



Chapter 17

Transfiguration

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McGee Introduction: As we noted at the conclusion of chapter 16, the final verse belongs to this chapter because it explains what our Lord meant when He made this statement:

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom [Matt. 16:28].

This was fulfilled for the apostles in the Transfiguration of Jesus. The Transfiguration is that picture of the Son of man coming in His kingdom. Someone may say, “Can you be sure that the Lord Jesus had reference to His coming Transfiguration?” Well, Simon Peter was one of the apostles who was present at the Transfiguration, and in his second epistle he wrote of that experience: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount” (2 Pet. 1:16–18). How was Jesus’ statement fulfilled for the apostles in that day? When the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration with three of His disciples present, this statement was fulfilled. The Transfiguration was a miniature picture of the kingdom, and Simon Peter confirmed this for us.

The other gospels give the account of the Transfiguration, with the exception of the Gospel of John. This leads me to say something that may startle you. The Transfiguration does not prove, nor set forth, the *deity* of Christ. It sets forth the *humanity* of Christ. The Gospel of John emphasizes the deity of Christ and therefore omits the account of the Transfiguration, although the other three Gospels record it.

The Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in my judgment, not only the proof of His humanity but the *hope* of humanity. The Man whom you see glorified there, transfigured, is the kind of person that you, my friend, will be someday if you are a child of God. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). The glorious prospect of being like Christ is before every man.

The Lord Jesus Christ was glorified before His death and resurrection, and this is the picture which is given to us here. You will find that the Gospel of Luke presents details which neither Matthew nor Mark include, because Dr. Luke is the one who sets forth the perfect humanity of Jesus.¹

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:94). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 17:1

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

[**after six days**] Mark 9:2, has the same number; but Luke says, Luke 9:28, after eight days. The reason of this difference seems to be the following: Matthew and Mark reckon the days from that mentioned in the preceding chapter, to that mentioned in this; Luke includes both days, as well as the six intermediate: hence, the one makes eight, the other six, without any contradiction.

Matthew mentions the six days that intervened between the day of the conversation and the transfiguration. Luke *includes* both those days, and thus reckons eight. Besides, Luke does not pretend to fix the precise time. In the Greek it is "*about* eight days after."

[**Peter, James and John**] The inner circle. Takes them aside from the rest, as on other occasions (Matthew 26:37; Mark 5:37).

[**high mountain**] Tradition says it was Tabor, but probably not because it was inhabited at that time. Most scholars suspect it might be Mount Hermon, but we don't know for sure.²

The "high mountain" where the transfiguration took place is not named. Cyril of Jerusalem and Jerome hold that Tabor, southwest of the Sea of Galilee, was the location. More recently, one of the spurs of Mount Hermon, within 14 miles of Caesarea Philippi, has been suggested. Although Luke has "eight days," he is not in disagreement with Matthew and Mark, who count only the "six" intervening days between the confession at Caesarea (one day) and the transfiguration (one day). Luke includes these two days in his account.³

ESV: After six days probably indicates that they are still in Caesarea Philippi. **Peter and James, and John.** The inner circle of disciples (cf. [26:37](#)). **high mountain.** Church tradition identifies this as Mount Tabor, about 12 miles (19 km) from the Sea of Galilee, but most scholars favor Mount Hermon, outside of Galilee and rising 9,166 feet (2,794 m) above sea level.⁴

Yashanet.com: There is a "sod" (hidden) level understanding to this verse. The "going up" to a high mountain can also be understood as a heightened level of spiritual awareness (i.e., insight into the Kingdom), especially in light of what occurs over the next few verses.

Spurgeon: OUR KING TRANSFIGURED IN GLORY

Were these "six days," a week's quiet interval, in which our Lord prepared

² Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

³ Believer's Study Bible

⁴ ESV Study Bible

himself for the singular transaction upon the "mountain apart"? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favored to see what none else in all the world might behold. Doubtless our Lord had reasons for his choice, as he has for every choice he makes; but he does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the garden; perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second.

The name of the "high mountain" can never be known; for those who knew the locality have left no information. Tabor, if you please; Hermon, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lone and lofty hill. While in prayer, the splendor of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun; and all his dress, like clouds irradiated by that sun became white as the light itself "He was transfigured before them": he alone was the center of what they saw. It was a marvelous unveiling of the hidden nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of John: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory."

The transfiguration occurred but once: special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in heaven; but we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.⁵

Matthew 17:2

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

[transfigured] Three accounts of this event; here and also in Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36. Luke mentions that this happens while He is praying, His raiment became white and effulgent, it glowed. Matthew notes that He was bright as the Sun (Ps 19:5,6). "Transfigured": appears 2x more: Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18 ("Transformed").

[transfigured] Greek: metamorphoo (GSN-3339), to change the form. Only here and in Mark 9:2; Romans 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18. Compare the transfiguration of Moses (Exodus 34:29-35) and of Stephen (Acts 6:15).

[was transfigured] That fullness of the Godhead, which dwelt bodily in Christ, now shone forth through the human nature, and manifested to his disciples not only that Divinity which Peter had before confessed, Matthew 16:16, but also the glorious resurrection body, in which they should exist in the presence of God to eternity.⁶

ESV: was transfigured. Jesus' physical transformation was a reminder of the glory he had before he became man (John 1:14; 17:5; Phil. 2:6-7) and a preview of his future exaltation (2 Pet. 1:16-18; Rev. 1:16).

It does not denote the change of the substance of a thing, but simply of its appearance. It puts on a new aspect. What this change was, we are expressly told:

⁵ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary

(1.) His face shone as the sun; that is, with a peculiar brightness. A similar appearance is described respecting Moses when he came down from the mount, Exodus 34:29,30. See also Hebrews 1:3, where Christ is called the brightness of the glory of God; in the original, the *splendour*, or *shining*, like the brightness of the sun.

(2.) The second change was that of his garments. They were white as the light. Mark says, white as snow, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them. The word "fuller" means, commonly, one who dresses cloth, or *fulls* it, so as to make it more thick and strong. Here it means one who *bleaches* cloth, or makes it white; one who cleanses garments, when by wearing they become soiled. Among the Greeks, that was a distinct trade. Luke says, white *and* glistening; that is, resplendent, shining, or a very bright white. There is no evidence here that what is commonly said of him is true, that his *body* was so changed as to show what his glorified body is. His body, so far as the sacred writers inform us, underwent no change. All this splendour and glory was a change *in appearance* only. The Scriptures should be taken just as they are, without any attempt to affix a meaning to them which the sacred writers did not intend.⁷

McGee: "His face did shine as the sun." The light shone from within Him rather than upon Him from the outside like a spotlight. At this point let me make the suggestion that perhaps it was this sort of thing that clothed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before their fall. After they sinned, they discovered that they were naked. The implication is that they were not naked before, which leads me to believe that they were clothed with this type of light. And it was the *humanity* of Jesus that was transfigured. The Transfiguration sets forth His perfect humanity.

The word *transfigured* is a very interesting word. It is the word *metamorphosis*, which means "a change of form or structure." The little woolly caterpillar will someday become a beautiful butterfly by the process of metamorphosis. This body that I have today, filled with infirmity and cancer, will someday be transfigured, and even those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be changed, transfigured. This is the hope of humanity.⁸

Matthew 17:3

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

[Moses] Moses had been dead over 1,700 years and his body was then in corruption (Deut. 34; Jude 1:9). He evidently was brought up from paradise below the earth (notes, Luke 16:21-31). This is an example of full consciousness and of a soul wearing clothes between death and resurrection (Rev. 6:9-11; Hebrews 12:23; Psalm 16:10). Christ had not yet become the firstfruits of all that had died, so Moses could not have had a resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

[Elias] Elijah, not yet dead, had then been living in heaven in his earthly body for nearly 1000 years (2 Kings 2; Malachi 4:5-6; Zech. 4:11-14; Rev. 11:3-11).

⁷ Barnes' Notes

⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:95). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Why Moses and Elijah?

Luke 9:27. What we are seeing is not only the glory of Jesus Christ, but also a staff meeting. They are discussing the redemption, specifically His departure from Jerusalem.

