

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 57

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus' unique authority and not putting men or the Bible on the same level as him, while also highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit in understanding Scripture and the responsibility of Christians to cast out demons.

Duration: 25:27

Scripture: Matthew 17:1

Topics: "Faith And Prayer", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the significance of the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, emphasizing the importance of not elevating any man or even the Bible above Jesus. It highlights the need to listen to Jesus above all else, avoid equating any man with Christ, and exercise faith in His authority over demons. The teaching stresses the necessity of faith, prayer, fasting, and reliance on the Holy Spirit to effectively minister to those oppressed by the devil, illustrating the power of faith in overcoming obstacles hindering God's will.

Transcript

We continue our study in all that Jesus taught, and we are looking today at Matthew's Gospel and Chapter 17 and Verse 1. Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, his brother, to a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments were white as snow. And, behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him.

Peter said, Lord, it is good for us to be here. We will make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. The disciples heard this, and they fell on their faces and were much afraid. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Arise, don't be afraid.

And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one save Jesus only. So, here is an important principle that we need to recognize. We can say that Moses here represented the law, and Elijah represented the prophets.

This is a frequent expression that you find in the Bible. The law and the prophets, the law and the prophets, the law and the prophets. It referred to the Old Testament Bible, which was described as the law

and the prophets.

The first five books were called the books of the law, and then there was history books, and then the prophets. But it was a general description for the Old Testament. And Moses was the great lawgiver.

He's known throughout Israel as the lawgiver. And Elijah is known as the most well-known prophet, even quoted in the last verse of the Old Testament. So, here we see, symbolically, we can say, in the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter was so excited.

He was giving Jesus, putting Jesus on the same level as the law and the prophets. Let's make three tabernacles, and Jesus, Moses, and Elijah all on the same level. And as soon as he did that, a cloud came and overshadowed them, saying, as it were, don't ever do that.

This is my beloved son. He's not in the same class as the book or a man. This is my beloved son.

Listen to him. What Christians can learn from this is, it's possible for us to be so taken up with a man of God, who's been a tremendous blessing to us, maybe a great prophet, and we can put him on the same level as Jesus in our lives unconsciously. We may criticize the Roman Catholics for making Mary a second mediator, but there are a lot of Protestants who make a pastor a second mediator between them and Christ.

And a man becomes equal to Christ, and immediately a cloud comes. The Lord says, you can't do that. This is my son.

He's in a class by himself. You cannot equate any man with him. And the second thing is, which is more subtle, is bibliolatry, where we worship the Bible.

Now that doesn't look so serious because it's the word of God, but it's the Bible itself which says in 2 Corinthians 3, the letter kills. That means if you take the letter of Scripture and live by that, it can kill you. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't obey God's word, but obedience must be in the spirit.

There's so many legalists who take little verses here and there, and words here and there, and built a legalistic system in Christianity, or built a cult. So this is one of the lessons that comes through here. When you put even the Bible on the level of Jesus, or a man of God, the greatest man of God on earth even, on the same level as Jesus.

These are all meant to direct us to Christ, the greatest, the most effective man of God, the greatest prophet. John the Baptist in the Old Testament was one who pointed to Christ. He said, behold the Lamb of God, I'm not worthy to untie his laces.

Or here is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. He was a pointer. So no prophet was meant to be a destination in himself.

We like the signposts that point to a city. You know, as you drive down the road, there are these signposts saying the city is here. Bombay is here, or Chennai is here.

So a prophet is like a signpost saying Christ is there. Go in that direction. One who draws people to himself is a hindrance to God's work.

And so this is one of the things we read here, and the other is that, as I said, that we don't get so taken up with the letter of Scripture, that we don't get the spirit of what is written there. Because this is the problem with the Pharisees. They were taking the letter of Scripture, and they were criticizing Jesus himself.

Saying, you're not obeying God's word, you're not keeping the Sabbath, you're not doing this, you're not doing that. Whereas Jesus was one who obeyed the law. He said, I've come to fulfill the law, but he obeyed the spirit of the law.

And so there's something that we can learn from there. And it says that when the cloud disappeared, and they heard this voice saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him. And he may use the prophet, he may use the Bible, but ultimately you've got to listen to him.

For example, faith doesn't come by reading the Bible, you know that? The Bible says if you read carefully, in Romans 10 and verse 17, it does not say faith comes by the word of Christ. There's an in-between step. Faith comes by hearing.

And hearing by the word of Christ. So that means the word of Christ refers to the New Testament. As you read it, you've got to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you.

