CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 17 — The Transfiguration, Faith Like a Mustard Seed, and the Temple Tax

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 16 ended with hard words.

Jesus told His disciples that He must suffer, die, and be raised to life.

He told them that they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

Then He made a promise:

Some who were standing there would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

Matthew Chapter 17 begins with that promise being fulfilled.

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain.

And there, He is **transfigured.**

His face shines like the sun.

His clothes become as white as light.

Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Him.

A bright cloud covers them.

And the Father speaks from heaven:

“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!”

The disciples fall on their faces in fear.

But Jesus touches them and says, **“Get up. Don't be afraid.”**

When they look up, they see no one except Jesus.

Then they come down the mountain.

And they come down into a world of trouble.

A father's son is tormented by a demon.

The other disciples have tried to help, but they could not.

Jesus heals the boy and teaches His disciples about faith.

Even faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains.

Then Jesus tells them again that He will be killed and raised.

And the chapter ends with a surprising lesson about paying the temple tax.

Jesus, the Son of the King, is not required to pay.

But He pays anyway so that no one is offended.

And He provides the money in an amazing way.

Matthew 17 therefore shows us two great truths:

The glory of Jesus as the beloved Son of God.

And:

The humility of Jesus as He walks the road to the cross.

The central truth of Matthew 17 is:

Jesus is the glorious, beloved Son of God whom the Father commands us to hear, and He calls His followers to trust Him with mustard-seed faith and to live humbly as children of the King.

I. UP A HIGH MOUNTAIN

Matthew 17:1 — Peter, James, and John

“Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother and led them up a high mountain by themselves.”

Six days later connects this event to Jesus' promise at the end of Matthew 16.

Jesus **took Peter, James, and John.**

These three were Jesus' closest disciples.

They were with Him when He raised Jairus's daughter.

They would be with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Now they would see something no one else would see.

Jesus **led them up a high mountain.**

Many believe this was Mount Hermon, near Caesarea Philippi.

Others believe it was Mount Tabor.

In the Bible, mountains are often places where God reveals Himself.

Moses met God on Mount Sinai.

Elijah met God on the same mountain.

Cross References

Mark 9:2

> Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain by themselves.

Luke 9:28

> About eight days after Jesus said these things, He took Peter, John, and James and went up on a mountain to pray.

Exodus 24:15

> When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it.

Spiritual Principle

God often reveals Himself to those who go apart with Him.

II. TRANSFIGURED

Matthew 17:2 — His Face Shone Like the Sun

“There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light.”

Transfigured means **changed in form.**

The Greek word is the word we get **metamorphosis** from.

Jesus' outward appearance changed to show the glory that was always inside Him.

His face shone like the sun.

His clothes became as white as light.

When Moses came down from the mountain, his face shone because he had been with God.

Moses reflected God's glory.

Jesus did not reflect glory.

The glory came from within Him.

For a moment, the disciples saw Jesus as He truly is.

Cross References

Exodus 34:29

> When Moses came down from Mount Sinai... he did not know that his face was shining because he had talked with the LORD.

Mark 9:3

> His clothes became shining white, whiter than anyone on earth could make them.

Revelation 1:16

> His face was like the sun shining at its brightest time.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' glory is His own; He does not borrow it from anyone.

Key Truth

The humble carpenter from Nazareth is the glorious Son of God.

III. MOSES AND ELIJAH

Matthew 17:3 — Talking with Him

“Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and were talking with Him.”

Moses and **Elijah** appeared.

Moses represented **the Law.**

Elijah represented **the Prophets.**

Together, they stood for the whole Old Testament.

And they were **talking with Him.**

Luke tells us what they were talking about.

Jesus' **departure** — His death — which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.

The Law and the Prophets were pointing to the cross.

Cross References

Luke 9:30

> Then two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with Jesus.

Malachi 4:4

> Remember the teaching of My servant Moses, the laws and rules I gave him on Mount Sinai for all the people of Israel.

Deuteronomy 18:15

> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people. Listen to him.

Spiritual Principle

The whole Old Testament points to Jesus.

IV. THREE SHELTERS

Matthew 17:4 — It Is Good for Us to Be Here

“Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, I will put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’”

Peter spoke up.

“Lord, it is good for us to be here.”

He was right.

It was a wonderful moment.

