

Matthew ch 17

Jesus has just finished giving instructions on discipleship and 3 basic keys as to what it means to be one of His disciples. and Let me just say that it's not the easy road; it's not the cushy, comfortable smooth sailing road that people so often think. The pathway of discipleship involves the denial of the self-life, the denial of our own self-interests, the denial of our own will. and Jesus would never ask anything of us but that He wouldn't do it Himself, Jesus asks nothing of you that He hasn't already done, so that He might set the standard for those who would follow after Him. You will never read where Jesus ever said do as I say not as I do, because Jesus never said that, He lived the life that He wants us to imitate. He said if you want to be the greatest in the kingdom, you've got to become the servant of all, and He said of Himself *"just as the Son of man didn't come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Jesus was always pointing to Himself as the standard by which we were to model our lives after. and He lived a life that displayed the ultimate in the denying of the self-life, in laying down His life for a world of people who had nothing but hatred and bitterness in their hearts toward Him because He loves us so much. Rom 5:7-8 *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* and Having set that standard He says now if any one wants to come after Me and be where I am, you have to do like wise, you have to deny yourself, and then also you have to pick up your cross. and We noted that the cross speaks of the ultimate in self-sacrifice; it speaks of the crucifixion of the flesh and the laying down of our lives for the sake of others. Even as Jesus didn't lay His life down for His own sake, but for the sake of others, (you and me) that we might be spared eternal judgment and in its place be given eternal life. and So like wise now it's essential that we must decrease and He must increase in our lives, we've got to crucify the flesh, as Paul the apostle said, *"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin."* Because as I so often quote, *"those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."*

As we crucify the flesh people will no longer see us, but they'll see Jesus in us and that's the whole point. That when people look at us they don't see us, they see Jesus, that they're not drawn to us, but that they're drawn to Him, so that they might be given the same hope and peace, and joy, that you've found in Him, because everything else is empty and futile.

True fulfillment is only found in the person of Jesus Christ and we're to lead our lives in such a way that that truth is reflected and that others are drawn to it being as Jude said, "snatched out of the fire" because God's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. and He's gone to the greatest length possible to give us that possibility, it cost Him His own dear Son, and He doesn't wish for that to be in vain when it comes to your life. I encourage you to be reconciled to Christ that you might experience everlasting life.

Then finally Jesus said, "Follow Me" which is to say walk the path I walk, live the way that I live, and do the things that I do. Which is basically a summary of the 2 previous requirements, 1st of all deny yourself, secondly as a progressive intensity to the 1st requirement pick up your cross, and then 3rdly to sum it all up, follow Me. Which as I said really sort of capsulizes the whole thing because you can't follow Christ with out denying yourself, and crucifying the flesh, it can't be done otherwise. And besides as believers (to be quite honest) it's expected of us. In Rom 12:1,2 Paul tells us it's our reasonable service, in 1 Cor 6:20 we're told, that we "*were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" What was that price, the shed blood of Jesus.

Now, ch 16 ends in an unfortunate place really because we read in vs 28 (read). Then we come to ch 17, which has a tendency to put this concept in our minds that, OK now we're on to something completely different. But that's not necessarily the case, and it's important that as we study the word that we remember that the original texts didn't have these ch and vs separations. These were added later (much later) for our convenience so that we could have a point of reference, the ch and vs separations were not divinely inspired by God. So it would've been better had those who made these divisions included vs 28 of ch 16, as the 1st vs of ch 17 and it would've spared a lot of confusion and eliminated a lot of questions. Because there seems to be a lot of confusion as to what exactly Jesus was talking about when He said (vs 28)

There are those who try and say "well, all of those 12 are now dead and Jesus didn't return so it looks like Jesus was wrong." Or there are the theories that maybe the Lord was in reference to His resurrection, or maybe He was in reference to Pentecost. But had this vs been included in ch 17 or had ch 16 not been divided until (say) vs 13 of ch 17 then it would seem quite obvious what Jesus was in reference to because Matthew (I believe) tells us right now. Matt goes from quoting Jesus' statement regarding His kingdom right into the account of the transfiguration. And if you get out your little Greek helps and you look at vs 28, you realize that the little phrase "coming in His kingdom" doesn't have to mean exactly what we would think anyway.

