

1. When I wrote the lesson for Chapter 15, I titled the lesson “misconceptions”.
 - a) For Chapter 17, we can call this “Misconceptions, II” –Jesus isn’t done yet. ☺
 - b) To explain, it is helpful look at the big-picture of why Matthew wrote this gospel.
 - i) Remember the purpose of the gospel was to present Jesus as the promised Messiah (i.e., King, or “The Christ”) to Israel. The book is “very Jewish” in its presentation.
 - ii) Matthew goes to extensive time and trouble to prove Jesus is the Messiah.
 - iii) Matthew quotes the Old Testament more than any other Gospel in order to prove Jesus is the Messiah.
 - a) The most common quote in the book is “as it is written.”
 - iv) Another issue Matthew has to deal with in this gospel is misconceptions about just who is the Messiah and what is his role.
 - a) Religious Jews of that day wanted a ruling a Messiah, not one who would suffer for his sins.
 - b) Further, many thought the Messiah would “just” be a man, say, on the same level as Moses or one of the prophets.
 - c) Part of Matthew’s job is to show Jesus superiority to other great Jewish patriarchs of the Old Testament.
 - c) Interwoven into Matthew’s gospel is what God expects from us as followers of Jesus.
 - i) Remember that this is written to a Jewish reader.
 - ii) Jews had an elaborate set of “official” interpretations on the Old Testament.
 - iii) What Jesus does, through the gospels is to show us how to properly interpret and read the Old Testament as to how it applies to our lives.
 - iv) Jesus spends a lot of time dealing with misconceptions about him and his mission.
2. With all that in mind let me summarize Chapter 17. It contains three stories:
 - a) First is Jesus being “transfigured” before 3 of the 12 disciples.
 - i) His physical appearance changes to brilliant white.
 - ii) All of a sudden Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus.
 - iii) The voice of God the Father then says to Peter in effect, “Listen to Jesus, not them”.
 - iv) Then, Moses and Elijah disappear.
 - b) The second story in Chapter 17 is about Jesus healing a boy of a demon.
 - i) Further, it talks about the disciples failure to do the same and why.
 - c) The third story is about some tax collectors asking the disciples if Jesus pays a certain tax.
 - i) Jesus told Peter, of all things, to go fish. Jesus said that in the mouth of a fish would be a coin that would pay the tax for Jesus and Peter.
 - ii) It is a strange story and I’ll analyze it to death when I get there. ☺
 - d) What I want you to think about now is why these three stories in this order?
 - i) What was Matthew’s purpose in tying all three together in this order?
 - ii) Let’s tie it to Matthew’s purpose for writing this book:
 - a) First we have Jesus “changing” into more of a Godly-appearance.
 - (1) It is another proof that the Messiah is God himself incarnate.
 - b) Second, we have the story of Jesus healing a boy of a demon.
 - (1) The main point of this story is that Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack-of-faith in not being able to heal this boy themselves.
 - (2) Jesus was teaching “don’t give up so easily” in their own faith.
 - c) Finally Jesus told Peter to go fish to get a coin out of the fish’s mouth.
 - (1) The main application has to do with “being a good witness to the unbelieving world around us”.

- iii) In summary we have:
 - a) 1) A story of Jesus showing his deity;
 - b) 2) A story of how the disciples are suppose to minister to others;
 - c) 3) A story of how the disciples are suppose to be witnesses to the outside world (i.e., non-believers).
 - d) That is a good summary of the Christian life!
 - (1) We draw upon God for our strength. God alone is a deity in the mystery of the Trinity. We realize that, and serve God.
 - (2) We serve God by serving others. We help lead others to Jesus and help minister to them of their needs.
 - (3) Finally, we are to be a witness to the outside world.
 - (a) Jesus never calls upon us to rebel against paying our taxes. Jesus never called for social revolution, just change from within. There are times for social revolution, but that is secondary in importance to being a good witness for Jesus.
 - (b) Jesus tells Peter to pay the tax as to “not offend them”. It is the idea of being a good witness to the outside world.
- e) There, I’ve summarized the chapter. The rest is just the details. ☺

