

## OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28<sup>1</sup>

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written  
for our learning:  
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,  
and inwardly digest them,  
that we may embrace and ever hold fast  
the blessed hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## MATTHEW 16:28-17:27<sup>2</sup>

“Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (16:28)<sup>3</sup>

### The Transfiguration

17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

4 Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I[a] will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved;[b] with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” 8 And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

10 And the disciples asked him, “Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” 11 He replied, “Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things, 12 but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.

### Jesus Cures a Boy with a Demon

14 When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, 15 and said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has epilepsy and suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

<sup>1</sup> Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

<sup>2</sup> All Bible quotations and footnotes are from Biblegateway.com, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

17 Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon,[c] and it[d] came out of him, and the boy was cured from that moment.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" 20 He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a[e] mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." [f]

### Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

22 As they were gathering[g] in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, 23 and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed.

### Jesus and the Temple Tax

24 When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?" 25 He said, "Yes, he does." And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" 26 When Peter[h] said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free. 27 However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea, and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me."

### Footnotes

17.4 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *we*

17.5 Or *my beloved Son*

17.18 Gk *it or him*

17.18 Gk *the demon*

17.20 Gk *faith as a grain of*

17.20 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add 17.21, *But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting*

17.22 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *living*

17.26 Gk *he*

## GOSPEL COMPARISON<sup>4</sup>

Pericope <sup>5</sup>	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
"Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."	9:1	16:28	9:27	
The Transfiguration	9:2-10	17:1-9	9:28-36	
The Coming of Elijah	9:11-13	17:10-13		
Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by a Spirit	9:14-29	17:14-21	9:37-43a	
Jesus Foretells His Passion again	9:30-32	17:22-23	9:43b-45	
Payment of the Temple Tax		17:24-27		

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

<sup>5</sup> An extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, "a book of pericopes"

**GOSPEL COMPARISON: TRANSFIGURATION**

Mark 9:2-13	Matthew 17:1-13	Luke 9:28-36
<p>2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one[b] on earth could brighten them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.</p>	<p>17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.</p>	<p>28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus[e] took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking about his exodus, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.</p>
<p>5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved;[c] listen to him!" 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.</p>	<p>4 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, [a] will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, the Beloved;[b] with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." 8 And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.</p>	<p>32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep, but as they awoke they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not realizing what he was saying. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen;[f] listen to him!" 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.</p>
<p>9 As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. 11 Then they asked him,</p>	<p>9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." 10 And the disciples asked him, "Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 11 He replied,</p>	
<p>"Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 12 He said to them, "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? 13 But I</p>	<p>"Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things, 12 but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands." 13</p>	<p>And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.</p>

tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."	Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.	
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## PERSPECTIVE

### 17:1-13 The Transfiguration

Some scholars believe that 16:28 should be included in Chapter 17 and linked to the Transfiguration story.<sup>6</sup>

v.1 Jesus takes the three disciples somewhere they can be alone. Jesus does not want publicity.

v.2 Jesus is transfigured, having a unique transformational experience before the three disciples. Matthew selects two features of this change: "*his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light*".<sup>7</sup> This is an added dimension of glory, it is the same Jesus, but now with an awesome brightness like the "sun" and "light". The difference with Moses is significant – Moses face shing is derivative of his being in God's presence, Jesus' face and clothes shining reveals his essential character.<sup>8</sup>

v. 3 Moses and Elijah's presence has several layers of significance and symbolism:

- 1) both are men of God whose lives ended in miraculous ways;
- 2) the two men symbolize the coming of the messianic age;
- 3) their conversation with Jesus marks him out as the Messiah who comes at the climax of their eschatological role; and
- 4) both men suffered rejection and hostility from the people they were sent to serve.<sup>9</sup>

Scholars are divided on what Elijah and Moses may represent:

- 1) The Law and the Prophets or the prophecy of the Hebrew Bible was fulfilled, Matthew does not say.<sup>10</sup>
- 2) It is less likely that they represent the law and the prophets. Elijah was not one of the writing prophets.<sup>11</sup>
- 3) It is more likely that they are there in their personal and symbolic capacities as figures in Jewish eschatological expectation and prefiguring aspects of the Messiah's role. The tell is in how the disciples respond to the experience by asking Jesus about Elijah's final prophetic role in the coming of the Messiah.<sup>12</sup>