That's how faith comes. But mere academic study of the word will not produce faith in anybody. There are a lot of people who study the word academically, and they're not spiritual.

They're just Bible scholars like you could study a chemistry book like that and get a Ph.D. in chemistry. And you can study the Bible like that and get a Ph.D. in the Bible, but you won't be spiritual. So it's very important to remember that, that study of the Bible by itself will not produce faith, it will only produce knowledge.

That puffs us up. It's the Holy Spirit that must speak to us through Scripture. And in verse Matthew 17, when they lifted up their eyes, they saw Jesus only.

The others had disappeared. And that's how it must be. It doesn't say let's run the race looking at any man of God.

It doesn't say let's run the race looking at the Bible. In fact, for 1400 years, there was no printed Bible. And so most Christians never had access to a Bible in their homes like we have today access to so many translations.

We must never forget that for 1400 years, most Christians did not have a Bible at home. How were they supposed to follow the Lord for 1400 years? If the Bible was so essential for following the Lord, God would have allowed printing to be discovered at least 100 years before Christ came. But I've seen the result of this.

Dependence on the Bible has led... I mean, I grew up in an assembly where they studied the Bible like anything, which I also did. I was very thankful for it. But I found it took away from dependence on the Holy Spirit.

So that's the balance we need. I believe in the study of the Scriptures, and I've studied this book from cover to cover, and I still study it. I believe there's a depth in it which I'll never exhaust.

But all the time I'm looking for the Spirit speaking to me through it. Otherwise I'll be putting Moses on the same level as Jesus. In the same way, I've been tremendously blessed by some wonderful godly men, and I respect them very highly.

There are writings of some, and there are very few real godly men, men of God who know God intimately, and whose writings and lives have blessed me. But I've always gone beyond them to Christ. Like Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ.

So we can follow man as long as he's leading us closer and closer to Christ. If a time comes when he drifts away, we just stop looking at him and continue to follow Christ. That way we will never go astray.

Impossible. And a really godly man will never, never seek to draw you to himself. He'll always point you beyond himself to Christ.

You know, many people can take advantage of this also. I want to give a warning here. There are many independent spirits in Christendom who love to hear something like this and say, I don't follow any man.

And that sounds exactly like what I'm teaching right now. But what they mean is, I don't submit to anybody. I'm a law unto myself.

And those are the worst of the lot. They are the biggest hindrance to the body of Christ. Because there's a balance in the teaching of Scripture.

As I said, when Satan quoted a Scripture to Jesus saying it is written, Jesus said it is also written. So truth is found in these two statements. It is written.

It is also written. So it's true. It is written.

We run the race looking only unto Jesus. But it's also written in Hebrews 13 and 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them.

Because they have to give an account to God for you in the final day. And let them do this with joy and not with grief. Hebrews 13 and 17.

So the balance is there. God has given us human leaders, apostles. And Paul had such authority over the church in Corinth that he could hand over a man in that church to Satan from many hundreds of kilometers away.

That's the authority God gives an apostle. And he could tell them, you guys can have 10,000 teachers, but I'm your father. That's inspired by the Holy Spirit.

So there's a balance in this that we must not forget. But Paul was not attaching people to himself. He was leading people to Christ.

But yet there was an authority that God gave to Paul that a spiritual person would recognize and submit to. So we move on in Matthew 17. So that's the other thing which Jesus was trying to teach these people through those circumstances.

In the Gospels, when we try to understand all that Jesus taught, there were situations and circumstances that the Lord led his people into. For example, we thought about that storm in the lake. There again, Jesus

was teaching something through circumstances that he could still the storm.

Through his life, through circumstances, and through his words. So all that Jesus taught combines all these things together. It's not just his spoken words.

There are a lot of things we learn from the circumstances, like this Mount of Transfiguration incident. And when they came up down from the mountain, Jesus said, don't tell anyone about this until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. So Peter kept that and he speaks about it only in his episode.

And his disciples asked him, why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? That's in Malachi, that quotation. And he answered and said, Elijah is coming and will restore all things in the future. But I say Elijah already came.

That's referring to John the Baptist. But they did not recognize him. But did to him whatever they wished.

They chopped off his head. So the Son of Man is also going to suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he was spoken to them about John the Baptist.

Here's the other verse that teaches us that John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, preparing the way for the first coming of Christ. And Malachi 4, verse 5 and 6 says, Before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, God will send Elijah, which means a ministry like Elijah's, which is not going to be one man. It's going to be a whole church, the body of Christ together, that understands God's purpose.

