

Read [Matthew 17:9 – 17:27](#)

- Teaching 67: Elijah Has Come: Faith Moving Mountains: Distress: Temple Taxes

[17:9] And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”

- 17:9 And as (while) they were coming down the mountain: the descent from Mt. Transfiguration
- Jesus commanded them, saying: Jesus instructed/ordered Peter/James/John
- Tell no one the vision: never speak of what you’ve seen here on this mountain to anyone else
  - not even the other 9 disciples!
- until the Son of Man is raised from the dead: until the Son of Man should be lifted up (divine passive) from (separation) the realm of the dead
  - when the proper time arrives (after the Son of Man’s Resurrection), the story of the Transfiguration can and must be proclaimed: 2 Pet. 1:16-21 and the gospel testimonies
- but why AFTER Jesus’ resurrection?
  - Jesus’ transfiguration anticipates His resurrection: the Father who glorifies the Son will soon raise Him in a body of glory (cf. [Philippians 3:21](#))
    - the strongest evidence for Jesus being the Messiah will be the Resurrection: (He was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord... [Romans 1:4](#)
  - the Father raised Jesus from among the dead: the Son would attain glory and honor through suffering/death (not without it) – just as foretold in [16:21](#)
  - in both transfiguration and resurrection, the Father honors the Son as the Suffering Servant: And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name... [Philippians 2:8-9](#)
  - if the disciples have struggled to understand Jesus as a suffering and dying Messiah, how would the fickle crowds react?
  - This does not mean that Jesus’ full glory could be known only through the resurrection. On the contrary, it means that though His true glory antedated the resurrection and was revealed to three intimates before the passion, it could be made known to others only after the resurrection. D.A. Carson

[17:10] And the disciples asked Him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” [17:11] He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. [17:12] But I tell you that Elijah has

already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.”

- **17:10** And the disciples asked Him (**Jesus**)
- Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah **must** come: So **why** then do the scribes say that it is first **necessary** that **Elijah** comes?
  - the vivid and startling vision of **Elijah** on Mt. Transfiguration had probably raised this question in their minds, but their question is also provoked by what **Jesus** just declared
  - **Jesus** has just revealed Himself to be God’s **Messiah**, declaring that He will die and rise from the dead
  - they also know the scribal teaching that God’s **kingdom** will not dawn/come until Yahweh has **first** prepared Israel by sending the prophet **Elijah** to restore all things
    - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet **before** the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction. **Malachi 4:5-6**
  - if **Elijah** comes in the way prophesied by **Malachi**, **how** is it possible that **Jesus** the **Messiah** will suffer and die at the hands of Israel’s religious leaders?
  - wouldn't **Elijah’s** substantial influence cause the people to embrace the **Son of Man**?
- **17:11** (And) He answered, **Elijah does** (indeed) **come**, and he will restore/reestablish all things
  - **Jesus** confirms the prophecy – yes **Elijah** is coming, and he will restore all things: **the whole of the Gospel being to be reduced to these two heads, repentance towards God, and faith in Christ; both which were taught by the true Elijah. John Gill**
  - now if the scribes and/or **Peter/James/John** are expecting **Elijah the Tishbite** literally, then they are indeed mistaken
- **17:12** **But** (sharp **contrast** with **17:11**) I tell you that **Elijah has ALREADY/NOW** come, and (yet: **surprising/unexpected**) they did not recognize him
  - **But I tell you:** similar to **But I say to you** in the **SotM**
  - **already come:** **Malachi’s** prophecy has been fulfilled: figuratively through **John the Baptist**
    - **Jesus** to the crowds: **For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Mt. 11:13-14** (cf. **11:10**)
  - **recognize:** acknowledge, give recognition to
- **but** (**adversative:** on the contrary) they (the people: religious leaders: **Herod**) **did to him whatever** they pleased (wished, desired, wanted)
  - they did not take to heart the message of **John’s** preaching
  - “**Elijah**” has already come and had been rejected and killed!
- **So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands:** in this same way, the **Son of Man** is destined to suffer/endure at the hands of the people: religious leaders: political authorities

[17:13] **Then** the disciples understood **that** He was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

- **17:13 Then (temporal)** the disciples understood/comprehended **that** He was speaking (spoke) to them of John the Baptist: **Elijah** has already come = **John the Baptist**
  - not referring to the vision of **Elijah** on Mt. Transfiguration!
  - **Gabriel** speaking to **Zechariah**: **And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. Luke 1:16-17**
- does **Jesus'** explanation mean that the latter-day **Elijah** (John the Baptist) and the **Son of Man** had failed in their respective missions? **absolutely not!**
- rather, they fulfilled their missions in **unexpected ways**
- **It is precisely by the Son of Man's suffering and death that He will save His people and establish God's rule. John heralds Messiah's work by his life no less than by his preaching and baptizing. John's most poignant witness to Jesus is his martyrdom; the Elijah of Malachi, far from forestalling Messiah's death, would foreshadow it. J. Knox Chamblin**

[17:14] And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to Him and, kneeling before Him, [17:15] said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures, and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. [17:16] And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him."

