

Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2020 1:20 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 17

"While he (Peter) was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5)

Last nite's lesson on Matthew 17 emphatically answered a question raised by Jesus to His disciples in last week's lesson, perhaps the most important question that could be asked of anyone, even to this day: "Who do YOU say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Who is Jesus? Peter actually correctly answered that question, replying: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Wow! But, as noted by Jesus, it was "revealed to him (to Peter), not by flesh and blood but by My Father who is in heaven"! In other words (as noted by John MacArthur), God the Father had actually opened Peter's eyes to the fullness of Jesus' identity and who He really was! And last nite's lesson on Matthew 17 clearly affirms that revelation (and reality!) to Peter, James, and John (and to us!) on the "mount of transfiguration," as discussed below!

The transfiguration event also sheds light on the slightly vague promise, made by Jesus to His disciples (in verse 28 of Matthew 16), that "some of them who were standing with Him would not taste death until they saw Him coming in His kingdom"!

So, what exactly took place on the mount of transfiguration?

Jesus was "transfigured" (the Greek word "metamorphosis" is used) "before them"! Before Peter, James, and John and apparently "for" them! His face "shown like the sun, and His garments became as white as light!" And Moses and Elijah "appeared...talking with Jesus"! Luke's account says, "talking about His departure (or coming death) which "He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem"! (Wow! Interesting! All part of the plan!)

It was then that the "ever-impetuous" Peter interrupted the "flow of things," by suggesting they build three tabernacles (like was done by the children of Israel when celebrating a seven-day feast, in the wilderness, that looked forward to the day when the children of Israel would enter the "promised land.) Peter obviously still had his heart and mind on the "earthly" kingdom, which he probably thought was now being consummated! But "while he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased! Listen to Him!" At which point the disciples "fell face down to the ground and were terrified" until Jesus "touched them" and told them to "get up and not to be afraid"! And when they got up, verse 8 says, they "saw no one but Jesus"! Whew!

A more "sanctified" Peter would later write (in 2 Peter 1:16-18): "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty! For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven

when we were with Him on the holy mountain!" Do you think Peter got it? Who Jesus Christ was, and is?

But what's the significance of Moses and Elijah being there? Moses, who God used to bring the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, and to establish the Mosaic covenant which governed the way Israel was to live! Whose own face "shown" (reflecting the "shekinah" glory of God) after meeting and speaking with God in a thick cloud over Mt. Sinai and delivering the ten commandments! And Elijah who challenged the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, and "proclaimed" the glory of God, leading the people back to God after their worst apostasy!

Did the presence of Elijah represent a fulfillment of the prophecies of Malachi 3:1 and 4:1-6, as the "forerunner" of the Messiah, who would "clear the way," and as the one who would "restore all things" the disciples wanted to know! No, John the Baptist, the forerunner, had already come (fulfilling Malachi 3:1)! But what was not revealed, and still a mystery to the disciples, was that Elijah's presence on the mount was just a "preview" of what was (and is!) still to come: the fulfillment of Malachi 4:1-6 with the coming (again) of Elijah, ushering in the second coming of Christ! It was for this reason that Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to tell of what had happened on the mount "until the Son of Man has risen from the dead"! It was not yet time to proclaim the "coming of the kingdom" until after the resurrection and coming of the "church age" (which we are now living in)! (And so, will Moses and Elijah be the "two witnesses," spoken of in Revelation 11:3, who will appear "to prophecy" in the second half of the seven-year Tribulation period, ushering in the second coming of the Lord, as many Biblical scholars believe?)

As noted, the transfiguration was primarily for the benefit of Peter, James, John, and us! 2 Corinthians 3:18 says: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit!" David Pratt, pastor of McLean Bible Church, has written that "as we behold the glories of the Lord, we become more like Him!" In other words, we will become what we behold! And one day, hard as it is to understand, we will be like Him! 1 John 3:2-3 says: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be! We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is! Everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as He is pure!" Wow! (All of which brings to my mind and I find myself singing the song we sometime sing, or hear, in our worship, "We shall behold Him; we shall behold Him, face to face, in all of His glory...!")

Well, there quite a bit more in Matthew 17! Including the inability of the disciples (probably the other nine who weren't on the mount!) to heal the epileptic, even though they were earlier given authority to do this kind of thing, in Matthew 10! (Perhaps it was due to the fact that earthly kingdom, earlier planned, was temporarily delayed and Jesus was now heading to the cross, in addition to their lack of faith!)

Then Jesus again shares the "game plan" (in verses 22-23)! Jesus "was going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day"! And the disciples were deeply grieved! (What? No kingdom? They still didn't understand!)

Happily, Matthew 17 ends with one of the greatest and certainly most fascinating of all the miracles of Jesus! And recorded only by Matthew, the former tax collector, who must have really appreciated it! And you can only imagine the shock for Peter, the "big fisherman"! You have to read it (in verses 24-27) to fully appreciate it! The wonder of it all! Reminds us of Jonah 1:17, where "the Lord prepared (appointed!) a great fish to swallow up Jonah!" Do you think God's in control of all nature and the universe? And that He has a plan for the world and for us?

Well, Matthew 17 gives us, I think, the most exhilarating, awe-inspiring, worship-evoking (Steve Holley used the word "horrific"! ) portrait of Jesus, perhaps in all the gospels!

Our goal, as we continue our study of Matthew, should be that we would "behold" the Lord Jesus Christ and become more like Him!

May we all go forth this week, with that thought in mind!

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