Two suggestions: These two men characterize two different things:

The Law and The Prophets. The Law came by Moses, the Prophet Elijah was an uniquely empowered prophet. Other prophets were powerful in their writings but, Elijah called down fire from heaven, shut the rain off for 3 ½ years! Mentioned by our Lord (Luke 4:25) and his brother James (Jas 5:17).

Another distinction between them that is provocative—Moses died! In Moses we can typify the dead in Christ that are saved. Elijah did not die, he was translated. So he can typify those that are at the throne without having tasted death (the “rapture,” those that were translated without death).⁹

[Moses and Elias] Elijah came from heaven in the same body which he had upon earth, for he was translated, and did not see death, 2 Kings 2:11. And the body of Moses was probably raised again, as a pledge of the resurrection; and as Christ is to come to judge the quick and the dead, for we shall not all die, but all shall be changed, 1 Corinthians 15:51, he probably gave the full representation of this in the person of Moses, who died, and was thus raised to life, (or appeared now as he shall appear when raised from the dead in the last day), and in the person of Elijah, who never tasted death. Both their bodies exhibit the same appearance, to show that the bodies of glorified saints are the same, whether the person had been translated, or whether he had died. It was a constant and prevalent tradition among the Jews, that both Moses and Elijah should appear in the times of the Messiah, and to this very tradition the disciples refer, Matthew 17:10.

We may conceive that the law in the person of Moses, the great Jewish legislator, and the prophets in the person of Elijah, the chief of the prophets, came now to do homage to Jesus Christ, and to render up their authority into his hands; as he was the END of the law, and the grand subject of the predictions of the prophets. This appears more particularly from what St. Luke says, Luke 9:31, that Moses and Elijah conversed with our Lord on his death, which he was about to accomplish, (πληρουν to fulfill), because in it, all the rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the law, as well as the predictions of the prophets, were fulfilled.¹⁰

Moses and Elijah were the two greatest prophets in the Old Testament. Moses represents the law, or the old covenant. He wrote the Pentateuch, and he predicted the coming of a great prophet (Deut. 18:15-19). Elijah represents the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6). Moses’ and Elijah’s presence with Jesus confirmed Jesus’ Messianic mission—to fulfill God’s law and the words of God’s prophets. Just as God’s voice in the cloud over Mount Sinai gave authority to his law (Exodus 19:9), God’s voice at the transfiguration gave authority to Jesus’ words.

⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

¹⁰ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

ESV: The appearance of **Moses and Elijah** represents the Law and the Prophets, which witness to Jesus as the Messiah, the one who fulfills the OT (cf. 5:17). Elijah was considered the prophetic forerunner of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5–6; cf. Matt. 3:1–3; 11:7–10).

McGee: Moses was the representative of the Law, and Elijah was the representative of the prophets. Moses had died, and Elijah had departed from this world in a chariot of fire. Luke tells us they were discussing Jesus' decease in Jerusalem—"And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30–31). The Law and the prophets bore testimony to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹¹

Yashanet.com: Peter clearly views this as a vision of the Kingdom of God. His desire to build "tabernacles" (*succot*) is tied to the Feast of Succot. This is the last of the Feasts of the Lord, and the one directly associated with the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Spurgeon: Thus the Law and the Prophets, "Moses and Elias", communed with our Lord, "talking with him"; and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus: they find it heaven to be where they can talk with him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to his decease, by which a new economy I would be ushered in. After condescending so long to his ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two master-minds like those of Moses and Elijah. What a sight for the apostles, this glorious trio! They "appeared unto them", but they "talked with him": the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus.

Matthew 17:4

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

[**tabernacles**] Greek: skene (GSN-4633), shade, booth, tabernacle (Matthew 16:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33; Acts 7:43-44).

Let us make here three tabernacles. A tabernacle is a tent. It was made commonly by fixing posts into the ground, and stretching on them cloth, fastened by cords. Isaiah 33:20. In some instances, they were made of branches of trees;-a temporary shelter from the sun and rain, not a permanent dwelling. Peter was rejoiced at the vision, and desirous of continuing it. He proposed, therefore, that they should prolong this interview, and dwell there. Mark adds, that they knew not what they said in proposing this. They were

¹¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:95). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

frightened, amazed, and rejoiced; and, in the ecstasy of the moment, they proposed to remain there.

Peter wanted to build three shelters for these three great men to stay to show how the Feast of Tabernacles was fulfilled in the coming of God's kingdom. Peter had the right idea about Christ, but his timing was wrong. Peter wanted to act, but this was a time for worship and adoration. He wanted to capture the moment, but he was supposed to learn and move on.

McGee: Simon Peter could never resist an opportunity to make a speech. Every occasion was an auspicious one for him. He generally got to his feet to say something, and usually it was to say the wrong thing—that is, until the Day of Pentecost. But here it is the wrong thing; he should have kept quiet. God Himself rebukes him, as we shall see, because he was attempting to place Moses and Elijah on the same plane with the Lord Jesus. Luke offers the explanation for this indiscretion of Peter's by stating, "... not knowing what he said" (Luke 9:33). And there are a lot of folk who talk without knowing what they are saying! Peter was rebuked. He should have kept still.¹²

Spurgeon: The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speak: "Then answered Peter." That which is uppermost comes out: "Lord!, it is good for us to be here." Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have been? Because it was so good, he would fain stay in this beatific state, and get still more good from it. But he has not lost his reverence, and therefore he would have the great ones sheltered suitably. He submits the proposal to Jesus: "If thou wilt." He offers that, with his brethren, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones: "Let us make here three tabernacles." He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John; but he says, "One for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child. He wanders a little; yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, and Elias, and Jesus: what company! But yet how unpractical is Peter! How selfish the one thought, "It is good for us!" What was to be done for the rest of the twelve, and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The like might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

Matthew 17:5

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

[bright cloud] The Shekinah Glory. The cloud that followed them by day and the pillar of fire at night in the wilderness wanderings. Seen on Mount Sinai. It is the presence of

¹²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:95). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

the glory of God that inhabits the Holy of Holies of the Temple. This cloud that overshadows Him here, ultimately takes Him up in the ascension (Acts 1:9).

[voice] is an authentication. Very reminiscent of the Baptism. Here it sets Peter straight, as while there are three personages here on the hill, they are by no means equal. What does it all mean? See 2 Pet 1:16-20. Peter here alerts you to the fact that there is something about Matt 17 that has not only to do with the glory of Jesus Christ, but also His Second Coming.

(2 Peter 1:16-21) ¹⁶*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ¹⁸And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

¹⁹*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: ²⁰Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

[bright cloud overshadowed them] A visible evidence of God's presence (Exodus 13:21-22; Exodus 14:19-24; Exodus 16:10; Exodus 19:9,16; Exodus 24:15-18; Exodus 34:5).

[a voice out of the cloud, which said ...] God's voice has been heard many times in Scripture.

A bright cloud overshadowed them. The word *overshadow* here means, rather, *to be diffused* or *spread* over them. It does not mean that it made *a shade*. A cloud was a symbol of the Divine Presence. Thus God went before the Israelites in a cloudy pillar—dark by day, and bright by night, (Exodus 14:19,20) he appeared on Mount Sinai in a cloud bright by fire, (Exodus 24:15-17) and a cloud, the symbol of the Divine Presence—called the *Shechinah*—dwelt continually in the Most Holy Place in the temple, 1 Kings 8:10,11, Ezekiel 1:4, 10:4. When, therefore, the disciples saw this cloud, they were prepared to hear the word of the Lord.

This is my beloved Son. This was the voice of God. This was the second time that, in a remarkable manner, he had declared this. See Matthew 3:17. This was spoken to confirm the disciples; to declare their duty to hear Christ rather than any other, and to honour him more than Moses and Elijah; and to strengthen their faith in *him* when they should go forth to preach the gospel, after he was shamefully put to death. After this, it was impossible for them to doubt that he was truly the Son of God. See 2 Peter 1:17,18.

