solve or a request too big for Him to answer. God does things no one else can do."

In the book about Ruth Bell Graham entitled *Footsteps of a Pilgrim*, Gigi Tchividjian tells about a time her mother, Ruth, was visiting her in France. The Tchividjians at that time lived in the French countryside, and one day Gigi invited some friends over for supper to meet Ruth. These friends were Jewish by birth, but not religious at all. As they prepared to entertain, the telephone rang. It was an old-fashioned phone, and difficult to use. Gigi answered, "Hello... hello... hello..." Finally an overseas operator broke through the static. It was a call for Ruth. It was her husband, Billy, who was in Tokyo. He had bad news. There was a serious problem with one of the children, a nineteen-year-old prodigal. Ruth would have to return home as soon as possible to deal with it.

As Gigi listened to her mother's side of the conversation, she saw the concern sweep over Ruth's face. But she also heard Ruth say to Billy over the phone, "Well honey, don't worry, the Lord will work it all out. He is still in control."

All day Ruth was making—or trying to make—phone calls as she planned an emergency trip home, and by and by Gigi asked, "Mother, wouldn't you like me to cancel the dinner guests tonight?"

"No, dear, please don't do that. I'm okay."

Around 6:30 the doorbell rang and the guests arrived. The subject of the day's difficulties never came up, and the guests lingered until nearly midnight, enjoying Ruth's animated conversation. Several weeks later, the friends remarked to Gigi about what a wonderful evening they had spent. But the thing that struck them most and made a lasting impression on them was the sense of peace they felt coming from Ruth all evening.[4]

I read that story while I was struggling with a particular concern of my own, and I was ashamed that my faith wasn't strong enough to generate the same peace.

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#### **Henry Blackaby - Faith** (Borrow [Experiencing God](#))

When God speaks, your response requires faith. All through Scripture when God revealed Himself, His purposes, and His ways, the response to Him required faith. God is interested in your walking with Him by faith. Read the following Scriptures to see what God has to say about faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7) [Jesus said,] "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." (John 14:12)

"For assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matt. 17:20) [Paul said,] "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:4-5)

If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. (Isa. 7:9)

Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass. Sight is an opposite of faith. If you can see clearly how something can be accomplished, more than likely faith is not required. Remember the illustration about our church budget? If we had chosen to operate on what we knew we could do, faith would not have been necessary.

Your faith does not rest in a concept or an idea. Faith must be in a Person — God Himself. If you or someone else decides something would be nice to have happen and then leads people to "believe" or "have faith," you are in a dangerous position. Faith is only valid in God and what He says He is purposing to do. If the thing you expect to happen is from you and not God, then you must depend on what you can do. Before you call yourself, your family, or your church to exercise faith, be sure you have heard a word from God.

With only mustard-seed (very small) sized faith in God, nothing is impossible. Jesus said His followers would do even greater things than He had done. Our faith, however, must be based on God's power and not human wisdom. Without a firm faith, you will stumble and fall.

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#### **QUESTION - [Can faith really move mountains?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In order to correctly interpret a passage such as Matthew 17:20, we first look at the overall context of the passage. Jesus, along with Peter, James and John, had just come down from the "[mount of transfiguration](#)," and they encounter a man with a demon-possessed child. The man tells Jesus that he brought his son to Jesus' disciples, but they couldn't cast the demon out (recall that Jesus earlier, in Matthew 10:1, gave His disciples the authority to cast out evil spirits). Jesus then chastises them for their lack of faith and then casts the demon out of the boy. When His disciples inquire as to why the demon didn't obey their command, Jesus

replies with the statement in Matthew 17:20. Their faith, He says, is small and weak. If it were the size of even the smallest of the seeds, the mustard bush, they would be able to “move mountains.”

The first thing that needs to be considered is the Bible's use of literary techniques. The Bible is first and foremost God's revealed Word; we want to be clear on this point (2 Timothy 3:16). While the Bible is God's revealed Word, it is revealed to us by way of language. God condescended—He lowered Himself—to speak to us in ways in which we would understand. Consider a father trying to communicate with his young child. The father has to condescend in order to be understood by the limited intellect and understanding of the child. This is analogous (though not identical) to the way in which God speaks to us.

The Bible employs many forms, or genres, of literature. There is historical narrative, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic writing, and epistolary literature (to name a few). Among these various literary genres, several literary techniques are used—metaphor, simile, imagery, parable, allusion, irony, personification, paradox, and hyperbole. As readers of the Bible, we must recognize when these techniques are being used so we can properly interpret the meaning. For example, in John 10:7, Jesus says, “[I am the door of the sheep](#).” How are we to interpret this verse? If we are too literal, we might start looking for a doorknob hidden somewhere on His body. However, if we understand this to be a metaphor, then we can begin to understand His meaning (Jesus is the way of access to eternal life, much like a door is the way of access into a room).

Another thing to consider in biblical interpretation is the context of the passage. More often than not, when we take a single verse out of its native context, we end up misinterpreting the verse. In the context of Matthew 17, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their weak faith and says that even if they had mustard seed-sized faith, they could command the mountain to move. Contextually, the mountain must refer to the demon that was afflicting the man's son. Jesus tells His disciples that, if their faith was stronger, they could have commanded the demon to leave the boy, and it would be so. This was clearly the case in Matthew 10 when Jesus sent them out to cure diseases, cast out demons, and spread the gospel. Therefore, it is clear from the context that Jesus does not intend to assert that mustard seed-sized faith can literally move mountains. Rather, the expression Jesus uses was a common colloquialism of that day; to a Jew of Jesus' day, a mountain is a metaphor signifying a seemingly impossible task.

Faith that can move mountains is not meant to imply a faith that can literally move literal mountains. The point Jesus was making is that even a little bit of faith—faith the size of a tiny mustard seed—can overcome mountainous obstacles in our lives.

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean to have mustard seed faith?](#)

**ANSWER** - Faith is so vital to the Christian life that Scripture tells us that, without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Yet faith is such a powerful gift from God (Ephesians 2:8–9) Christ told His disciples that, with just a tiny measure of it, the size of a mustard seed, they could move mountains. So, what does it mean to have “mustard seed faith”?

We see the reference to “mustard seed faith” twice in Scripture. First, in Matthew 17:14–20, we see Christ's disciples unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy, even though Jesus had previously given them the authority to do this very thing (Matthew 10:1). When they inquired of Jesus why they were not able to drive the demon out, the Master replied, “Be

of the great men of the faith, such as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, to know that superhuman feats were performed by those whose faith was, at one time, only the size of a mustard seed.

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#### QUESTION - [Why do so many people struggle with a lack of faith?](#)

**ANSWER** - The apostle Paul exhorts Christians to “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). What we see here is a contrast between truth and perception—what we know and believe to be true and what we perceive to be true. This is where the Christian struggle with a lack of faith finds its basis. The main reason why so many Christians struggle with a lack of faith is that we follow our perceptions of what is true rather than what we know to be true by faith.

Perhaps before going any further it may be helpful to come up with a working definition of *faith*. Faith, contrary to popular opinion, is not “belief without proof.” This is the definition that many skeptics give for *faith*. This definition reduces faith to mere [fideism](#)—i.e., “I believe despite what the evidence tells me.” Skeptics are right to reject this concept of faith, and Christians should reject it, too. Faith is not belief without proof or belief despite the evidence; rather, faith is a complete trust or confidence in someone or something. That trust or confidence we have in someone is built up over time as he proves himself faithful time and time again.