While Peter is speaking a cloud appears, which is symbolic of the holy presence of God, and from out of the cloud a voice speaks to Jesus and the disciples. "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" (v.5) The command to "listen to him" appears exactly the same in Mark, Matthew and Luke and it is directed to the disciples.<sup>13</sup> God's voice from the cloud, as with Moses in Exodus, affirms the special relationship of Jesus to God and demands that the disciples listen to him.

Unlike the baptism story, God is clearly speaking to and heard by the disciples.<sup>14</sup> The voice is an allusion to Isaiah 42:1 "with him I am well pleased", Jesus is presented as the suffering servant in Isaiah. In 16:13-20, the divine confession of Jesus as the Son of God confirms and underlines Peter's confession.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>7</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>8</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>9</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>10</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>11</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>12</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>13</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>14</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>15</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary*, pp. 866-867

vv. 6-8 The disciples are overwhelmed by the supernatural event, struck with fear, face down on the ground, and Jesus touches them and tells them “*Get up and do not be afraid.*” (v. 7) Jesus is himself again, alone and the heavenly visitors and cloud have disappeared. Jesus will accomplish his mission not in God’s glory but in the normal conditions of earthly human life.<sup>16</sup>

17:9-13 unpacks the meaning of what just occurred as the disciples follow Jesus down the mountain. It concerns three topics:

- 1) The order not to tell anyone until the Son of Man has been raised;
- 2) The place of Elijah in the process of messianic fulfillment (vv. 10-12a, 13); and
- 3) The fate of Jesus himself (v 12b).<sup>17</sup>

v. 9 As long as his mission of suffering, death and resurrection remains to be accomplished, Jesus does not want people distracted by the prospect of heavenly glory, which could have encouraged the desire for a political Messiah. The followers should focus on the cross and not on the glory at this stage in the gospel. Jesus’ confidence that he will be raised, vindicated, and return as king (16:21, 27-28) is not what his disciples focus on.<sup>18</sup>

The command to keep silent until Jesus has risen from the dead (17:9) not only stresses the impossibility of preaching the whole truth of Jesus until he has completed his mission, but it also underlines the centrality of the cross, and makes Peter, James, and John authoritative bearers of the Jesus tradition.<sup>19</sup> Jesus is looking through certain suffering and death, to equal certainty that God will raise him from the dead on the third day.<sup>20</sup>

The transfiguration is immediately followed by a passion prediction of the Suffering of the Son of Man. The verses deprive Jewish critics of an objection to Christian claims – if Malachi 4:5 is correct Elijah must come first before the eschatological unfolding. Jesus counters that Elijah, in the person of JohnBap, has indeed come. The passage also emphasizes the parallels between JohnBap and Jesus: both suffer similar fates.<sup>21</sup>

V. 10 Oddly, the disciples do not comment on the cloud or the voice, or Moses, or the need to keep silent until after Jesus’ death and raising, they ask about Elijah. (v.10) It is possible that the disciples have encountered the argument with the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because Elijah is prophesied to come first.<sup>22</sup> Moreover if Elijah is to restore all things (v.11) then why would the Messiah have to suffer and die? If the Messiah has to die, then how does Elijah fit into the picture? Had Elijah come unnoticed?<sup>23</sup>

v. 11-13 Jesus states that the prophecy has been fulfilled, and the disciples take this to mean through the life, ministry, and death of JohnBap. (v.13) The disciples may have remembered that Jesus equated JohnBap with Elijah. “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John came, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.” (11:13-14). For whatever reason the three disciples now understood that the prophecy requiring Elijah to return before the Messiah was fulfilled in JohnBap, and that how JohnBap was treated would be repeated in Jesus life and death.<sup>24</sup>

## Background

Christology: Jesus is the prophet like Moses, who as a unique Son of God, and surpasses Moses. Eschatologically, Jesus on the mountaintop radiant shows that history has come full circle and the