- **17:14** And when they came to the crowd: having reached the bottom of the mountain
- a man came up to Him (**Jesus**), kneeling before Him (in petition)
- **17:15** (and) said, Lord have **mercy** (pity/compassion: **urgent request**) on my son, **for** (**reason**) he has (what *seems* to be epileptic) seizures, and he suffers terribly/severely
  - Lord, have mercy: desperate father appeals to **Jesus'** compassion
  - my son: his only son (cf. **Luke 9:38**)
  - suffers: from injuries incurred during his episodic *seizures*
- For/Indeed he often/frequently falls (**iterative**) into the fire and often into the water
  - the fire: fire that heated his home?      the water: open courtyard well?
  - **THIS** is the oppressive, destructive work of a tormenting demon
  - the boy was also deaf and mute (cf. **Mark 9:25**)
- **17:16** And (**surprising/unexpected**) I brought him to your disciples, and they could not (they had **no ability**) heal/restore him: from this terrible affliction to normal health
  - this encounter with the other disciples likely took place while **Jesus** along with **Peter, James, John** were up on Mt. Transfiguration

- the father expected that the disciples *would* be able to heal his son, even begging them (cf. **Luke 9:40**): perhaps the scribes were mocking them for their inability to heal the boy

[**17:17**] And Jesus answered, “**O** faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” [**17:18**] And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.

- **17:17** And Jesus answered (and said), **O** (solemnity and deep emotion) faithless/unbelieving and twisted/perverse generation, how long am I to be with **y o u**? (cf. **Mark 9:19**, **Luke 9:41**)
  - How long am I to bear (endure) with you?
    - when coming down from Mt. Sinai, **Moses** was confronted by Israel’s apostasy in **Exodus 32**: so too, **Jesus**, having descended Mt. Transfiguration, encounters both spiritual opposition and unbelief
    - **Jesus’** statement seems to be addressed to:
      - the father lacking faith in the power of **Jesus**
      - the unmerciful scribes quarreling with the disciples
      - the gathered crowd, often characterized by unbelief
      - the 9 disciples: despite all that they have seen/heard, in this case, they also exemplify this generation’s obstinate unbelief
      - they seem to have regressed to the spiritual level of the multitude – remember the **Missional Discourse** in **ch10**:
        - **And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. 10:1**
        - **And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. 10:7-8**
    - **Jesus’** words express personal disappointment and also both a consciousness *and* an acute awareness of His heavenly origin and destiny
    - although the disciples’ unbelief is painful to Him, in longsuffering patience *and* love, **Jesus** would continue to bear with these men He had called, and He would yet again demonstrate His authority over the demonic realm
      - the disciples cannot heal, but **He can!** *and He will!*
  - Bring (Carry: **command**) him (the boy) **here (locative) to me**: addressed to the father: **Bring you son here. Luke 9:41**
  - **Jesus gave the perfect example of proper behavior during annoying and distressing circumstances. In what He was about to do, He revealed not only His power but also His love.**
- William Hendriksen**
- **17:18** And Jesus rebuked (it) the demon: the true source of the boy’s terrible condition
    - rebuked: different than the word for cast out

- and it came out of him: nothing can withstand the rebuke of the **Lord**
- and the boy was healed (passive recipient) **instantly** (at that hour)
- Whereas the Israelites committed idolatry immediately after receiving the law, Jesus descends from the mountain and faithfully relies upon His Father in exorcising the demon from the child.

### **Benjamin Gladd**

- And all were **astonished** at the majesty of God. **Luke 9:43**
- **Mark's** narrative gives greater insight into the demonic possession, how an evil spirit made the boy mute, that it would seize him and throw him down, and also cause him to foam at the mouth and grind his teeth
- **Mark** also describes how the demon coming permanently out of the boy as commanded by **Jesus** seemed to leave the boy for dead with **Jesus then** raising him up by the hand

[17:19] **Then** the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” [17:20] He said to them, “**Because** of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

