

**Gospel of Matthew**  
**Chapter 16:28-17:21**  
**“From Glory to Glory”**

**\*All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted\***

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For the sake of preserving the context, let's begin reading this morning in **16:24** even though a few of those verses will be a repeat from last week ...

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**Chapter 16, verses 24-27:** The mark of a true Christian is denying ourselves, dying to self and following the Lord through thick and thin.

A truth that Paul summarizes in ...

**Romans 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

As Christians we're warned, admonished, encouraged and begged by God to leave the world behind. Live in it, but don't be part of it. We're to keep our focus on the spiritual ... the eternal ...

Now with that in mind ... let's read the **next verse**.

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**Verse 28:** So, with the warning to remain spiritually focused, comes this word of encouragement.

Notice that **verse 28** doesn't say that they'd see the Son of Man "come", but that they'd see His "**coming**". Because the word "**coming**" in this verse is key.

It's the Greek word erchomai (er'-khom-ahee) and Dr. Zodhiates says that the best definition of it is "To be in transit from a distant place to a near one". So, this is not an event ... but a process.

And that's just what Jesus is saying here ... that some of those present would witness a portion of the process of His return.

A prophecy that's fulfilled six days later ... in the account of the Transfiguration.

**Matthew's gospel** gives us a somewhat skimpy account of the Transfiguration so we're gonna read **Matthew 17:1-8** and then flip over to **Luke's gospel, chapter 9**.

And you might also want to look at **Mark 9** on your own, because there are a few unique bits of information on the Transfiguration there too.

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Chapter 17, verses 1-8: Now to ...

**Luke 9:28** Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. **29** And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became white and gleaming*. **30** 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. **32** 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 as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not realizing what he was saying. **34** While he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began* to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. **35** Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” **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.

This took place at an unspecified site on Mount Hermon which sits about 15 miles north of where Jesus and the disciples had been.

That matters because some have been bothered by the fact that **Luke’s gospel** says eight days, while both **Matthew** and **Mark** say six, but that’s only because **Luke** includes both partial days of travel while **Matthew** and **Mark** do not.

Another thing to take note of here is that Jesus, interestingly ... took only three of His disciples (Peter, James and John) and left the other nine behind

**Q. But why would He do that? -- Yes ... they were the “Inner Circle” as we call it, but why were they the “Inner Circle”?** – And this wasn’t the only occasion either ... Jesus took these three off by themselves a total of three times:

- 1.** The first time was in **Luke 8:40** ... When Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. He left the crowds and the nine disciples outside, but took Peter, James and John into the house with Him to witness the resurrection of this girl.
- 2.** The second time is here with the account of the transfiguration. As they glimpse into the future and witness the Lord’s glory.
- 3.** And the last time is in **Mark 14:33**, in the Garden of Gethsemane. Where scripture says that Jesus became very distressed and troubled. And He told these three, “**My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death**” and then He

prayed "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

And by these things, Jesus prepared these three disciples of the "Inner Circle":

1. First, He showed them His power over death ...
2. Then what His glory would be through death and ...
3. Finally His submission to death.

And this preparation proved to be important for these men of the "Inner Circle" as it relates to the Lord's counsel to **deny yourself, take up your cross and follow ....**

But this most certainly created some jealousy among the disciples. The nine who were left behind wanted to be part of the inner circle too ...but Jesus wasn't playing favorites and He didn't choose incorrectly.

He came to this earth with a purpose ... to save us. And these three (Peter, James and John) were a special part of that plan ... so Jesus prepared them to accomplish their assignment.

But the nine were Jealous! They wanted to be part of the "Inner Circle" and go do cool stuff like the three, but they didn't understand what that really meant.

So, let me remind you of the "cool stuff" that the "Inner Circle" got to be a part of:

When Peter was about 75 years old, he was forced to watch as his wife and children were put to death and the he himself was crucified ... upside-down.

James, the brother of John was sawn in half ... lengthwise.

And John, it's believed, lived to be about 95 and ultimately died of natural causes, but only because the enemy's attempts to put him to death failed ... including when they tried to boil him to death in oil.

Remember that when the Romans put someone to death they had three goals:

1. Make it long and painful.
2. Make it public and ...
3. Make them dead.

So, they didn't want to overcook John, or he would die too quickly. So, they gathered the crowd, filled the cauldron with oil, brought it to a boil and dipped John in.

But they only succeeded in their first two goals; it was painful, and it was public, but John didn't die. Though I don't doubt that during his recovery he often wished he had.

I don't know about you, but that pretty much takes care of any jealousy I might have toward the "inner circle". Jesus prepared them for what He knew they would face.

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So, Jesus is "transformed" into something similar to His heavenly glory (**Revelation 1:16**) and then He has a little chat with Moses and Elijah about His pending death and ultimate ascension back to the Right-Hand of the Father.

**Q. But you gotta wonder ... why Moses and Elijah? Why not Abraham or Noah?** – Likely it's because Moses and Elijah are representative.

Jesus uses the phrase "**the law and the prophets**" six times in the **gospel of Matthew**. Well Moses brought the law and Elijah represents the prophets.

Jesus fulfilled the Law by His sinless life and then He perfectly fulfilled all that the prophets had recorded, so Moses and Elijah make sense.

But ... poor Peter! It reads this way in **Luke's account** ...

**Luke 9:5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.**

When he got scared or felt uncomfortable ... he talked!

It's been said that "Some people have something to say, other people just have to say something." All three of the disciples were "terrified" and Peter was the one who just had to say something.