We see that as a reference to the 2nd coming or an establishing of His rule on earth, but Jesus didn't say that some here won't taste death until the skies break open and come to execute judgment upon the earth. This word "coming" means to accompany, to bring, come, enter, or appear. The word "kingdom" here in the Greek is the word *basileia*, which means (abstractly) rule, or (concretely) a realm. So this could also just as easily be understood or have been translated, *"Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man appearing in His realm."* Or glory, and then Matt goes immediately into the account of the transfiguration showing how in fact 3 of the disciples saw Jesus glorified on the Mt, and so I'm of the persuasion that this is what Jesus was in reference to when He made this statement.

Vs1-3

Now if this wouldn't rock your world, nothing would, Jesus takes Peter James and John up onto a high Mt. Most likely Mt Hermon since they were in Caesarea Philippi and He was transfigured before them, and it's very possible that this whole thing took place at night because in Luke's Gospel we're told that when this all started taking place that these 3 guys were heavy asleep. But this word that's been translated transfigured is a very interesting word; it's the Greek word "metamorphoo" which is where we get our English word metamorphosis. Which is what happens when a caterpillar spins a cocoon around itself, and emerges a butterfly, it's undergone a metamorphosis. Its changed from one thing into another, and so the Lord here (though we're not told how) was somehow radically altered or transfigured before them. and That same word is used in a spiritual since twice in the bible concerning our being transformed in Christ, once in Rom 12:2 and the other in 2nd Cor 3:18. (Write those down and look at them later.) and It says that His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as the light.

Now that reminds me of another man who went up a Mt and began to glow, or radiate so that the children of Israel couldn't even look directly at him and they put a veil over his face to cover him. Remember when Moses went up Mt Sinai to receive the law of God, having spent time in God's presence he began to literally glow. But as time went by he began to fade, because the law wasn't to be a lasting covenant, the bible says that the law is simply a tutor that leads us to Jesus Christ

In other words it's the law that teaches me what sin is so that I might recognize and realize my insufficiency and inadequacy and inability to live up to the righteous requirements of the law. Because the law is spiritual, and when I realize that I don't have to commit the literal act of adultery to be guilty of breaking the command, but rather all I have to do is look upon someone with lust in my heart; and then I realize that the whole aspect of the law is the same way. I see that I'm guilty of breaking virtually every law of God that was written. I'm a lying, murdering, thieving adulterer in Gods eyes and that's just for starters.

Now I see that there's no way I can live up to God's righteous standard, and even if I could it's too late because I've already blown it, so I'm justifiably condemned to hell for all eternity, because I've violated the righteousness of God. and There's no way that I can live up to those standards, that's the point (what do you mean?)

The law was never given to make you righteous, it was given to show you that you can't be righteous, and show you you're need for a Savior. When you look into the law and realize your desperate need for help, it's done it's job because Jesus is the only one who has ever fulfilled the righteous requirements of God being in all ways tempted as we are tempted and yet with out sin. Therefore apart from me receiving His righteous covering, I stand guilty before God and so the law drives us to Christ. and When Moses received the law his skin was glowing when he came down from the Mt, but it differed from this in that Moses was *reflecting* the glory of God. But that's not what's happening here with Jesus, He's not reflecting the glory of God, He's shining with a radiant glory, the light is literally emanating from with in Himself.

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* He wasn't reflecting God's glory; the glory of God was literally shining forth from with in Him. And John would reflect on this some years later and relate it to us like this, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"*

(Vs 3)

Now what do we see in this, Moses who as we stated was the giver of the law, and Elisha was an outstanding figure among the prophets. So by these 2 figures being present what's represented here is that the sum total of the OT revelation is found in Christ. The law and the prophets culminate in, and point to, Jesus Christ Luke tells us that they were talking about His death that would be accomplished in Jerusalem, their conversation revolved around the work of the cross which no doubt encouraged Jesus in what was about to transpire in His life.

Something else we see in Jesus' taking these 3 guys aside is the fact that every time that He took Peter, James, and John aside for some specific miraculous event, it always concerned death. The 1st time He took them aside was when He took them into Jairus' house after his daughter had died, and after He had moved out the mockers He brought her back to life. Showing His power and victory *over* death. Again right before His arrest He took them with Him into the garden of Gethsemane and saw Jesus deny His own will giving Himself completely into the hands of the Father in surrendering *to* death, the death of the cross. and Then here we find that He's speaking with Moses and Elijah about His death, and they are seeing how He will be glorified *in* death.