Then he offered to build **three shelters.**

These may have been like the shelters used during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Peter may have wanted to stay on the mountain.

He wanted the glory to last.

But Peter made a mistake.

He put Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah.

One for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Jesus is not one great prophet among others.

He is far greater.

Mark tells us Peter did not know what to say because he was so afraid.

Cross References

Mark 9:5

> Peter said to Jesus, “Teacher, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents — one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Luke 9:33

> Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents.” Peter did not know what he was talking about.

Leviticus 23:34

> On the fifteenth day of the seventh month is the Feast of Shelters. This festival to the LORD will continue for seven days.

Spiritual Warning

No one is equal to Jesus — not even the greatest servants of God.

V. LISTEN TO HIM!

Matthew 17:5 — A Voice from the Cloud

“While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!’”

While Peter was still speaking, God interrupted him.

A bright cloud covered them.

In the Old Testament, a cloud often showed God's presence.

The cloud led Israel through the wilderness.

The cloud filled the tabernacle and the temple.

Then **a voice from the cloud** spoke.

“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

These are the same words the Father spoke at Jesus' baptism.

Then the Father added three more words:

“Listen to Him!”

Moses had said that God would raise up a prophet, and the people must **listen to him.**

Now God was saying, **This is that Prophet.**

Moses and Elijah were great.

But Jesus is the One we must listen to.

Cross References

Matthew 3:17

> And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son, whom I love. I am very pleased with Him.”

2 Peter 1:17

> Jesus heard the voice of God, the Greatest Glory, when He received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice said, “This is My Son, whom I love, and I am very pleased with Him.”

Luke 9:35

> A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!”

Spiritual Principle

The Father commands us to listen to His Son above every other voice.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When God speaks from heaven, His message is simple: Listen to Jesus.

VI. FACEDOWN AND TERRIFIED

Matthew 17:6 — The Disciples Fell

“When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.”

The disciples **heard** the voice of God.

And they **fell facedown to the ground.**

They were **terrified.**

This is how people in the Bible often respond when they meet the holy God.

Ezekiel fell on his face.

Daniel fell on his face.

John fell at Jesus' feet as though he were dead.

God's holiness is overwhelming.

Cross References

Ezekiel 1:28

> This was what the glory of the LORD looked like. When I saw it, I bowed facedown on the ground.

Daniel 10:9

> Then I heard the man speaking. As I listened, I fell into a deep sleep with my face on the ground.

Revelation 1:17

> When I saw Him, I fell down at His feet like a dead man.

Spiritual Principle

A true sight of God's holiness humbles us.

VII. “GET UP. DON'T BE AFRAID.”

Matthew 17:7 — Jesus Touched Them

“But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ He said. ‘Don't be afraid.’”

This is a beautiful verse.

The disciples were on the ground, shaking with fear.

Jesus came to them.

He touched them.

“Get up.”

“Don't be afraid.”

The glorious Son of God was also gentle and kind.

His touch gave them courage.

The same Jesus who shines with heavenly glory also reaches down to lift up frightened people.

Cross References

Daniel 10:10

> Then a hand touched me, and I was set on my hands and knees, shaking with fear.

Revelation 1:17

> He put His right hand on me and said, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.”

Matthew 14:27

> But Jesus quickly spoke to them and said, “Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.”

Spiritual Principle

The glorious Jesus is also the gentle Jesus.

Key Truth

Jesus' glory does not push us away; His touch draws us near.

VIII. NO ONE EXCEPT JESUS

Matthew 17:8 — When They Looked Up

“When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.”

When the disciples looked up, everything was different.

Moses was gone.

Elijah was gone.

The cloud was gone.

They saw no one except Jesus.

Moses and Elijah had done their work.

They pointed to Jesus.

Now Jesus alone remained.

This is a picture of the whole Christian life.

In the end, it is about **Jesus only.**

Cross References

Mark 9:8

> Suddenly Peter, James, and John looked around, but they saw only Jesus there alone with them.

Luke 9:36

> When the voice finished speaking, only Jesus was there.

Hebrews 12:2

> Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect.

Spiritual Principle

Every great servant of God fades away, but Jesus remains.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When everything else disappears, Jesus is still there — and He is enough.