- 3. Verse 1: After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.
 - a) The first story in this chapter is about the “transfiguration”.
 - i) To summarize, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up to a mountain, where Jesus becomes “glowing white” before their eyes.
 - b) The first thing to realize is that Verse 1 goes with Verse 28 of the previous chapter.
 - i) Some translations such as the King James have the first word of Verse 1 as “and”. It ties Verse 1 of this Chapter with Verse 28 of the previous chapter. Here are the two verses together:
 - a) “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (And) After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. (Matthew 16:28-17:1, NIV).
 - ii) In Verse 28 Jesus told the disciples that some of them would not taste death until they see Jesus coming into his kingdom.
 - a) If you recall from the last lesson, this is a difficult verse to translate.
 - b) The best explanation is that the term “kingdom” refers to the kingdom of believers, that is, life here-on-earth as Christians. It does not refer to Jesus’ second coming nor does it refer to our next life-in-heaven.
 - c) The proof is to tie Verse 28 of Chapter 16 with Verse 1 of Chapter 17.
 - d) Here, six days after Jesus made the “some of you” statement, three of the 12 disciples are lead up unto the mountain to see Jesus transfigured.
 - c) OK, why these three guys? Why not take all 12 or a whole multitude for that matter?
 - i) The most logical explanation is that Jesus wanted to keep his Messiahship a secret until the time of the cross. He has stated that many times.
 - ii) If a large multitude of people saw Jesus like this, they would try to force him to be King of Israel there on the spot, like the promises made for Jesus 2nd coming.
 - iii) It would be more difficult for the religious leaders to condemn him to death if people saw this glowing-white incident.
 - iv) Back to the question, why did Jesus pick Peter, James and John?
 - a) First of all, we don’t know for sure. This is just speculation.
 - b) Remember God is in charge and He gets to make the choices, not us.

- v) For starters, we have to read this story in context of some of the previous stories.
 - a) Remember in Chapter 16 Jesus just told them how he was going to be betrayed and killed. This is where Jesus made the famous “get behind me Satan” statement to Peter.
 - b) The disciples could be going through some moments of doubts.
 - c) Jesus “showed off his power” in order to validate to the disciples who He was and the fact that it was worth the price one of his followers.
 - vi) But why Peter, James and John? Here is something to think about:
 - a) Other than Paul, who came later, Peter & John wrote most of the New Testament. Maybe Jesus picked these two for that reason.
 - (1) (Don’t confuse the disciple-John with John the Baptist!)
 - b) Peter wrote about this incident (See 1st Peter 1:16).
 - c) The James mentioned here, is not the same guy who wrote “James”.
 - (1) This James is the older brother of John.
 - (2) This James is killed by King Herod (Acts 12:2)
 - (3) James becomes the first of the 12 disciples to be martyred.
 - d) Therefore, maybe the reason Jesus picked these three guys is that one served as an example of being a martyr for Christ, while the other two were used mightily in the early church growth and in writing epistles.
 - d) Let’s get back to Verse 1. Why the emphasis on “six days”?
 - i) The story of Jesus transfiguration is told in Mark and Luke’s Gospel.
 - a) Mark also mentions the six days.
 - b) Luke says eight days, but it is not a contradiction. Luke says “about eight days after Jesus says all this” (Luke 9:28 NIV). Luke includes some extra days at the start.
 - ii) The bible does not say why this time frame is so important.
 - a) The commentators are filled with speculation, and it is just that.
 - b) The Christian-Jewish commentators see a significance of less-than-a full-week in this time span as somehow symbolic of a Sabbath-week.
 - (1) I’m not sure what you do with that information, but there it is. ☺
 - iii) I think the main point is to point out that soon after Jesus made the prediction that “some of you will see the manifestation of Jesus”, that some did.
4. Verse 2 (again): There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.
- a) The word “transfigured” describes a change from within.
 - i) The Greek word for transfigured is similar to the term “metamorphosis”.
 - ii) It does not mean Jesus had a bright spotlight on him; it was a major physical change in his being.
 - b) Remember that Matthew himself was not up there. He got his information second-hand from one of the three disciples.
 - c) These two verses are full of questions and speculations about the future.
 - i) If Jesus was that “bright”, how was it that the disciples could still look at him?
 - ii) How did the disciples know this was Moses and Elijah?
 - a) Did Jesus introduce them? “Peter, meet Moses; Moses, meet Peter”, etc. ☺
 - b) Did they have nametags? How did the disciples know which guy was Moses and which guy was Elijah?
 - iii) What I am about to say is speculation on my part, so read it as such:
 - a) I think when we get to heaven, we just “know” who people are. We won’t need nametags. This is a good thing, because I’m terrible at names. ☺