VS4

So again the impulsive Peter, feeling compelled to say something put his brain on hold and his mouth in gear and just spit this out. I mean after all you don't see this everyday, and Likes Gospel tells us that he didn't even know what he was saying. He was just overwhelmed and with out even thinking he just said something and so this is what he said, and sometimes we eat such a big juicy foot sandwich when we say something but should've kept our mouths shut. You feel like you need to say something, but you don't know what to say and then something comes out that just couldn't be any more wrong. Well Peter was familiar with that feeling.

Vs5

So the Shekinah glory of God came upon them (them probably referring to Jesus Moses and Elijah) while Peter was still talking and the voice of God the Father interrupted Peter. You remember that it was a bright cloud that came down when the tabernacle was finished and they were ready to begin the sacrifices; the glory of God that filled the Holy of Holies. The same basic thing happened when Solomon dedicated the temple, and here we see it again and now the Father basically repeats Himself, saying the same thing concerning Jesus that He said at His baptism. with one addition, He says hear Him, and that's emphatic, in other words hear Him and Him alone. He's basically telling Peter don't even think of trying to put Moses and Elijah upon the same pedestal as My own dear Son, you listen to Him and Him alone. Everything that they've done in the past is all-great, but it was all pointing to this moment.

Heb 1:1-2 says, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.*" You've done well to heed the law and the prophets up until this point, but that was all just a shadow of what's being fulfilled in My Son, hear Him. Because the full revelation of God is found in Him, having seen Him we've seen the Father.

Vs6

I'll bet they did, we've just been rebuked by almighty God. and Peter would never forget this moment, as a matter of fact he refers to this moment in his 2nd epistle when he said, "*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." Now He doesn't mention the fact that that word came as a direct rebuke because he stuck his foot in his mouth, but Peter no doubt as all of us would reflected on this day many times for the rest of his life.

Vs 7-8

No doubt having just experienced something in the supernatural, being scared with their heads down on the ground, the human touch of Jesus was quite comforting. But the thing we want to take note of in this passage is that when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only. and Again the phrasing is emphatic, they saw Jesus and Him alone. The answer doesn't lie in the law or the prophets, but in Jesus only. and Peter got that point as well as he would later say in Acts 4:12 *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* The law points to Christ, the prophets pointed to Christ and there is no salvation found in any other. Jesus alone is the resurrection and the life and it's only by believing in Him that we'll never die, we'll just pass from life to life.

Vs9

Again the hour had not yet come for Jesus to be revealed in His fullness as the Messiah, and so He says don't tell anyone what you've seen until after My resurrection. and The word "vision" here has the idea of a supernatural event, not something that they just imagined or a hallucination or anything like that. and We notice here another prediction of His resurrection.

Vs10-13

So having just seen Elijah, this triggers in their minds a teaching that they've received by the scribes, and that is that before the Messiah was to come that Elijah would come before Him. and Of course they're in reference to Mal 4:5 which says quite plainly, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."* and So the disciples are a bit confused because, well we just seen Elijah and so he's obviously not going before you so how does this fit into the big picture? and Jesus affirms that particular teaching and says they're right Elijah will come, and he'll restore all things, (what does that mean) there's a couple of thoughts on that. #1 That Elijah will be the one to usher in the kingdom in the respect of he will be the one who will go before the restoration of the kingdom age. and The other is that he will be used as the vessel to bring repentance to the Jews as we read in Zech 12:10 *"then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."*

There are those that hold that it will be Elijah who will be used to turn the hearts of the Jews toward Jesus so that they will see Him for who He is, and that Elijah will be the one used to cause the scales to fall from their eyes. Either way you choose to look at it is at this point fine with me. But He says in vs 12 (read 12-13).

Remember that when Zacharias was in the temple and the angel Gabriel said to him regarding John that he would go before that Lord “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” In other words it won’t be Elijah himself, remember when the Jews sent certain men to inquire of John and they said are you the Christ? and He said no, and so they said, “*Are you Elijah?*” He said, “*I am not.*” He said no, but what Jesus is saying here is that in spiritual sense J.B was Elijah, not that Elijahs' soul was in John but that the same spirit that was upon Elijah rested upon John. So had the people received Jesus at this time J.B. would’ve qualified as a proper fulfillment of prophecy, but since the Father knew that they wouldn’t He sent J.B. in the spirit and power of Elijah. Because the kingdom wasn’t to be ushered in at this time, so John more or less was a foreshadowing of what was to come in the person of Elijah. I know it’s a bit confusing, but that’s about the best I can do for you and what ever part you don’t understand intellectually, you have to just receive by faith because that’s basically what Jesus is saying.