Christianity is a faith-based religion. It is based on faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. God has provided us with His Word, the Holy Bible, as a testimony of His faithfulness to His people all throughout history. In its bare essentials, Christianity is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ claimed to be the promised Messiah and the Son of God. His life was one of perfect righteousness according to the revealed Law of God, His death was an atoning sacrifice for the sins of His people, and He was raised to life three days after His death. When we place our faith and trust in Christ alone for our salvation, God takes our sin and



places it on the cross of Christ and awards us, by grace, with the perfect righteousness of Christ. That, in a nutshell, is the Christian message. As Christians, we are called to believe this message and live in light of it.

Despite this, Christians still struggle with believing the biblical account because it doesn't match up with our perception of reality. We may believe that Jesus was a real person, we may believe that He died by crucifixion at the hand of the Romans, we may even believe that He led a perfect life according to God's Law, but we don't "see" how faith in Christ makes us righteous before God. We can't "see" Jesus atoning for our sins. We can't "see" or "perceive" any of the great truths of Christianity, and, therefore, we struggle with lack of faith. As a result of this lack of perception, our lives often do not reflect the fact that we really believe what we claim to believe.

There are many reasons for this phenomenon among Christians. The main reason we struggle with faith is that we don't truly know the God in whom we profess to have faith. In our daily lives, we don't trust complete strangers. The more intimately we know someone and the more time we have had to see him "in action," the more likely we are to believe what he says. But, if God is essentially a stranger to us, we are less likely to believe what He has said in His Word. The only cure for this is to spend more time in God's Word getting to know Him.

The world, the flesh, and the devil often distract us. By "the world" is meant the accepted "wisdom" of the unbelieving world and the culture in which we find ourselves. For those of us living in Europe and North America, that dominant worldview is naturalism, materialism, skepticism, and atheism. "The flesh," refers to our sinful nature that still clings to Christians and with which we struggle on a daily basis. "The devil" refers to Satan and his horde of evil spirits who excite and entice us through the world and our senses. These things all afflict us and cause us to struggle with faith.

That is why Christians need to be constantly reminded of what Christ has done for us and what our response should be. The apostle Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" ([Romans 10:17](#)). Our faith is built up as we have the gospel continually preached to us. Our churches need to be built on the solid preaching of the Word and the regular observance of the ordinances. Instead, too many churches spend their time, energy, and resources on the creation of "programs" that neither feed the sheep nor draw a clear distinction between godliness and ungodliness.

Consider the example of the Israelites in the Old Testament. God had performed great miracles in rescuing His chosen people from slavery in Egypt—the Ten Plagues, the pillar of smoke and fire, and the crossing of the Red Sea. God brings His people to the foot of Mount Sinai, gives them the Law and makes a covenant with them. No sooner does He do this than the people begin to grumble and lose faith. With Moses gone up on the mountain, the people convince Aaron, Moses' brother, to construct an idol (against God's clear prohibition) for them to worship ([Exodus 32:1–6](#)). They were no longer walking by faith, but by sight. Despite all the clear miracles God did in their redemption, they lost faith and began to go on their perception.

That is why God instructed the new generation of Israelites before going into the Promised Land to continually remind themselves of what God had done for them: "And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" ([Deuteronomy 6:6–7](#)). God knows that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak ([Mark 14:38](#)), and so He commands His people to be in constant remembrance of these things.

In conclusion, we need to heed the example of the disciple Thomas. When Thomas heard the stories of the resurrection, he wouldn't believe them until he saw Jesus with his own two eyes. Jesus accommodated Thomas' lack of faith by making an appearance to him and allowing him to see and touch Him. Thomas responds in worship, and Jesus says to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Many skeptics today echo Thomas' sentiment: "Unless I see Jesus face to face, I will not believe!" We must not behave as the unbelievers do. We need to continually keep in mind Paul's exhortation to walk by faith rather than sight. We learn in the book of Hebrews that without faith it is impossible to please God ([Hebrews 11:6](#)) because faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, not responding to our perceptions [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about faith? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I overcome the fact that I am struggling with faith?](#)
- [Can faith change God's plan? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I keep the faith? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Faith vs. fear - what does the Bible say? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I overcome the fact that I am struggling with faith? | GotQuestions.org](#)

## Matthew 17:21 ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."]

- this: Mt 12:45
- but: 1Ki 17:20,21 Da 9:3 Mk 9:29 Ac 13:2,3 14:23 1Co 7:5 2Co 11:27 Eph 6:18

### Related Passages:

Mark 9:29+ And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

### ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."]

**NET NOTE - TECHNICAL NOTE** - Many important Manuscripts do not include Mt 17:21 "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." The verse is included in a(2 )C D L W { (1, 13 )Ü lat, but is almost certainly not original. As B. M. Metzger notes, "Since there is no satisfactory reason why the passage, if originally present in Matthew, should have been omitted in a wide variety of witnesses, and since copyists frequently inserted material derived from another Gospel, it appears that most manuscripts have been assimilated to the parallel in Mk 9.29" (TCGNT 35). The present translation follows NA(27 ) in omitting the verse number as well, a procedure also followed by a number of other modern translations.

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Though want of faith was the chief hindrance to the healing of the poor lunatic child, yet the case was one in which special means were needed. Faith would have suggested and supplied these special means: since they were absolutely necessary in the case if the disciples were to succeed in it, faith would have exercised herself in them. With God all things are equally possible; but to us, one devil may be harder to deal with than another. One kind will go at a word, but of others it may be said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." He that would overcome the devil in certain instances must first overcome heaven by prayer, and conquer himself by self-denial. The drink-devil is one of the kind which may assuredly be conquered by faith; and yet we must generally use much intercession God-ward, and total abstinence, as an example man-ward, before we can displace this demon. Our business in the world is to deliver men from the power of the devil, and we must go to Jesus to learn the way. No amount either of prayer or self-denial must be spared if we can thereby deliver one soul from the power of evil; and true faith in God will enable us to put up the prayer and practise the self-denial. May be, some of us have failed because we are not yet well instructed in the right method of procedure. Either we are trying faith without using the appointed means, or we are using the means but not exercising simple faith in God; and in either case we shall make a failure of it. If we go to work by faith in God, in Christ's own way, we shall drive out the evil spirit.

## Matthew 17:22 And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men;

- **The Son of Man:** Mt 16:21 20:17,18 Mk 8:31 9:30,31 10:33,34 Lu 9:22,44 18:31-34 Lu 24:6,7,26,46
- **going to be delivered:** Mt 24:10 26:16,46 Ac 7:52 1Co 11:23

### Related Passages:

Mark 9:30-32+ (JESUS 2ND PASSION PREDICTION) And from there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He was unwilling for anyone to know about it. 31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The [Son of Man](#) is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." 32 But they **did not understand** ([agnoeo](#) in imperfect tense = ongoing ignorance!) this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Luke 9:43-45+ (JESUS 2ND PASSION PREDICTION) And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears; for the [Son of Man](#) is going to be delivered into the hands of men." 45 But they **did not understand** ([agnoeo](#) in imperfect tense = ongoing ignorance!) this statement, and it was concealed (perfect tense = ongoing or abiding effect) from them so that they might not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.