I don't know that God ever actually uses the phrase "Shut up!" but I'd say this is about as close as you can get. Peter ... "**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; [how about if we] listen to Him [instead of you]!**"

And **Luke's record** says that the cloud from which God spoke actually enveloped the disciples which would certainly have added to gravity of God's words. No wonder they were afraid.

**Luke 9:34 While [Peter was speaking] a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.**

And **Matthew** says that as God spoke the disciples "... **fell face down to the ground and were terrified.**"

But notice with me ... what Jesus did when His children became frightened. It says ...

**“... Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be Afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.**

**“Jesus Himself Alone”.** That’s a pretty complete statement and it’s the Lord’s recipe for our fears. Not Jesus plus a club, not Jesus plus money, not Jesus plus a pill, not Jesus plus political pull ... but Jesus Himself Alone.

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**Verses 9-13:** The disciples asked this question based on ...

**Malachi 4:5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers ...**

The scribes had been saying that Jesus couldn’t be the messiah based on the way they understood this passage ... that Elijah had to come back and restore things before the messiah would come.

So, the disciples were confused and Jesus repeats what He’d told them previously about John the Baptist ...

**Luke 1:15 "... he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. 16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 "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."**

So, Elijah’s spirit has already come in the person of John the Baptist, but he will, one day, make a personal return as well (**Revelation 11:1-14**).

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**Verses 14-21:** Obviously this is a literal account of events, but it also offers us some important spiritual symbolism.

But before we talk about either ... we need to read the fuller account in ...

**Luke 9:17 And one of the crowd answered Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*.” 19 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!” 20 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around and foaming *at the mouth*. 21 And He asked his father, “How long**

has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 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 said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” 25 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.” 26 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.

Clearly this boy was an epileptic and based on the Greek, had been so from his adolescent years through young-adulthood. He was in rough shape ... suffering seizures because of his demon possession ... often being thrown into fires and water. And his father reports some degree of mental illness ... not to mention that he was a deaf mute. But he was not born with these issues.

We also know that the nine disciples that were left behind had been trying to cast out this demon and had been unable to do so.

**Q. So, is that what Jesus was talking about when He says in verse 17 “You unbelieving and perverted generation”?** -- No. When Jesus made that statement He was speaking to the crowd and, perhaps, specifically to the scribes that **Mark 9:14** tells us were present.

We know that because where our Bibles say “**unbelieving**”, Jesus uses the word *apistos* (ap'-is-tos) which means one who actively disbelieves or one who stands in opposition. So, there’s no way He’s aiming that at His disciples.

**Q. But still ... why couldn’t the disciples cast out this demon?** Jesus says it was, “**because of the littleness of their faith**”. Not their disbelief, but the smallness of the faith they had.

Every believer, according to **Romans 12:3** has some faith, but Jesus very matter-of-factly says to the disciples here that they could have ... and perhaps should have had, more faith than they did.

**Q. So, what is faith?** – It’s an unshaken confidence in God, His Word and His ways. Faith is having such a confident belief in everything God tells us ... that our actions are based upon it (**Hebrews 11:1**).

**Q. So how do we get more faith than the small amount we have at the time of our spiritual birth?** – Three ways:

- 1.** By asking God for more faith (**James 4:2-3**)

- 2.** We exercise our faith muscle by obeying God ... not testing God, but obeying God (**James 2:14**)
- 3.** By taking in the promises of God's Word daily (**Romans 10:17**)

**Q. So ... can we really move mountains by faith?** -- Yes ... but ONLY if it's in the will of God.

Which brings us back to the symbolism of this passage ...

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**Conclusion:** But first let me read to you the account of Jesus healing a man born blind ...

**John 9:1 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.**

Take note that despite what Jesus called "**littleness of faith**" in His disciples He expressed absolutely no anger or even frustration at them. He expressed frustration with the unbelieving scribes, but not toward the disciples ... despite their failure to cast the demon out of the boy.

**Q. Why?** -- For the same reason that man was born blind ... "**so that the works of God might be displayed**".

Back in **verses 14-15** we saw the boy's father bring him to Jesus. May that be a word to all of us!

Whether you're a parent or not ... bringing people to Jesus is the most important thing we will ever do.

**Q. Who should we bring to Jesus?** -- Everyone in your sphere of influence who's not already sitting at His feet!

When your child is afraid ... bring them to Jesus!

When your friend is hurting ... bring them to Jesus!

When your co-worker is broken ... bring them to Jesus!

That's how your fears were conquered. That's how your hurts were healed. That's how you were made whole.

Give them what you have ... bring them to Jesus.

This passage in **Matthew** tells us that nine men tried but could not cure this boy. Jesus though ... Jesus was the cure!

And likewise, this world's philosophies ... have failed. The plethora of counselors in every school and community ... have failed. Religion has failed. Drugs have failed. Programs have failed ... but Jesus has never failed!

So ... bring them to Jesus!

In 2007 16.1% of the adult US population identified as either atheist (that is ... do not believe in a creator) or agnostic (they believe in a creator but deny all involvement of that creator). But by 2014 (which is the most recent data), that number had increased to 22.8%. During that same period, the percentage of non-Christian faiths grew from 4.7% to 5.9% in that same group.

That means that over that seven-year period of time, we lost 7.9% of our fellow Americans. That's 2 ½ million souls lost in seven years.

Or you can think of it this way ... if we keep doing exactly what we've been doing ... about the time we leave this earth ... we will have lost right at 100,000,000 more souls.

**Q. So what am I saying?** – Very simple ... bring them to Jesus.