Jesus is more than just a great leader, a good example, a good influence, or a great prophet. He is the Son of God. When you understand this profound truth, the only adequate response is worship. When you have a correct understanding of Christ, you will obey him.

McGee: This is God the Father's testimony to Jesus, the Son. Jesus is the final authority in matters of revelation. What Moses, Elijah and the prophets had to say was wonderful. The writer to the Hebrews says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ..." (Heb. 1:1-2). The *Son* is the One who came to earth as the final revelation of God to man.

Now notice this great statement by the Father—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Have you ever heard a voice out of heaven commending you and saying that God was well pleased with you? Well, He has never said that to me either. In fact, He has never said it to anyone but this One. The Lord Jesus is the only One who ever has been well pleasing to God. And you and I well never get into God's presence until we are *in* Christ by faith. When we receive Christ as our Savior, then we are placed in the body of believers. Christ is the only One in whom God has been pleased, and we are accepted in the Beloved.¹³

ESV: bright cloud. Reminiscent of the cloud of God's presence and glory that appeared at various times in the OT (e.g., Ex. 13:21-22; 34:5-7; 1 Kings 8:10-13). **voice.** God the Father's public endorsement of Jesus his **beloved Son** echoes that given at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:17). Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, superior to Moses and Elijah, so the disciples must **listen to him** in order to understand his messianic purpose.

Yashanet.com: The cloud is associated with the *Shekinah* - God's visible presence on earth. (Much of Jewish mystical literature surrounding the Kingdom is concerned with the Shekinah.) The voice from heaven is called the *Bat-kol*. (Literally, "daughter of the voice.") The *Shekinah*, and the *Bat-kol* are feminine in the Hebrew - as is the *Ruach haKodesh*, the "Holy Spirit."

The "feminine aspect" of God is one ignored, if not frowned upon, in Christianity. Again, this is partly due to pagan doctrine of "the mother of God" (as found in Catholicism) and a lack of understanding of the deeper meaning of the Hebrew scriptures (as is lacking in both Catholicism and Protestantism).

God is described as being both masculine and feminine at the time of the creation:

Genesis 1:27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

Interestingly, even Paul offers a feminine aspect to the coming Kingdom:

Galatians 4:26 - *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

¹³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:95). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Spurgeon: "While he yet spake." Such wild talk might well be interrupted. What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. "A bright cloud overshadowed them." It was bright, and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it, and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience; yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness, and "a voice out of the cloud"? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with his favored ones.

The voice was clear and distinct. First came the divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, "This is my beloved Son," and the Father's declaration of delight in him, — "in whom I am well pleased." What happiness for us that Jehovah is well pleased in Christ, and with all who are in him! Then followed the consequent divine requirement, "Hear ye him." It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest.

The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of his glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the luster of light could communicate through the eye. The audible part of the transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible; in fact, it would seem, from the next verse, to have been more so.

Matthew 17:6

And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

[fell on their face, and were sore afraid] Seems to be a normal thing with men who have met God (Job 42:5-6; Isaiah 6; Daniel 8:18; Daniel 10:5-11; Acts 9:4; Rev. 1:17).

They fell on their face. They entered into the cloud; or the cloud enveloped them, Luke 9:34. They were, therefore, afraid. They were awed at the presence of God; and their fears were removed only by the voice of their beloved Master. No man can see God and live. And it is only the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Christ, (see 2 Corinthians 4:6) that mortals can bear.

ESV: terrified. Fear was a common experience of people in the OT who witnessed the awesome reality of God's presence (e.g., Ex. 19:16; Deut. 5:5).

Spurgeon: Yes, the voice overcame them. Deeper impression was produced by the words of the Lord than by the blinding light. "When the disciples hear it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid." They were in the immediate presence of God, and listening to the Father's voice: well might they lie prostrate and tremble. Too clear a manifestation of God, even though it related to Jesus, would rather overpower than empower us. The three disciples said no more about building tabernacles, but as one man, "They fell on their face." Awe is the end of talk: in this case it looked as if it were the end of consciousness; but this was only a temporary swoon, from which they would recover, and be all the more joyous.

Matthew 17:7

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, *Arise, and be not afraid.*

Spurgeon: Jesus had seemed to go away from them, lost in a cloud of brightness; but now he "came and touched them." His communings with pure spirits did not make him disdain the touch of feeble flesh. Oh, the sweet comfort of that gentle touch! It aroused, consoled, and strengthened his amazed and trembling disciples. The touch of the manhood is more reassuring to poor flesh and blood than the blaze of the Godhead. The voice from heaven casts down; but the word from Jesus is, "Arise." The Father's voice made them sore afraid, but Jesus says, "Be not afraid." Glorious God, how much we bless thee for the Mediator!

Matthew 17:8

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

McGee: Do you want a good motto for your life? I suggest these two words: *Jesus only*. He is the One who is the authority. I hope you will mark those two words, *Jesus only*, in your Bible. They provide a good motto for all of us.¹⁴

Spurgeon: Closed were their eyes, because of "the too transporting light"; and they dared not open them till they felt the touch of Jesus. Then they lifted up their eyes. What did they see?

Moses, and Elias, and the exceeding brightness had all gone, and they had come back to the common-places of their life with Jesus. "They saw no man," but they had lost nothing, since Jesus remained. They had gained by the vanishing of the shining ones, since they could see Jesus all the better, and their attention was not divided. The vision of his transfiguration had blinded them, had stupefied them; but to see "Jesus only" was to come back to practical life, and to have the best of all sights still left to them. Oh, that we also may have the eye of our mind so fixed on the Lord as our one object, that HE may fill the whole field of our vision, and we may see Jesus only!

Matthew 17:9

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, *Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

[from] Greek: ek (GSN-1537), out from or from among. Always used of Christ and saints as being resurrected out from among the dead. All the righteous will be raised from among the wicked dead before the Millennium. The wicked will remain dead until the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:4-6,11-15). Note the many times resurrection (out) from among the dead is mentioned (Matthew 17:9; Mark 6:14,16; Mark 9:9-10;

¹⁴McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:96). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Mark 12:25; Luke 9:7; Luke 16:31; Luke 20:35; Luke 24:46; John 2:22; John 12:1,9,17; John 20:9; John 21:14; Acts 3:15; Acts 4:2,10; Acts 10:41; Acts 13:30,34; Acts 17:3,31; Romans 4:24; Romans 6:4,9,13; Romans 7:4; Romans 8:11; Romans 10:7,9; Romans 11:15; 1 Cor. 15:12,20; Galatians 1:1; Ephes. 1:20; Ephes. 5:14; Col. 1:18; Col. 2:12; 1 Thes. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:8; Hebrews 11:19; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:3,21). The first resurrection is the one "out from among the dead," and the second resurrection is that of all the rest of the dead (Rev. 20:4-6).

Tell the vision to no man. This vision was designed particularly to confirm them in the truth that he was the Messiah. While he was with them, it was unnecessary that they should relate what they had seen. When he was crucified, they would need this evidence that he was the Christ. Then they were to use it. There were three witnesses of it-as many as the law required; and the proof that he was the Messiah was clear. Besides, if they had told it then, it would have provoked the Jews and endangered his life. His time was not yet come.

Charged them. Gave them a commandment.

Mark adds, Mark 9:10 they kept this saying, questioning what the rising of the dead should mean. The Pharisees believed that the dead would rise; and there is no doubt that the disciples believed it. But their views were not clear. And, in particular, they did not understand what he meant by *his* rising from the dead. They do not appear to have understood, though he had told them Matthew 12:40 that he would rise after three days.¹⁵

Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone what they had seen until after his resurrection because Jesus knew that they didn't fully understand it and could not explain what they didn't understand. Their question (Matthew 17:10ff) revealed their misunderstandings. They knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but they had much more to learn about the significance of his death and resurrection.

McGee: Why wait until the Resurrection to tell it, and why should it be told at that time? Because it is part of the gospel story. It tells who Jesus is. He is the perfect Lamb of God. He has been tested for three years, and at this time He is on the way to the cross to die for the sins of the world. You see, God required a lamb without blemish, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who could die a substitutionary death for mankind, because He was sinless. In His perfect humanity He was transfigured. He is the *hope* of mankind.