Capernaum a City of Galilee  
Source: [ESV global study Bible](#)

## JESUS' SECOND PASSION ANNOUNCEMENT IN MATTHEW

And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The [Son of Man](#) is going ([mello](#) about) to be delivered ([paradidomi](#) as in Mt 20:19+ - divine passive ~Father ultimately handed His Son) into the hands of men (of sinners in Mt 26:45+) - Who is **they**? If we compare the parallel passages in Mark and Luke (see [above](#)) they is surely the 12 disciples. They had been near Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13+) and are now moving south. This is Jesus' second passion prophecy in Matthew ([see chart](#) - first = Mt 16:21–23+, third = Mt 20:17–19+). Other passages hinted at the passion - Mt 9:15; 10:38; 12:40; 16:4; 17:12. Whereas the first prediction described the fact that Jesus would suffer, be killed and be raised on the third day, the present prediction adds the detail that He will be delivered ([paradidomi](#)) into the hands of men (elders, chief priests and scribes in Mt 16:13+). **Delivered** was used of handing someone over into the power of another as when a criminal was handed over for punishment.

[John Broadus](#) has an interesting thought on the description **gathering together** (coming together) writing that this verb "implies that they returned by different routes to a fixed point in Galilee. Upon reflection, this is seen to agree exactly with Mark's statement that Jesus 'wished no one to know' (Mk 9:30+) (cp. [above](#) on Mt 16:5) of the journey through Galilee, for a natural expedient to this end would be the separation of the Twelve into several parties, taking different routes. We then understand that at the rendezvous, as they were assembling, Jesus made the statement that follows. Mark's 'for' (9:31) perhaps indicates (Alford) that he wished to pass on unnoticed, because he was engaged in privately teaching his disciples about his approaching death. Or it may mean that he wished to avoid the fanatical multitude, who, at his last recorded visit to Capernaum, wanted to make him a king after their own notion. (John 6:15.)

While Jesus does not specify how He would be betrayed, clearly one of the 12 who would carry out this betrayal. One can only imagine what [Judas Iscariot](#) was thinking as he heard Jesus' prophecy that ultimately pointed to him as the betrayer! On the other hand we must not forget that God is sovereign over all these events and Judas could have done nothing had it not been the will of the Father. Ro 8:32+ says God the Father "did not spare His own Son, but **delivered** ([paradidomi](#)) Him up for ([huper](#) - on behalf of = speaks of [substitution](#)) us all." Yes it was Judas (Mt 26:24+). Yes it was the Jews (Acts 3:13+). And yes it was Pilate (Mt 27:26+). All who delivered Him are culpable, but ultimately it was God Who delivered Him. Acts 2:23+ states that "this Man, delivered over **by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." Isaiah 53:10+ says "**But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief**; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand."

*He sugared the bitter pill of his death  
with the sweetness of his assured resurrection.*

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 22, 23. Our Lord returned often to the solemn subject of his death at the hands of men. It was on his own mind, and therefore he spake of it to his disciples. Their minds were far too receptive of other notions in reference to his kingdom, and therefore he set before them the truth again and again, almost in the same words. He would banish all dreams of a worldly monarchy from their souls. His death would be a grievous trial to them, and he would prepare them for it. He now speaks of his being betrayed: this was ever a bitter drop in his cup of gall. The [Son of Man](#) comes to save men, and is, by a man, "betrayed into the hands of men." For man he lived, by man he is betrayed, and by man he died. Full well he foresaw that "they shall kill him." O suicidal world! Will nothing content thee but the blood of God's own Son? Our Lord would have us preach much about his death now that it is accomplished, for he continually talked of it while yet in the future. No theme is so vital, so practical, so needful. His penetrating mind realized death, and anticipated that third day, when the word would be fulfilled,—“He shall be raised again.” This

was the light of the morning which would have banished the darkness of despair from the minds of the disciples, if they had understood and believed. An old writer says, "He sugared the bitter pill of his death with the sweetness of his assured resurrection." Our Lord well knew what he said, and he used plain terms; but speak as he might, his followers could only in part apprehend his meaning; and that part made them "exceeding sorry." Christ's words, half understood, may cause the heart great grief. Yet, it may be, this cooling cloud of fear calmed their minds, and kept them from that fanaticism which filled the air around them. He knew best what state of mind would be safest for them at that time; and he knows the same as to us at this moment.

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**Delivered** (betrayed, handed over) ([3860](#)) **paradidomi** from **para** = alongside, beside, to the side of, over to + **didomi** = to give) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another. **Paradidomi** is used in legal parlance to describe handing someone into the custody of the police, authorities, etc. To deliver up one to custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death. **Paradidomi** can describe the "illegal", treacherous or unjustified handing of someone over to someone as in a **betrayal**. Thus it describes the delivering over of an individual to an enemy who will presumably take undue advantage of the victim

**PARADIDOMI IN MATTHEW** - Matt. 4:12; Matt. 5:25; Matt. 10:4; Matt. 10:17; Matt. 10:19; Matt. 10:21; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 17:22; Matt. 18:34; Matt. 20:18; Matt. 20:19; Matt. 24:9; Matt. 24:10; Matt. 25:14; Matt. 25:20; Matt. 25:22; Matt. 26:2; Matt. 26:15; Matt. 26:16; Matt. 26:21; Matt. 26:23; Matt. 26:24; Matt. 26:25; Matt. 26:45; Matt. 26:46; Matt. 26:48; Matt. 27:2; Matt. 27:3; Matt. 27:4; Matt. 27:18; Matt. 27:26

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#### QUESTION - [How many times did Jesus predict His death?](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus' death was the final sacrifice that paid the debt of sin for all (Hebrews 9:28). His death was the ultimate purpose of His ministry. In fact, Jesus predicted His death at least three times in the [Synoptic Gospels](#) (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), and the book of John offers even more predictions.

The first time Jesus predicted His death is detailed in Matthew 16:21–23, Mark 8:31–32, and Luke 9:21–22. Jesus had just fed the multitudes, and He said that the "Son of Man must suffer many things" (Mark 8:31); be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes; be killed; and be raised again. Peter then rashly began to rebuke Jesus, and Christ responded, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:33; Mark 8:33). Jesus knew that His death must happen. It was necessary in God's plan to save the world.

Jesus predicted His death a second time in Matthew 17:22–23, Mark 9:30–32, and Luke 9:43–45. This occurred shortly after the Transfiguration, when Peter, James, and John saw Christ in His heavenly glory. Perhaps this was the reason the disciples were so confused by Jesus telling them He was going to die. At this point, they believed His kingdom was just around the corner. Despite their lack of understanding, they were "afraid to ask" for clarification (Mark 9:32; Luke 9:45).

Matthew 20:17–19, Mark 10:32–34, and Luke 18:31–34 describe the third time Jesus predicted His death. He spoke to His disciples as they were heading up toward Jerusalem for Passover, and He told them how He would be mocked, scourged, crucified, and then rise again. On this occasion also, the disciples did not understand Jesus' saying because the meaning was hidden from them. They would soon learn what Jesus meant in the events of Good Friday and following.

