

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 16 & 17

Matthew 16:27-28

Q - What do you think the disciples thought when they heard this statement?

“See the coming of the Son of Man”

Let's remember what we spoke about last time in light of Jesus' identity as the son of man. This comes from a really important vision from Daniel:

Daniel 7:9-10 - "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. 10 "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Daniel 7:13-14 - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a **Son of Man** was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

The identity of the “son of Man” is related to this vision and the one whom God gives the authority and dominion. It is associated with Jesus' messianic role as judge and king. So very soon after Jesus begins to tell his disciples that he “must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day (**Matthew 16:21**)” he talks to them about the coming of the son of man.

Let's follow the progression from the last chapter: Jesus confirms he is the Messiah in the most definitive way yet → then he tells his disciples he is going to suffer and die → then he reminds them that the son of man will come as judge and king in glory. The fact that the Messiah will suffer was confusing for the disciples to understand but it doesn't change the full mission and purpose of the Messiah. The ultimate plan is *still* the plan, but now there is some clarity on the progression of the plan.

Matthew 17:1-5

v. 1 - “six days later”

The word “transfigure” means change of appearance. (<3339> μεταμορφώω, *metamorphoo*)

Let's consider the images associated with this amazing moments:

Bright light, glory and cloud - all elements also in Daniel's vision. Also we have two really important figures from Scripture - Moses and Elijah!

This is the second time in Matthew (and one of only a few rare instances in Scripture) where the audible voice of God is heard from heaven. In Matthew's gospel both instances are similar in message:

Matthew 3:17 - (*at Jesus' baptism*) and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

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!"

Let's think about the message in light of the moment. God doesn't just declare Jesus his beloved son in this second declaration, but he adds another line this time: "listen to him!". In the presence of Moses the great law giver and Elijah, one of the greatest prophets ever, God says "*listen to my son*".

Q - What do you think Peter wanted to make 3 tabernacles/tents?

- 1 - Honoring the three men - giving them a place to sit, rest and be shaded
- 2 - Prolonging the moment - if Peter makes three tents, then the men will stick around for a while
- 3 - Commemorating the moment - making three tents as a memorial to this holy moment

Interestingly though, Peter's desire to honor the three men with equal makeshift construction projects is the instance that the heavenly voice responds to - listen to *him*. Peter is honoring these three figures equally (not a bad thing), but God wants Jesus to be honored above Moses and Elijah as the son of God - and he wants his words to be heard over the Law and the Prophets!

Matthew 17:6-9 - Don't Tell Anyone Yet!

Q - If you saw something like this, would you be able to keep it to yourself?!

Q - Why didn't Jesus want the disciples to speak about this?

Q - When does Jesus say the disciples can tell people about this vision? Why do you think that is significant

Jesus commands the disciples not to speak of the transfiguration until after His resurrection because His identity as the glorious Son of God can only be fully understood in light of the cross and the empty tomb. Without the resurrection, the vision of his glory would be misunderstood as a display of triumph alone, rather than the affirmation of a Messiah who must *first* suffer, die, and then be exalted.

A vision like this would have been hard to keep quiet - but there is also the quandary of only Peter, James and John being the ones who saw it. While three men hallucinating the same hallucination is unlikely, a vision alone isn't necessarily sufficient grounds for belief for the rest of the world.

So, we don't see the disciples preaching the transfiguration as part of the gospel message. But it certainly would have had a lasting impact on the faith and confidence of at least these three disciples for the rest of their lives - lives that would include their own leadership of the church, spreading of the gospel, recording the historical life and words of Jesus for Scripture (the gospel of John), writing up to 6 additional books of the New Testament (1 & 2 Peter, 1-3 John, Revelation) and each living and giving their lives for Christ in the end (first James, then Peter and lastly John).

The transfiguration is significant - but what is most significant is Jesus and his words. He's God's beloved son - hear him.

Q - How do you think your life would be impacted if you saw the transfiguration of Jesus?

What is interesting about this event is that we all probably wish we could see a vision like that - certainly we'd be convinced of the truth if we saw it. But yet we haven't seen such a vision - in fact few have - so are we to have a weaker faith than Peter, James and John?

That's a good question. And conveniently, one addressed by Peter himself in his later letter. Writing during a time where false teachers about Jesus were on the rise, he boldly speaks to the church, and us:

2 Peter 1:16-18 - 16 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"-- 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Peter tells/reminds the reader that he saw the glory of Christ and heard the voice of God. That's a reason to listen to what Peter is saying about the Lord. And yet, he doesn't *just* encourage us to believe him because he saw a vision of the coming of the Lord. He pivots slightly in the very next verses:

2 Peter 1:19-21 - 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. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Peter is saying that the vision of Jesus, though amazing and glorious, only confirmed what the Scriptures already said! The vision was affirming what the Bible had already prophetically spoken of about Jesus Christ. If you never saw the spiritual vision, you still have the Spirit-inspired Scriptures!

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NLT) - Because of that experience, we have even **greater confidence** in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place-- until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, 21 or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

No once in a lifetime heavenly vision? No problem! We have the Bible which is a work of God's spirit. Reading the scriptures gives life and builds faith - and through the pages of God's book our own eyes are opened to see that which we have not seen with our physical eyes!

Here's what was written by two of the men who were eyewitnesses to the transfiguration that day on the mountain:

1 Peter 1:8 - and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

John 20:29-31 - Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." 30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

So, while we haven't yet "seen" Jesus, we will - because we have obeyed what God's voice said that day on the mountain top - "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; **listen to Him!**"