The hope of mankind is not in science or education. Both of them are letting us down today. They have created Frankenstein monsters, and we don't know what to do with them. For example, they have invented a little gasoline buggy in Detroit, Michigan, that is giving us a lot of trouble by polluting the air and clogging all the highways. Science cannot solve the problem. Believe me, friend, the hope of the world just happens to be in a Person by the name of Jesus Christ. Be sure you know Him; He is your only hope.¹⁶

¹⁵ Barnes' Notes

¹⁶ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:96). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The Transfiguration confirmed Yeshua's "coming in his kingdom" (16:28) to these three *talmidim*, but without the more public confirmation which followed his resurrection (see 1C 15:5–6), the testimony would have been of little value in proving Yeshua's identity and would have raised more questions than it answered. Hence Yeshua advised closedmouthedness for the time being.¹⁷

The disciples would be prepared to interpret the significance of the transfiguration only after the resurrection. If any account of this episode were related to the public, it would only fan the fires of popular messianic expectations and hinder the redemptive purpose of the Suffering Son of Man, the Messiah who must die on a cross.

Spurgeon: What they had seen would confirm their own confidence, and remain a secret spring of delight to them; but as it would require great faith in others to believe it, they were to "tell the vision to no man." The transfiguration would be as hard to believe as the incarnation itself; and there could be no practical use in making demands upon a faith which scarcely existed. Until the greatest confirmation of all was given in our Lord's resurrection, the vision on the Holy Mount would be rather a tax upon faith than a support of it in the case of those who did not themselves personally see it, but only heard the apostle's report of it. It is wise not to overload testimony. There is a time for making known the higher truths; for out of season these may burden, rather than assist, inquiring minds. What a secret these men had to keep! They did keep it; but they never forgot it, nor ceased to feel its influence.

Now that the Son, of man is risen again from the dead, no doctrine needs to be kept back. In bringing life and immortality to light, our Lord has rent away the veil which had long concealed the higher mysteries of the gospel His coming out of the grave has set free all buried truth. It is idle, not to say sinful, to be silent about the deep things of God now that "the Lord is risen indeed." Yet some preachers we could name never mention election, the covenant, or final perseverance by the year together.

Matthew 17:10

And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

[disciples asked] The three of them (Matthew 17:1).

They are asking why the scribes look for Elijah coming (Mal 4:5). The Old Testament closes with a prophecy. Elijah was expected by the Jewish leadership to precede the Great and terrible Day of the Lord. John 1:19 the Jews asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah. Are you "that prophet"? Meaning Moses due to Deut 18.

¹⁷Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 17:9). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

[Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?] As the disciples saw that Elijah returned to heaven, knowing the tradition of the elders, and the prophecy on which the tradition was founded, Malachi 4:5, 6, Behold I send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come; and he shall turn the hearts, etc., it was natural enough for them to inquire what the meaning of the tradition, and the intention of the prophecy, were.¹⁸

The Torah-teachers say Eliyahu must come first. This teaching is based on Malachi 3:1 and 3:23–24(4:5–6), and it is kept alive in Judaism every Passover, at the Seder meal, when an extra place is set for *Eliyahu HaNavi* (“Elijah the prophet”), and the door is opened to welcome him, should he be there. Three points: (1) Yochanan the Immerser, “if you are willing to accept it,” was Eliyahu (11:10–14&N), (2) Eliyahu himself had in fact “come first” by appearing there on the mountain (v. 3), and (3) Eliyahu may yet appear before Yeshua’s second coming (see Rv 11:3–6&N).¹⁹

Spurgeon: One by one the difficulties of the disciples are stated to their Lord, and their solution is soon given. One of these concerned Elijah; and as he had been just now before them, they were led to mention it. "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" This is the report of men who have studied our Scriptures, that Elias comes before the Lord's appearing. No doubt it staggered their minds when they had it put in some such logical fashion as this,—

Messiah cannot come till Elijah has appeared;
Elijah has not appeared;
Therefore Jesus is not the Messiah.

Matthew 17:11

And Jesus answered and said unto them, *Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.*

Why then say the Scribes The disciples appear to have been satisfied now, that he was the Messiah. The *transfiguration* had taken away all their doubts. But they recollected that it was a common doctrine among the Jews that *Elijah* should appear before the Messiah came; and they did not then recollect that he had appeared. To this difficulty the word *then* refers. "We are satisfied that thou art the Christ. But Elijah is not yet come, as was expected. What, 'then,' is the meaning of the common opinions of our learned men, the scribes? Were they right or wrong in their expectation of Elijah?" Matthew 11:14. See also Mark 9:11-13.

Spurgeon: "Jesus answered": he has an answer for all questions, and we shall do well to bring our difficulties to him to hear his replies. Our Lord admits that Elias must come before the Messiah: "Elias truly shall first come"; but he asserts that the person intended by the prophecy "is come already" and that the evil ones "have done unto him whatsoever

¹⁸ Adam Clarke's Commentary

¹⁹ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 17:10). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

they listed." This cleared up the doubt at once. Then Jesus went on to say that what had been done to the true Elias would also be done to himself, the Messiah.

Jesus himself must die by a cruel death: "Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." How simple the explanation of the difficulty! How often has, it happened that we have been looking for that which has already come, or have been perplexed by a doctrine which, when it has been opened to us by the Holy Spirit, has proved full of instruction and comfort. Without divine teaching we drown in the shadows; but with it we swim the fathomless deeps.

Matthew 17:12

But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Jesus Christ changes idioms here and speaks parabolically. Jesus points out in v. 11 that Elijah's time is still yet future. But then He says that Elijah has come already, He means in type or in spirit.

[come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed] Referring to John the Baptist coming in the spirit and power of Elijah to do before His first coming what Elijah will do before the second coming (Matthew 17:13; Luke 1:17; Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1).

[knew him not] Or, They have not acknowledged him. That is, the Jewish rulers have not acknowledged him, did not receive him as the forerunner of the Messiah. But it appears that all the rest acknowledged him as such; and some, from the power and demonstration of his preaching, were inclined to think he was more, even the Messiah himself: see Luke 3:15.

They have done whatsoever they listed. The word *list* is an old English word, signifying to *choose*, to desire, to be inclined. See John 3:8. It means here, that they had done to John as they pleased; i.e., they had put him to death, Matthew 14:10.

Mark adds, Mark 9:12, that Jesus told them that it was written of the Son of man that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. This was written of him particularly in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. To be set at nought, is to be esteemed as worthless, or as nothing; to be cast out and despised. No prophecy was ever more strikingly fulfilled. See Luke 23:11.

McGee: This raises a question in the minds of a great many folk regarding John the Baptist. Was he really Elijah? We have covered the same problem in Matthew 11. What our Lord is doing in this chapter is trying to forestall the argument that Jesus had to die on the cross because John the Baptist was not Elijah—and Elijah has to come before Christ returns to establish His kingdom. Our Lord is saying that if they would receive

Him as King, John would be Elijah. Don't ask me how that could be—I am only telling you what the Scriptures teach.

“Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them”—this is the second time the Lord Jesus mentions His approaching crucifixion.²⁰

Yashanet.com: Yeshua of course is referring to John the Baptist, whom he says "was Elijah." Critics often point to this as a "contradiction." Some go as far to say that this shows that Scripture teaches reincarnation.

However the concept of multiple appearance of Elijah is not foreign to Judaism, nor is the idea of someone being "in the spirit" of a great prophet, nor is the concept of Elijah coming more than once:

Seder 'Olam Rabba, ch. 17 - *In the second year of (King) Ahazia, Elijah was hidden, and he will not be seen again until King Messiah comes. And then he will be seen but will be hidden a second time, and seen again only when Gog and Magog come.*

Matthew 17:13

Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Matthew 17:14

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

[they were come to the multitude] Four—Christ, Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:1,10)—came down from the mountain the next day after the transfiguration (Luke 9:37).

[kneeling down to him] Ancients always fell down and touched the knees of the person whose kindness was asked (Exodus 9:29).

