

Who Is This Bedazzled Guy?

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[0:00] If you would open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 17, this morning we're going to be looking at the transfiguration. And what I want you to help you to see is that the transfiguration is not just an historical event, it's a motivational event.

And so would you turn now to Matthew 17? I'm actually going to start in verse 24 of 16. Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

[1:50] Listen to him. When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, rise and have no fear.

And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

And the disciples asked him, then why do the scribes say that this first Elijah must come? And Jesus answered, Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.

But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Every day you must ask yourself a question. Who matters most today?

[2:53] Who matters most? According to what Jesus is calling to at the end of Matthew 16, Jesus is saying, today you have a choice. Either you're going to live for yourself in this world which is passing away, or you're going to live for me, the Christ, and his kingdom which goes on forever and will one day culminate in the restoration of all things.

Choose this day who you will follow, yourself or the Christ. And so in Matthew 16, 24, Jesus says, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

And then what we see in verses 25 through 28 is Christ's rationale for it. Remember at the end of the sermon last week, I pointed you to those three fours in verse 25.

Verse 25, do you see that in chapter 16? You read the word, for whoever would save his life will lose it. In other words, whoever will live his life now will lose it then.

And then you see a four in verse 26. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Let's say you gather all the money and all the possessions in this life, and then Jesus comes back, and on that day you forfeit your soul.

[4:20] What was the benefit of everything you acquired? And then he goes on to say, it culminates in verse 27, the last four, he says, for the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and

then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

And so he's saying, I'm going to come back someday, and I'm going to judge everyone. I'm going to repay them. So if you live this life now for yourself, I will repay you accordingly.

But on that day when I come back, if you live this life now for me, I will repay you. You will find life. And then in verse 28, he says, truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

What I want you to see is the connection between verse 28 and chapter 16 and verse 1 of chapter 17. Truly, I say to you, some of you here are not going to die until you see me a certain way.

And then Matthew says in 17.1, six days later. The transfiguration is very much connected to this call to follow Jesus.

[5:47] It's part of Jesus' rationale to come after him. He's saying, come after me because I'm coming back. There's a future glory, and let me give you a glimpse of this glory now.

The transfiguration is motivation to live for Christ. Getting a glimpse of the glory of Christ compels us to follow him in all of our life for all of our days.

And so the transfiguration is not just a historical event. It's purposed by God to motivate you to follow Jesus. It gives you a glimpse of his glory.

So for us, here's what this means. The transfiguration took place almost 2,000 years ago, and God intends it to have an effect on us today in 2017.

To be followers of Jesus. It's fuel for followership. And so this one who calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him, he's the glorious one.

[7:04] He's breathtaking. He's overwhelming. And what we're going to see is his full glory, accompanied by an anticipation of a fullness of suffering, that's all designed to accomplish a full salvation, the restoration of all things.

And it results in you fully following him. So here's how we're going to proceed. We're going to walk through verses 1 through 13 of chapter 17, and then I'm going to bring it to a point and ask you two questions, and then we'll bring it to bear, say amen, sing a song, and go follow him.

All right. If you would look at chapter 17, verse 1, and after six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

Now here's what you've got to be aware of right away. Matthew, you really doesn't talk that much in terms of specific times. And so when he gets very specific about six days, it should catch your attention.

Like, Matthew, why are you being so specific? It's because he's making a connection. He wants us to understand that what Jesus says in verse 28 finds its fulfillment in what happens on this mountaintop six days later.

[8:28] And notice that Jesus is bringing with him three of his disciples. These are, it's the inner group. It's Peter, James, and John. James and John are the sons of Zebedee.

And Jesus brings them with them up on the top of this mountain. And these are the same three guys that in Matthew 26, Jesus is going to pull them aside in the Garden of Gethsemane.

They played a special role. So Jesus brings them up onto this mountaintop. Now, if you're familiar with mountaintops and the Bible, you'll quickly remember that throughout the Old Testament, a lot of revelation of God's glory happens on mountaintops.

