

Matthew 17:1-2 The Purpose for the Transfiguration of Christ

We are starting a new chapter today, Matthew chapter 17. Our focus will be on verses 1-8. Matthew 17:1-8.

Again Matthew chapters 5 through 25 there are five messages or five sermons in those chapters. We have studied three of them: Matthew chapters 5 through 7; Matthew chapter 10; and Matthew chapter 13. Matthew chapters 14 through 17 are supportive scriptures for the message given in chapter 13 of The Parables of the Kingdom. All of these teachings in chapters 14 through 17 are The Ministry of the Principles of the Parables in Action, examples and fulfillment.

And so as we begin chapter 17, it is part of the final collection of chapters 14 through 17. And you will notice we have entitled it The Prophecy of the Transfiguration of Christ Fulfilled. I do not think you are going to see that title anywhere else. Usually it is The Transfiguration, or The Transfiguration of Christ. This is The Prophecy of the Transfiguration of Christ Fulfilled. The reason why we say *fulfilled* is because back in Matthew 16:28, the last verse of the last chapter that we took last week, we told you that verse just does not fit with the rest of the chapter.

Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that there are some who have been standing here who should not taste of death until they should see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." So He is talking about the disciples there that some of them would not die until they see the Son of Man coming into His kingdom. Over the years there have been tremendous debates as to exactly what that means that *some would not die*. Obviously Christ has not come into His kingdom as of yet and they have died. See what problems could arise just because of the text itself and misunderstanding the text.

As I mentioned to you last week 16:28 should actually be the first verse of chapter 17. The chapter divisions and verse divisions were put there by man. Matthew did not put chapter divisions and verse divisions in his gospel, he just wrote a gospel. It is a letter, a long letter, but letter, nonetheless. And if it was taken as the first verse of chapter 17, we would see as we begin reading in verse 1, **And after six days, Jesus takes alongside of Him, Peter and James, and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain privately. And He was transfigured...** or more literally, *transformed*. The word *transformed* is the Greek word from where we get our English word *metamorphosis* from. He was not changed, but transformed in form and in substance, completely, not physical anymore.

...and His face did shine like the sun, and His clothing became white as the light. There was a transformation and a transfiguration here where Christ - in verse 3 it says that Moses and Elijah appeared to Him, talking with Jesus up on the Mount. So after six days, verse 1 says, after six days Jesus took these three disciples up to the mountain, the top of the mountain, and Jesus was transformed. And Moses and Elijah appeared with Him on the mountain in transformed form. They were not physical, they were now spiritual, but able to be seen by the disciples, these three: Peter, James, and John.

So in 16:28 when Jesus said, "There are some standing here who should not taste of death until they see the Son coming into His kingdom," six days later - that is what the text says, "and after six days Jesus led them up to the top of the mountain," - and it was there that He was transformed and they saw Him in His glory, in His kingdom, though it is only temporary. So 17:1-8 is the prophecy that Jesus gave, back in verse 28, it was fulfilled. The transfiguration or the transformation of Jesus was fulfilled here when Jesus was transformed in front of the three disciples.

And also I want to point out to you secondly, the very first word. I do not think I have ever done a word study on the word *and*. And you might not think that the word *and* has any specialty to it when it comes to the Greek text. Yes, it does. There are a few words that are translated *and*:

One is a soft *and* (**δέ**, de), which means *and* or *now*.

And there is another word **νῦν** (nun) that means *now*.

But this word is **καί** (kai), a common word for *and*.

I bring this up because some English translations use the translation *now*, "Now after six days," but it is the word *and*. It is never translated *now* it is always translated *and*. And the reason why it is important is because it connects verse 1 with the end of chapter 16. In our chapter divisions and in our verse divisions it is a continuation of the principles of discipleship that were presented to us back in chapter 16.

"And after six days Jesus takes with Him (alongside of Him) Peter, James, and John." In Luke 9:28 Luke says, "Some eight days later," or, "some eight days after." Here Matthew says, "After six days," so it is between six and eight days after Jesus gave this prophecy in verse 28 of chapter 16 that Jesus was transformed up on top of the mountain.