IX. DON'T TELL ANYONE

Matthew 17:9 — Until the Son of Man Has Been Raised

“As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, ‘Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’”

As they came down the mountain, Jesus gave them an instruction.

“Don't tell anyone what you have seen.”

Not yet.

Until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.

The people would not understand the glory of Jesus until they understood the cross and the resurrection.

After the resurrection, the disciples could tell everyone.

And they did.

Peter later wrote about this moment.

He said, **“We saw His majesty with our own eyes.”**

Cross References

Mark 9:9

> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone about what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Luke 9:36

> Peter, James, and John said nothing and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Matthew 16:20

> Then Jesus warned His followers not to tell anyone He was the Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The glory of Jesus is understood only in light of the cross and the resurrection.

X. ELIJAH MUST COME FIRST

Matthew 17:10 — The Disciples' Question

“The disciples asked Him, ‘Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?’”

The disciples had a question.

They had just seen Elijah.

They knew Malachi's prophecy.

God would send **Elijah** before the great day of the LORD.

The teachers of the law said Elijah must come **before** the Messiah.

So the disciples were confused.

If Jesus is the Messiah, where was Elijah?

Cross References

Mark 9:11

> Then they asked Jesus, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

Malachi 4:5

> Look, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

John 1:21

> They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He answered, “No, I am not.”

Spiritual Principle

Honest questions about Scripture should be brought to Jesus.

XI. ELIJAH WILL RESTORE ALL THINGS

Matthew 17:11 — Indeed, Elijah Is Coming

“Jesus replied, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming and will restore all things.’”

Jesus agreed with the Scripture.

Elijah is coming.

And he **will restore all things.**

Malachi said Elijah would turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.

His work would be to prepare people's hearts for the Lord.

Cross References

Malachi 4:6

> He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers.

Acts 3:21

> Jesus must stay in heaven until the time comes when all things will be made right again, as God promised long ago through His holy prophets.

Luke 1:16

> He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God.

Spiritual Principle

God always prepares the way before He acts.

XII. ELIJAH HAS ALREADY COME

Matthew 17:12 — They Did Not Recognize Him

“But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. In the same way the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.”

Then Jesus said something surprising.

“Elijah has already come.”

“They did not recognize him.”

“They did to him whatever they pleased.”

Herod had imprisoned and beheaded him.

And Jesus connected John's suffering to His own.

“In the same way the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.”

The forerunner suffered.

The Messiah would suffer too.

Cross References

Matthew 11:14

> And if you will believe what they said, you will believe that John is Elijah, whom they said would come.

Mark 9:13

> I tell you that Elijah has already come. And people did to him whatever they wanted to do, just as the Scriptures said it would happen.

Matthew 14:10

> He sent soldiers to the prison to cut off John's head.

Spiritual Principle

People often fail to recognize God's messengers until it is too late.

Key Truth

The path of John and the path of Jesus both led through suffering.

XIII. THEY UNDERSTOOD

Matthew 17:13 — John the Baptist

“Then the disciples understood that He was talking about John the Baptist.”

The disciples finally understood.

Jesus was talking about **John the Baptist.**

John was not Elijah come back from the dead.

But he came **in the spirit and power of Elijah.**

He fulfilled the prophecy.

And the One he prepared the way for was Jesus.

Cross References

Matthew 11:14

> And if you will believe what they said, you will believe that John is Elijah, whom they said would come.

Luke 1:17

> He will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah.

John 1:21

> They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He answered, “No, I am not.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus helps His followers understand the Scriptures.

XIV. A FATHER KNELT BEFORE JESUS

Matthew 17:14 — Down from the Mountain

“When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before Him.”

Jesus and the three disciples came down from the mountain.

From the glory of heaven, they came into the trouble of earth.

A crowd was waiting.

A man came to Jesus.

He **knelt before Him.**

He was desperate.

Cross References

Mark 9:14

> When Jesus, Peter, James, and John came back to the other followers, they saw a great crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.

Luke 9:37

> The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus.

Matthew 8:2

> Then a man with a skin disease came to Jesus. The man bowed down before Him.

Spiritual Principle

Mountaintop experiences prepare us for valley ministry.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We cannot live on the mountain; we must bring what we saw there down into the valley where people are hurting.

XV. HAVE MERCY ON MY SON

Matthew 17:15 — Into the Fire and the Water

“‘Lord, have mercy on my son,’ he said. ‘He has seizures and suffers greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.’”