Vs14-15

That word “epileptic” or your bible might say lunatic, is literally moonstruck. In that day and even before the time of Christ they thought that insanity was somehow related to sleeping under a full moon. and That’s where we get the thought of someone being a loony, the word Luna in Latin means moon, so this father is saying hey, my son has been struck by the moon, he’s gone insane and he’s suicidal.

Vs16-18

Again this a powerful lesson for those of you who are parents, this man was interceding on the behalf of his son, bringing him to Jesus, pleading with the Lord to have mercy on his son, bring your children before the Lord, pray for them. and Maybe things seem to be going OK in your kids life, that’s great pray for them, don’t wait for something to wrong before you begin to pray for your kids. Jesus said suffer the little children unto Me, in other words bring them to Him. It just doesn’t matter how young your kids are or how old they are they need your prayers.

This guy had approached the disciples of Jesus and they couldn’t do anything for Him, maybe you’ve tried different counselors, and different ministers or pastors and nothing seems to be working in regards to your child. Don’t lose hope, take them to Jesus. But one other thing that I want us to quickly notice here that I believe is quite significant, and that’s that Satan always seems to be waiting at the bottom of the hill of every spiritually high experience you may have. It seems that every time that I have a spiritually high experience, a “mountain top” experience, and like Peter I think “Lord it’s good to be here, I never want to come down. But you can’t live on the Mt top and so you have to come down, because the Lord desires that I bear fruit and there's no fruit tress on Mt tops.

It may be beautiful up there and you can see for miles but the fruit is bore in the valleys, not the Mt tops so it's inevitable that I come down. and When I do it seems that the enemy is always right there to test and try me and to take away all of the glory and blessing that I've just received. and So it is wise to be prepared and to know that know matter how high my spiritual experience may've taken me I am not immune to enemy attack. and Often times the greater the blessing, the greater attack, because he wants to distract you and destroy what God has done. and So just be aware of that and don't be ignorant to the devises and the strategies of your enemy.

Vs19-20

So when all of the fanfare had dissipated the disciples (no doubt embarrassed and a bit humiliated) said, how come we couldn't do that. and Jesus said because you lacked the faith. When you read the other Gospel accounts of this event you can see how violent this particular encounter was, the boy was foaming at the mouth and the demon was throwing him down and forcing him to convulse. The people were all around already in doubt, and so these guys were no doubt shaken, I personally have never encountered this particular type of event but I can see how it might shake you up a bit. and These guys being as human as the rest of us (though I'm not making excuses for them) wavered in their faith. and Jesus says here that even if you'd've had the faith of a mustard seed (which is one of the smallest of all seeds) then not only could you have done this but you could move Mts. Now what does that say about our faith? That we don't have much, but the point of this statement wasn't how much faith you have as much as it is what's the object of your faith. Because God is omnipotent, He's all powerful so He can do seemingly impossible things with the smallest amount of faith.

But bear in mind that He's speaking to His disciples and so the assumption here is that you'll be denying yourself, and asking things in accordance to His will, not yours. The Lord is not licensing you to have the every desire of your flesh if you only just believe, He's saying that there's no limit to what God can do through you when you're absolutely surrendered over to Him.

Vs21

2 Thoughts here either this type of faith is not activated apart from prayer and fasting, but that it is built up through the denial of the flesh (fasting), and spending time with God in prayer. Or that this particular type of demon is of some type of a higher rank and it takes a person that's really in tune spiritually via prayer and fasting to cast it out. Either way the point remains the same, you and I need to be prayed up and in denial of the appetites of the flesh life because you never know what the course of a day might bring. and It's too late once the trial is upon you, you need to be prepared in advance.

Vs22-23

Notice how the Lord is really trying to inundate them with the plan of the cross, He's told them about it plainly at least 4 times in the last 6-7 days. But they still aren't really getting it, and we can criticize them because hindsight is 20/20. But they didn't understand until afterward and they're sad because they heard the part about Him being killed, but they never seemed to understand the part about the resurrection.

Vs24-27

We'll comment on this briefly before we head on in, Lord willing, to ch 18 next week.