[when they were come to the multitude] It appears that a congregation had been collected during our Lord's stay on the mount: how great must have been the desire of these people to hear the words of Christ! The assembly is self-collected, and no delay on the preacher's side discourages them—they continue to wait for him. In the present day how rare is this zeal! How few by the most pathetic invitation can be brought together, even at the most convenient times, to hear the same doctrines, and to get their souls healed by the same wonder-working Christ!

Kneeling down to him—Or falling at his knees, γονυπετων. The ancients consecrated the EAR to memory; the FOREHEAD to genius; the RIGHT HAND to faith; and the KNEES to mercy: hence those who entreated favor fell at and touched the knees of the

²⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:96). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

person whose kindness they supplicated. See Wakefield's Commentary; and see the note on Exodus 9:29; where the subject is largely explained.²¹

Matthew 17:15

Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

[lunatick] Greek: *seleniazomai* (GSN-4583), moonstruck. The epilepsy was thought to have been caused by the moon because the attacks were worse at the change and full of the moon. It was really caused by a demon which attacked during this time so as to make others think the moon was the cause (Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:17; Luke 9:38).

[oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water] The demon sought to kill the boy by this means so that his life was in continual danger, causing the parents much concern.

My son—is lunatic— One who was most affected with this disorder at the change and full of the moon. See on Matthew 4:24 (note). But this lunacy was occasioned by a demon, see Matthew 17:18, and Mark 9:17; Luke 9:38. In this case, the devil intended to hide himself under the appearance of a natural disorder, that no supernatural means might be resorted to for his expulsion. See a remarkable account on Luke 9:39.

My son. This was an only son, (Luke.) He was possessed with a devil. This calamity was attended with the following symptoms:-he was *lunatic*, Matthew 4:24; he was sore vexed, i.e., he suffered greatly, or was greatly afflicted; he fell often suddenly in the manner of persons having epileptic fits; he was dumb, that is, he was dumb except when the fit was *coming on him*; for Luke says, that when the spirit took him, he cried suddenly out; he foamed and gnashed with his teeth, and wasted away, or became poor and emaciated. It tore him, (Luke,) and scarcely departed from him, or he had only short intervals of reason; for so the passage in Luke, bruising him, hardly departeth from him," should be translated.²²

Falleth oftentimes into the fire, and oft into the water—The paroxysms of his disorder frequently recurred; and among his numerous falls, some were into the fire and some into the water: so that, on this account, his life was in continual danger. Those who are under the influence of the devil are often driven to extremes in everything. Such are often driven into the fire of presumption, or the waters of despair. Satan takes advantage of our natural temper, state of health, and outward circumstances, to plague and ruin our souls.

ESV: By calling him **Lord**, the man shows respect for Jesus as an esteemed, righteous teacher, but he goes beyond that by believing that Jesus will show **mercy** and heal his son.

²¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

²² Barnes' Notes

Matthew 17:16

And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

[**thy disciples**] The nine that were at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1).

Thy disciples could not cure him—No wonder, when the cure must be effected by supernatural agency, and they had not faith enough to interest the power of God in their behalf, Matthew 17:20. A spiritual disorder must have a spiritual remedy: natural means, in such cases, signify just—nothing.

And I brought him to thy disciples That is, not to the apostles, for they had power over unclean spirits, Matthew 10:8 but to others of his followers, who attempted to work miracles. It is probable that many of his disciples attempted this, who were not personal attendants on his ministry, Mark 9:38.

McGee: This was probably the worst case which had been brought to the attention of Jesus. It was also a sad situation because the disciples were impotent. This is a picture of the church today in a world that is demon-possessed and has gone crazy. Why is the church impotent in this crazy world? Because it doesn't have enough psychology or enough methods or enough money? It has all of those things, but they are not what the church really needs.

This man had to say to Jesus, "I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not heal him."²³

Matthew 17:17

Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

[**O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?**] This applied to the disciples because of their unbelief (Matthew 17:20), to the father whom He addressed in particular (Mark 9:17-24), and to the scribes who were questioning the disciples (Mark 9:16).

[**bring him hither to me**] A command of authority and absolute confidence in God.

O faithless and perverse generation!—These and the following words may be considered as spoken:

1. To the disciples, because of their unbelief, Matthew 17:20.
2. To the father of the possessed, who should have brought his son to Christ.
3. To the whole multitude, who were slow of heart to believe in him as the Messiah, notwithstanding the miracles which he wrought.

²³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:96). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! *Perverse* means that which is twisted or turned from the proper direction; and is often used of the eyes, when one or both are turned from the natural position. Applied to a *generation*, or race of men, it means that they hold opinions turned or perverted from the truth, and that they were wicked in their conduct. He applied this probably to the Jews, and not to his real disciples.

How long shall I suffer you? That is, how long shall I bear with you? How long is it necessary to show such patience and forbearance with your unbelief and perversity? This was not an expression of impatience or complaint, so much as a proof that they were so slow to believe that he was the Messiah, notwithstanding his miracles, and that even his disciples so slowly learned to put the proper trust in him.

Mark adds, (Mark 9:20-22,) that when he that was possessed was brought, the spirit, by a last desperate struggle, threw him down, and tore him, and left him apparently dead. He adds farther, that the case had existed during the whole life of his son, from a child. This was a case of uncommon obstinacy. The affliction was fixed and lasting. The disciples, seeing the obstinacy of the case-seeing him dumb, wasted away, torn, and foaming-despaired of being able to cure him. They lacked the *faith* which was necessary; *doubted* whether they could cure him, and therefore could not.

Jesus said to the father, Mark 9:23 "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." That is, this cure shall be effected if you have faith. Not that *his* faith would give Jesus the power to heal him, but it would *render it proper* that he should exert that power in his favour. In this way, and in this only, are all things possible to believers. The man had faith, Mark 9:24. The father came, as a father *should* do, weeping, and praying that his faith might be increased, so as to make it *proper* that Jesus should interpose in his behalf, and save his child. "Help my unbelief," (Mark 9:24). This was an expression of humility. If my faith is defective, supply what is lacking. Help me to overcome my unbelief. Let not the defect of my faith be in the way of this blessing.²⁴

McGee: "O faithless and perverse generation" would be His word to the church in our day and probably individually to you and to me. "Bring him hither to me." Jesus is the Great Physician. Take your case to Him, my friend.²⁵

ESV: faithless. In spite of the miracles and teaching of Jesus, the majority of people did not place their faith in him as the Messiah. **Twisted** indicates people's distorted perception of Jesus and spiritual truth.

²⁴ Barnes' Notes

²⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:96). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Spurgeon: The whole generation among whom he lived caused the Savior suffering by their want of faith, and the absence of that straightforward confidence in God which would have secured them the greatest blessings. His own disciples — he had been with them, and yet they had not learned to have faith in him. The scribes and Pharisees—he had suffered from them many times already, and now they must make a poor lunatic the center of conflict with him. He had been in fellowship with heaven, and it was terrible jar to his heart to come down among such an unruly and unbelieving company. They were both "faithless and, perverse" the two things commonly go together: those who will not believe will not obey.

What a trial was all this to our Lord's holy and gracious mind! "How long shall I suffer you?" Must I continue in such unworthy company? "How long shall I suffer you" Must I always be thus tried by your ill manners? It was a moment when his triumphant foes and unbelieving friends alike deserved rebuke. But the word once spoken, Jesus will not leave the poor sufferer before him to endure the malicious attacks of the evil spirit. See how our royal Captain turns the tide of battle with a word! He transferred the fight from the disciples to himself: "Bring him hither to me." Once in the circle of our Lord's own power; all is done. "Bring him hither to me." Never let us forget this precept. When most self-despairing, let us be Christ-confiding.

Matthew 17:18

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

[**rebuked the devil**] Jesus rebuked the devil, not the moon, for He knew the source of the trouble (Matthew 4:23-24; Matthew 10:1-8; John 10:10; Acts 10:38).

Jesus rebuked the devil—Deprived him of all power to torment the child; and obliged him to abandon his present usurped habitation. There are some souls whose cure God reserves to himself alone, and to whom all the applications of his ministers appear to be utterly ineffectual. He sometimes does all without them, that they may know they can never do any good without him. QUESNEL.