And so Moses on the mountaintop in Exodus 19 and 24 and 34, God meets him there and reveals himself to him.

And Elijah on the mountaintop in 1 Kings 19, when he squares off against the prophets of Baal, and God shows up in awesome, awesome ways. And so Jesus is very purposefully, in verse 1, bringing these three disciples up onto this mountaintop so that they would behold his glory, so that they would follow him.

[9:50] In Luke chapter 9, we learned that during this whole episode, the disciples were really sleepy.

And chances are this all happened at night, which is important for what's about to happen. So here's what I want you to see so far.

Right now, in verse 1, Jesus is bringing his disciples up to the mountaintop. And he's just being faithful to what he said he would do in verse 28.

So already, Jesus is being faithful to his word. And now in verse 2, we have this Christological light show that takes place.

Do you like laser shows? Have you been to a planetarium thing at night? You know, dark lights. Been to fireworks recently. What happens on this mountaintop supersedes them all.

[10:58] We read in verse 2, Jesus is transfigured.

Jesus is transfigured. And we get our word metamorphosis from that word transfigured. He was dramatically changed in his appearance before his disciples. His face shone like the sun.

Have you recently tried to look at the sun around midday? You can't. Maybe for a little glimpse, and then your eyes get that kind of like, I can't see anything now for a little bit.

That's what's going on here. Jesus has been transfigured, and now there is a brilliance coming out of him. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

Do you know what bedazzle means? You know, there's this like bedazzling. Ladies will bedazzle their purses. Bedazzle your jeans. Kind of bedazzle hats.

[12:07] I've seen bedazzled fingernails. They're kind of glimmer. And so Jesus, his clothes were bedazzled from the glory that he was emanating.

Kind of harkens back to Revelation chapter 1 where John, the son of Zebedee, has another vision of the glorified Christ, and he sees him in his brilliant glory.

And in verse 17, he drops as a dead man. Here we have on this mountaintop, Jesus' brilliance on display.

And I just want to pause here and ask a question. What kind of brilliance are we talking about? On a full moon, I can walk around my neighborhood because it's basically lit up.

I can see pretty well. The moon is brilliant. It's a reflected brilliance because we all know that the moon does not generate its own brilliance.

[13:16] That the moon is simply reflecting the brilliance of the sun. But when it comes to the sun, the splendor of the sun, it is essential to its nature.

The sun generates its own heat and light. And so the brilliance that we see here in verse 2 of chapter 17, it's not a reflected brilliance.

Remember when Moses came down off the mountain and he had to veil his face because he was reflecting the glory of God? It's not that kind of brilliance. The brilliance on display here is a brilliance of God himself emanating outwards.

It is a radiating glory. What we see happening here are the disciples are getting a glimpse of the unveiled essential splendor of the second person of the Trinity.

This is the way he's always been like. His pre-incarnate glory, this is the way he's always existed. And when he comes back someday in Revelation 21 and 22, do you remember the light source of the new Jerusalem?

[14:42] Doesn't need the sun anymore. Jesus is lighting up the place because of his essential glory on display.

Who is this guy? Who is this guy on this mountaintop? He's true to his word and we have an unveiling of his glory.

This past Wednesday night, I was coming back from being here at the building. Brian Whittington had just taught another installment in his apologetics class and I was coming back and it was, you know, this rainy craziness that's been happening and so it's been pretty dark and I live by Lincoln Park so I'm driving by Lincoln Park and there's been this whole kind of softball tournament going on all week at Lincoln Park but it got rained out but the lights were still on and so I'm driving down 22nd Avenue and I see this glory coming over Lincoln Park.

I'm like, what's going on? It was lit up! And so if you were at the base of this mountain here at Matthew 17 at night and you look up and you see this wonderful glory happening on the top of this mountain, you'd be like, what is going on?

Who is this guy? Shining like the sun on the mountaintop. This is the one who has called you to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him.