Some traditionalists hold that this mountain is Mount Tabor. But more Christians hold that it is Mount Hermon, over 9000 feet on Mount Hermon. But He takes them after a six-day journey, He takes them up on the high mountain. Some even hold that it is Mount Sinai where Moses got the law. It is not mentioned here what mountain it is. There is no indication as to what mountain it is, but Jesus took these three up there privately for this exposure so they could see the transformation of Jesus Christ.

But like I said, the word *and* that opens up the section, it connects it with chapter 16, and it is a continuation of the principles of discipleship. How is the transformation of Jesus a continuation of the principles of discipleship? And why put it here? If it comes after chapter 16, okay, we use the chapter divisions, say, "Okay, that part is over, now we are starting a new section." No, we are not. We are continuing on with the section on discipleship.

Remember back in chapter 16 Jesus told the disciples — in fact, Peter was the spokesman for the disciples — but Jesus told the disciples that it is necessary that He goes into Jerusalem to

suffer at the hands of the leaders, to be killed, to die, and to rise on the third day. And Peter took Him aside privately, and Peter rebuked Jesus, and said "God have mercy on You, this will never happen to You."

And again the beginning of The Preservation of the Flesh. Our natural human inclination is that anything that God might do, or anything that you might foreshadow God might do, it cannot be to hurt the human frame or the human part of life, because "A God of love wouldn't do that," so they say.

So Jesus tells Peter, "The influence over your life is Satan, because you are not minding – your frame of mind does not run along – the things of God, but rather your mind is on the things of man. You are there to protect yourself." Jesus is introducing suffering into the mix. Jesus is introducing hardship into the mix.

But even harder than that Jesus told everybody then, back in chapter 16, that if you want to be His disciple there are three things that you must do — tough stuff:

(1) You must deny yourself. You have to reject yourself. You have to surrender your life to Christ and have Him be Lord and let Him lead. We must follow behind Him. Deny yourself.

(2) Take up your cross. Because the death Jesus died on the cross was my death. He died for me. Yes, He did, a substitute, but that was my death for my sin.

(3) And then thirdly, He says, "And follow me." Follow behind Him. Do not get out in front of Him. Do not get along side of Him but follow behind Him.

So basically He is saying, "You have to die to yourself." Whatever you want, whatever your desires are, you must die to yourself, if you are going to surrender your life to Christ.

You cannot take the Lord on board with you and then go your own way with the Lord on board. Just say, "Now I have got the Lord with me, things are going to work out better for me the way I want life to work out, because I have got the Lord with me now." That is not what the Bible says. The Bible says that I abandon my goals and what I want out of life and I surrender and I go with Him. He does not go with me; I go with Him. And you can see already it causes a lot of problems, with people individually and personally, with family and friends. Human situations. That "If I follow Christ," and I have heard this before in various forms. "If I follow Christ like that, there is going to be a whole lot of people be upset." That is true.

Somebody told me the other day, he said, "I'm afraid that I offended or hurt somebody's feelings."

And I said, "Well, what did you do to hurt their feelings or offend them?"

"Oh, I just did what the Lord wanted me to do, but they didn't understand."

I said, "Well then they are supposed to be offended and they are supposed to have their feelings hurt."

That is the way it is. Because if I am self-centered and I want you to do things my way, if you follow the Lord then I am going to have my feelings hurt. I am going to be offended. But see that is the testimony of the believer. The testimony of the believer is not persuasive words or nice words that we try to persuade people to believe in Christ. It is literally following Christ that causes waves in other people's lives. And those waves are what God uses as a testimony. That is the testimony of the Christian. Following Jesus Christ is going to cause problems, but that is the testimony of the believer.

So chapter 16 and 17 go together in that the suffering, and the denial of self, and the transformation of Christ go together, to present the perfect (or whole) perspective of what life is all about. You cannot have suffering and you cannot have the surrender of your life to Christ without knowing that in the future there is going to be glory. There is going to be transformation. What is it all about? Why? And what is in it for me?

And so these chapters, both of them together, present The Proper Perspective of Life. Most of the time we only see the perspective of life incomplete. We only see the human. We only see the suffering. We only see the hardship. We only see the difficulty. We do not see it spiritually, and that is very important. It has to be seen both in the human and in the spirit.

In chapter 16 there is death and denial. There must be death, there must be denial of self, before there can be life. That is the principle of life.