The father cried out:

“Lord, have mercy on my son.”

His son **has seizures.**

He **suffers greatly.**

He **often falls into the fire or into the water.**

Mark tells us this had been happening since the boy was a child.

The demon was trying to destroy him.

This father had watched his son suffer for years.

Cross References

Mark 9:18

> Whenever the spirit attacks him, it throws him on the ground. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes very stiff.

Luke 9:39

> An evil spirit seizes my son, and suddenly he screams. It causes him to lose control of himself and foam at the mouth.

Mark 9:22

> The spirit often throws him into a fire or into water to kill him. If You can do anything for him, please have pity on us and help us.

Spiritual Principle

A parent's love brings their children to Jesus.

XVI. THEY COULD NOT HEAL HIM

Matthew 17:16 — The Disciples Failed

“I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

The father had already tried.

He brought his son **to Your disciples.**

But they could not heal him.

This was surprising.

In Matthew 10, Jesus had given His disciples authority to drive out demons.

They had done it before.

But this time, they failed.

Cross References

Mark 9:18

> I asked Your followers to force the evil spirit out, but they couldn't.

Matthew 10:1

> Jesus called His twelve followers together and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and sickness.

Luke 9:40

> I begged Your followers to force the evil spirit out, but they could not do it.

Spiritual Principle

Past success does not guarantee present power.

XVII. HOW LONG?

Matthew 17:17 — Bring the Boy to Me

“Jesus replied, ‘You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to Me.’”

Jesus spoke with strong feeling.

“You unbelieving and perverse generation.”

Unbelieving — they lacked faith.

Perverse — twisted, turned away from what is right.

These words may have been directed at the crowd, the teachers of the law who were arguing, and even the disciples.

“How long shall I stay with you?”

“How long shall I put up with you?”

Jesus had just come from the glory of heaven on the mountain.

Now He was surrounded by unbelief.

But then He said:

“Bring the boy here to Me.”

Even in His frustration, Jesus did not turn the boy away.

Cross References

Mark 9:19

> Jesus answered, “You people have no faith. How long must I stay with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me.”

Luke 9:41

> Jesus answered, “You people have no faith, and you are evil. How long must I stay with you and be patient with you? Bring your son here.”

Deuteronomy 32:5

> They have done evil against Him. They are not His children. They are a twisted and crooked people.

Spiritual Principle

Unbelief grieves the heart of Jesus.

Key Truth

Jesus' frustration with unbelief never stopped His compassion for the hurting.

XVIII. HEALED AT THAT MOMENT

Matthew 17:18 — Jesus Rebuked the Demon

“Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.”

Jesus **rebuked the demon.**

And **it came out of the boy.**

He was healed at that moment.

What the disciples could not do, Jesus did instantly.

Years of suffering ended with one word.

Cross References

Mark 9:25

> When Jesus saw that a crowd was quickly gathering, He spoke to the evil spirit. He said, “You spirit that makes people unable to hear or speak, I command you to come out of this boy and never enter him again!”

Luke 9:42

> Jesus gave a strong command to the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then He gave him back to his father.

Matthew 8:16

> That evening people brought to Jesus many who had demons. Jesus spoke and the demons left them, and He healed all the sick.

Spiritual Principle

What we cannot do, Jesus can do.

XIX. WHY COULDN'T WE?

Matthew 17:19 — A Private Question

“Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, ‘Why couldn't we drive it out?’”

The disciples were embarrassed.

They came to Jesus **privately.**

“Why couldn't we drive it out?”

This was a good question to ask.

They did not make excuses.

They did not blame the boy or the father.

They came to Jesus to learn.

Cross References

Mark 9:28

> When Jesus went into the house, His followers asked Him privately, “Why couldn't we force that evil spirit out?”

Luke 9:40

> I begged Your followers to force the evil spirit out, but they could not do it.

Matthew 10:8

> Heal the sick, raise the dead to life again, heal those who have skin diseases, and force demons out of people.

Spiritual Principle

Failure can become a classroom if we bring it to Jesus.

XX. FAITH LIKE A MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 17:20 — Nothing Will Be Impossible

“He replied, ‘Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’”

Jesus gave the reason.

“Because you have so little faith.”

Then He said something surprising.

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed...”

