

Matthew 17

ASVh with Comments

Summary. In this chapter, the Lord Jesus interacts with the disciples, Moses and Elijah, the Father, the crowd, a man and his son, and some tax collectors. The events of the chapter take place in various locations, such as a high mountain, some place where the crowd was gathered to wait for the Lord Jesus, Galilee, Capernaum, and a house in Capernaum. The main points of the chapter are the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus telling the disciples about His death and resurrection. Everything in this chapter directly or indirectly supports the teachings related to the transfiguration and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. 1) The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus. This unique event happened only to the Lord Jesus; it is as important as the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. The voice of the Father speaks out of the cloud during the transfiguration, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” Therefore, by the will of the Father and His testimony, the heavenly body of the Lord Jesus appeared to three disciples, Peter, James, and John, so we can believe that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and He is above the Old Testament prophets. It is essential to believe that the transfiguration was real and the real heavenly body of the Lord Jesus overshadowed the human body of the Lord Jesus so the disciples could see His glory and testify to everybody. 2) Death and resurrection. After the transfiguration, the Lord talks to the disciples about His death and resurrection on the third day. The disciples need to believe in the bodily resurrection and connect all this with the transfiguration. 3) The healing of a boy. The boy’s sickness and healing can be applied symbolically to the world. The world itself is like this boy; it has sickness and is set for punishment and cleansing through fire (See 2 Peter 3:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). But the Lord’s mercy gives a chance to all people to repent through the baptism of water and come at the foot of the cross and be healed (See Matthew 8:17, Isaiah 53:3-9). We need to come to the Lord Jesus like the father of the boy who had blind faith in the Lord Jesus and believed that all things are possible. 4) The teacher’s tax. The Lord Jesus uses the tax situation from Capernaum to teach His disciples that God the Father is the King of the earth (See: Matthew 5:35, Isaiah 66:1, Psalm 24:1-2).

17 ¹ And after six days **Jesus** takes with **Him** Peter, and James, and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain by themselves.

Comments 17:1. These three disciples have been called up here for a reason; not that they are special, but each one has a duty in a different way from the others, and these ones needed to see the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus.

² And **He** was transfigured before them; and **His** face shone as the sun, and **His** outer garments became white as the light.

Comments 17:2. This transfiguration was the transfiguration of the human body to show the heavenly body of the Lord Jesus, the body that only heavenly beings have. Imagine two bodies overlapped as one, the human body and the heavenly body within; no one else on earth can have this. The Bible tells us that there are two kinds of bodies: the earthly body, made from the dust of the ground, and the heavenly body, made of substance beyond human knowledge and understanding. The heavenly body of the Lord Jesus cannot be touched by human flesh; you can see it, but you can’t touch it because it has too much power for the human flesh to touch. The heavenly body of the Lord Jesus was with the Father until this point of the transfiguration, and just for a short time, the Lord Jesus’ heavenly body came to overshadow the human body and then returned back to the Father. It is important to note that the human body of the Lord Jesus was not changed or transformed in any way during this transfiguration because of the cross. The Lord Jesus has to be completely (one hundred percent) human from birth until the cross in order to fulfill His mission on earth. The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus was by the will of the Father to show to the disciples; it is a mercy from the Father for the disciples’ sake. This transfiguration was the Father’s will for humans that they would see the heavenly body of the Lord Jesus and believe.

³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with **Him**.

Comments 17:3. In the Bible, we see that Moses was the friend of God and Elijah was the servant of God. These two were chosen by God the Father to meet with the Lord Jesus; each one has a specialty in a different way. The Bible doesn’t tell us what they talked about, and we should not speculate but understand that it is not the Father’s will for us to know the nature of the meeting.

⁴ And Peter answering, said to **Jesus, Lord**, it is good for us to be here; if **Thou will**, I will make here three tents; one for **Thee**, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Comments 17:4. This verse shows the character of Peter; he loved the Lord and always wanted to please the Lord. Peter wanted to do what he could to please the Lord, and that is one of the reasons the Lord chose him.

⁵ While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a **Voice** out of the cloud, saying, This is **My Beloved Son**, in whom **I** am well pleased; **listen to Him!**

Comments 17:5. "... behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them." It is clear from the Bible that no one has seen the Father. This passage is another proof of this fact; even the disciples have not seen the Father; they only heard His voice coming from the bright cloud.

⁶ And **having** heard it, the disciples fell on their face, and were **extremely terrified**.

⁷ And **Jesus having come**, and **having** touched them, **He** said, Arise, and be not afraid.