- b) Further, I think we are all going to “transfigure” somehow, like Jesus in our new manifested body in heaven.
- c) Notice what John said in his epistle: (Remember John was 1 of these “3”)
 - (1) “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”
(1st John 3:2, NIV)
 - (2) I suspect that John was reflecting on this vision that he saw many years earlier. That in heaven, it will be a little or a lot like this “transfiguration”, where Jesus “glows white from within” and we as believers recognize each other.
- d) Again, this is John’s speculation. Come to your own conclusion! ☺
- d) OK, why Moses and Elijah? Why not Abraham, or Noah, or King David?
 - i) Here are some interesting things to think about.
 - a) Elijah never died. He was “raptured” to use a modern Christian term. The verse of Elijah being taken into heaven is in 2nd Kings 2:11
 - b) Moses death is just as strange. The book of Deuteronomy states that Moses went up to a mountain by himself to die, and God himself buried him and no one “to this day” knows where Moses body is. (Ref.: Deut. 34:5).
 - c) Also in the New Testament Book of Jude. There is this strange reference that Satan and the Archangel Michael fought over the body of Moses! (Reference Jude 1:9)
 - ii) The answer requires that we “think Jewish”.
 - a) More than anyone else, Moses represents “The Law”.
 - (1) Moses is considered the greatest leader ever in Jewish history.
 - (2) He wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, which to Jews, is honored more than the other books of the bible.
 - (3) According to religious Jews to this day, there are 613 commandments given in the five books of Moses. The “10 commandments” are those given to everybody-at-once. The rest were given to Moses, who then related them to everyone else. With that many commandments, Moses is associated with the law.
 - b) Elijah is considered the greatest of the prophets.
 - (1) We’re going to discuss him more in a few verses, but the main idea is that the bible says Elijah was 1) “raptured” by God and 2) will return prior to the coming of the Messiah.
 - (2) A Jewish ritual, which is part of the Passover meal, is to leave an empty plate for Elijah in case he shows up. The door is left open or unlocked for the same reason.
 - (3) In a Jewish mind, Elijah is considered the greatest of the prophets.
 - c) Therefore, Moses and Elijah represent “The Law and The Prophets”
 - (1) Mathew wants to show in the next few verses that Jesus is not equal to the “Law and the Prophets”, but Jesus is greater than the “Law and the Prophets”.
- 5. Verse 4: 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." ⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"
 - a) The first thing I want you to see is that a purpose this whole thing is to show these disciples and us the reader is that Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah.

- b) Let me try to paraphrase what Peter is saying, “Wow Lord, it is an honor that you picked me, and John and James for this great mountaintop experience. Tell you what, to honor all three of you, let us three guys build three equal-size shrines, one for each of you”.
 - i) When Peter said “shelter’s” (or booths, depending upon your translation), he was referring to a portable tabernacle, designed to be a place of honor.
 - ii) Peter’s mistake was to put Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah.
 - iii) Luckily, God the Father came on the scene to correct Peter! ☺
 - c) Verse 5 talks about the voice of God the Father saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”
 - i) A reason for this statement was to correct Peter. It was to help the three disciples understand Jesus superiority in rank to Moses and Elijah.
 - ii) For God the Father to call Jesus “his son” implies equality with God the Father.
 - a) Most of this verse is almost identical to God the Father’s statement when the dove descending upon Jesus way back in Chapter 3.
 - d) The verse also mentions a “bright cloud” and a voice from the cloud.
 - i) To understand this, again you have to “think Jewish”.
 - a) When God spoke to Moses at Mt. Sinai, there was a thick cloud surrounding the mountain. (Reference Exodus 19:9)
 - b) The voice of God is often associated with clouds. The word picture for us is that we can’t fully comprehend God and his power. Just as clouds make things “fuzzy” for us to see, so it is with direct communication from God.
6. Verse 6: When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.
- a) Notice that the voice of God scared the disciples. The “white-Jesus” didn’t invoke fear.
 - i) Maybe I’m reading too much in the text, but there is no mention of any fear when they saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah. When they heard the voice of God the Father, now they were scared.
 - ii) One can read that of some of the Old Testament prophets as well. When one realizes they are in the presence of a holy and perfect God, one realizes their own imperfections and fear-of-judgment sets in.
 - b) God wanted them (and us!) to learn more about Jesus, and who Jesus was, in comparison to the great leaders of Israel’s past.
 - i) The application to us is that it is ok to honor and respect great Jewish and Christian leaders, but our primary focus needs to be on Jesus.
 - a) To quote God the Father about Jesus, “Hear Him!”
7. Verse 9: 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.”
- a) Jesus told these 3 guys not to tell anyone about the vision until after the resurrection.
 - b) That means that Matthew himself didn’t hear about this until later.
 - c) This had to be tough for the disciples. Imagine seeing this and not being able to tell anyone about it! I also suspect that their egos went up a notch that “they” were chosen and not the others. Jesus will deal with that in the next section of the text.
 - d) It was probably a long walk down the mountain. Jesus was trying to let Peter, James and John “digest” all the information presented on the mountaintop.
8. Verse 10: The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”
- a) In the last book of the Old Testament, in the last chapter, in the second to last verse, it does say that Elijah comes prior to the Messiah coming.
 - i) “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.” (Malachi 4:5, NIV)