[16:21] That's who this is. He lights up your heart. He compels you to follow him. Would he get a glimpse of his glory?

You want to follow him. In verse 3, we realize that this amazing event on the mountaintop, Jesus has some people with him besides the disciples.

Look at verse 3. Who is this? And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

If it weren't enough that Jesus is, his glory has been revealed and he's lighting up the place, there are two other guys with him, Moses and Elijah. Let me ask you this question.

If you had to answer who are the top two presidents of the United States of America, how would you answer? It'd be interesting, wouldn't it? Mine would be George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

[17:29] George Washington is known for our first president. He's the one that started off our nation, right? Abraham Lincoln, 16th president and he's known for the Emancipation Proclamation in which slaves were delivered from slavery.

The deliverer, the establisher, and the deliverer. And so when we think about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in the history of our nation, we think certain things.

Moses. Now when Jews would think about the key players in Israel's history, their minds would go certain places. Moses led the people out of Egypt.

On Mount Sinai was given the law. He is the law giver. When you hear Moses, you think law. And then there's Elijah.

Mount Carmel, 1st Corinthians 19, defeats the prophets of Baal. He's early 2nd Kings. He doesn't die. He's taken up in a chariot of fire.

[18:36] In Malachi 4, 5, there's this prophecy of Elijah. That Elijah will be sent before the great and awesome day of the Lord.

And the understanding is he would usher in the restoration of all things. He's a prophet. When you hear Moses, you think law.

When you hear Elijah, you think prophet. So these are heavy hitters from Israel's past.

Representing the law and the prophets and they're in the presence of Jesus and they're having a conversation.

Don't you wish Matthew told us what they were talking about? Wouldn't you like to know? I don't think Jesus was saying, Moses, I don't think you've ever met Elijah. This is Elijah. Elijah, this is Moses. Seems like that they're having a conversation well into it that they knew each other.

It's a good thing that Luke 9 tells us what they were talking about. Would you flip over there to Luke chapter 9? I hope your heart is starting to beat a little faster.

[19:46] Because in Luke 9 we have a very interesting thing that's being talked about in verses 30 and 31. And behold, two men were talking with him.

Who are they? Moses and Elijah. Verse 31, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure. So notice, they've appeared in glory too and they're speaking of his departure.

Do you see a little number next to that word departure in your Bible? It's from a Greek word that's called exodus. They were speaking of his exodus.

Now let's look at the next clause that was about to which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. They're talking about the second exodus Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem through his suffering, death, and resurrection.

They're talking about the salvation that he would accomplish in Jerusalem by dying on the cross and being raised from the dead. They were talking about him ushering in the kingdom of him through his death, inaugurating the kingdom that would consummate into the restoration of all things, which means our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, our relationship to each other, and even our relationship to this world, this created place.

[21:16] That's what they were talking about. God's plan for the fullness of time.

Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus about what he's about to do and accomplish in Jerusalem. What it gets at is God's plan of salvation.

God has had a plan from the beginning of the world. And Moses and Elijah, they recognized they were moving in a direction that would be fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ.

And so when Jesus says in Matthew 5, 17, do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

He's talking about his work of salvation on the cross that Moses and Elijah and all the prophets pointed to.

[22:21] Who is this guy? Who is this guy? He's faithful to what he says. He's shining like the sun. He's surrounded by big hitters like Moses and Elijah who are talking about what he's about to do in Jerusalem.

And then we come across verse four and it's a bit bizarre. Look at that with me. And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here.

If you wish, I would make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. And so here's this grand display of awesome things and Peter starts saying, Jesus, I'll start making tents, buddy.

What do you need me to do? In Mark 9, Mark explains Peter's behavior by saying he didn't know what to say for they were all terrified.

Luke says, not knowing what he said. In other words, he is speaking without thinking, which for Peter is somewhat normal. So if you have a rash person who is terrified, stupid things typically happen, don't you think?