The Gospel of John gives a few more predictions of Jesus's death, but they are slightly more subtle. For instance, when Mary anointed Jesus with the costly perfume, and Judas asked if she should have sold it for the poor, Christ said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me" (John 12:7–8). While not an explicit prediction like the previous three, this statement of Jesus clearly pointed to His coming death and burial. Again, in John 13:33, Jesus hinted that His time was short as He told the disciples, "Where I am going you cannot come." Finally, in John 14:25, Jesus talked about giving the Holy Spirit in His absence, which hinted at His death as well as the future of the church.

Jesus intentionally came to earth to die for our sins. Jesus gave His disciples predictions about His death and the events that followed "so that when it does take place you may believe" (John 14:29). - [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Summary of Jesus' Nine Prophecies of His Passion

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
<b>First passion announcement</b>	Mt 16:21–23 <sup>±</sup>	Mk 8:31–33 <sup>±</sup>	Lk 9:22 <sup>±</sup>
<b>Second passion announcement</b>	Mt 17:22–23 <sup>+</sup>	Mk 9:30–32 <sup>±</sup>	Lk 9:43–45 <sup>±</sup>
<b>Third passion announcement</b>	Mt 20:17–19 <sup>+</sup>	Mk 10:32–34 <sup>±</sup>	Lk 18:31–34 <sup>±</sup>

**Matthew 17:23 and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.**

- **they will kill:** Ps 22:15,22-31 Isa 53:7,10-12 Da 9:26 Zec 13:7
- **the third:** Ps 16:10 Jn 2:19 Ac 2:23-31 1Co 15:3,4
- **And they were:** Jn 16:6,20-22

## **JESUS PREDICTS HE WILL DIE BUT WILL LIVE AGAIN**

**and they will kill ([apokteino](#)) Him, and He will be raised ([egeiro](#)) on the third day** - It is interesting that Jesus does not say "they will kill **Me** and I will be raised." Jesus tells His followers that the grave could not hold Him and He would come back to life after His murder. They focus on His death rather than His life after death accounting for their reaction of doom and gloom.

**And they were deeply ([sphodra](#)) grieved ([lupeo](#))** - The first announcement of His death had met with opposition but this announcement has no opposition but it does have grief. They had seen Jesus raise people from the dead so they should have had some understanding of what He was saying. But both Mk 9:32 and Lk 9:45 tell us the disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying (the reason being that it was concealed [[parakalupto](#)] from them) and we see that this lack of understanding continues even into His post-resurrection appearance to the 11 disciples in the upper room. Luke records that they still had doubts...

And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. But **they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit**. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do **doubts** arise in your hearts? (Luke 24:36-38+)

[John Broadus](#) makes an interesting observation that "The three who had witnessed the transfiguration must have been better able to bear this renewed and painful announcement; but they could not tell the others what they had seen and heard."

**Matthew 17:24 When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?”**

- **when:** Mk 9:33
- **tribute:** "Gr. didrachma, in value fifteen pence." Ex 30:13 38:26 This tribute seems to have been the half shekel which every male among the Jews paid yearly for the support of the temple, and which was continued by them, wherever dispersed, till after the time of Vespasian.

## **PAYING THE TEMPLE CONTRIBUTION**

**When they came to Capernaum** - This story of paying the temple tax is found only in Matthew. One wonders if the fact that Matthew had once been a tax collector has any bearing? They are still in Galilee and now at Jesus "home base" on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**Those who collected ([lambano](#)) the two-drachma tax** (NET = collectors of the temple tax) **came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher ([didaskalos](#)) not pay the two-drachma tax** - The verb **collected** means to collect what is due, normally in terms of taxes and interest. **the two-drachma** denotes a tax of two [drachmas](#) that was required of every male Jew each year as a Temple tax. Some writers think that the tax collectors phrased their question this way because they thought that Jesus might consider Himself exempt from the tax. The idea could be doesn't Jesus pay like everyone else does?

**NET NOTE** - "Collectors of the double drachma." This is a case of metonymy, where the coin formerly used to pay the tax (the double drachma coin, or di,dracmon [didrachmon]) was put for the tax itself (cf. BDAG 241 s.v.). Even though this coin was no longer in circulation in NT times and other coins were used to pay the tax, the name for the coin was still used to refer to the tax itself. The temple tax refers to the half-shekel tax paid annually by male Jews to support the temple (Ex 30:13–16).

[Broadus](#) says "The Greek didrachmon, or double draehm, was a silver coin equal to two Attic draehms, and in the times of the New Testament and Josephus was nearly equal to a half shekel, or something over thirty cents....It is not at all clear with what design the collectors asked the question, but most likely in a reproachful tone, as if he was slighting a duty recognized by all devout Jews.

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 24.The half-shekel tribute was a religious payment, based originally on law, but enlarged by a custom



which had no support in Scripture. It was ordained by the divine law to be paid for each person to the Lord when the people were counted. From this redemption-money there was no exemption; but it was not a tax levied year by year. It had gradually grown into a fashion among professedly religious people to pay this "tribute money" every year; but the payment was entirely optional. Thus, it was established by custom, but it had not been appointed by law, and could not be enforced by it. It was a voluntary annual gift, and only persons who were professed devotees of the Jewish religion would pay it. Such religionists as these would be very particular, not only to pay the annual tribute, but to have it known that they paid it. The collectors of half-shekels did not apply at once to Jesus, of whom, it may be, they stood in salutary awe; but they addressed Peter with the somewhat ensnaring question, "Doth not your master pay tribute?" As much as to say, "Surely he does so: we would not suspect him of neglecting to do so. A person of such eminence cannot fail to be peculiarly exact as to this customary fee."

**NET NOTES** - Grk "Collectors of the double drachma." This is a case of metonymy, where the coin formerly used to pay the tax (the double drachma coin, or διδραχμον [didrachmon]) was put for the tax itself (cf. BDAG 241 s.v.). Even though this coin was no longer in circulation in NT times and other coins were used to pay the tax, the name for the coin was still used to refer to the tax itself. The temple **tax** refers to the half-shekel tax paid annually by male Jews to support the temple (Exod 30:13–16).

**Matthew 17:25 He \*said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?"**

- Yes: Mt 3:15 22:21 Ro 13:6,7
- of their: 1Sa 17:25

## PETER'S RESPONSE TO THE TAX COLLECTORS

**He \*said, "Yes."** - "Peter was in such a hurry to vindicate his Lord that he compromised Him. "He saith, Yes." He might have asked his Lord's mind, or he might have referred the collectors to Jesus Himself; but he was in a hurry, and thought himself safe enough in maintaining his Master's reputation. He was quite certain that his Lord would do all that good people did. Our Saviour and His cause have often suffered from the zeal of friends. Christ is better known by what He says himself than by what His friends say for Him." (Spurgeon)

**And when he came into the house**(probably Peter's house), **Jesus (lesous) spoke to him first**(prophthano - come before, anticipate), **saying** - Peter was out of doors at the time he gave his quick reply, and little did he think that the Lord Jesus would note what he had said, and tell him of it as soon as he was come into the house; but so it was." (Spurgeon) The idea of **spoke first** is that in His omniscience Jesus already knew what had transpired between the tax collector and Peter. The NLT paraphrases it "before he (Peter) had a chance to speak." Jesus did not need Peter to tell Him that he had already told the tax collector "Yes." (cf Jn 1:48).

