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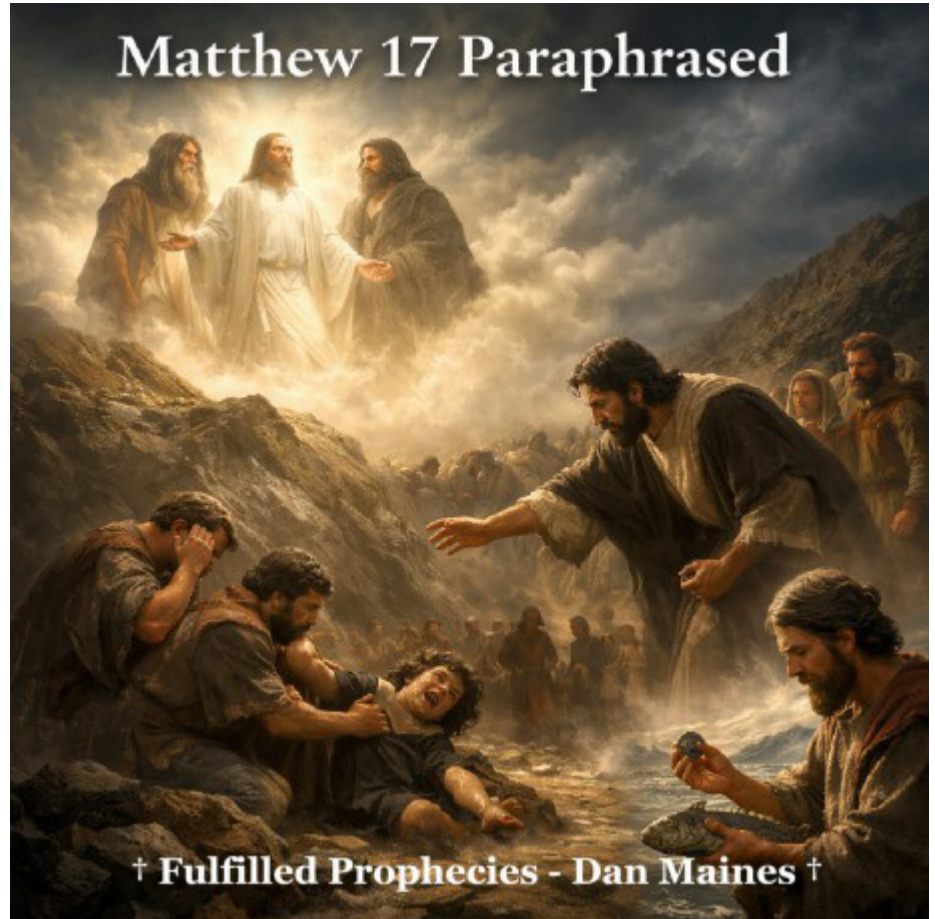
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Matthew 17 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

Matthew 17 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Jesus was steadily revealing who He was to His disciples, not only through miracles but through moments where His divine authority was openly shown (Matthew 16:16-17).

† Matthew 17 records three major events, the transfiguration, the healing of a demon possessed boy, and the temple tax lesson, each showing Christ's authority over the Law, over spiritual powers, and over the temple system itself (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 3:3-6).

† From the fulfilled perspective, these events were preparing the disciples for the coming covenant transition that would climax in the judgment of Jerusalem in their generation (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34).

Matthew 17:1

After six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves.

† Jesus intentionally separated three witnesses, a common biblical pattern when God reveals something important, requiring two or three witnesses to establish a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15).

† Peter later confirmed this moment as a real historical event when he wrote about seeing Christ's majesty with his own eyes (2 Peter 1:16-18).

† Early Christians understood this event as a preview of Christ's kingdom authority that would soon be revealed in power (Matthew 16:28).

Matthew 17:2

And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

† The word transfigured describes a visible change revealing Christ's divine glory that was normally hidden during His earthly ministry (John 1:14).

† This shining appearance echoes the glory that appeared when God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29-30).

† It demonstrated that Jesus possessed the same divine glory that belonged to God alone (Hebrews 1:3).

Matthew 17:3

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

† Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets, the two major sections of the Hebrew Scriptures (Luke 24:27).