- b) There is a possibility that some Jewish scribes were telling the disciples that Jesus is not the Messiah because “Elijah must come first”. Therefore, they asked Jesus this question.
9. Verse 11: Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.
- a) Jesus is saying there is a double-fulfillment of Malachi's prediction about Elijah.
- b) Jesus says in Verse 12 that Elijah has already come.
- i) In that sense it refers to John the Baptist as stated in Verse 13.
- c) Jesus then says in Verse 12 that Elijah will come. Remember that Jesus made this statement after the appearance of Elijah and Moses up on the mountaintop.
- i) Therefore, Jesus is predicted another appearance by Elijah before Jesus 2nd coming.
- d) Let's talk about the past tense appearance of “Elijah”. Although Jesus never bluntly said it is John the Baptist, the disciples understood it was about John the Baptist.
- i) It is important to understand that John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah.
- ii) In John's Gospel, The Jewish religious leaders asked John directly are you Elijah and he said “no”. (Reference John 1:21)
- iii) On the other hand, before John the Baptist was born, an angel appeared to John the Baptist's father and said, “He (John) will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:15, NIV).
- iv) Tying John 1:21 and Luke 1:15 together, John was not the literal fulfillment of Elijah as promised in Malachi, but he is the spiritual fulfillment (a “type” or word-picture) of Elijah as part of Jesus first coming.
- e) Let's talk about the future appearance of “Elijah”. This has not happened yet.
- i) Look at Malachi 4:5 again. It says that Elijah will come “before that great and dreadful day of the LORD”.
- a) Jesus death and resurrection is not a “dreadful day”. Not to me at least. ☺
- b) It is referring to the events of Jesus second coming. I don't know if you've read Revelation, but it is pretty full of some dreadful things. ☺
- ii) In Revelation, Chapter 11, it speaks of “my (God's) two witnesses” in Verse 3.
- a) I believe that one of those two witnesses is Elijah.
- b) Elijah is not mentioned by name in Revelation Chapter 11, but it is logical speculation because Jesus said Elijah would come and restore all things.
- c) Personally, I believe the other guy in Revelation 11 is Moses.
- (1) I can't prove it, but the fact that Moses and Elijah appear in this chapter as two witnesses does tie very well to Revelation 11.
- (2) Besides these two guys in Revelation 11 have the power to turn water to blood and strike the earth with plagues (ref: Rev. 11:6). That sounds very Moses-like to me. ☺
- (3) The other powers given to these two guys is to “shut the sky so that it does not rain”. (Ref.: Rev. 11:6). That is one of the miracles that is associated with Elijah (Ref. Luke 4:24 and 1st Kings 17:1).
- iii) Getting back to the transfiguration, Luke mentions something that is not mentioned in Matthew. Luke mentions that Moses and Elijah were “were speaking of His (Jesus') departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem”. (Luke 9:31, NASB). One wonders if the fact they were discussing this fact means they were chosen to be the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