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<sup>16</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>17</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>18</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>19</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 866-867

<sup>20</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>21</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 866-867

<sup>22</sup> “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.” (Mal. 4:5)

<sup>23</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>24</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

eschatological expectations of Judaism had been fulfilled. The eschatological prophet, one like Moses and Elijah, has appeared, and the light of the resurrection and the Parousia has already shown forth.<sup>25</sup>

This passage accomplishes several objectives:

- 1) Identifies Jesus as the Son of God and links Son of God with Isaiah's Suffering Servant.<sup>26</sup>
- 2) Elevates Peter, James, and John as authoritative sources for the Jesus tradition; and
- 3) Addresses Jewish concerns about Elijah appearing before the messiah;

Three aspects of this incident contribute to its Christological force:

- 1) Visible alteration of Jesus appearance demonstrates that he is more than a human teacher/rabbi;
- 2) Association with Moses and Elijah demonstrates his messianic role; and
- 3) Voice from heaven declares his identity as the Son of God.<sup>27</sup>

Other Transfiguration themes include:

- 1) Jesus' status as the new Moses
- 2) Echo of Baptism and Peter's confession;
- 3) Foreshadows the resurrection and Parousia (second coming).<sup>28</sup>

There are many interpretations of the historicity of the story. It is an unusual event in the life of Jesus, supporting seeing Jesus as some sort of counterpart to Moses on Sinai. This is because

- 1) No one has put forth a convincing theological or literary explanation for Peter's remarks about the booths and this raises the possibility of a historical kernel to the story.
- 2) While the parallels between Jesus and Moses are striking, they are at points rather inexact which implies that the Mosaic motifs in themselves cannot suffice to explain the story's origin.
- 3) The story may have come from an event when Jesus was radiant before his disciples.<sup>29</sup>

Some commentaries believe the Transfiguration is a Resurrection story that Mark moved up in the Gospel. The Transfiguration story is not a resurrection story because

1. It does not read like a resurrection story,
2. Nothing in it suggests that Jesus has been raised, and
3. It has precise details that ties it to the surrounding stories. What is evident is that all three synoptic gospels tell essentially the same story, though it is not easy to see exactly what it means.<sup>30</sup>

In Matthew this story is really for the three selected disciples (and the readers) to experience. The emphasis on them, themselves, and they is unusual:

- v. 1 Jesus took Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.
- v. 2 And he was transfigured before them,
- v. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.
- v. 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them
- v. 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.
- v. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."
- v. 8 And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.<sup>31</sup>

### Reflection

In Matthew, the Birth, Baptism, Transfiguration and Resurrection show God's direct intervention in human affairs in Jesus' life and death. They all seek to shape the reader's understanding of Jesus identity and mission and the centrality of the cross, grave and resurrection to understanding Jesus. The story elevates

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<sup>25</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>26</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>27</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>28</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>29</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>30</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>31</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

Peter, James, and John as authoritative bearers of the Jesus tradition<sup>32</sup>, adding nuance to “For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven” (16:17), and “my ecclesia”.(16:18)

We have to ask ourselves is the Transfiguration specifically for the three disciples and the reader. Why did Jesus in all three Synoptic Gospels feel the need for this revelation to the disciples and the reader? Are the lessons of the last three chapters (14-16) so difficult and troubling, or is the path forward so dangerous and unsettling? Or both?

### **17:14-20 Jesus Cures a Boy with a Demon**

The boy's father tells Jesus he brought his son to the disciples, and they had failed to “cure” him. (v.17) Most modern interpreters take the boy's problem to be very serious case of epilepsy. Matthew unlike Mark and Luke seems to view the condition as a sickness. The problem is the disciples had not been able to help him.<sup>33</sup>

Faith: Faith enables and the lack cripples. This is because faith is the precondition God sets for acting in the world. Faith in itself is not a power. Nor does it give one who possesses it power. Faith, trust, and hope call on God or Jesus to act on its behalf.<sup>34</sup>

The eye of faith contemplates not itself but the object before it which for Matthew should always be God in Christ. Above all when faith, regardless of how small, passes beyond simple faith of assent, it becomes the opportunity for God, the mover of mountains, to enter the world in fresh and surprising ways.<sup>35</sup>