And Jesus rebuked the devil. The word *rebuke* has the combined force of *reproving* and *commanding*. He *reproved* him for having afflicted the child, and he *commanded* him to come out of him. Mark 9:25 has recorded the words which he used—words implying reproof and command: "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." And the spirit cried, and with a mighty convulsion came out, leaving him apparently dead. Jesus lifted him up by the hand, (Mark,) and gave him to his father, (Luke.)

Matthew 17:19

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

[Why could not we cast him out?] These disciples were at least honest enough to investigate the reason for failure.

Why could not we cast him out?—They were confounded at their want of success—but not at their want of faith, which was the cause of their miscarriage! When the ministers of the Gospel find their endeavors, with respect to some places or persons, ineffectual, they should come, by private prayer, to Christ, humble themselves before him, and beg to be informed whether some evil in themselves have not been the cause of the unfruitfulness of their labors.

Matthew 17:20

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

[Because of your unbelief] A simple and a complete answer. This is still the reason for failure to cast out demons and for unanswered prayers of every kind. God promises answers to all alike on the condition that one is in Christ and doubts not (Matthew 21:22; Mark 9:23; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16; Hebrews 11:6; James 1:5-8).

[If ye have faith ...] "If ye have faith" it will be done—whatever you say—but if you do not have faith it will not be done.

[as a grain of mustard seed] Faith—pure and unmixed with doubt—as a grain of mustard seed can even move a literal mountain.

[this mountain] The Mount of Transfiguration, not some difficulty (Matthew 17:17; Mark 11:22-24; Luke 17:6; 1 Cor. 13:2).

[to yonder place] As if pointing to a particular place.

[nothing shall be impossible unto you] Nothing promised by God's Word or that is good for His children (Psalm 34:10; Psalm 84:11; Matthew 7:11; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16).

The disciples were unable to drive out this demon, and they asked Jesus why. He pointed to their lack of faith. It is the power of God, not our faith, that moves mountains, but faith must be present to do so. The mustard seed was the smallest particle imaginable. Even small or undeveloped faith would have been sufficient. Perhaps the disciples had tried to drive out the demon with their own ability rather than God's. There is great power in even a little faith when God is with us. If we feel weak or powerless as Christians, we

should examine our faith, making sure we are trusting not in our own abilities to produce results, but in God's.

Jesus wasn't condemning the disciples for substandard faith; he was trying to show how important faith would be in their future ministry. If you are facing a problem that seems as big and immovable as a mountain, turn your eyes from the mountain and look to Christ for more faith. Only then will your work for him become useful and vibrant.

McGee: "Nothing shall be impossible unto you"—that is, nothing that is according to the will of God for you. It was God's will that this boy be delivered from demon possession. Why couldn't the disciples deliver him? Because they didn't have the faith.²⁶

ESV: little faith. The disciples are not, of course, devoid of faith, but their faith is not functioning properly. Faith can be stronger or weaker (cf. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Rom. 14:1). Moving a **mountain** was a common metaphor in Jewish literature for doing what was seemingly **impossible** (cf. Isa. 40:4; 49:11; 54:10; Matt. 21:21–22).

Yashanet.com: The potential for "walking in the Kingdom" is outlined here in an amazing fashion. The question this begs is, "Why aren't we seeing these type of miracles today?" Obviously, the twelve apostles had a unique relationship, but a good reason for the lack of the truly miraculous today, is the rejection of the Torah by those who claim to be following God for the past 1900 years. This applies to both gentiles, who follow a theology of an anti-Torah messiah figure, as well as Jews, who don't recognize the Torah in the flesh - Yeshua.

Spurgeon: Want of faith is the great cause of failure among disciples, both as to themselves and their work for others. There may be other specific maladies in certain cases, but this is the great and main cause of all failure: "Because of your unbelief." If there had been true faith, of the real and living kind, the disciples could have wrought any miracle, even to the moving of a mountain. Whatever faith we may have, we shall not work a miracle, for this is not the age of prodigies. Is our faith therefore limited in its sphere? Far from it. We can now by faith accomplish that which is fit and right without miracles. Our faith may be small "as a grain of mustard seed," but if it be living and true it links us with the Omnipotent One. Still is it true, "Ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and, it shall remove." Mountains shall move before our faith by means as sure as if they were miraculous; by means even more wonderful than if the course of nature had been changed. Comparatively speaking, the suspension of natural law is a coarse expedient; but for the Lord to work the same result without violating any of his laws is an achievement not less divine than a miracle. This is what faith obtains of the Lord at the present hour: her prayer is heard, and things impossible to herself are wrought by divine power. Spiritually and symbolically, the mountain is removed. Literally, at this hour the mountain stands, but faith finds a way round it, through it, or over it; and so in effect removes it.

In the mission field, mountains of exclusiveness which shut out

²⁶McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:97). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

missionaries have been removed. In ordinary life, insurmountable difficulties are graciously dissolved. In a variety of ways, before real faith hindrances disappear, according to the word of the Lord Jesus — "Nothing shall be impossible"

Matthew 17:21

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

This verse is not in some of the better manuscripts.

The lesson here is very straightforward. They could not make their witness effective here due to unbelief. Pray and fasting, self-denial. The Lord makes it clear that they should have been able to heal the child. The capacity of them to serve God was constrained by their unbelief.

Your faith is not an inhibitor to the Lord causing someone to be healed. The Lord healed people who were dead (Jarius' daughter, Lazarus). It is the power of Jesus Christ that heals, not someone's faith. Don't jump to the conclusion that a Christian is ill due to their lack of faith! That would be a misapplication. Paul the apostle was not healed of his affliction, three times he prayed for healing. Was his faith lacking? The Lord may choose not to heal someone. That doesn't mean that your lack of faith might be an impediment to His healing you, but His not healing you is not a proof that you lack the faith. It is a necessary but not sufficient solution. The Lord may have some other purpose in mind.²⁷

[this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting] Implying different kinds of demons and different degrees of power to cast them out.

Fasting and Prayer—The Cure for Unbelief

The disciples asked the Lord why they could not heal a lunatic boy. Jesus said, "Because of your unbelief ... Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:14-21). Faith needs prayer for its development and full growth, and prayer needs fasting for the same reason. Fasting has done wonders when used in combination with prayer and faith. This is a Biblical doctrine.

To fast means to abstain from food—that which caused the fall of man. Fasting humbles the soul before God (Psalm 35:13); chastens the soul (Psalm 69:10); and crucifies the appetites and denies them so as to give the entire time to prayer (2 Samuel 12:16-23; Matthew 4:1-11). It manifests earnestness before God to the exclusion of all else (1 Cor. 7:5); shows obedience; gives the digestive system a rest (Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 9:15; Luke 5:33); demonstrates the mastery of man over appetites; aids in victory over temptation; helps to attain power over demons; develops faith; crucifies unbelief; and aids in prayer (Matthew 4:1-11; Matthew 17:14-21).

All believers are supposed to fast, but no regulations or set rules are given as to how long or how often. That is determined by individual desire and needs (Matthew 9:14-15; 1 Cor. 7:5; Acts 13:1-5). Men should fast when under chastening (2 Samuel 12:16-23); under judgment (1 Kings 21:27); in need (Ezra 8:21); in danger (Esther 4); when worried

²⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

(Daniel 6:18); in trouble (Acts 27:9,33) in spiritual conflict (Matthew 4:1-11); and when desperate in prayer (Acts 9).