† Their presence showed that the Law and the Prophets pointed directly to Christ and were now finding their fulfillment in Him (Romans 10:4).

† Luke records that they were speaking with Jesus about His departure that He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

Matthew 17:4

Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here, if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

† Peter likely connected this moment with the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration associated with God's presence dwelling among His people (Leviticus 23:42-43).

† However, Peter misunderstood the moment, placing Moses and Elijah on the same level as Christ (Mark 9:6).

† The following voice from heaven corrected this misunderstanding and declared the superiority of Jesus.

Matthew 17:5

While he was still speaking, behold, 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.

† The cloud represents the same divine presence that appeared during Israel's wilderness journey (Exodus 13:21).

† God the Father directly commands the disciples to listen to Jesus, showing that the authority of the Son surpasses the Law and the Prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2).

† This moment confirmed Peter's earlier confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16).

Matthew 17:6

When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified.

† Fear was a normal response when people encountered the direct presence of God's glory (Ezekiel 1:28).

† Their reaction showed they understood the seriousness of the divine voice they had just heard.

† Throughout scripture, encounters with God's glory often caused people to fall down in awe and fear (Daniel 10:9).

Matthew 17:7

And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Get up, and do not be afraid.

† Jesus consistently calmed fear when His disciples encountered overwhelming divine moments (Matthew 14:27).

† His touch demonstrated His role as mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).

† The command not to fear appears frequently when God reveals His presence to His people (Isaiah 41:10).

Matthew 17:8

And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

† Moses and Elijah disappearing symbolized that the Law and the Prophets had served their purpose and now pointed fully to Christ (Romans 10:4).

† Jesus standing alone emphasized that He is the final and ultimate authority (Hebrews 12:24).

† The disciples were being prepared to understand that Christ alone would lead the new covenant people of God.

Matthew 17:9

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.

† Jesus often instructed silence about certain events until the proper time, so that His mission would unfold according to God's plan (Mark 1:44).

† The resurrection would later provide the full explanation of His identity and mission (Romans 1:4).

† Only after the resurrection would the disciples fully

understand what they had witnessed.

Matthew 17:10

And His disciples asked Him, Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?

† The scribes based this belief on the prophecy found in Malachi 4:5 about Elijah coming before the day of the Lord.

† The disciples were trying to understand how that prophecy fit with what they had just witnessed.

† Jesus clarified that the prophecy had already been fulfilled.

Matthew 17:11

And He answered and said, Elijah is coming and will restore all things.

† Jesus acknowledged the prophecy but explained its proper fulfillment.

† The restoration spoken of referred to preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah (Luke 1:16-17).

† This restoration work was connected to John the Baptist's ministry.

Matthew 17:12

But I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished, so also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.

† Jesus identified John the Baptist as the Elijah who had come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Matthew 11:14).

† Just as John was rejected and killed, Jesus predicted that He would also suffer rejection.

† This continued the pattern of Israel rejecting God's prophets (Matthew 23:37).

Matthew 17:13

Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

† The disciples now realized that Malachi's prophecy had already been fulfilled in John.

† This meant the promised day of the Lord judgment was approaching within their generation (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 23:36).

† It confirmed that the prophetic timeline was already unfolding.

Matthew 17:14

When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying.

† The posture of kneeling showed humility and desperation for help (Mark 1:40).

† Crowds constantly surrounded Jesus because of His reputation for healing and authority.

† This scene contrasts the glory on the mountain with the broken condition of the world below.

Matthew 17:15

Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill, for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

† The father describes severe suffering that placed the boy in constant danger.

† The term used here reflects what people in that time believed about certain illnesses.

† The true cause would soon be revealed as a demonic affliction.

Matthew 17:16

I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.

† The disciples had previously been given authority over demons (Matthew 10:1).

† Their failure revealed a lack of faith and spiritual readiness.

† This moment became a teaching opportunity for Jesus.

Matthew 17:17

And Jesus answered and said, You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I put up with you, bring him here to Me.

† Jesus addressed the broader unbelief surrounding Him, not

only the disciples.

† The phrase unbelieving generation appears frequently when Jesus rebukes Israel's spiritual blindness (Matthew 12:39).