Comments 17:6-7. In these verses, we notice that the voice of the Father has power that terrifies the disciples. Even the disciples who were close to the Lord had fear; imagine among other humans how much more fear would be if they heard the voice of the Father from the heavens. There is fear at His appearance, which is why the Father never makes Himself known to humans; however, the Father does not want us to have this type of fear; instead, He wants us to glorify Him.

⁸ And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, **except Jesus Himself alone**.

⁹ And as they were coming down from the mountain, **Jesus** commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no **one**, until the **Son of Man** be risen from the dead.

Comments 17:8-9. "And lifting up ... tell the vision to no one ..." It was a vision for the disciples to see Moses and Elijah; these two cannot physically come down at this time. Moses and Elijah, in this context, had no substance on them, and when you see something that has no substance, it is a vision. These two cannot come in substance; it was just a vision for the disciples' eyes. However, the Lord Jesus had a conversation with them, but there was no physical contact. Between the Lord Jesus and the disciples, it is not the same; the disciples see only a vision, but for the Lord Jesus, time and space have no meaning, so the Lord Jesus talked directly with Moses and Elijah while the disciples saw in the vision. Nevertheless, the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus is not a vision; it is real (See comments on verse 2), and it is important to believe it is real.

Q: What did it mean for the disciples to see the Lord Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah? **A:** The purpose of this vision and the transfiguration is to make sure that the disciples know who the Lord Jesus is and that He is above all, including Moses and Elijah, who were important Old Testament people.

¹⁰ And the disciples asked **Him**, saying, Why then **do** the scribes say that Elijah **it behooves** to come first?

Comments 17:10. All the disciples have been taught since a young age in the synagogue by the Scribes and Pharisees; they were taught the doctrines, the rules, and the knowledge of the traditions. Now, the Lord Jesus comes and teaches them the true rules of the Lord that contradict many teachings from their traditions. The vision creates confusion in their knowledge since Moses and Elijah come to glorify the Lord Jesus. How will the people take this? They have been taught all their life who is above who, and now, in this vision, we have Moses and Elijah who come to pay respect to the Lord Jesus; this makes them question who the Lord Jesus is. People can't accept this since these two had high levels based on the teachings they received, and that is why the Lord advised them to tell the vision to no one until after His resurrection.

¹¹ And **answering, He** said, Elijah indeed **comes**, and **will** restore all things;

¹² **however, I** say to you that Elijah **has** come already, and they knew him not but did **to** him whatever they **desired**. **In this way**, the **Son of Man** also is **about to** suffer from them.

¹³ Then understood the disciples that **He spoke to them about** John the Baptist.

Comments 17:11-13. In these verses, the Lord refers to the humbleness in men. Humbleness to the point of accepting their sins and asking for forgiveness. Obey the Law and listen to the voice of the Lord; most people have ignored the voice of the Lord.

¹⁴ And they **having come** to the multitude, came to **Him** a man, kneeling to **Him**,

Comments 17:14. This is an example that clearly shows blind faith; faith by hearing took over this man. Even though he saw that the Lord Jesus' disciples failed his faith, his faith in the Lord Jesus was greater than the failure of His disciples. For this faith, the Lord Jesus healed his son.

¹⁵ and saying, **Lord**, have mercy on my son, for he is epileptic, and suffers grievously; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.

¹⁶ And I brought him to **Thy** disciples, and they could not cure him.

Comments 17:15-16. The man describes the boy's sickness but notice his faith and the words he uses: "Have mercy on my son." With a great need for help, this man is willing to humble himself and come and beg for mercy from the Lord Jesus, not asking, but begging. The mercy of the Lord is granted upon the faith you have. If you have faith, the mercy from the Lord will be granted.

The healing of this boy also has a hidden meaning. The world itself is like this boy; it has sickness and is set for punishment and cleansing through fire (See 2 Peter 3:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). But the Lord's mercy gives a chance to all people to repent through the baptism of water and come at the foot of the cross. The Lord's mercy and help are waiting; come! As the Lord healed this boy, in the same way, He can heal and save everyone from falling into the destructive fire that will come upon the world.

¹⁷ Now answering, **Jesus** said, O faithless and perverted generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I hold up with you? Bring him here to **Me**.

Comments 17:17. This rebuke is directed at the disciples. Although they had been with the Lord Jesus, what they had seen and heard did not stay with them.

¹⁸ And **Jesus** rebuked him; and the demon went out from him, and the boy was cured from that hour.

Comments 17:18. This verse declares the Lord Jesus' authority over the unseen world, for the unseen world is under His feet; by His command, all things will obey.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to **Jesus** in private, saying, Why were we not able to cast it out?

Comments 17:19. This verse shows that the common failure in humans is doubt and putting themselves down before doing anything. But, before you do something, believe that all things are possible under the name of the Lord Jesus. By faith, it is not you who does it, but the Lord Himself.