- **17:19 Then** (**temporal**: shortly afterwards) the disciples came to (approached) Jesus privately and said, **Why** could we not cast it out: **Why** didn't *WE* have **the ability** to cast out this demon?
  - **privately**: perhaps from embarrassment
  - yet the men are demonstrating that they are teachable
- **17:20** (And) He said to them, **Because of y o u r** little faith
  - **little faith**: a **poverty** of faith
  - they had cast out many demons before: And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. **Mark 6:13**
  - but **not this time**: for they lack understanding and the accompanying faith by which to act according to the right understanding: they failed because of their poverty of faith
  - when the demon did not leave, they should have persisted in prayer
- For truly, I say to **y o u**: amen, I solemnly declare to you that
- if **y o u** (should) have faith like a grain of mustard seed (or just mustard seed)
  - **if**: conditional statement with no assumption of its fulfillment
  - **faith**: state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted
  - Little faith, like that of a mustard seed, can be effectual; poor faith, like that of the disciples here, is ineffectual. **D.A. Carson**
  - The faith of a mustard seed is the kind of trust in God which does not immediately give up in despair when its efforts so not meet with immediate success. It maintains its uninterrupted and vital contact with God and therefore continues to pray fervently, knowing that God in His own time and in His own way will bestow the blessing. Such

faith links its possessor with the inexhaustible and infinite sources of God's power, wisdom, and love. It operates in harmony with God's revelation in His Word. Consequently, its prayers are not motivated by sinful desires, and it does not tempt God. It is therefore able to remove mountains. **W. Hendriksen**

- **then y o u** will say to this mountain (a mountain in view: probably Mt. Transfiguration), **Move (Go) from here to there** (a location relatively distant from the speaker), **and it will move** (go)
  - **Jesus** isn't talking about literally moving mountains: a proverbial expression meant to express the highly improbably *if not impossible*
  - **Disciples can address the mountain, but only God can remove it.** **J. Knox Chamblin**
  - later in **ch21**, **Jesus** will make a similar statement and follow it with a call to prayer
- **and nothing will be impossible** (powerless/disabled) **for y o u**
  - the disciples presently lacking power are assured by **Jesus** of future power by **one means only**: utter trust in their heavenly Father to provide the power needed to achieve His will on earth: **George Muller** possessed such a trust in his heavenly Father as he regularly prayed to God to do the highly improbable – to feed a host of orphans each day!
  - **Jesus** has just demonstrated **this truth** to these men: He has *moved the mountain* of the obstacle of demon-provoked epilepsy, as He perfectly trusts the Father, He earnestly prays to Him, and He confidently relies on the Spirit's power
  - how could **kingdom disciples** do less than their **Master**?
  - the apostles would 'move many mountains' as their faith became extraordinarily "richer" as **Christ** builds His church through them in **Acts**

[17:21] not contained in the oldest manuscripts – perhaps added later to harmonize with **Mark's** gospel

- **Mark** gives further context **why** their casting out failed and **why** their faith was impoverished: **And He said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."** **Mark 9:29**
- **an entire life bathed in prayer** **D.A. Carson**
- the disciples didn't need giant faith, but they *did* need true faith
- **Application:** is not poor faith the result of poor prayer?

[17:22] As they were gathering in Galilee, **Jesus** said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, [17:23] and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

- **17:22** As **they** (**Jesus** and His disciples) were gathering in Galilee
- **Jesus** said to them (the disciples), The Son of Man is about to be (imminently destined to be) delivered into (handed/turned over) the hands of men
  - be delivered:

- a **human giving over**: a betrayal by the man and ‘disciple’ Judas Iscariot, which serves the saving purpose of God AND
- a **divine giving over**: the Father delivering the **Son** over to death to atone for the sins of His people
- **17:23** and they (the human hands) **will (future: definite)** kill Him (the **Son of Man**), and He will be raised (**future: divine passive**: from death to life) **on the third day**
  - the same truth is underscored yet again: **Jesus** must suffer before He is glorified
  - but having been killed, He will most assuredly be raised from the dead
- **And they** (the disciples) **were greatly** (intensely) **distressed**
  - **distressed**: the disciples perceive that **Jesus’** enemies **will** kill Him, but they don’t seem to comprehend much less believe the latter part of **Jesus’** proclamation, that just as certainly as He will die, He most certainly **will** be raised back to life

[**17:24**] When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the tax?” [**17:25**] He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?”