Listen to this, listen to Jesus in John 12:23-26, **Jesus answered and said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone..."** If it does not fall into the ground it just sits there. If a seed does not fall into the ground, what purpose does it serve? What is the result? It is just going to sit there. It has to fall into the ground, in essence, metaphorically, as if dying.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone: but if it should die, it brings forth much fruit." The only way that spiritual fruit is born in the life of the believer is to die to self.

"If any man serve Me," Jesus said, "Let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will my Father honour."

Dying to self. Submit to the fact that when Jesus died on the cross, He died your death. This is The Perspective of Life. The whole perspective of life is found in John chapter 12. If I try to keep from suffering and keep from the hardships of following Christ, I will not bear fruit, not bear the fruit of Christ in my life.

In John 3:30 John the Baptist – Yochanan HaMatbil, *John the baptizer* – he says, "Jesus must increase and I must decrease." He and I cannot be Lord at the same time. I cannot do what I want to do and do what He wants me to do the same time. It is impossible. He does not just go

with me. He does not follow me. I follow behind Him. He is Lord. He leads. One Lord. But in order to do that I must deny myself. I have to reject what I want to do just to follow Christ.

And as we mentioned last week, that is what the Bible says about who a sinner is. Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to our own way." It does not say we are bad. It does not say we are horrible people. It is just we just do things our way. We do what we want to do. Christ is calling people to surrender to Him when He does that.

But even Jesus Himself saw The Proper Perspective of Life. In Hebrews 12:2 the writer of Hebrews says that we should be, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." So He is faced with the cross. and He endured the cross, even the shame of the cross, because of the joy that was set before Him. He saw the end result. The cross itself was not His joy. It was set ahead. And He saw that as He went through the cross and endured it and despised the shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God that there would be salvation and spiritual life given to all who would come to Him. For that He had joy in what He did because of the end result. The proper perspective. It has to be complete. You know I might suffer difficulty and hardship, yes, but the end result is the fruit of Christ. The end result is the ministry of Christ. The end result is the purpose of Christ.

Even Paul says in Romans 8:18, "For I reckon (that is, *I calculate*) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The proper perspective of life is the suffering here does not even compare. It does not even compare to the glory we are going to experience in Christ, and that glory that we are going to experience. But see, if we are limited, if we only see the human, and feel the human, and we do not see the end result, then it is going to take us mentally and emotionally and even physically, and twist us because we do not see the whole picture. We do not live seeing the whole picture as we just saw in Christ a few moments ago.

Paul, again, in I Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," it is the word for *altered*. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." You are going to be changed, you are going to put on a spiritual body. The human will be gone, the physical body will be gone, the physical earth will be gone. You will now function with Christ in His glory.

John said in I John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does 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." The disciples here are given a glimpse. What they saw of Christ up on the mountain of transfiguration is who Christ is today. They were allowed to see a glimpse of glory and what it is like in the spirit realm that is going on. They heard about suffering, and death, and being raised from the dead, and about denying yourself. It seems like all negative, except the negatives are what is taking care of those things in our lives that interfere with Christ. Cannot live for self and live for Christ at the same time. It is impossible. And so they saw a glimpse. They saw Him just as He is. What they saw is Christ who He is today.

John in Revelation chapter 1 was on the island of Patmos and Jesus appeared to him with these eyes as of flames of fire, and with this radiance coming out from Him. And when John turned around – he heard this noise and when he turned around and saw Him, he fell over as dead. That is who Christ is today. He is in His glory.

Life even dictates these things to us. Stop and think about it. If you want to work at a job, if you are led to get a job, you are trained for it, you are educated for it. Whether it be on the job training or you go to school and get trained for it, you have to go through the process of being trained. You cannot just walk into it; we need to be developed. That is just part of life. Sports, good example. If you know about football players and football and sports and the rough workouts they have to go through to get prepared for the game. They might complain because of the hardship of the workouts, and how hard it is, because it is hard. It is purposely made to be hard so that when they face the opponent, they are able to function at one hundred percent. They might moan and groan and complain. But they also know it is necessary. If they were told, "You do not need to show up to practice, just show up for the game on Sunday." They would find somewhere to work out because they know if they showed up for the game on Sunday and had not worked out all week they are in big trouble, because the opponent is prepared. All of life is like that.