A mustard seed was one of the smallest seeds.

Jesus was not saying they needed **more** faith.

He was saying that even a tiny amount of **real** faith is powerful.

The issue was not the size of their faith.

It was the object of their faith.

Perhaps they were trusting in their own past success.

Perhaps they had begun to think the power was theirs.

“You can say to this mountain, ‘Move,’ and it will move.”

Moving mountains was a Jewish way of describing something that seemed impossible.

“Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Not because of the strength of our faith.

But because of the greatness of our God.

Cross References

Luke 17:6

> The Lord said, “If your faith is as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Dig yourself up and plant yourself in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”

Mark 11:23

> I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, “Go, fall into the sea.” And if you have no doubts in your mind and believe that what you say will happen, God will do it for you.

1 Corinthians 13:2

> I may have so much faith that I can move mountains. But even with all these things, if I don't have love, then I am nothing.

Spiritual Principle

Small faith in a great God can do great things.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

It is not great faith in God that we need, but faith in a great God.

XXI. PRAYER AND FASTING

Matthew 17:21 — This Kind

“But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Jesus added another reason.

“This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Some battles require deeper dependence on God.

The disciples may have tried to drive out the demon in their own strength.

They may have been going through the motions.

Prayer shows dependence on God.

Fasting shows seriousness and humility before God.

This verse is not found in some of the oldest copies of Matthew.

But Mark records Jesus saying that this kind can come out only by prayer.

The lesson is clear either way.

Spiritual power comes from dependence on God.

Cross References

Mark 9:29

> Jesus answered, “That kind of spirit can only be forced out by prayer.”

Ezra 8:23

> So we fasted and prayed to our God about our trip, and He answered our prayers.

Daniel 9:3

> Then I turned to the Lord God and prayed and asked Him for help. I did not eat any food. I put on rough cloth and sat in ashes.

Spiritual Principle

Deeper battles require deeper dependence on God.

Application

Building dependence on God includes:

- Praying regularly, not only in emergencies.
- Fasting to seek God with focus.
- Admitting our own weakness.

- Not relying on past success.
- Trusting God's power, not our own.

XXII. DELIVERED INTO THE HANDS OF MEN

Matthew 17:22 — In Galilee

“When they came together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.’”

For the second time, Jesus predicted His death.

“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”

Delivered means **handed over** or **betrayed.**

Jesus knew Judas would betray Him.

He knew the religious leaders would hand Him over to the Romans.

And He knew that, behind it all, the Father was handing Him over for our salvation.

Cross References

Mark 9:31

> Jesus was teaching His followers. He said to them, “The Son of Man will be handed over to people, and they will kill Him.”

Luke 9:44

> Don't forget what I tell you now: The Son of Man will be handed over to people.

Matthew 20:18

> Look, we are going to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the leading priests and the teachers of the law.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus repeated the truth about the cross because it was central to His mission.

XXIII. THE DISCIPLES WERE FILLED WITH GRIEF

Matthew 17:23 — Raised on the Third Day

“They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life.” And the disciples were filled with grief.

“They will kill Him.”

“On the third day He will be raised to life.”

Jesus always spoke of His death and His resurrection together.

But the disciples heard only the first part.

They were filled with grief.

They did not yet understand the resurrection.

They only heard that Jesus would die.

Their sorrow was real.

But it would one day turn to joy.

Cross References

Mark 9:32

> But the followers did not understand what Jesus meant, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Luke 9:45

> But the followers did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them so they could not understand it.

John 16:6

> Your hearts are filled with sadness because I have told you these things.

Spiritual Principle

Never stop at the cross; always remember the resurrection.

Key Truth

The grief of Good Friday gives way to the joy of Easter morning.

XXIV. THE TEMPLE TAX

Matthew 17:24 — Doesn't Your Teacher Pay?

“After Jesus and His disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, ‘Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?’”

Jesus and His disciples came back to **Capernaum.**

The collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter.

This tax was not a Roman tax.

It was a tax for the temple in Jerusalem.

The Law of Moses required every Jewish man over twenty to pay half a shekel for the work of God's house.

In Jesus' day, it was equal to about two days' wages.

The collectors asked Peter:

“Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?”

Cross References

Exodus 30:13

> Each person who is counted must pay half a shekel. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD.