“Little faith” confirms at least that the disciples have some faith. The main point is that faith enables; it lack cripples. Faith, which is not believe, but trust and hope in God in Christ, is the precondition which God has set for many of his actions in the world.<sup>36</sup>

The key to miracles in Matthew is faith (8:10, 13, 26; 9:2, 22, 28-29; 14:31; 15:28). If the miracle workers themselves have weak faith or lack faith then the power is absent. The power of Jesus as Messiah is unique, and his disciples can draw on it only by faith.<sup>37</sup>

This Generation: “How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you?” (v.17) Jesus may be asking both how long he will have to be with, and put up with, people like this. It is an unusually candid insight into the frustration Jesus felt in his ministry and among his disciples.<sup>38</sup>

Jesus outburst against this “generation” (v. 17) is a Matthean theme (11:16; 12:39, 41-42, 45; 16:4) which will culminate in the charge in 23:34-6 that “this generation” has reached the point of no return in its rejection of God's messengers.<sup>39</sup> Jesus expects to be rejected by the leadership, what upsets him is when his own disciples fail in faith. The disciples had failed to bring any of their own faith in Jesus to bare on the exorcism even though faith in Jesus will give you seemingly unlimited power. (v. 20)<sup>40</sup>

Jesus complains not only about the powerless disciples and the crowd looking on, but the whole generation. (v.17) They are faithless and perverse: faithless because they have a wrong attitude toward God, they do not trust God and they do not believe that anything is possible with God; and perverse which may mean they are twisted of distorted in their thinking and spiritual attitude. This applies to the disciples, the crowd, and the entire generation of Israelites.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 866-867

<sup>33</sup> Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 436-455

<sup>34</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>35</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>36</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 866-867

<sup>37</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>38</sup> Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 436-455

<sup>39</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>40</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>41</sup> Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 436-455

Reflection: Matthew links faith to understanding to discipleship/following Jesus. We need faith to energize seeking understanding and striving to follow Jesus. As we saw in Chapter 16, Jesus required rethinking the meaning of key terms and titles and changing one’s expectations of God. There is frustration in Matthew that the followers of Jesus and the generation of his time struggle with faith and understanding.

**17:22-23 Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection**

This second announcement of Jesus coming death and raising adds a new element, betrayal. This is the first hint (apart from the editorial comment in 10:4) of Jesus betrayal by Judas, as yet unnamed. This represents the pathos of Jesus world: God gives the Son of Man into the hands of others, and God gives the Son of Man universal authority. The two actions are not contradictory, they are God’s hidden, but sovereign will, God’s divine purpose.<sup>42</sup> Additionally the disciples continue to focus on his death, and either ignore, not understand, or avoid the subject of resurrection.<sup>43</sup>

Matthew’s version of the third prediction<sup>44</sup>:

22 “As they were gathering in Galilee”	Assumed to be the disciples. No reason is given for the time or place of his prediction.
Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands,	Jesus takes the initiative, Son of Man is Jesus normal way of referring to himself. He will be betrayed into human hands infers treachery will deliver him to the authorities.
23 and they will kill him,	Jesus is facing the end of his life on earth as a result – he will be killed.
and on the third day he will be raised.”	In all three predictions it is consistent that on the third day he will be raised through the action of the Father.
And they were greatly distressed.	The disciple’s focus on the prediction of betrayal and death and ignore the raising by the Father. They are greatly distressed.

The repetition of the passion prediction provides the key for understanding Jesus and his ministry and mission. Jesus tells us that he will be delivered into the hands of sinful people, and in 28:18 that all of his power and authority have come from God. This juxta-positioning of God-given powers and being delivered by God to sinful people is the mystery of God’s hidden sovereign will.<sup>45</sup>

Reflection: Matthew is preparing us in advance for Jerusalem and the last week of Jesus life: Jesus remains faithful to his mission, he exercises God-given authority and power, and he is betrayed by one of his closest friends/disciples into the hands of those who will kill him. Can we, or should we attempt to, understand “*God’s hidden, but sovereign will, God’s divine purpose*”<sup>46</sup> or do we approach it through faith acknowledging that it is beyond understanding?

