

Day 17, Matthew 17

by David Servant

Jesus' transfiguration fulfilled a promise, and faith is essential for delivering miracles and resisting Satan's attacks.

Scripture: Malachi 4:5, Matthew 10:1, Matthew 16:28, Matthew 17:10-11, Matthew 17:17, Matthew 17:21, Luke 9:31, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Faith And Prayer", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

David Servant preaches on the fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Matthew 16:28 through His transfiguration before Peter, James, and John, where they saw Him in His glorified state with Moses and Elijah. He explains how Elijah had already come in the form of John the Baptist, as a forerunner of Jesus, and how Elijah's ministry may be embodied in a representative before Jesus' second coming. David emphasizes the importance of faith in delivering the demon-possessed boy, highlighting how prayer and fasting can increase faith and be tools for spiritual growth.

Transcript

Jesus' promise in Matthew 16:28 that some of His disciples would not taste death until they saw "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" was fulfilled just six days later when He was transfigured before Peter, James and John. They saw Him as we one day will---in His glorified state---His face shining like the sun. Those three disciples were also blessed to see Moses, who had died about 1,500 years earlier, and Elijah, who never died, but was raptured 900 years earlier. Both were alive and doing well, and according to Luke's Gospel, both were extremely interested in Jesus' "departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31).

In the second-to-last verse of the Old Testament, God promised: "I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). For this reason, the scribes were anticipating the return of Elijah prior to the coming of the Messiah (17:10), which was one of their excuses for rejecting Jesus as Messiah. They missed it on two counts. First, Elijah had already come, according to Jesus, in the form of John the Baptist, and as a forerunner of Jesus. Second, the Messiah would be coming to earth more than once, and His first appearance would not be at "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). Interestingly, Jesus revealed that Elijah would also return more than once, and thus we can anticipate his return before Jesus' second coming. I'm assuming that Elijah will not personally return, but that Elijah's ministry will be embodied in a representative like John the Baptist. Jesus said that

Elijah would "restore all things" (17:11), which although vague, certainly sounds encouraging.

Jesus had already given the twelve apostles authority to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1). So why did they fail to deliver this one young boy whose father entreated them? Clearly, their unbelief was the reason (17:17, 19-20). Once again we see the vital importance of faith. If the disciples had exercised the necessary faith, the boy would have been delivered. But they didn't, so he was left in his demonized condition. I'm glad Jesus had faith! Whenever I read these kinds of stories it makes me wonder how many blessings we are living without because of our lack of faith. Help us, Lord!

We note that Jesus also mentioned that the particular kind of demon that oppressed the boy could only come out through prayer and fasting (17:21). A note in the margin of my Bible indicates that this verse is not found in many ancient manuscripts, which means that it's questionable whether Jesus actually said those words. Regardless, Jesus' statement about the necessity of prayer and fasting do not nullify what He said about the necessity of faith. If 17:21 contains authentic words of Jesus, then the reason for the apostle's failure was not either lack of faith or lack of prayer and fasting. Rather, it was both. Therefore, prayer and fasting must be tools for increasing faith, which should not surprise us. Naturally, those who spend extended time in prayer---to the point of skipping meals---are going to have greater faith than those who don't, just as those who spend extended time meditating in God's Word will have more faith in God than those who don't.

In any case, Jesus indicated that prayer and fasting was not necessary to be successful at casting out every kind of demon, but only for the particular kind that afflicted this boy. You don't need to fast to gain personal victory over Satan's attacks. But you absolutely must have faith to resist him (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Think of the string of miracles needed for Peter to pay his and Jesus' temple tax! Someone had to lose a certain coin in the Sea of Galilee, a fish had to get that coin stuck in its mouth, and that same fish had to be caught by Peter at a certain location and time! God wants us to pay our taxes, and He'll help us do it!

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