**"What do you think (doceo), Simon (Simon)? From whom do the kings (basileus) of the earth (ge) collect (lambano) customs (telos - levied on goods) or poll-tax (kensos - levied on individuals), from their sons or from strangers(allotrios)?** - Jesus' question to Peter was rhetorical for clearly **kings** would not tax their own family (**their sons**), but taxed **strangers** (non-family members) in order to support their families. And so **strangers** in this context would refer to anyone not a family member of the **kings**. In an ironic twist, if there was any tax Jesus should not have to pay it would be tax on the Temple, for in truth He as the God-Man was the One for Whom the Temple was built (cf Lk 2:49, Jn 2:16 - see [Spurgeon's comment](#)). But even though Jesus had the right not to pay the Temple tax, He took the "high road" by taking the "low road." In other words, as Paul wrote Jesus emptied Himself and gave up His rights as God and as stated in the next verse agreed to pay the tax (cf Php 2:6-7+).

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 25, 26. Our Lord began with Peter upon the subject before he had time to state his action or defend it: "Jesus prevented him." He knew what his servant had been doing, and he hastened to set him right. As he had been but little of a Peter in this case, our Lord calls him "Simon." He questions him: "What thinkest thou, Simon?" He will make him judge in the case. Do kings take poll-tax of their own children, or of strangers? Of course, the family of the prince was always free from the levy. The king's subjects, and especially the aliens under his rule, must pay the capitation charge; but the princes of the blood royal were free. Should Jesus pay redemption-money for himself to God? Should he, who is himself the King's Son, come under poll-tax to his Father? If tribute money has become a tax to be levied in the kingdom of God, "then are the children free." Neither Jesus nor Peter was bound to pay. Peter had not seen the matter in this light.

**NET NOTES** - The phrase their sons may mean "their citizens," but the term "sons" has been retained here in order to preserve the implicit comparison between the Father and his Son, Jesus.



**Customs** (5056) [telos](#) means an end, a completion, a [consummation](#). The word [termination](#) is close but misses the **essence** of the meaning, because a process can be terminated without reaching completion or consummation, which is the essence of the meaning of telos. Friberg - 1) as an action achievement, carrying out, fulfillment (Lk 22:37); (2) as a closing act end, termination, cessation (2Cor 3:13; 1Pet 4:7), opposite arche (beginning); (3) as a goal toward which movement is being directed outcome, end (result), purpose (1Ti 1:5); (4) **as civic payment of what is owed tribute, tax, customs (duties)** (Ro 13:7); (5) in adverbial expressions; (a) accusative (to telos) =. finally (1Pe 3:8); (b) eis telos = with either a temporal or quantitative sense according to the context to the end (Mk 13:13), finally, at last (possibly 1Th 2:16), in full measure, fully, completely (Jn 13:1; possibly 1Th 2:16); (c) with eos, mechri, achr - to the end, to the last or fully, altogether, depending on the context. (Analytical Lexicon)

**Poll-tax** ([tribute](#)) (2778) **kensos** from Latin **census**, which means a counting of the people and valuation of property. Kensos is equivalent to the Greek word apographé ([582](#)) which literally means a write-up or an assessment. In the NT, tribute or **poll-tax** paid by each person whose name was taken in the census which the Greeks called epikephálaion, head tax (found 4x - Mt 17:25, 22:17, 19, Mk 12:14). **Gilbrant** adds "This noun (kensos) is the Greek transliteration of the Latin word **censēre**, meaning "enrollment" (cf. the English word census). It is quoted in Greek literature from the First Century B.C. meaning "poll tax, tribute." The Romans always levied a tax in conjunction with a census, so the two meanings of "enrollment" and "tax" were closely associated. It occurs only four times in the New Testament. In Mt 17:25; 22:17, 19; and Mk 12:14, the tax in view is the "census" or "poll tax" paid with a Roman coin on which appeared Caesar's image, such an image being objectionable to the Jews. It is significant that Matthew, a tax collector, should use this term." ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Strangers** (245) ([allotrios](#) from allos other, another) denotes "that which belongs to another, that which is strange or foreign"; it is used both as an adjective and as a substantive. It means those of other blood, of other than the royal family in Mt 17:25. It means foreign, strange, not of one's own family, alien, an enemy;" "aliens" in Heb. 11:34. **Allotrios** is the opposite of **idios** one's own (the word used in Jn 10:4 for his "own" sheep). **Allotrios** may also denote something hostile or dangerous. **Allotrios** occurs extensively in non-biblical literature and the Septuagint.

**ALLOTRIOS - 14V** -Matt. 17:25; Matt. 17:26; Lk. 16:12; Jn. 10:5; Acts 7:6; Rom. 14:4; Rom. 15:20; 2 Co. 10:15; 2 Co. 10:16; 1 Tim. 5:22; Heb. 9:25; Heb. 11:9; Heb. 11:34

**Matthew 17:26 When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt.**

- Mt 17:17

## **PETER GIVES CORRECT ANSWER**

**When Peter said, "From strangers ([allotrios](#))," Jesus ([Iesous](#)) said to him, "Then the sons (of royal blood) are exempt ([eleutheros](#))** - As alluded to above, the Temple was the Father's house and Jesus as His Son could by all rights claim exemption.

**Broadus** adds "And so the Son of God, as Peter had recognized Jesus to be (Mt 16:16), ought to be exempted from paying tax to the temple for the support of divine worship. He uses the plural, 'sons,' because He is stating the inference from His previous argument in a general form; but the application is obviously designed to be to Himself."

**Matthew 17:27 "However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."**

MIT Matthew 17:27 **But so as not to rub them the wrong way**, go to the lake and fish with your hook line. Then take the first fish you catch, open its mouth, and you will find a silver coin (equal to two double drachmas). Take that and give it to them for me and you."

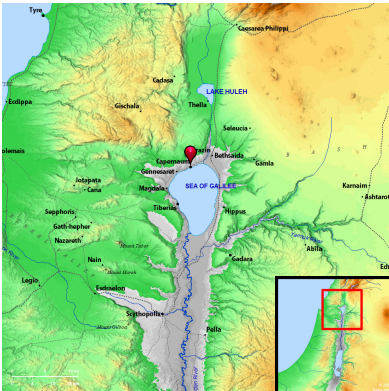
GWN Matthew 17:27 However, so that we don't create a scandal, go to the sea and throw in a hook. Take the first fish that you catch. Open its mouth, and you will find a coin. Give that coin to them for you and me."

BBE Matthew 17:27 But, so that we may not be a cause of trouble to them, go to the sea, and let down a hook, and take the first fish which comes up; and in his mouth you will see a bit of money: take that, and give it to them for me and you.

RSV Matthew 17:27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first

fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

- **so that we do not offend them:** Mt 15:12-14 Ro 14:21 15:1-3 1Co 8:9,13 9:19-22 10:32,33 2Co 6:3 1Th 5:22 Tit 2:7,8
- **take the first fish:** Ge 1:28 1Ki 17:4 Ps 8:8 Jon 1:17 2:10 Heb 2:7,8
- **Take that and give it to them:** 2Co 8:9 Jas 2:5



Capernaum - "Home Base" in Galilee

## LET'S AVOID A SCANDAL

**However** - This functions like a term of contrast and several translations render it "but" (NET, CSB, NIV). Even though as the Son of God He did not need to pay, **but** He would pay and then states the purpose for so doing.