Together will be the new man that is the Elijah of the last days. It won't be one person. It will be a prophetic ministry coming forth from the church, preparing the way for the second coming of Christ.

Preparing people for the second coming of Christ. So that is the ministry of the church today. When they came to the multitude, a man came up to him, falling on his knees, Matthew 17, 14 and saying, Lord have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic.

He is very ill and he often falls into the fire and often into the water. I brought him to your disciples and they couldn't cure him. See, this is why Jesus said to them, that we can't stay up in the mountain forever.

Peter said, it's good for us to be here. Let's just settle down here. This is a wonderful place.

It's the spirit of heaven out here on the mountaintop. And Jesus said, no, we've got to go down. See, this is sometimes how we can feel when we have mountaintop experiences with the Lord.

And it's so wonderful to be in his presence and the presence of his people, especially when we have godly men near us like Moses and Elijah. And it's wonderful to be with such people, but the Lord says you can't be there forever because this is only a preparation for ministry down in the valley. So every mountaintop experience that we have is even with godly men and with Christ himself, is only a preparation for ministry to needy people in the valley.

God has not called us just to bless ourselves. The blessing of Abraham was, the Lord said to Abraham, I'll bless you and you'll be a blessing to all the families of the earth. And that's the blessing that comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit puts within us a spring of water that springs up to everlasting life. But then that spring flows out from us and becomes rivers of living water that blesses other people. So that's how it must be in our

life.

If it just remains as a spring, satisfying ourselves, we have frustrated the ultimate purpose of God. It must flow out from us to bless others because there are needy people down in the valley. Here's this man with a son who's a lunatic.

How is he going to be helped if Peter, James, and John stay up in the mountain forever? Or if Jesus stayed there? So there's a lesson here for those of us who are taken up with mountaintop experiences and all that. Every experience like that must lead us down to serve people oppressed by the devil in the valleys. And so they go down and there's this man who could not be helped by these other disciples.

Now remember we saw in Matthew chapter 10 that Jesus had given the disciples, these apostles, specific authority to cast out demons. Just like he's given us if you are believers. Every believer who believes that Satan's been defeated on the cross and his power has been taken away and every demon's been defeated there, you know, can cast out demons in Jesus' name.

The demons are not afraid of man, but they are afraid of the mighty name of Jesus and the authority behind that. And yet they couldn't cast it out even though God had given them that, the Lord had given them that specific authority, they couldn't exercise it. This man had brought into the disciples and the disciples could do nothing.

I mean that's true even today. There are many demon-possessed people in the world and sometimes they bring them to Christians and many Christians are powerless. They say they don't know what to do because those Christians have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire, never known the anointing of God, not known the authority that Christ has given us over Satanic powers.

It's exactly like this. Non-Christians say, I brought somebody to your disciples and they couldn't even help them. And the Lord says, Oh unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to me.

I feel very often that the Lord says similar words today. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. And when he sees needy humanity bringing people to his children for deliverance and help from Satanic oppression and a lot of people can't help them, he says the same words, Oh unbelieving and perverted generation, you Christians who call yourself by my name, how long shall I put up with you? It's very, very sad.

And I believe that it's our responsibility to take this seriously and say, Lord, according to what your purpose for my life is, I want to be able to meet the need of those you send to me. I want to seek you so earnestly that you will anoint me with whatever is my calling. I'm not supposed to do everything in the body of Christ, but whatever is my particular function in the body of Christ.

And that's something all of us who are believers must recognize that every single believer has some function. And it's not just preaching wonderful messages that is the main thing. There are many, many functions in the body of Christ.

And if you can recognize your particular function and say, Lord, I want to be able to exercise that function to deliver people from the oppression of the devil who come across my path. I want to be available to you for that and I want to be anointed by the spirit for that, then you will not frustrate God's purposes. But I think a lot of Christians are frustrating God's purposes because they're not thinking in terms of

responsibility to deliver others from the oppression of Satan.

They're only thinking of, well, it's good for us to be here with Moses and Elijah on the mountaintop. Every now and then we have wonderful experiences and Sunday we go to church and we have a lot of clapping and wonderful music and all that. But what about being useful to the people oppressed by the devil in society around you? That's part of our calling.

And then the man brought the boy to Jesus and Jesus rebuked the demon and cast out. Once again, you see this principle throughout. Jesus cast out the demons with a word.