**17:24-27 Jesus and the Temple Tax**

This rather strange story found only in Matthew provides insight into the status and mission of Jesus. The ½ shekel Temple tax was an annual levy on adult Jewish males disapproved of by the Sadducees as a recent Pharisaic invention. The tax collectors approach is tentative and may be to see if Jesus will fulfill this obligation or oppose it like the Sadducees.<sup>47</sup>

The dilemma is that if Jesus paid the tax, he would be classing himself as an “outsider” not a “son”. If he refused to pay the tax, he would give the impression that he rejected the Temple, which is something in Matthew he did not believe. So Jesus took an action that would satisfy the tax collectors without using money from his supporters. “Found” money did not belong to anyone so there is no barrier to Peter’s paying the tax.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 866-867

<sup>43</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>44</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455

<sup>45</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary* pp. 684-749

<sup>46</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 866-867

<sup>47</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.641-671

<sup>48</sup> Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 436-455



The roots of this theological concept, God as Father, believers as sons, is found in the OT and Judaism. But the theme was given renewed emphasis by Jesus, who among other things instructed his disciples and followers to address God as “*Abba*” in the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>49</sup>

One can also look at the Temple Tax (17:24-27) in the context of the later Caesar’s Denarius story (22:17–21), Since both chapters deal with 1) taxation, 2) what’s owed to God, and 3) what’s owed to political rulers, Eugene Lemcio suggests that their relationship should be explored more fully.<sup>50</sup>

### Take Aways

Matthew gives us three stories where God tells who and what Jesus is:

#### Nativity

- “the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (1:20)
- Emmanuel, “God is with us.” (1:23)
- “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” (2:2)

#### Baptism

- “16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him.
- 17 And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved,[e] with whom I am well pleased.” (3:16-17)

#### Transfiguration

- “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light.” (17:2)
- “Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.” (17:3)
- While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved;[b] with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” (17:5)

In Matthew, Jesus is initiated by God (Birth), promised to us by God (Birth), claimed by God (Baptism), and in him, God is revealed (Transfiguration). Jesus fulfills the OT prophecies, and God commands us to listen to him, follow him, be transformed by the experience, and to let God’s light shine through you into the world.

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<sup>49</sup> Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 684-749

<sup>50</sup> Eugene E. Lemcio, “Matthew 17:24–27 & 22:17–21. ‘Peter’s Penny’ & Caesar’s Denarius or Two Coins, Two Masters” in The King Who Teaches: St. Matthew’s Royal Curriculum. A Pedagogical Aid (unpublished manuscript, 2023)

## REFLECTION

1. How does the Transfiguration shape your understanding of Jesus' identity?
2. How do you interpret Peter's desire to stay on the mountaintop?
3. How do you define and experience faith in God and Jesus?

## CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father,  
for the witness of your apostle and evangelist,  
Matthew, to the Gospel of Beatitude and Grace  
which you have given us in your Son, our Savior;  
and we pray that, after his example,  
we may with ready wills and hearts obey  
the calling of our Lord to follow him;  
through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

*The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun*  
1.

## SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



*The Inspiration of St. Matthew, Caravaggio, 1602*

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly class for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

Matthew's gospel is worth studying because the author attempts to uphold Jesus' Jewish past, with Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection, in the context of the 1st Century CE Jesus movement and early church, and in a hostile Hellenistic and Jewish world.

21st Century readers recognize Matthew as the source of many of the best-known stories and sayings of Jesus as well as a social philosophy that many non-Christians believe in. Famous for its Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, and other teachings, Matthew is often called the most Jewish of the Gospels, while also contributing with the Gospel of John to antisemitism.

The class is created and led by Joe Jennings and advisors include: the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA; the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, Episcopal Church of our Saviour, Mill Valley, CA; the Rev. Heather Wenrick, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Seattle; and the Father Vincent Pizzuto, PhD., vicar at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Inverness CA and Full Professor at the (Jesuit) University of San Francisco, New Testament and Christian Mysticism, in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

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