**So that** ([hina](#) - purpose clause) **we do not offend** ([skandalizo](#)) **them** - Jesus begins with the purpose for which He will send the fisherman fishing for a fish.

**Go** ([poreuo](#)) **to the sea** ([thalassa](#) - Capernaum was next to the Sea of Galilee - see map above) **and throw** ([ballo](#) - [aorist imperative](#)) **in a hook, and take** ([airo](#) - [aorist imperative](#)) **the first** ([protos](#)) **fish** ([ichthus](#)) **that comes up** ([anabaino](#)); **and when you open** ([anoigo](#)) **its mouth** ([stoma](#)), **you will find** ([heurisko](#)) **a shekel** (stater). **Take** ([lambano](#)) **that and give** ([aorist imperative](#)) **it to them for you and Me** - A shekel (stater) was a silver coin worth four Attic drachmas, equivalent to one Jewish shekel. Here we see a combination of the [omniscience](#), [omnipotence](#) and [providence](#) of Jesus, which would have been another "miracle" that would increase Peter's faith that Jesus was indeed God. Notice Jesus generously paid for both Himself and Peter.

**John Broadus** on **offend them** is "better, cause them to stumble, give them an occasion for objecting to my claims, and refusing to receive Me. (See [note on](#) Mt 5:29.) They would have said that He did not keep the law, did not perform a recognized duty of every Israelite, and so He certainly could not be the Messiah....Jesus never wrought a miracle for his personal benefit. If he had procured the money for this purpose in an ordinary way, it might have obscured the fact of his extraordinary position as the Messiah. Matthew probably recorded this incident to show his Jewish readers on the one hand that Jesus felt himself entitled to the respect due to the Messiah, and on the other, that he was very careful to keep the law in all respects, so that no Jew had a right to stumble at him. Our Lord's disposition to forego a privilege to which he was justly entitled, rather than that men should have an excuse for misapprehending him, was imitated by Paul (1 Cor. 9), and stands before us all as a part of the example of Christ.

**Bob Utley** - Many have criticized this account because it seems to be Jesus using His Messianic powers for personal purposes. It was the ongoing exercise of Jesus' miraculous powers that was used to train the disciples and increase their faith. In this account, Jesus showed His power over nature and His foreknowledge which would help Peter in the days to come when he experienced difficult times in his own pilgrimage of faith.

**Spurgeon's Commentary** - 27. Our Saviour would not willingly give ground for offence. He was not bound to pay; but rather than raise a scandal, he would pay both for himself and for Peter. How gracious were his words: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them"! If the question had remained by itself, clear from other circumstances, our Lord might, on principle, have declined to pay the tribute-money; but Peter's rash declaration had compromised his Lord, and he would not seem to be false to the promise made by his follower. Besides, Peter would be involved in a dispute, and Jesus will far rather pay than leave his servant in a difficulty. When the pocket is involved in a matter of principle, we must be careful that we do not even seem to be saving our money by a pretence. Usually, it will be wisest to pay under protest, lest it should appear that we are careful of conscience in a special degree when we can also be careful of our cash.

The manner of payment prevented the act from compromising our Lord. Very interesting was the hooking of the fish which brought

the silver in its mouth. "Take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money." Very remarkable the providence which, caused the shekel to fall into the sea, and made the fish first to swallow it, and then to rise to the hook as soon as Peter began his angling. Thus the great Son pays the tax levied for his Father's house; but he exercises his royal prerogative in the act, and takes the shekel out of the royal treasury. As man he pays, but first as God he causes the fish to bring him the shekel in its mouth.

The piece of money was enough to pay for Peter as well as for his Lord. Thus did our Lord submit to be treated as one who had forfeited life, and must have a half-shekel paid as redemption-money for him. This he has done for our sake, and in association with us; and we are redeemed by his act, and in union with him: for he said of the piece of money, "That take, and give unto them for me and thee." There were not two half-shekels, but one piece of money, paid for Jesus and Peter: thus we see that his people are joined with him in the one redemption.

"He bore on the tree the sentence for me,  
And now both the Surety and sinner are free."

The obvious moral lesson is,—Pay rather than cause offence. But far greater and deeper truths lie slumbering down below. They are such as these: the glorious freedom of the Son, his coming under tribute for our sakes, and the clearance of himself and us by the one payment which he himself provided. Spurgeon's Commentary

**NET NOTES** - The four drachma coin was a stater (στατήρ, statēr), a silver coin worth four drachmas. One drachma was equivalent to one denarius, the standard pay for a day's labor (L&N 6.80).

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**Offend** (4624) [skandalizo](#) from [skandalon](#)= a trap = put a snare or stumbling block in way; English = scandalize = to offend the moral sense of) means to put a snare (in the way), hence to cause to stumble, to give offense. To entrap, trip up, or entice to sin, offend. So here in Mt 5:29-30 **skandalizo** is used in the active sense which conveys the idea to cause to do wrong, to entice to commit sin. In the passive sense it means to be led into sin, to be caused to do wrong. In the passive some uses mean to be offended (Mt 11:6), the idea being that one is taking offense at Jesus and/or refusing to believe in Him. Finally, [skandalizo](#) can mean to furnish an occasion for some to be shocked, angered, or offended (Mt 17:27).

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**Stephen Olford** - [According to Your Word: Morning and Evening](#)

"Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook."—Matthew 17:27

In this verse, the Lord practices his own teaching on offending, and takes every step to avoid offense.

Some of the most severe language the Lord ever used in His teaching was in connection with the offending of little ones. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6, KJV).

The apostle Paul similarly teaches this important truth, and indeed more—he lived it. He says that even if it were merely in the eating of meat that he made his brother to offend, he would cease to eat altogether. Note the solemn words in 1 Cor. 8:12: "When you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ."

O, that I might have the wisdom to live a life without offense, and yet not compromise Your Holy Word.

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**Vance Havner - For Me and Thee"**

"... give unto them for me and thee." Matt. 17:27

Taxes are due and our Lord bids Simon do the amazing thing of catching a fish with the money in its mouth. So the tribute is paid both for Simon and his Lord.

Has the Lord bid you to do the unprecedented thing, the irregular, the thing that takes your breath? If you are with him in blessed partnership, if he commands you, then you share with him the consequence, it is "for me and thee."

We do not think of him as sharing with us such prosaic matters as taxes. Some time ago I listed my taxes too highly through ignorance of the rules. I wondered, when time came to pay them, whether I should be able to straighten out my mistake. I knew the Lord didn't want his money wasted on expenditures one didn't really owe so I set out for the office with a prayer. When I got there I was met by a friend who piloted me through and I saved what was to me a sizable difference. I came away thankful for the Lord's guiding hand.

If we are in his hand, his affairs are ours and ours are his. No matter is so matter-of-fact but he shares it. If all we have is his, all he

has is ours; whatever he bids us do, the fruit thereof he enjoys with us. The servant shares with the master because the master is also brother and there is one father

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[Adrian Rogers](#) (p 66) - Dominion over the Fish of the Sea - Now, can you imagine that? Here's this one fish; here's some poor fisherman reaching in his pocket or whatever, and he drops this coin overboard. He watches it as it sinks to the bottom of blue Galilee. His heart is broken. But here's this fish. Of all the fish in the sea, like a guided missile, he comes along. He sees that shiny thing on the bottom; he opens his mouth and picks it up. And then the Lord just guides him, as by radar, to the one hook sitting right there. And he bites that hook, and when he comes up, he's got a coin in his mouth. Who engineered all of that? The Lord of glory. He had dominion. Jesus had dominion.

