

Episode #827 Matthew 17 Part 1-Jesus Only

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had just promised His disciples that some of them would not experience death before seeing the kingdom of God coming with power. We discussed that this took place in the Acts period, when the early, blade stage of the kingdom began, and all but Judas were alive to see it. Now, we come to the glorious story of the transfiguration.

III. The Transfiguration. Matthew 17:1-8.

- A. Matthew 17:1. “Six days” is exclusive reckoning, discounting parts of days. Luke 9:28 gives inclusive reckoning, including parts of days. Just three were elected out of the twelve for this experience. These three were chosen to see Him heal Jairus’ daughter, Mark 5:37, and to go with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:37. The devil used an exceedingly high mountain when tempting the Lord (Matthew 4:8, Luke 4:5). John sees the Holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from a great and high mountain (Revelation 21:10). The two tallest mountains in Israel were Tabor and Hermon. Tabor was located between Zebulon and Naphtali in northern Israel, but according to Bullinger was inhabited and had a fortress on top of it at this time, so the mountain mentioned here was probably Hermon. Hermon was in the north near Lebanon forest, and was considerably higher than Tabor.
- B. Verse 2. Transfigured is *metamorphoo*, to change into a new form. Bullinger compares to *metaschematizo*, to change from a former condition. In Luke 9:29, the fashion of his face was changed. They had a glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ in all the glory He had given up when He came to earth. This is the glory Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6:1-5. Matthew says his clothing was white as the light; Mark 9:3 says exceedingly white as snow, as no clothier on earth can whiten them; Luke 9:29 says it was white and flashing like lightning or radiant.
- C. Verse 3. Moses was Israel’s great lawgiver. Elijah was Israel’s most honored and greatest prophet. Only Luke tells us what they were talking about: about the decease (*exodus*, departure) which He was about to accomplish (fulfill, *pleroo*) at Jerusalem.
- D. Verse 4. It is good Peter added the condition “if You wish.” This is *thelo*, if you desire. Tabernacles are the Greek *skene*, meaning three centers of activity. He is picturing these three men in partnership, like three men might form a business together: “For You one, and Moses one, and one Elias.” The problem with his statement is he gave Moses and Elijah a place equal to that of the Lord!
- E. Verse 5. A bright cloud or a cloud of light! How does a cloud of light put someone in its shadow? This voice is the miracle of the voice, for of course God has no lips, tongue, vocal cords, etc. Beloved is *agapetos*, loved with self-sacrificial love, love in action. Things God is well-pleased with: with Christ, to give the Lord’s little flock the kingdom (Luke 12:32), by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (I Corinthians 1:21), to reveal His Son in Paul (Galatians 1:15-16), and it pleased the Father in that in Christ should all fullness dwell (Colossians 1:19). God is well pleased in Christ. Do we agree with God? All who complain against Him are in opposition to God in their opinions. Him is first, HIM hear, over even Moses and Elijah. Who is greater than Israel’s greatest lawgiver and prophet? The Lord Himself!

- F. Verse 6. All these glorious things were too much, but this voice was what pushed them over the edge!
- G. Verse 7. “Came” is again approached, but the opposite of men approaching the king. They come as supplicants, He in grace.
- H. Verse 8. He was the one exception, the other glorious figures being gone. It is good if all other religious things fade out of the picture in our lives and we see Jesus only, unique, above and apart from all the rest. Including churches, ministers, rituals, all men, and all the things men!

IV. Elijah Comes First. Matthew 17:9-13.

- A. Verse 9. He commanded them, leaving them no other option.
 - 1. It is important that this tells us this was a vision. Visions are not made of actual objects. Those who object that Elijah was alive in heaven but Moses was dead, and how could he have been there, are ignoring the fact that this was a vision. Bullinger has a long explanation that Michael came to raise the body of Moses for the transfiguration in Jude 1:9, which is why he was alive here. “This dispute must have taken place after the death of Moses and his burial by Jehovah, for ‘death reigned from Adam to (until) Moses’ (Rom. 6.14). The devil claimed Moses for the death-state, but God raised him as representative of those hereafter to be raised, as Elijah of those to be caught up without dying.” But the “body of Moses” was the men who partook of Moses’ spirit (Numbers 11:16-17), not his dead body.

V. Conclusion: The Lord’s transfiguration was a superlative event for the three disciples, but it taught them an important lesson. When Peter put the Lord Jesus on the same plane with Moses and Elijah, he was corrected by the voice from God, which pointed them only to His beloved Son. We all need to come to the same place the disciples did: where all others, even Bible characters, fade away and we see Jesus only. He is truly the greatest One of all, God in human form, our Lord and Savior. Let us indeed look to Jesus only!