And I believe that is a great testimony to the heathen when those who cast out demons cast out the demons with one single sentence and not with screaming and yelling and hours of prayer and fasting and all that. You never see Jesus spending hours of prayer and fasting to cast out one demon. We must manifest the authority of Jesus where with one word, one sentence, the demon goes.

And I can tell you that is true. The number of demons that I've cast out, never have I had to say more than one sentence. It's not because I'm special.

It's because the name of Jesus, they fear and tremble at the name of Jesus. We must have faith in that. And if you don't have faith in that, then of course it won't work.

But then I want to tell you that hours of prayer and fasting is not going to solve the problem. You need to go away from there and say, Lord, I didn't have faith. And then you need to pray and fast in secret so that you'll be equipped that the next time when you encounter that type of problem, you can deal with it.

So there is a place for prayer and fasting in secret prior to your handling that type of situation. So Jesus cast out the demons with a word. It was always like that, one word.

And the Bible says in 1 John 4, 17, great verse, As Jesus is, so are we in this world. We have the same authority to exercise. If we are anointed with the Holy Spirit, our conscience is clear, and we are walking in humility, walking with the Lord, we have the same authority that Christ had.

That's the meaning of using his name. So it should not be said about us that somebody says, I brought this to one of your disciples and he couldn't cast out the demons. There may be numerous reasons why God does not allow some sicknesses to be healed.

In Paul's case, sickness was not healed. In Timothy's case, sickness was not healed. But there's never a single case where God will allow a demon to be in a person.

That is 100% against God's will. Just like I say, God doesn't want us to be a slave to a single sin in our life. I say, I have no doubt in my mind that God does not want any human being to have one single demon in him.

And it's the responsibility of Christians in the name of Jesus, whenever they encounter it, to cast out that demon. And we don't go around looking for demons all over the town. But when they come across our path and people bring them to us, we should have the authority to cast them out.

And that's why we need to walk with the Lord continuously because we don't know when that occasion will arise when we have to, when we are called upon to cast out the demon. And then the disciples came to Jesus and said, why couldn't we cast out? We are trying to understand all that Jesus taught. And he was

teaching here about casting out demons.

It's a very important aspect of ministry, particularly if you minister in the villages in India, it's very, very important to know how to do it. And he said to them, he didn't say because you didn't pray and fast. That's how some people misunderstand it.

He said because of the littleness of your faith. Verse 20. Your problem is you don't believe.

The authority I gave you, which is mentioned in Matthew chapter 10, you don't believe that. You don't believe that you have authority. Then of course nothing will happen.

You know the Lord can give you authority, but you don't believe it. That was the situation here. Let's ask the question, did the Lord give them authority? Sure, you read Matthew chapter 10, verse 1. Why couldn't they cast it out? They didn't believe it.

The Lord's given us authority. You don't believe it, nothing happens. It's a principle in the Christian life.

Christ died for your sins. You don't believe it, your sins are not forgiven. Christ can fill you with the Holy Spirit.

You don't believe it, you won't be filled with the Spirit. You name it, anything in scripture, you can access it only by faith. Christ has given you authority over demons.

You don't believe it, you'll never have authority over demons. So littleness of your faith, and he said if your faith is a mustard seed, you can even say to this mountain, move from here, and nothing will be impossible to you. Now the meaning is, the mountain is something which is a hindrance to my fulfilling the will of God in my life.

Now there are some obstacles that God himself places in our way. Say he closes a door, then it's no use trying banging at the door if God himself has closed it. But there are some mountains that the devil puts in our way that hinders us from moving on in God's purpose for our life.

And those mountains have to be removed in Jesus' name. We have to pray against it and make sure it gets out of the way because it's hindering our fulfilling God's will. You say, how to know whether this obstacle is from God or from the devil? There's absolutely no way to know it except by walking in the Holy Spirit.

That's why I said there's no rule book here. You have to learn to live by the Holy Spirit, keep a clear conscience, walk in humility. The Holy Spirit will tell you.

Those who are led by the leading of the Holy Spirit, they are the sons of God. And to come to that faith, he says in verse 21, you need to pray and fast. So there is a place for prayer and fasting in secret, but not there in public while trying to cast out the demon.

That's in private before you get there. You must be prepared before the time comes. Jesus prayed and fasted.

And so when time came, he had the authority to cast out demons. So let's recognize that it is God's will for us to have authority over all of Satan's power. And I believe that God will help us to be there if you can trust him.

Believe that for yourself. We'll conclude here and continue in our next episode.

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