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**A Silver Shekel** - Rome operated a mint in Tyre that produced silver shekels of high purity (94 percent silver or more). These and half-shekels were the only coins accepted by the temple in Jerusalem. The high priests paid Judas with silver shekels like this one to betray Christ (Matt 26:15). This was also the coin Jesus told Peter to find in the fish's mouth (Matt 17:27).

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### **Big Fish Story**

Jimmy Smith developed an interest in foreign missions while attending Houston Baptist University. After learning of his interest, two missionaries invited him to visit their work in Guatemala. Money was very tight so he and his wife knew the trip would be impossible unless God intervened. Several weeks later, Smith went fishing with a deacon in his church named Gene Alexander. They talked about an upcoming fishing tournament offering a \$20,000 prize for catching a particular fish. Gene knew of Smith's desire to visit Guatemala and promised him \$5,000 for the trip if he caught the fish. Upon learning of the prize fish, Mrs. Smith logged it in her prayer journal and began talking to God. Then on the day of the tournament, Gene reeled in the \$20,000 fish as his first catch of the day. Officials speculated the odds of landing that fish as his first catch were 1 in 6.8 billion. Jimmy Smith and his wife made the trip and God confirmed his call on their lives. They later returned to Guatemala and served as foreign missionaries. Of course things like this have happened before. See Matthew 17:27 for the details.<sup>73</sup>

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### **For me and thee. (Matt. 17:27) - L B E Cowman - [Springs in the Valley](#)**

Peter had been a fisherman. Jesus had said, "Follow me," and Peter had given up his fishing business to follow. We read that straightway he forsook his nets, and followed. That must have been a tremendous experience for Peter—giving up his means of livelihood, upkeep of his home, not to mention the money for those taxes. Peter, the Fisherman, left all to follow Christ. The Lord knew that he had given up his means of livelihood to answer His call, and from the very thing that Peter had given up for His sake—fish—the Lord met His servant's need when the time for paying the taxes came around. No servant of Christ will ever be the loser.

So our dear Lord is always thinking in advance of our needs, and He loves to save us from embarrassment and anticipate our anxieties and cares by laying up His loving acts and providing before the emergency comes. "For me and thee," He had said, bracketing those words together in a wondrous, sacred intimacy. He puts Himself first in the embarrassing need, and bears the heavy end of the burden for His distressed and suffering child. He makes our cares, His cares; our sorrows, His sorrows; our shame, His shame.

The tax was due—the Master's and disciple's,  
And to the sea the Master strangely sent:  
A fish would yield the needful piece of silver!  
Strange bank, indeed, from which to pay that rent.  
"One piece of silver!" Not two equal portions!

One piece of silver—one, and shining bright;  
"That use for Me and thee," thus spoke the Master,  
"That claims on Me and thee we thus unite."

Blest, happy bond! May I thus sweetly know Him!  
Am I His servant? Hath He use of me?  
Then, O my soul, why shouldst thou own law's limit,  
If thy dear Lord doth find delight in thee?

If thou art His—joint-heir in all His riches,  
Then, O my soul, a simpler spirit grow;  
"How shall He not, with Him, why, give us all things,"

All that we need, to do His work below!

J. DANSON SMITH

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**Big and Small Miracles** [More Precious Than Silver: 366 Daily Devotional Readings - Page 13](#)

So that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin.—Matthew 17:27

If you made a list of all the big creation miracles Jesus did before he came to earth, what would be on it? My list contains galaxies, black holes, solar systems, the law of gravity, the law of thermodynamics, the atmosphere, the asteroid belt, constellations, and photosynthesis. All of them are God-sized wonders.

When this same Lord lived in Palestine, he performed smaller-scale miracles: withering a fig tree; finding a coin in the fish's mouth; healing Peter's mother-in-law of a fever; restoring a man's shriveled hand. He performed powerful miracles but at a different speed and on a smaller scale than when he created the cosmos.

C. S. Lewis said the Lord's earthly miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story that is written across the whole universe in letters too large for some to see. How exciting to look up into the heavens and realize that a personal God created in a personal way all that we see. Stars, suns, and galaxies are the very stamp of his power and personality. And this same Lord of creation loves you and me.

But I think the most epic of all miracles will be raising us up and transforming our lowly bodies into glorious bodies like our Lord's. Talk about power that's personal! The law of gravity will be turned upside down, and the resurrection of the dead will be written across the whole universe in letters large enough for everyone to see.

Make a point of looking up into the heavens tonight. Even if it's overcast, there's a magnificence to it all. Contemplate how marvelous God's creation is, including you.

Just as David prayed, thanking you for being mindful of him despite how infinitesimally small he was in light of your creation, I join him in that thought, Lord. Thank you that I am significant to you.

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R E Neighbour - "That take, and give unto them for Me and for thee." (Matt. 17:27.)

For Me and for thee: my bounty is thine,  
I give unto thee, the things which are mine;  
My storehouse shall prove thy gracious supply,  
The taxes together we'll pay, thee and I;  
So look unto Me, and banish thy care,  
Together we'll walk; together we'll share.

Me and Thee for it—the task and the toil,  
The burdens that press, from which we recoil;  
The work which we think can never be done,  
The fight which we say can never be won;  
'Tis then Jesus says, We'll both undertake,  
Together we'll toil, till victory break.

Peter knew not what to do. How could he pay the demands of Rome from an empty treasury? The natural thing, and the right thing, was an appeal to the Master. The Lord met his exigency with the word that sent Peter fishing under orders to take the first fish "that cometh up." In the fish's mouth, Jesus said, "Thou shalt find a piece of money, that take, and give unto them for Me and for thee."

The tax-collector still comes! It is not for money that he now seeks. Sometimes he comes to collect our day's quota of "patience," "love," "gentleness," or "long suffering." We have an empty heart; we cannot "pay." What shall we do? The Master says, "Me and thee for it, we'll meet this deficiency together." All of His bounty is ours; it is even as He said, "for Me and for thee." Our need is His; it is "Me and thee for it."

'Tis Me and thee for it, and not thee alone,  
'Tis for Me and thee, for we two are one;  
Though I am thy Master, I count thee as friend,  
So, each for the other we'll be to the end.

It is all too wonderful, this life unto which we are called. None ever had such a Companion as we. Our husband is our Lord. He is our Master and also our Friend. He undertakes for us, guides us, empowers us. Into our hands He places all His wonderful store of goods. He bids us to draw on Him for every kind of need.

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## The Coin in the Fish

By the shore, where the waters gleam,  
A lesson unfolds, a simple theme.  
The tax they ask, the toll they seek,  
But in His wisdom, Jesus speaks:

*"Go to the sea, cast in your line,  
For in the depths, My plan aligns.  
A fish will rise, a coin inside,  
Enough for you, and Me beside."*

A lesson taught through humble means,  
God's provision behind the scenes.  
Not wealth amassed, nor power displayed,  
But daily needs, by Him conveyed.