- f) Getting back to these verses, notice Jesus says the he will suffer the same way that John the Baptist did. He was referring to the corporate rejection by the religious leaders.
 - i) The more you read the gospels, you more you understand that the corporate rejection of Jesus and the crucifixion didn't "sink in" until after the resurrection.
 - ii) I suspect the disciples were still pondering the Elijah-John the Baptist connection and not thinking about what Jesus said about he'll suffer a similar fate to John.
10. Verse 14: When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.
- a) Jesus and those three disciples are now down from the mountaintop.
 - i) They are now joined by the rest of the disciples and a large multitude.
 - b) Next we have the description of a man pleading with Jesus to heal his son.
 - c) The man claims his son is possessed by a demon. The symptoms sound like epilepsy and the fact that his son is having "epileptic fits". Yet somehow, the man thinks, or knows it is something worse and demon(s) are controlling his son.
 - i) A side note to us is "how do we tell, for example, if someone today is suffering from epilepsy or a demon possession? My answer would be "I don't know, and you should consider both possibilities. Pray to God the father to cure the person and if it is a demon possession, to remove it. Further, God has blessed us with hospitals, doctors and clinics. God expects us to use those items to help others.
 - d) Back to the boy, you can visually picture both the frustration of the father and the disfigurement of the boy. He probably has burn scars from falling into fire pits. (Was he blind or partially blinded from this? This is someone who fell into water and fire pits.) A desperate father, wanting his son to be better turns to this "healer" to help.
 - e) A quick reminder of some thoughts on demon possession. I am convinced that a believer in God is "sealed" and cannot be demon possessed. That is very different from letting Satan influence us and causing us to sin. I do believe demon possession exists. The movie "The Exorcist" is based on a number of actual case studies, except in real life those demons were removed. I don't believe it exists very much in the United States as we pray too much around here.
11. Verse 16: I (the boy's father) brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."
- ¹⁷ "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."
- a) Jesus response amazes me here. Notice Jesus does not just say, "Of course I'll cure him, I love all people, bring him to me!
 - i) Jesus does cure him. The point is not Jesus lack of compassion toward the son.
 - ii) Jesus first uses this opportunity to address the crowd and teach his disciples a lesson about their faith and his power.
 - b) Here's a good question: When Jesus said, "O unbelieving and perverse generation" was Jesus talking to his disciples or the whole multitude?
 - i) Jesus is responding to the fact that the man brought his son to the other disciples, but they were not able to heal the boy.
 - ii) Therefore, the most likely possibility is that Jesus is addressing the disciples that they were unable to cast out the demons.
 - a) In Chapter 10, Jesus gave his disciples the authority to cast out demons.
 - (1) "He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness." (Matthew 10:1, NIV).
 - b) We'll talk more in a minute about why Jesus rebuked the disciples.