Exodus 38:26

> Every man who was counted, twenty years old or older, paid a half shekel.

Nehemiah 10:32

> We will each give one-eighth of an ounce of silver every year to support the work of the Temple of our God.

Spiritual Principle

Supporting the work of God's house is part of faithful living.

XXV. “YES, HE DOES”

Matthew 17:25 — Jesus Spoke First

“‘Yes, He does,’ Peter replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus spoke first. ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?’”

Peter answered quickly.

“Yes, He does.”

When Peter came into the house, **Jesus spoke first.**

Jesus already knew what had happened.

He had not been there, but He knew.

Then Jesus asked Peter a question.

From whom do the kings of the earth collect taxes?

From their own children or from others?

Cross References

Matthew 22:21

> Then Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and give to God the things that are God's.”

Romans 13:7

> Pay everyone what you owe him. If you owe any kind of tax, pay it.

1 Samuel 8:17

> He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus knows what happens even when He is not visibly present.

XXVI. THE CHILDREN ARE EXEMPT

Matthew 17:26 — From Others

“‘From others,’ Peter answered. ‘Then the children are exempt,’ Jesus said to him.”

Peter knew the answer.

Kings do not tax their own children.

They tax others.

“Then the children are exempt.”

Jesus' point was powerful.

The temple tax was for God's house.

Jesus is God's Son.

So He should not have to pay a tax for His own Father's house.

And those who belong to Jesus are children of God too.

Cross References

Galatians 4:7

> So now you are not a slave. You are God's child, and God will give you what He promised, because you are His child.

John 8:36

> So if the Son makes you free, you will be truly free.

Romans 8:15

> The Spirit we received does not make us slaves again to fear. The Spirit we have makes us God's chosen children, and with that Spirit we cry out, “Father.”

Spiritual Principle

Those who belong to Jesus are children of the King, not slaves.

XXVII. A COIN IN A FISH'S MOUTH

Matthew 17:27 — So That We May Not Cause Offense

“But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth, and you will find a coin. Take it and give it to them for My tax and yours.”

Jesus did not have to pay.

But He chose to pay anyway.

Why?

So that we may not cause offense.

Jesus did not want to give anyone a reason to reject His message over something small.

He set aside His rights for the sake of others.

Then He gave Peter unusual instructions.

Go to the lake.

Throw out your line.

Take the first fish.

Open its mouth.

You will find a coin.

The coin would be enough to pay the tax for both Jesus and Peter.

Peter was a fisherman.

Jesus met his need through the very thing Peter knew best.

And notice the words **“for My tax and yours.”**

Jesus provided for Peter's need along with His own.

Cross References

Exodus 30:13

> Each person who is counted must pay half a shekel. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD.

2 Kings 4:6

> When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another jar.” But he said, “There are no more jars.” Then the oil stopped flowing.

John 21:6

> He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they did, and they caught so many fish they could not pull the net back into the boat.

Spiritual Principle

Sometimes love chooses to give up its rights so that others are not offended.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The King's Son paid a tax He did not owe — and at the cross, He paid a debt He did not owe for us.

XXVIII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 17

1. Jesus' Glory Is Revealed

The Transfiguration confirms Him as God's beloved Son, greater than Moses and Elijah.

Principle:

Jesus is not one of the great servants of God; He is the Son of God.

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2. Listen to Jesus

The Father commands us to hear Christ above all voices.

Principle:

Every other voice must be measured by the voice of Jesus.

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3. Faith Unlocks God's Power

Even faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains.

Principle:

It is the greatness of God, not the size of our faith, that moves mountains.

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4. Some Victories Require Prayer and Fasting

Deeper battles need deeper dependence on God.

Principle:

Spiritual power flows from spiritual dependence.

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5. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Were Certain

He prepared His disciples to understand the cross and the empty tomb.

Principle:

The cross and the resurrection always go together.

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6. We Live Humbly, Not to Cause Offense

Jesus paid the temple tax even though He was exempt, modeling humility and peace.

Principle:

Love sometimes gives up its rights for the sake of others.

XXIX. THE MOUNTAIN AND THE VALLEY

Matthew 17 moves from the mountain of glory to the valley of need.

On the Mountain

- Jesus shines with glory.
- Moses and Elijah appear.
- The Father speaks.
- The disciples worship.