Since fasting and prayer are so prominent in the Bible, modern Christians should do more of this until they receive power with God over all the powers of the devil. Many things about fasting and its benefits are not known to modern men, but those through the ages who have been men of great prayer have also fasted much.²⁸

Spurgeon: Though want of faith was the chief hindrance to the healing of the poor lunatic child, yet the case was one in which special means were needed. Faith would have suggested and supplied these special means: since they were absolutely necessary in the case if the disciples were to succeed in it, faith would have exercised herself in them. With God all things are equally possible; but to us, one devil may be harder to deal with than another. One kind will go at a word, but of others it may be said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." He that would overcome the devil in certain instances must first overcome heaven by prayer' and conquer himself by self-denial. The drink-devil is one of the kind, which may assuredly be conquered by faith; and yet we must generally use much intercession God-ward, and total abstinence, as an example man-ward, before we can displace this demon. Our business in the world is to deliver men from the power of the devil, and we must go to Jesus to learn the way. No amount either of prayer or self-denial must be spared if we can thereby deliver one soul from the power of evil; and true faith in God will enable us to put up the prayer and practice the self-denial. May be, some of us have failed because we are not yet well instructed in the right method of procedure. Either we are trying faith without using the appointed means, or we are using the means but not exercising simple faith in God; and in either case we shall make a failure of it. If we go to work by faith in God, in Christ's own way, we shall drive out the evil spirit.

Matthew 17:22

And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

[**The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men ...**] The 26th New Testament prophecy in Matthew (Matthew 17:22-23, fulfilled). Next, Matthew 18:7. The second announcement of His sufferings and the first of the betrayal (Matthew 16:21).

The Son of man shall be betrayed, To betray, means to deliver up in a treacherous manner. This was done by Judas Iscariot, called for that the traitor, Matthew 26:14-16,47-50. A traitor, or betrayer, is one who makes use of confidence reposed in him for the purpose of delivering him up, who puts that confidence in him to the hands of enemies.

²⁸ Dake Stgudy Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Spurgeon: AGAIN THE KING SPEAKS OF HIS DEATH

Our Lord returned often to the solemn subject of his death at the hands of men. It was on his own mind, and therefore he spake of it to his disciples. Their minds were far too receptive of other notions in reference to his kingdom, and therefore he set before them the truth again and again, almost in the same words. He would banish all dreams of a worldly monarchy from their souls. His death would be a grievous trial to them, and he would prepare them for it. He now speaks of his being betrayed: this was ever a bitter drop in his cup of gall. The Son of man comes to save men, and is, by a man, "betrayed into the hands of men." For man he lived, by man he is betrayed, and by man he died. Full well he foresaw that "they shall kill him." O suicidal world! Will nothing content thee but the blood of God's own Son? Our Lord would have us preach much about his death now that it is accomplished, for he continually talked of it while yet in the future. No theme is so vital, so practical, so needful.

His penetrating mind realized death, and anticipated that third day, when the word would be fulfilled, — "He shall be raised again." This was the light of the morning which would have banished the darkness of despair from the minds of the disciples, if they had understood and believed. An old writer says, "He sugared the bitter pill of his death with the sweetness of his assured resurrection."

Our Lord well knew what he said, and he used plain terms; but speak as he might, his followers could only in part apprehend his meaning; and that part made them "exceeding sorry." Christ's words, half understood, may cause the heart great grief. Yet, it may be, this cooling cloud of fear calmed their minds, and kept them from that fanaticism which filled the air around them. He knew best what state of mind would be safest for them at that time; and he knows the same as to us at this moment.

Matthew 17:23

And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

They were exceeding sorry—Since the conversation on the mount, with Moses and Elijah; Peter, James, and John could have no doubt that their Lord and Master must suffer, and that it was for this end he came into the world; but, while they submitted to the counsel of God, their affection for him caused them to feel exquisite distress.

And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again, See Matthew 12:40. Mark and Luke add, that they understood not that saying, and it was hid from them, and they were afraid to ask him. The reasons of this may have been:

(1.) They were strongly attached to him, and were exceedingly sorry (Matthew) at any intimation that he was soon to leave them. They learned with great slowness and reluctance, therefore, that he was to be treated in this manner.

(2.) They were not willing to believe it. They knew he was the Messiah. But they supposed that he was to be a distinguished Prince, and was to restore the kingdom to Israel, Acts 1:6. But to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and be put to death, appeared to them to be frustrating all these expectations.

(3.) Though what he said was plain enough, yet they did not understand it; they could not see how he could be the Messiah, and yet be put to death in this manner. Nor did they understand it fully till after the resurrection.²⁹

Once again Jesus predicted his death (see also Matthew 16:21); but more important, he told of his resurrection. Unfortunately, the disciples heard only the first part of Jesus' words and became discouraged. They couldn't understand why Jesus wanted to go back to Jerusalem where he would walk right into trouble.

The disciples didn't fully comprehend the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection until Pentecost (Acts 2). We shouldn't get upset at ourselves for being slow to understand everything about Jesus. After all, the disciples were with him, saw his miracles, heard his words, and still had difficulty understanding. Despite their questions and doubts, however, they believed. We should do no less.

17:22-23 The disciples didn't understand why Jesus kept talking about his death because they expected him to set up a political kingdom. His death, they thought, would dash their hopes. They didn't know that Jesus' death and resurrection would make his kingdom possible.

This is the third time He speaks to His disciples of His death and Resurrection. The first time He mentioned it was when they were in Caesarea Philippi. Now He is in Galilee, on His way to Jerusalem, and He mentions it again. All that the disciples can do is to feel sorry.

ESV: to be delivered. This second prediction of Jesus' passion (cf. 16:21), has an ominous new detail: Jesus will not only be handed over to his enemies, he will be betrayed.

Matthew 17:24

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

[**tribute**] Greek: didrachma (GSN-1323), double drachma, worth about \$1.30 today. This was the temple tax which every Jew paid yearly (Exodus 30:13; 2 Kings 12:4; 2 Chron. 24:6-9).

All Jewish males had to pay a temple tax to support temple upkeep (Exodus 30:11-16). Tax collectors set up booths to collect these taxes. Only Matthew records this incident—perhaps because he had been a tax collector himself.

A per-capita tax of one **half-shekel** to support the activities of the *cohanim* is specified in Exodus 30:11–16, 38:26. This was equivalent to one or two days' wages for an average worker.³⁰

²⁹ Barnes' Notes

ESV: two-drachma tax. At the annual census, each person over the age of 20 was to give a half-shekel offering for the support of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:11–16), which was later applied to the temple. The religious tax **collectors** approach **Peter**, the disciples' leader, rather than Jesus himself, perhaps in deference to Jesus' esteem as a popular **teacher**.

Yashanet.com: This is in reference to the Temple tax that all Jews were to pay to support the work of the Temple. This tax is also an atonement, according to the Torah.

***Exodus 30:11-16** - And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.*

Matthew 17:25

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter is alone. Peter without checking says of course he does.

Jesus asking who pays tribute, the residents or the tourists? Some scholars believe that this is a tribute for the Temple. Ex 30 talks of ransom money for the soul. The firstborn of every household had to be redeemed. Questionable whether these are linked. Other scholars believe this money was to be raised from the strangers not the locals.

[Yes] This is evidence that Christ paid all taxes and tributes common among the people. Christians are subject to all laws (Romans 13:1-8).

³⁰Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 17:24). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

He saith, Yes—From this reply of Peter, it is evident that our Lord customarily paid all taxes, tributes, etc., which were common among the people wherever he came. The children of God are subject to all civil laws in the places where they live—and should pay the taxes levied on them by public authority; and though any of these should be found unjust, THEY rebel not, as their business is not to reform the politics of nations, but the morals of the world.

prevented him, saying ...] Anticipating what Peter was going to ask, He gave the answer first.

Jesus prevented him. That is, Jesus *commenced speaking before Peter*, or spoke before Peter had told him what he had said. This implies, that though not present with Peter when he gave the answer, yet Jesus was acquainted with what he had said. *Prevent* here means, to go before, or precede. It does not mean, as now with us, to *hinder*, or obstruct. See the same use of the word in Psalms 59:10, 79:8, 88:13, 119:148, 1 Thessalonians 4:15.

[tribute] Greek: *kensos* (GSN-2778) and Latin *census*, poll or registration tax.