- iii) If Jesus was addressing the whole multitude, then Jesus is addressing the fact that the multitude was interested in Jesus-the-miracle-worker, not Jesus the Messiah.
 - a) The rebuke came at the fact they were ignoring his teaching and not following him, and they were only interested in seeing the miracles.
 - iv) My point is you can read this verse as either Jesus rebuking his disciples specifically or you can read it as Jesus rebuking the large crowd.
- 12. Verse 18: Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.
 - a) The fact Matthew mentions the exorcism shows that Jesus did have compassion on the boy and his father. Jesus first used the situation to teach those around him a lesson.
 - b) Mark's Gospel has more details about the exorcism itself. Mark mentions that the release of the demon appeared to have killed the boy. The crowd thought the boy was dead until Jesus told him to get up. (Reference Mark 9:26).
 - c) Matthew's emphasis is on Jesus the Promised Messiah. One of the promises of the Messiah in the Old Testament is that he would do miracles. (Ref.: Isaiah 29:18, et.al.)
 - d) Mark's gospel emphasizes Jesus as his role as a "servant" to mankind and thus gives more details about this miracle as well as other miracles.
- 13. Verse 19: Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"
²⁰ He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, 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. "
 - a) The disciples were aware that Jesus gave them the authority (back in Chapter 10) to drive out demons. Yet, they failed here to drive them out.
 - b) Jesus rebuked them by saying in effect, "You couldn't do it because you didn't have enough faith".
 - c) Let's talk about what Jesus meant by that:
 - i) We're they not praying with enough faith?
 - ii) If I pray say, for a new Mercedes, and I pray without doubting I will get that Mercedes, is God now "obligated" to give me that Mercedes because I asked "In Jesus name"? ☺
 - iii) Of course not. Prayer is not about getting your will accomplished, it is about getting God's will accomplished. Prayer is God getting us involved in the process.
 - iv) There is a classical Christian expression that goes "Without God, we can't and without us, God won't." The first part of that expression means we can't accomplish anything spiritually without asking God for help. The second part of that expression means that God desires to work through people. This is why He encourages and asks for prayer. It is God's way of keeping us close to Him.
 - a) My favorite illustration on this topic is when you send a child of yours off to college. You don't give them all the money they need for the next 4-5 years. You give it to them a little at a time. That way, they stay in contact with you! ☺ In a sense, God works the same way, he gives us what we need a little at a time so we stay in contact.
 - d) Let's get back to Jesus talking about the faith of the disciples.
 - i) He said that they lack the "faith" to heal the boy of demon possession.
 - ii) Jesus then gives an illustration that if you have the faith of a mustard seed, which is enough faith to move a mountain.
 - a) Again, Jesus is not saying, "OK, Mount Everest, move three feet to the left as I pray it in Jesus name". ☺ Jesus is saying that if you pray something that is God's will, it will happen on God's timing. If it is God's will to move a mountain three feet to the left, stand back and watch it move!

- iii) What I believe (along with many commentators) is that the disciples gave up too easily in trying to cure the boy of demon possession.
 - a) They probably prayed a few times and said, “it’s no use, we give up”.
 - b) Sometimes God requires we pray consistently and often for a situation. It is not a matter of “I need to pray 17 times for this before God will act”; it is a matter of attitude. If it is God’s will for the boy to be healed, God will accomplish it through our prayers on God’s timing. Before God is willing to act, there may be some other lesson he wants to teach us. There may be some aspect God is trying to teach us before he answers our prayer.
 - (1) (For another illustration on this topic, see Luke 11:5-10)
 - c) In this case, God delayed answering the prayer of the disciples in order to teach them not to give up so easily. God delayed curing the boy of demon-possession in order to show them how to have greater faith through more persistence.

- 14. Verse 21: “However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” (NKJV)
 - a) The NIV translation does not have Verse 21, except in your footnotes.
 - b) They have a good reason. Many of the early translations don’t have Verse 21.
 - c) If you read Mark’s account of this same story, Mark ends with this statement:
 - i) “He (Jesus) replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.” (Mark 9:29, NIV)
 - ii) All the major translations agree that this verse does exist in Mark’s Gospel.
 - iii) The debate is whether or not “some well-intentioned copyist” also snuck that same line in Matthew’s Gospel to try to make it consistent.
 - iv) The point is Jesus did say “Verse 21” based on Mark’s Gospel. The debate is simply whether or not it belongs in Matthew’s account as well.
 - v) Some early translations of Mark’s Gospel also say “prayer and fasting”, which explains the “fasting” part of Verse 21.
 - d) Since we know Jesus did say this, let’s talk about it while we’re in the neighborhood. ☺
 - i) The first question to ask is, “What did Jesus mean by “this” kind of demon?”
 - a) Jesus said “this” kind of demon can only be removed by prayer (and possibly fasting).
 - b) My thought is, “What do you mean “this” kind of demon? You mean there is more than one kind? How are we supposed to know what “kind” of demon this is? The answer is we don’t know. Let me explain further.
 - c) The bible implies there are “ranks” of angels, both good and bad kinds.
 - (1) For example, in Daniel 10, the archangel Gabriel (higher rank than a “regular” angel) has to go fight against the (demon) “prince” of Greece. This implies there is a head-demon in charge of Greece. It makes you wonder if there is a head-demon in charge of the USA!
 - d) Demons have “ranks” sort of like generals, colonels, privates, etc.
 - ii) Jesus is implying that this “high ranking” demon requires prayer and fasting in order to be removed from this boy.
 - a) I believe Jesus is teaching that a high-ranking demon requires a constant or consistent attitude of prayer in order to combat that rank.
 - b) In order to fight against such a demon, a regular basis of prayer (and possible fasting) is needed to exorcise that demon.
 - e) Tying Verse 21 to the previous verses, Jesus main point is for us to have persistence.
 - i) Jesus rebuked the disciples for not praying enough to deal with this demon.
 - ii) In Verse 21, Jesus is teaching we need to consistently pray to deal with this demon.