In the Valley

- A boy is tormented by a demon.
- A father is desperate.
- The disciples have failed.
- A crowd is full of unbelief.

What Connects Them

- The same Jesus is present in both places.
- The glory of the mountain gives power for the valley.

Key Truth

Jesus is just as glorious in the valley as He is on the mountain.

XXX. WHY MOSES AND ELIJAH?

Moses Represents the Law

God gave the Law through Moses.

Elijah Represents the Prophets

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets.

Both Met God on a Mountain

Moses and Elijah both met God on Mount Sinai.

Both Had Unusual Endings

God buried Moses, and Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind.

Both Pointed to Jesus

The Law and the Prophets point to Christ.

Both Disappeared

Only Jesus remained.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Law and the Prophets came to the mountain to bow before the One they had been pointing to all along.

XXXI. WHAT MATTHEW 17 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 17 presents Jesus as:

The Glorious One

His face shone like the sun.

Greater Than Moses and Elijah

The Law and the Prophets point to Him.

The Beloved Son

The Father is well pleased with Him.

The One We Must Hear

“Listen to Him!”

The Gentle Comforter

He touched His frightened disciples.

The Deliverer

He freed a tormented boy.

The Teacher of Faith

He showed that small faith in God is powerful.

The Suffering Savior

He would be delivered, killed, and raised.

The Son of the King

He was exempt from the temple tax.

The Humble Servant

He paid it anyway.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Jesus who shone on the mountain is the same Jesus who walked humbly toward the cross.

XXXII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What does “transfigured” mean?

It means changed in form.

Jesus' outward appearance changed to reveal His inner glory as the Son of God.

Question 2

Why did Jesus take only Peter, James, and John?

They were His closest disciples.

They were also with Him at other important moments, like raising Jairus's daughter and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Question 3

Why did Moses and Elijah appear?

Moses represented the Law, and Elijah represented the Prophets.

Together, they showed that the whole Old Testament points to Jesus.

Question 4

What were Moses and Elijah talking about with Jesus?

Luke tells us they were talking about His departure — His death — that He would accomplish in Jerusalem.

Question 5

What was wrong with Peter's idea of building three shelters?

It put Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah.

Jesus is far greater than any prophet.

Question 6

What did the Father say from the cloud?

“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!”

Question 7

What does it mean that the disciples saw “no one except Jesus”?

Moses and Elijah had done their work in pointing to Him.

In the end, Jesus alone remains, and He is enough.

Question 8

How was John the Baptist the Elijah who was to come?

John came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

He prepared the way for the Messiah, fulfilling Malachi's prophecy.

Question 9

Why couldn't the disciples drive out the demon?

Jesus said it was because of their little faith.

They may have been relying on their own past success instead of on God.

Question 10

What does faith like a mustard seed mean?

It means even a small amount of real faith in God is powerful.

The power is not in the size of our faith but in the greatness of God.

Question 11

Why does Jesus mention prayer and fasting?

Some battles require deeper dependence on God.

Prayer and fasting show that we are relying on Him, not on ourselves.

Question 12

Why were the disciples grieved when Jesus predicted His death?

They heard that He would be killed but did not yet understand the resurrection.

Question 13

What was the temple tax?

It was a tax every Jewish man paid for the support of the temple in Jerusalem.

It was based on the half shekel required in the Law of Moses.

Question 14

Why did Jesus pay the temple tax if He was exempt?

To avoid causing offense.

He set aside His rights so that no one would stumble over something small.

Question 15

What should Matthew 17 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 17 should cause believers to live:

- Worshiping Jesus as the glorious Son of God.
- Listening to Jesus above all other voices.
- Trusting His gentle touch when they are afraid.
- Keeping their eyes on Jesus alone.
- Bringing the glory of worship into the valleys of life.
- Trusting God with even small faith.
- Depending on God through prayer and fasting.
- Remembering both the cross and the resurrection.
- Living as children of the King.
- Setting aside their rights for the sake of others.

XXXIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 17 asks several important questions.

Do I Make Time to Go Apart with Jesus?

Do I See Jesus in His Glory, or Only as a Good Teacher?

Am I Placing Anyone or Anything on the Same Level as Jesus?

Am I Listening to Jesus Above All Other Voices?

When I Am Afraid, Do I Let Jesus Touch Me and Lift Me Up?