If I am going to walk with Christ, I have to understand that life – if I am going to live life with Christ, even though I am in the human – listen to this, even though I am in the human, life is spiritual. Life is spiritual. My opponent is a spirit, not a human being.

Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "Our wrestling is not with flesh and blood." We are not wrestling with people. We are wrestling with evil spiritual forces that function in the spirit realm, using people who probably do not even realize it most of the time. My opponent and my enemy is a spirit so I must be disciplined. Because I naturally, normally, function in the human, I must be disciplined to deal with Satan. So there must be a learning process of the denial of the human – or more exact, a denial of myself – because Satan will attack me if I am living for myself, and he will bring destruction. In order for Christ to live His life through me, I must deny myself.

There was an article this week and I am going to close with this. Some of you might have read it. Some of might have followed it. I follow the news for things just like this, little excerpts that just stick out. Spiritual truths that just stick out in the news. You have heard about the churches that were burned in Louisiana. Three churches. Somebody set fire to them and they caught a suspect. He is a suspect. He has not been convicted but they arrested a suspect, his last name is Matthews. Well they did a little history on this guy and it is kind of interesting because they got in touch with people whom he had contacted over the Internet and in the neighborhood and did a study and a research on his life and who he is as a person. Well he met this gal over the Internet, and they began talking and one day she agreed to meet with him for coffee in a coffee shop and just to find out more about him and tell him more about her. One of the things that she told him was, "I want you to know that I am a Satanist." That is what she said. She said he was fascinated. A Satanist. What do Satanists do? What kind of life? What do you do as a Satanist? She became alarmed at his obsession with her being a Satanist. Now listen to this, she wants the press to know, she wants everybody else to know, what Satanism is

today. "What Matthews is accused of doing is absolutely wrong. Burning down churches, Satanists do not do that. They do not bring harm to people. Satanism isn't about burning churches," she said. Listen to this, "But Satanism is about self-reflection and loving yourself." Wow. It almost sounds like church. "Self reflection and loving yourself." Exercise your own human expression. Show love to yourself and love to your neighbor.

"Well, what if some of the things my neighbor is doing is sin?"

"Well, you've got to love them. You've just got to love people."

The Satanist message in the last days is love, and self-reflection as to how you are promoting this love. "We don't do harm to people. It is self-reflection and loving yourself."

Jesus said you follow Him. You must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Him. The hardship is temporary. The hardship in the flesh is necessary because we are doing battle with a spirit who uses the human realm to get us caught up in the human – emotionally and psychologically and physically – to get us to go for the bait because we are just normally and naturally in tune with all the human around us, including ourselves. And so if Satan can work through the human realm and through other people and get us to respond in the human, he has got us and twists us. But if we refuse to go for the bait?

My wrestling is not with people. My wrestling is with Satan through people and I have to understand that my wrestling with Satan might mean I am dealing with people who are trying to love me, who are trying to practice self-reflection and improve themselves and make them a better person. But it is still a rejection of Christ. And the source is not the spirit of Christ Himself.

So it is really understanding. Paul says, "Do not be ignorant of Satan's devices." He will use other people and they could just be the nicest people you ever meet. Some of the world religions produce nice people, good people. I use the term loosely. Some of the cults that are around that deny the deity of Christ, they are some of the most wholesome, moral, upright people. Always taking care of people. Always helping people. All these things are nice. But what spirit is behind it? That is the key. What spirit is behind it? And I can be deceived. I can be delusional about Satan's influence over my life. And I can take the human, I can take the psyche, and I can take the emotion, I can take the physical, I can take circumstances; and mesh it all together as if it is all one. But the proper perspective of life is that we are in the physical and in the human for a while. So there will be difficulty because of our opponent. He is deceitful. He deceives us. He tricks us.

But the struggle and difficulty that we have - it is the Lord letting the disciples know, "This is just temporary guys." Look what glory is going to be like in the future. We will not have all of this. We will be with Christ and His glory. And all of this will be behind. But we have to understand the whole picture, not just part of it. We are not just left here to run circles in the mud. We have Christ living within and He calls us to learn to live spiritually and learn to live by faith and not physically. Be properly disciplined. Deny yourself. Follow Christ. Our opponent, he is well-equipped.

Let's close with prayer.