15. Verse 22: When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." ²³ They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.
 - a) Here Jesus once again, explains the fundamental purpose that he will die and be raised again on the third day.
 - b) The interesting question to ask is, "Why did Jesus make that statement here and now?"
 - i) First, we have Peter, James and John with their egos in the clouds because they were privileged to see Jesus transfigured.
 - a) Peter gets rebuked for focusing on Moses and Elijah equally with Jesus.
 - ii) Then we have the rest of the disciples rebuked because they "gave up too easily" in attempting to exorcise a demon possessed boy.
 - iii) Now Jesus is telling of the three-day death and resurrection.
 - iv) The true answer is we don't know why Jesus made the statement here.
 - v) I'm speculating in that this is a moment where the disciples felt remorseful.
 - vi) Jesus rebuked 9 of the 12 disciples and God the Father rebuked Peter.
 - a) People listen best when they are humble.
 - b) When people realize they made a mistake, is when they are most willing to listen to correction.
 - c) Maybe that's why Jesus used this opportunity to explain the three-day purpose so that it will sink in.
 - vii) Further, the disciples still may have been looking for Jesus to start the great Messianic rule now.
 - a) The purpose of Jesus second coming is to rule and reign from earth.
 - b) That is what the disciples and all of Israel hopes for.
 - viii) Seeing the power of Jesus on the mountaintop and seeing Jesus heal a boy of demon possession got the disciples focus on the power of Jesus and not the mission of Jesus. Jesus is trying to get the disciples back on the right focus.
16. Verse 24: After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" ²⁵ "Yes, he does," he replied.
 - a) We now have the third and final story in this chapter.
 - i) The 1st story was about the "transfiguration."
 - ii) The 2nd story was about the disciples' failure to cure the boy of demon possession.
 - iii) Now we have this story about a specific tax collection.
 - b) On a side note, you can tell that Matthew is a former tax collector.
 - i) In Matthew's Gospel, he uses lots of different technical terms to describe money.
 - ii) It would be as if we wrote a book, and we used the words "penny, nickel, half-dollar, 10-dollar note, 100-dollar note, etc." all in the same book.
 - iii) The "two-drachma tax" was roughly two-days wages. This particular tax was used to maintain the Temple.
 - c) When Peter was asked this question, Peter's ego responded in Verse 25 with "Of course he does." Peter then probably thought, now that I've committed Jesus to paying this, I better go Jesus about that subject. ☺
17. Verse 25 (cont.): When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes--from their own sons or from others?" ²⁶ "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him.
 - a) Jesus does address the issue of actually paying the tax in Verse 27.
 - b) Before Jesus gets to that topic, Jesus uses this story to illustrate a point about taxes.