Or of strangers? The word strangers does not mean foreigners, but those who were not their own sons, or members of their family. Peter replied, that tribute was collected of those *out of their own family*. Jesus answered, then are the children, or *sons of the kings, free*; i.e., taxes are not required of them. The meaning of this may be thus expressed: "Kings do not tax their own sons. This tribute money is taken up for the temple-service; i.e., the service of my Father. I, therefore, being *the Son of God*, for whom this is taken up, cannot be lawfully *required to pay this tribute*." ³¹

The Children Are Exempt

17:24. Free adult Jewish men all over the ancient world showed their solidarity with the temple and the Holy Land by paying a half-shekel tax (Ex 30:13–16); in New Testament times this was two drachmas (as here), or two days' wages. After 70, in Matthew's time, the Romans confiscated this tax for the upkeep of a pagan temple, and some Jews may have refused to pay it on principle; but in Jesus' day, any Jew loyal to Judaism would have paid it. The local collectors of the tax may have wondered about Jesus' position on the matter if he had already betrayed some opposition to the temple (as later in 21:12–14; 23:38–24:15); collectors did not force those living off charity (as they would assume Jesus to be—Lk 8:3) or beggars to pay. Or they may have simply been wondering if he would pay it in this locality or elsewhere, because the disciples were moving about.

17:25–26. Like a good prophet, Jesus responds to Peter before Peter even brings up the matter (1 Sam 9:20; 1 Kings 14:6; 2 Kings 5:26; 6:32).

³¹ Barnes' Notes

New Testament ***New Testament**. The common modern term for the early Christian literature finally declared canonical by the church and accepted by nearly all Christians today.

disciples ***Disciples**. Students of rabbis or philosophers, normally committed to memorizing and living according to their master's teachings.

The answer to Jesus' question was obvious; the royal family did not tax itself. Jesus' point is thus that the Son of God should not be taxed for the upkeep of his Father's house. (The principle of an exemption was known in Judaism: the temple's attendants, the priests, applied it to themselves, to the chagrin of some of their Pharisaic contemporaries—Mishnah *Sheqalim* 1:3–4.) For Matthew's readers this saying would mean: It is not because Jesus is not in solidarity with Judaism (for he is), but rather because he is the *hope* of Judaism, that he need not pay.

17:27. On the basis of solidarity with the rest of the Jewish community, however, Jesus pays the tax. If some of Matthew's Jewish Christian readers were looking for an excuse to avoid paying the tax in their own day, this text would encourage them to pay it instead.

A stater was worth four drachmas (4 denarii); hence it covered the tax for both Jesus and Peter. Jewish teachers had several stories describing how God rewarded faithful Jews who bought fish and found gems in them; if these stories are as early as the first century (their date is not certain), Peter might be surprised that something similar had actually happened to him. Some fish in the Lake of Galilee had mouths large enough to hold staters; one such fish was what is now called the *Chromis simonis* (named after Simon Peter).³²

Spurgeon: Peter was in such a hurry to vindicate his Lord that he compromised him. "He saith, Yes." He might have asked his Lord's mind, or he might have referred the collectors to Jesus himself; but he was in a hurry, and thought himself safe enough in maintaining his Master's reputation. He was quite certain that his Lord would do all that good people did. Our Savior and his cause have often suffered from the zeal of friends. Christ is better known by what he says himself than by what his friends say for him.

Peter was out of doors at the time he gave his quick reply, and little did he think that the Lord Jesus would note what he had said, and tell him of it as soon as he was come into the house; but so it was.

Our Lord began with Peter upon the subject before he had time to state his action or defend it: "Jesus prevented him." He knew what his servant had been doing, and he hastened to set him right. As he had been but little of a Peter in this case, our Lord calls him "Simon." He questions him: "What thinkest thou, Simon?" He will make him judge in the case. Do kings take poll-tax of their own children, or of strangers? Of course, the family of the prince was always free from the levy. The king's subjects, and especially the aliens under his rule, must pay the capitation charge; but the princes of the blood royal were free. Should Jesus pay redemption-money for himself to God? Should he, who is himself the King's Son, come under poll-tax to his Father? If tribute money has become a tax to be levied in the kingdom of God, "then are the children free." Neither Jesus nor Peter was bound to pay. Peter had not seen the matter in this light.

Pharisaic ***Pharisees.** A movement of several thousand pious Jewish men who sought to interpret the law carefully and according to the traditions of previous generations of the pious. They had no political power in Jesus' day but were highly respected and thus influential among the larger population. They emphasized their own version of purity rules and looked forward to the resurrection of the dead.

³²Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 17:24). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Matthew 17:26

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, **Then are the children free.**

Jesus is saying that they are not subject to this tax.

[Then are the children free] As this tax is levied for the temple of which I am Lord, then I am not obliged to pay; and My disciples, like priests that minister, should be exempted from it. But to save any offense we will pay (Matthew 17:26-27).

Then are the children free—As this money is levied for the support of that temple of which I am the Lord, then I am not obliged to pay the tax; and my disciples, like the priests that minister, should be exempted from the necessity of paying.

ESV: Then the sons are free. Because the temple is God the Father's own house, the Son and those he has brought into the Father's family (12:48–50) are exempt from the temple **tax**, signaling that, with the coming of the kingdom, believers are no longer under the OT law but the law of Christ (see Gal. 6:2).

Yashanet.com: Does Yeshua teach breaking of the Torah here by saying this? No, for the same reason found in Matthew 12, when Yeshua was challenged as to the behavior of his disciples on the Sabbath. If the religious authorities recognized who Yeshua was, they would have realized that they had a greater "Tabernacle/Temple" before them, in the form the Messiah.

Yeshua's presence among them took priority over the physical Temple, which was (in this sense only), a "lesser" representation of the image of God and His Kingdom, (a "shadow," i.e., Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5, 10:1). Yeshua is above the physical Temple as He is the actual image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Note however, that after His death, his disciples continued to attend the Temple for services and sacrifices, but no longer for the Yom Kippur sacrifice (as we will explain in our other studies).

Nonetheless, Yeshua commanded His disciples to pay the tax, for reason explained below.

Matthew 17:27

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Note that although Yeshua was "correct," in that His presence initiated a higher level of Torah commandment, He deferred to the principle of setting aside His "right" for the benefit of others.

There is a species of fish, indigenous to the Sea of Galilee, that have the characteristic that they pick up bright things off the bottom and carry them in the mouth. Locally, they now call this fish "St. Peter's Fish."

Jesus used the fish as a method to demonstrate to Peter that He was the Lord of Creation. He clearly was not subject to this tax.

[piece of money] Greek: *stater* (GSN-4715), about \$2.60, enough for both Christ and Peter to pay the tax. This is a notable miracle. If the money was in the fish, it took a miracle to know it was there. If it was not in the fish, it took a miracle to have a fish get the money and bring it to Peter. Jesus here shows another example of material supply. Nothing is impossible to the believer (Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:22; Mark 9:23; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16). Gifts of the Spirit are for men today to enable them to repeat the works of Christ that He did by these same gifts (1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; 1 Cor. 13:1-3; John 14:12).

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them. That is, lest they should think that we despise the temple and its service, and thus provoke needless opposition, though we are not under *obligation* to pay it, yet it is best to pay it to them.

As usual, Peter answered a question without really knowing the answer, putting Jesus and the disciples in an awkward position. Jesus used this situation, however, to emphasize his kingly role. Just as kings pay no taxes and collect none from their family, Jesus, the King, owed no taxes. But Jesus supplied the tax payment for both himself and Peter rather than offend those who didn't understand his kingship. Although Jesus supplied the tax money, Peter had to go and get it. Ultimately all that we have comes to us from God's supply, but he may want us to be active in the process.

As God's people, we are foreigners on earth because our loyalty is always to our real King—Jesus. Still we have to cooperate with the authorities and be responsible citizens. An ambassador to another country keeps the local laws in order to represent well the one who sent him. We are Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Are you being a good foreign ambassador for him to this world?

McGee: His method of getting the tax money was certainly novel, to say the least. Now our Lord demonstrates that He has recovered all that Adam lost. The creatures were obedient to Him. The fish as well as Peter followed His command. I believe that God had given to Adam the same dominion over all creation, but he lost it at the Fall. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

In the Transfiguration we see man restored to his original *purpose*. In the episode of the tribute money we see man restored to his original *performance*.³³

³³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:97). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.