The earth is His, the sea, the shore,  
The fish obey their sovereign Lord.  
No need too small, no task too slight,  
His hand provides, His ways are right.

So when you doubt or fret the day,  
Remember the fish and the coin that lay.  
For God supplies in ways unseen,  
Through humble acts, His grace is keen.

Trust His wisdom, His love so pure,  
For in His care, all needs endure.  
Like Peter's line cast to the sea,  
God's provision flows for you and me.

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## John Butler - MIRACLE MONEY [Sermon Starters](#)

Matthew 17:27 "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them for me and thee" (Matthew 17:27).

The miracle of the coin in the fish is the theme of our text. It is a very instructive miracle.

### FIRST—THE POVERTY FOR THE MIRACLE

"Give unto them for me and thee." Christ did not live in affluent circumstances. He did not even have the small amount to pay the Temple tax. Christ was not like many religious charlatans who fleece their followers to line their own pockets with a fortune. However, Christ's poverty was for our benefit. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that he through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). What poverty have we experienced to bring honor to Christ? Ask yourself that question the next time the offering plate goes by.

### SECOND—THE PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLE

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them." The tribute will be paid even though Christ is actually exempt. Since the payment of the tax was not an evil thing and in principle went for a noble cause, Christ would not argue the case lest He unnecessarily offend others His action is a principle that requires much humility to practice and does not put first priority in life on one's rights. In our day of "right emphasis, we know very little about practicing this principle. A. B. Bruce said, 'It is not a mark of greatness in the kingdom to bluster about rights.' This is not compromise with evil, however, for it did not break God's laws to keep from offending others which is indeed wrong. It was a case of humility in not claiming one's due.

### THIRD—THE PRECEPT FOR THE MIRACLE

"Go thou ...". We note two important lessons from the precept.

- The essentialness of the precept. God's miracles are often associated with God's commands. If you have are short in God's



blessings maybe it is because you do not pay enough attention to His precepts.

- The economy of the precept. It is most instructive to note the economy of Christ's miracles. He did not do supernaturally that which could be done humanly. The fish did not jump out of the water onto the shore and spit up the coin, That was unnecessary as Peter could fish for the fish and take the coin out of the fish's mouth. God never works miracles in a way that will make us lazy.

#### FOURTH—THE PROOF IN THE MIRACLE

"Give unto them for me and thee." The fact that Christ condescended to pay the tribute could give doubt to Peter that Christ was all that He claimed to be. But Christ gave ample proof of His claims in providing the coin through the power of the miracle. The miracle would be proof that would be most assuring to Peter's faith.

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#### F B Meyer - Our Daily Walk FOR ME AND THEE

"Not withstanding, lest we should offend them, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee."-- Mat 17:27.

PETER HAD been fairly well-to-do. He had his house, and boat, and nets. There was no lack in the fisherman's house. But when Jesus said, "Come after Me," he left all, and there was an immediate cutting off of the former sources of supply, so that when the tax gatherer came, there was nothing to meet his claim. Our Lord maintained that He personally was under no obligation to meet the demand. As a child, to use His own words, He was free; but He immediately identified Himself, as He always does, with His troubled disciple. We can never leave anything for Christ, without His recognition, and His being ready to defray whatever cost may accrue from obedience.

The identification was so absolute between the Master and His disciple, that He refrained from providing two coins, which might have indicated some severance of interest. Was it not His intention to put beyond all controversy that He and His are one, and that in every act of His on our behalf, in His willingness to meet the demands made upon us, there is no severance of interests, no mere patronage, but an absolute identification with all that concerns us.

There are profound lessons here. Demands are constantly knocking at the door of life, which we find it hard, sometimes impossible, to meet. There are needs of food and clothing, of the rent collector and the tax gatherer. But is not Christ aware? Is He not faithful? Will He let us go under in the struggle? Never! Whatever demand made on the servant is assumed by the Master--That take, He says, and give unto them for Me and thee.

As He enters the wilderness of temptation, He reminds us--it is "for Me and thee." As He hangs upon the Cross, and passes forth from the grave, radiant with triumph, He turns to us and says: "This victory over death and the grave is for Me and thee." Yes, and through all the ages that are yet to be, amid the marvels of unfolding new worlds, nothing shall accrue to Him of which He will not say: "That take, and give, or use, for Me and thee." Only remember, we must take, and give. We must appropriate the unsearchable riches of Christ, we must impart them, or they will not profit us.

#### PRAYER

We thank Thee, our Father, for our union with the Risen Christ. May we share more largely in His glorious life, and live as the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. AMEN.

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#### A TIMELY GIFT

Topics: Dependence on God; God's Faithfulness; Needs; Providence; Provision; Trust

References: Genesis 22:14; Isaiah 61:1-4; Matthew 8:23-27; 17:27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

On a recent service trip to the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged coast of Mississippi, we worked at a home that was owned by a retired United Methodist pastor. Rev. Jones said he and his wife had left their home before Katrina struck and gone to a shelter. After the storm passed, they were allowed back into the city to grab a few belongings. When they entered their house, the water was still knee-high, but Jones was determined to see what he could salvage.

Jones saw several framed family photos floating in the water. He didn't see anything else to save, so he grabbed the pictures and left. Back at the shelter, he took the photos out of their frames so they could dry out. When he removed his father's picture, money fell out of the frame. He was astonished to count out \$366. Even more astounding was that his father had died in 1942, when Jones himself was only twelve years old. He had no idea the money was in the frame.

The money was precisely what he and his wife needed to go to Atlanta after the storm to live with their daughter.

—Douglas Heiman, Evansville, Indiana

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#### QUESTION - [What is the temple tax?](#)

**ANSWER** - The temple tax was required of Jewish males over age 20, and the money was used for the upkeep and maintenance of the temple. In Exodus 30:13–16, God told Moses to collect this tax at the time of the census taken in the wilderness. In 2 Kings 12:5–17 and Nehemiah 10:32–33, it seems the temple tax was paid annually, not just during a census. This half-shekel tax wasn't a large sum of money, but roughly equivalent to two days' wages. According to the tractate *Shekalim* in the [Talmud](#), the temple tax was collected during one of these Jewish festivals: Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles.

The temple tax is also mentioned in the New Testament in Matthew 17:24–27 when Peter was confronted by the religious leaders collecting the tax. The leaders asked Peter, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" The leaders may have been attempting to prove Jesus' disloyalty to the temple or His violation of the Law. Peter affirmed that Jesus did pay the temple tax. When Peter came into the house where Jesus was, the Lord asked him, "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?" Peter replied that kings collect from others because their children are exempt. Jesus' point was that, since the temple was His Father's house, Jesus was exempt. Why should the Son of God pay a tax to His own Father?

Even though Jesus, as the Son of God, and His disciples were exempt from paying the temple tax, they would pay the tax in order to not offend the Jewish leaders (Matthew 17:27). Jesus then instructs Peter to throw out a fishing line, which would result in a catch. When Peter opened the fish's mouth, he found a coin that happened to be the correct amount for the temple tax for him and Jesus.

Jesus used the question about the temple tax to teach a lesson. Christians are free, but they must sometimes relinquish their rights in order to uphold their witness and not cause others to stumble. True freedom is not serving ourselves but others (see Galatians 5:13).