- c) It is important to understand that this is a “Temple Tax”.
 - i) This tax is used to maintain the Temple.
 - a) Peter probably accepted the fact it was necessary for all Jews to maintain this tax in order to maintain the Temple.
 - b) This has nothing to do with being pro/anti Roman occupation.
 - c) This is about maintaining “God’s temple” in Peter’s mind.
 - d) This is why Peter bluntly made the statement a few verses back in effect “Of course Jesus pays the temple tax”. Then Peter went to go ask Jesus if or how Jesus is going to pay this tax.
 - ii) In the minds of the disciples, the Temple building in Jerusalem is something special and needed to communicate with God.
 - iii) Peter forgot that Jesus said, (in Chapter 12) “that something greater than the temple is here” (Matthew 12:6b, NIV).
 - d) With that in mind, let’s get back to the text. Jesus asked Peter in effect, “do kings collect taxes from their own children, or from other people?” Peter gave the correct answer.
 - i) Then Jesus gave the obvious conclusion, “the sons are exempt.”
 - ii) So what is Jesus talking about? Here’s a clue:
 - a) “In love, he (God The Father) predestined us (believers) to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:5, NIV)
 - b) We as “sons” are exempt from the King’s taxes.
 - c) So does that mean we can tell the I.R.S. about Ephesians 1:5 and not pay our taxes? Unfortunately, no. ☺
 - d) Jesus must be talking about something else. In the next verse, Jesus tells Peter how to pay this particular Temple Tax. Therefore, Jesus is talking about something else in this verse.
 - iii) I believe (but can’t prove) that Jesus is talking about the “tax” of our souls.
 - a) Salvation requires accepting Jesus as payment of our sins*.
 - (1) * Standard disclaimer: God judges us fairly based on what information we have about Jesus. God judges all fairly.
 - (2) With that said, we are all “taxed” to get into heaven. The payment is Jesus himself. Failure to make that payment is eternal hell.
 - (3) We as believers are exempt from that tax because we are adopted as “sons” of the king. That king is God himself.
18. Verse 27: "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."
- a) If you travel to Israel and go around the Sea of Galilee area, some of the restaurants offer a dish called “St. Peter’s fish”. Apparently there is a type of fish in this Sea that is a bottom-dweller and is attracted to shiny objects.
 - i) The odds of Peter catching one that “happens” to have this four-drachma coin is a miracle and not a coincidence.
 - ii) Remember the Jewish expression, “Coincidence is not a kosher word”.
 - b) If you remember earlier, I talked about how Matthew uses a lot of different money terms.
 - i) In Verse 27, the Greek word is “stater”. This is another coin that is worth 4-drachmas. Don’t you feel better now that you know that information? ☺
 - ii) It is simply a trivial point to show the authenticity of Matthew’s Gospel.
 - c) So why did Jesus make Peter go fish to get this coin?
 - i) Jesus could have “snapped his fingers” and made a coin appear.
 - ii) He could have asked the disciples to take up a collection for Jesus.
 - iii) Instead, he made Peter go fish for it.

- d) I have some speculative theories, but they are just that. Jesus doesn't comment any further on this.
 - i) First and foremost, it fits in with Matthew's purpose that Jesus is the Messiah. A miracle was shown to Peter with a coin in a fish's mouth that fit the amount.
 - ii) Peter had to humble himself to do this. Peter is used to net fishing. Here Jesus says to "throw out a line". That means line fishing. This had to humble Peter.
 - iii) Some people speculate that Jesus was teaching Peter to "keep your day job" while still preaching the Gospel.
 - a) Commentators are real mixed on this. Some say that God is calling us to keep our profession while being in the "professional ministry". Others are saying we're reading too much into this verse.
 - b) There are hints in the Book of Acts that Paul worked as a tentmaker while he was a missionary. (Reference Acts 18:3).
 - c) There are also references in Paul's letters to ask for financial support. For example, 1st Corinthians, Chapter 9 takes on this topic.
 - d) I don't have a problem with "professional" ministers. If people can be a good witness for Christ while others pay their expenses, so be it.
 - e) In summary, some people think this verse is about Peter should still keep his day job to financially support himself and pay his taxes.
 - f) The counter-argument is, "If Jesus still wanted Peter to fish, why didn't Jesus say, "Go catch a bunch of fish, sell some at the market and then pay for taxes". Because Jesus didn't say it that way, some people think this miracle has nothing to do with wanting Peter to fish again.
 - g) I do lean toward this interpretation. If Jesus just pulled a coin say, out of his cloak, people reading the Gospel might interpret that as if we are just to "pray for mysterious money to appear" to pay our bills. Jesus specifically picked Peter's profession.
- e) The important lesson is Peter obeyed.
 - i) Jesus asked Peter to trust him and go line-fish and the correct change will come from the fish's mouth! It would take faith to follow an illogical order like that.

19. With that said, we'll wrap it up, fish and all! ☺

20. Heavenly Father, Help us, like the disciples to focus on you, and not other "great people" around us. Further may our faith be like a mustard seed, so it can grow and be used for your glory. May we be persistent in our prayer life so we can combat the evil forces that exist around us. Finally, give us the strength to be obedient to what you ask us to do, even if it seems illogical to our minds. We seek you through prayer and through your word so we may better be your servants and glorify you in all we do. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.