²⁰ And **He** says to them, Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Remove away from here to there; and it will remove; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Comments 17:20. This verse is used for encouragement; all humans have small faith, and this verse encourages those who have small faith but believe in the Lord Jesus. Faith starts with the question, "Do you believe there is a God?" Some may not believe everything in the Bible, but inside of them, they believe that there is a God. The Lord does not give to all to have the same way of believing; it is a gift to have faith. Faith is not measurable by quantity; it is a gift, and it is by knowing in the heart. Size and quantity are not the same and don't measure the same way. The mustard seed in this verse represents the size of faith, not quantity. We cannot say we have a pound of faith, but we can say we have little or big faith.

²¹ However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

Comments 17:21. It is believed that this verse was part of the original manuscript written by Matthew. The verse is important for all believers because prayer and fasting symbolize faith and humbling yourself before the Lord. People try to omit this way, but true believers should recognize the importance of humbling through actions and in your heart. The heart must be humbled; humbling through actions alone for people to see is not enough.

²² Now, while they stayed in Galilee, **Jesus** said to them, The **Son of Man** is about to be betrayed into the hands of people;

²³ and they will kill **Him**, and the third day **He** will be raised up. And they were extremely grieved.

Comments 17:22-23. The Lord often reminds the disciples about His death and resurrection because He knows that their faith will be tested after His departure, and He wants to prepare them for the things to come.

²⁴ And they having come to Capernaum, those receiving the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Does not Your **Teacher** fulfill the half-shekel?

Comments 17:24. As they entered this town, the disciples called the Lord Jesus a Teacher. The town had its own rule: a teacher tax was to be imposed, so they asked the Lord Jesus to pay a teacher's tax. It is believed that this

was not at all a temple tax but a city tax set by the rulers of that place. This tax is not a tax that was used for taking care of the temple of the Lord, but it is an extra tax imposed on people who would teach and is collected for the rulers of that place. It is a tax by force, not by the will of the people. This system was for people, not for God; the Lord does not take by force but by the willingness of the person to give. In those days and similarly in these days, many people used the name of the Lord to make a profit for themselves. The temple tax itself, when you enter the temple, there will be a box in the front (See 2 Kings 12:4-16; Mark 12:41-42), and as people walk in, the Lord puts in the people's hearts whom and how much to drop in the box. The purpose of the box system was so that no one could boast about how much they put in. Also, it is to be noted that the temple of the Lord is in Jerusalem, not in Capernaum.

²⁵ He says, Yes. And having come into the house, **Jesus** spoke first to him, saying, What do you think, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they take toll or tribute? From their sons, or from strangers?

Comments 17:25. The answer "Yes" here means that Peter says that the Lord Jesus is not paying the tax. In Simon's eyes, the Lord Jesus does not need to pay the tax regardless of whether He accepts their rules or not; the Lord Jesus is a Holy Teacher and does not need to pay human taxes.

²⁶ And when he said, From strangers, **Jesus** said to him, Therefore the sons are free.

²⁷ However, in order that **We** might not cause them to stumble, having gone to the sea, cast a fishhook, and take up the first fish coming up; and having opened its mouth, you will find a shekel; take that, give it to them for **Me** and you.

Comments 17:25-27. The Lord wants to point out to the disciples that you cannot lie. According to the Bible, Peter lied since the Lord Jesus was prepared to pay the tax; he should consult the Lord Jesus before he gave the answer. Lying is a human way to get out of a confrontation, but the Lord doesn't want His children to get out of trouble by lying. So, the Lord paid the tax for Himself and Peter. Peter will be part of teaching, people will come for Peter, and Peter will go to the Lord Jesus. Peter acted as a middleman for referring information to people, so he was also considered a teacher. Humans make many rules, then and now, and enforce them on people. "having gone to the sea, cast a fishhook ..." Here, we need to keep in mind that the Lord Jesus owns the sea and the fish in it. The fish belongs to the Lord, not that the fish gives money to the Lord. The fish could die if it swallows the money. The Lord did not take the money from the fish, nor did the fish give the money to the Lord. This action in this verse shows the mercy of the Lord upon the fish.

Life and Faith Applications. 1) We must believe that the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus was real. His human body was not transformed in any way during the transfiguration because of the cross. 2) The death and the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the third day are significant since the Lord has talked about these numerous times with the disciples. 3) With just a little faith in the Lord Jesus, all things are possible; pray with a joyful heart and fast with a humble spirit to come to meet the Lord and ask for help. 4) Do not lie to get out of a situation, but pray before you give an answer or engage in an activity. 5) Try not to offend people, try to keep peace, and at the same time, be truthful towards the Lord.