When Everything Else Fades, Is Jesus Enough for Me?

Am I Bringing What I Learn from God into the Valleys Where People Hurt?

Have I Been Relying on Past Success Instead of on God?

Is My Faith, Even If Small, Truly Resting in God?

Do I Depend on God Through Prayer and Fasting?

Do I Remember the Resurrection When I Think About the Cross?

Am I Willing to Give Up My Rights So That Others Are Not Offended?

XXXIV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Jesus Only”

On the mountain, the disciples saw amazing things.

Jesus shining like the sun.

Moses and Elijah.

A bright cloud.

The voice of God.

Peter wanted to build shelters and stay.

He wanted to hold on to the moment.

He wanted Moses and Elijah to stay too.

But then the Father spoke.

“Listen to Him!”

And when the disciples looked up, everything else was gone.

They saw **no one except Jesus.**

This creates a powerful principle.

Great experiences fade.

Great leaders pass away.

Even the greatest servants of God point beyond themselves.

In the end, what remains is Jesus.

And Jesus is enough.

Principle:

When the mountaintop moments are gone and the great voices are silent, Jesus remains — and He is all we need.

XXXV. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 17 begins on a mountain and ends by a lake.

On the mountain, Jesus shines with the glory of God.

Moses and Elijah appear.

The Father speaks:

“This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!”

The disciples fall on their faces.

Jesus touches them and lifts them up.

And they see Jesus only.

Then they come down into the valley.

A boy is suffering.

A father is desperate.

The disciples have failed.

But Jesus speaks, and the boy is healed.

Then Jesus teaches them that even faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains.

He tells them again that He will die and rise.

And He shows humility by paying a tax He did not owe.

Matthew 17 therefore reminds us:

Jesus is far greater than anyone else.

The Father calls us to listen to Him.

His glory does not drive us away; His touch draws us near.

Small faith in a great God is powerful.

Spiritual battles require dependence on God.

And love is willing to give up its rights for the sake of others.

The story of Matthew 17 does not end with:

Three shelters on a mountain.

Failed disciples.

Or grieving followers.

It ends with:

A healed boy.

A lesson in faith.

And a King who humbly pays what He does not owe.

The same call still stands:

Go apart with Jesus.

See His glory.

Listen to Him.

Let Him lift you up.

Keep your eyes on Jesus only.

Trust Him with mustard-seed faith.

Depend on Him in prayer.

Live humbly as a child of the King.

And until He returns:

Keep listening to Him.

Keep trusting Him.

Keep praying.

Keep your eyes on Jesus only.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for revealing the glory of Your Son.

Thank You that Jesus is not just a teacher or a prophet, but Your beloved Son.

Lord Jesus, we worship You.

Your face shines like the sun.

You are greater than Moses and Elijah.

The whole Old Testament points to You.

Forgive us for the times we have placed anyone or anything on the same level as You.

Father, we hear Your command: “Listen to Him.”

Help us listen to Jesus above every other voice.

When Your holiness overwhelms us, let us feel the touch of Jesus.

Help us hear Him say, “Get up. Don't be afraid.”

When everything else fades away, help us see Jesus only.

Teach us that He is enough.

Give us grace to bring what we learn on the mountain into the valleys where people are hurting.

Forgive us when we rely on our past success instead of on You.

Give us faith, even if it is as small as a mustard seed, that rests completely in You.

Teach us to depend on You through prayer and fasting.

Help us face every battle with humble dependence on Your power.

Thank You that Jesus was delivered into the hands of men for us.

Thank You that He was killed and raised on the third day.

When we grieve, remind us of the resurrection.

Thank You that through Jesus we are children of the King.

Teach us to live humbly, setting aside our rights so that others are not offended.

And thank You that Jesus paid a debt He did not owe so that we could be free.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!’” — Matthew 17:5

Central Truth

Jesus is the glorious, beloved Son of God whom the Father commands us to hear, and He calls His followers to trust Him with mustard-seed faith and to live humbly as children of the King.

Matthew 17 in One Sentence

Jesus is transfigured in glory before Peter, James, and John as the Father commands them to listen to Him, then He comes down to heal a tormented boy, teaches that mustard-seed faith can move mountains, predicts His death and resurrection again, and humbly pays the temple tax He did not owe.