[23:30] That's my personal experience with myself. Now, here's what I do. I imagine, here's Peter talking. Can I make tents for you guys?

Moses looks over at Jesus and says, are you sure you want to build your church on him? And then Elijah is like, he has a good point.

And then there's verse five. as Peter is speaking, we have the introduction of a whole new thing.

A bright cloud. A bright cloud overshadowed them. Do you remember when God led his people out of Egypt? He led them out as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

If you were listening carefully to Rick when he opened up the service in Exodus chapter 34, God came down on the mountain as a cloud and met with Moses.

[24:39] When Solomon dedicated the temple in 1 Kings 8, a cloud filled the temple. A cloud of the glory of God, his presence. temple and then Ezekiel very tragically that same cloud which was in the temple gradually departs the temple signifying God's judgment and departure from being among his people.

This bright cloud is the presence of God the Father and it says it overshadowed them which is a really interesting way to talk about it because it's a bright cloud at night so maybe the better word would be it over brightened them.

Whatever the case it was overwhelming because then if that weren't enough a voice is heard. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased.

It's the Father speaking. It's identical language to Matthew 3 17 after Jesus has been baptized. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased. What is going on here is this.

In Matthew 16 16 Peter says you are the Christ the son of the living God and now God the father on the mountaintop is saying yep that's my boy my beloved one and I am well pleased in him.

[26:10] He's talking about the faithfulness of Christ. I'm delighting in him and he's delighting in what Christ has made known about himself that he's going to go to Jerusalem that he's going to suffer that he's going to be crucified and he's going to be raised.

That's right. That's my son. He's on my plan and I'm delighting in him. with whom I'm well pleased is a reference to Isaiah 42 1 which is a reference to the suffering servant my son.

Peter, James, and John hear this voice of God from the cloud. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased and they're undone.

They drop prostrate face down. But before I get there there's a difference between what the father says in Matthew 3 and Matthew 17.

There are three words difference. Listen to him. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased. Listen to him.

[27:27] It's kind of like an immediate rebuke of Peter who is just kind of talking blah blah blah blah blah. Listen to him. But we need to ask ourselves the question what has Jesus just said in the gospel of Matthew?

And what he's just called us to is to if anyone would come after me he must deny himself take up his cross and follow me. We must listen to him.

A disciple listens to his or her master. And so when you hear those words listen to him here's what you need to understand. He's saying obey him.

Not just to listen to gain knowledge but listen to obey. So for us this is what it means. We need to take to heart what Jesus has already said all the way back to the Sermon on the Mount.

Listen to him. Obey him. And then to hear this call of disciples we must listen to him and obey him. And when we get into Matthew 18 and 19 where Jesus starts telling us about what are the kingdom norms.

[28:39] What is kingdom greatness? It's humility. We must listen to him and obey him. What's kingdom purity? What are kingdom marriages like?

What is kingdom peacemaking like? What are all these things? We listen to him and obey him. If anyone would come after me let him take up his cross and follow me.

Let him deny himself. Who is this guy on this mountaintop? He's the one who's faithful to his word. He's the one shining like the sun. He's the one who fulfills the Old Testament and he's hanging out with big hitters from Israel's past.

He's beloved by his father because he's doing the father's will. And all of a sudden upon hearing the father's voice the disciples fall prostrate terrified.

It's a theophany. It's an appearing of God. It's not unusual. When God shows up people drop down on their face terrified. They're overwhelmed by the voice of God.

[29:49] It's what happened in Exodus chapter I think it's 20 or 21 where the people hear the voice of God from the mountaintop and they plead with Moses don't let him say anything to us anymore.

And in verse 7 we see Jesus do something that I hope does good to your soul. He sees them drop. He sees them terrified. And this glorious one shows how gentle he is.

he goes to them touches them and says rise and have no fear. Now they're no longer hearing the voice from the cloud.

They're hearing the voice of their master saying fear not. When they pick up their heads it's just Jesus.

the cloud is gone. Moses and Elijah are gone. Jesus unveiled brilliance is now veiled.