- **17:24** When they came to Capernaum: **Jesus** and His disciples arrive in Capernaum
  - this is the final time **Jesus** and His disciples will be in Capernaum, which has served as a headquarters of sorts for **Jesus’** mission to Galilee
  - **Matthew**, tax collector for the Romans, is the only evangelist who records this narrative
- the collectors (receivers) of the two-drachma tax went up to (approached) Peter and said, **Does your teacher not pay the** (two-drachma) **tax** (what is due)
  - the question supposes a **positive response** – “Does not **Jesus** pay the tax?” – their question does not suggest that they suspect **Jesus** of tax evasion
  - **collectors**: These collectors of the temple tax are not “tax collectors” as Matthew had been, who had worked for the Roman occupying forces (cf. **9:9**); rather, they are representatives of the Jewish religious establishment in Jerusalem overseeing the temple. **Michael J. Wilkins**
  - **two-drachma tax**: a coin worth 2 Attic drachmas, but no longer in circulation in NT times; it was about equal to a half shekel (2-days’ wage) among the Jews, and was the sum required of each person (Jewish males 20 and older) annually as the temple tax (for maintaining the services and sacrifices of the Jerusalem temple); even though this tax was paid with other coins (such as the denarius), the amount was termed as such **BDAG**
  - the basis for such a tax comes from **Exodus 30:13** and **38:25-26**
- **17:25** He said, Yes: Peter replied, Yes (He does)

- And when he (**Peter**) came into the house, **Jesus** spoke to him first (to be ahead of someone in some activity: **anticipation**: before **Peter** can bring it up with **Jesus**), saying, **What do you think, Simon**: what does it seem to you? what is your understanding?
  - the discussion between **Jesus** and **Peter** is not regarding the paying of the rightness of Jews paying tribute to Caesar (that will be addressed later in **ch22**) – this is a Jewish tax
- From whom do kings of the earth take (receive/accept) toll or tax?
  - toll or tax: referring to the whole range of taxation
- From their sons or from others (strangers, foreigners)?
  - their sons: citizens of a nation **or the king's own offspring, his royal sons?**

[**17:26**] And when he said, “From others,” **Jesus** said to him, “**Then** the sons are **free**. [**17:27**] However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

- **17:26** And when he (**Peter**) said, From others/strangers/foreigners
- **Jesus** said to him, **Then** (it is necessary to conclude that) the sons are free: from obligation, independent, not bound
  - as stated by **Peter** in **16:16**, **Jesus** is the **Son** of the living God, uniquely God's royal **Son**, the beloved **Son** in whom the Father is well (perfectly) pleased
  - but as **Jesus** also expressed twice in the **SotM**, those who truly follow after Him, genuine **kingdom disciples**, also *become* sons of God
    - **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Matthew 5:9**
    - **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:44-45a**
  - and as great as the temple was that represented the presence of God among His people, something greater than the temple was here (**Mt. 12:6**), the **Lord** of the temple Himself!
  - and so as God's unique **Son**, as both son and **Lord** of **King David**, as **King** of an everlasting kingdom, as **Lord** over the temple, and possessing the unbreakably strong bond between the royal **Messiah** and God's sons, neither **Jesus** nor **Peter** is really obliged to pay such a temple tax... imposed by the Father: **THE SON** and the sons are free!
  - and yet **Jesus** willingly determines to pay the tax anyway, not just for Himself but also for **Peter**: the foremost **Royal Son** willingly serving another
  - **17:27 However (But!)**, in order **not to give offense (purpose)** to (to anger) **them** (tax collectors)
  - to not cause others to become ensnared in sin: after all, this tax **was** divinely instituted
  - even though **Jesus** is within His rights to not pay it, to refuse might indicate a lack of interest in the temple (which will eventually be destroyed *but not yet!*) or even irreverence: this cannot be – thus:

- go/proceed/travel to the sea (of Galilee) and cast (forcefully throw) a (fish)hook and take the first fish that comes up (that you catch/discover)
  - hook: only use of this word in the NT
- and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel
  - shekel: the **stater**, a silver coin = four drachmas (c. four days' wages) **BDAG**
- Take that (the shekel) and give it (**urgency**) to them (tax collectors) for me and for yourself
  - **Jesus**, has already multiplied fish on 2 occasions to feed the hungry and already subdued the raging waters of the Sea of Galilee on 2 occasions, again shows **mastery** over nature
  - **Jesus** directs this specific fish to swallow a shiny object: not just any shiny object, but the exact shiny object at the exact time of His bidding in the exact place of Capernaum for the express means of paying the exact tax for both the **King** and His son and for the explicit declaration that **Jesus** is **Lord**
  - **Matthew** doesn't directly state it but nevertheless strongly implies that **Peter** obeys exactly, catching the exact fish purposed by God, and **Jesus'** words are perfectly fulfilled
- **Application:** we cannot avoid all offense, but we should strive to avoid unnecessarily offending others. Why? Because that is exactly what **Jesus** did.
- May we all remember the example of the great apostle of the Gentiles: "We suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ." (**1 Corinthians 9:12**) **J.C. Ryle**