[30:56] It's just normal. Dark on a mountaintop. But it's not normal. These men have seen the glory of Christ.

They've been changed. If you want to jot down if you're taking notes. 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 16 through 17. It's Peter's account of what happened on the mountaintop.

Jesus is alone there. Who is this guy? Who is this guy? He's the one that calls you to follow him.

He's the one that calls you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him. In verses 9 through 13 Jesus and his disciples make their way down the mountain.

What we see in verses 1 through 8 is the glory of Christ on the mountain. Christ in full glory. And then going down the mountain Jesus speaks of a fullness of suffering that he will experience.

[32:16] Would you please take a look at what he has to say? Verse 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

Now this may sound strange to you. Jesus is saying, keep it on the down low guys that what you just saw. Why would he say this? Because he didn't want to distract them. There's this frenzy going on at the time for a Messiah, a political figure to take over.

And he doesn't want them saying anything until after his resurrection. It's the resurrection that will be the greatest evidence that he is the Messiah. And so he tells them, keep it on the down low.

And as they're on their way down, verse 10, the disciples ask him, then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come? What they're asking is, hey, we just saw Elijah with you.

The scribes teach that they must come first. What's up with that? And Jesus essentially says in verses 11 and 12, Elijah, yes, they're right.

[33:25] He does come and he will restore all things. He will usher in the kingdom of restoring all things. He says, they're right. But they missed him.

Verse 14, but I tell you that Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the son of man will certainly suffer at their hands.

And so Jesus clears up this Elijah question. The scribes had been teaching that but they missed John the Baptist when they came. John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4 or 5 of Elijah coming before the awesome day of the Lord.

But here's what I want you to notice. In verse 9, and as they were coming down the mountain Jesus commanded them, tell no one the vision until the son of man is raised from the dead.

Coming down to reality. me. I'm heading towards my death in resurrection. In verse 12, so also the son of man will certainly suffer at their hands.

[34:41] As John the Baptist went, so will the son of man go. The kingdom will be established through suffering. So what we see going on here is this.

We have God, the glory of Christ on display on the mountaintop, and then on the way down, Jesus is back talking about the fullness of suffering he will experience to accomplish our salvation and restore all things.

Who is this guy? He is the all glorious one, full of glory, and who will suffer fully to accomplish a fullness of salvation and give you fullness of grace that will result in you fully following him.

He did it for you. He did it for his glory. Who is this guy? He's the one who keeps his word. He is the one shining like the sun.

He's the fulfiller of the Old Testament. He is beloved by his father because he does the father's will. He is gentle. Rise, do not fear.

[36:00] And he will suffer. And he will suffer greatly in order to accomplish our salvation. So let's bring it all the way back.

If anyone would come after me, who's the me? He's the Christ, the glorious one. the one who would suffer in order to save so that we could follow him.

It's just not a historical event, this transfiguration. It's a functional event. It compels us as we see his glory to follow him.

Let me just make this connection for you. if this is Jesus, if this is truly who he is, who we see on the mountaintop is who he is now.

This is who he is. This is the true Jesus in his glory. He's worth everything. Every minute of your day, every square inch of your life, every penny in your bank account, he is worth it all because of who he is, what he's done, and what eventually he will do.

[37:39] tomorrow morning when you wake up, I hope you're asking the question today, who matters most?

And after getting a glimpse of the glory of Christ here in Matthew 17, I hope you gladly say, oh Lord Jesus, I will gladly deny myself, and I will take up my cross, and I will follow you because you alone are glorious, and you alone are worthy of my life.

Let's pray. God in heaven, would you take these words of yours in Matthew 17, especially this glimpse of the glory of Christ on the mountaintop, and would you press that into our hearts so that we will never forget it, so that we wake up day after day with the sense that Lord Jesus, you are the glorious one, and that when you come back, we will see you as you are, and we will rejoice.

It's in your name we pray. Amen. Amen.