† His frustration reflected the persistent rejection of God's works among the people.

Matthew 17:18

And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

† Jesus demonstrated absolute authority over demonic forces.

† Unlike other exorcists of that era, Jesus cast out demons by direct command (Luke 11:20).

† This miracle again confirmed His divine authority.

Matthew 17:19

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, Why could we not drive it out?

† The disciples recognized their failure and wanted to understand why.

† Private instruction from Jesus often followed moments of confusion (Mark 4:34).

† This showed their desire to grow in understanding.

Matthew 17:20

And He said to them, Because of the littleness of your faith, for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible to you.

† The mustard seed illustration emphasized the power of genuine faith even when it appears small.

† Moving mountains was a common Jewish expression describing overcoming great obstacles (Zechariah 4:7).

† Jesus was teaching that faith in God unlocks power far beyond human ability.

Matthew 17:21

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

† Spiritual authority requires dependence on God rather than self confidence.

† Prayer and fasting reflect humility and reliance on God's power.

† Jesus showed that spiritual battles require spiritual preparation.

Matthew 17:22

And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.

† Jesus again predicted His coming suffering and death.

† These predictions prepared the disciples for the events that would soon unfold (Matthew 20:18-19).

† The title Son of Man connects to Daniel's prophecy about the Messiah (Daniel 7:13).

Matthew 17:23

And they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day. And they were deeply grieved.

† The disciples struggled to understand how the Messiah could suffer and die.

† The resurrection would later confirm Jesus' victory over death (Acts 2:24).

† Their grief shows they had not yet grasped the full purpose of the cross.

Matthew 17:24

When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two drachma tax came to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the two drachma tax?

† This tax supported the temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 30:13).

† By this time the temple system was still functioning but would soon face judgment in AD 70 (Matthew 24:2).

† The question tested Jesus' relationship to the temple system.

Matthew 17:25

He said, Yes. And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, What do you think, Simon, from whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll tax, from their sons or from strangers?

† Jesus used a simple illustration about royal authority.

† The question was designed to show that the Son of God was not obligated to pay a tax for His own Father's house.

† It pointed to Jesus' unique relationship with God.

Matthew 17:26

When Peter said, From strangers, Jesus said to him, Then the sons are exempt.

† Jesus declared that He, as the Son, was not obligated to pay the temple tax.

† This statement quietly revealed His divine identity.

† Yet He still chose to avoid unnecessary offense.

Matthew 17:27

However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel, take that and give it to them for you and Me.

† Jesus miraculously provided the payment, showing His authority even over creation.

† The miracle revealed that He could easily provide what was needed.

† It also showed humility, choosing peace rather than unnecessary conflict (Romans 12:18).

Historical References

† Justin Martyr wrote that the transfiguration confirmed Christ as the one greater than Moses and the prophets in Dialogue with Trypho.

† Irenaeus explained that Moses and Elijah appearing with Christ showed that the Law and the Prophets testified about Him in Against Heresies Book 4.

† Eusebius noted that the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy through John the Baptist proved the prophetic timeline leading up to the judgment of Jerusalem in Ecclesiastical History.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Christ alone is the authority we follow, not religious systems or traditions (Colossians 2:16-17).

† Faith, even when small, becomes powerful when it rests in God rather than human strength (Hebrews 11:6).

† Jesus has authority over spiritual forces, sickness, and every challenge we face (Matthew 28:18).

† The kingdom Christ revealed to His disciples is now the spiritual kingdom believers live in today (Luke 17:20-21).

Q & A Appendix

Q What was the purpose of the transfiguration?

A It revealed Christ's divine glory and confirmed that He is greater than the Law and the Prophets, pointing to Him as the fulfillment of both (Matthew 17:2-5; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Q Who was the Elijah that was supposed to come?

A Jesus said John the Baptist fulfilled that role by coming in the spirit and power of Elijah (Matthew 17:12-13; Luke 1:16-17).

Q Why did the disciples fail to cast out the demon?

A Jesus said it was because of their lack of faith and dependence on God (Matthew 17:20; Mark 9:29).

Q Why did Jesus pay the temple tax if He was the Son of God?

A He paid it to avoid unnecessary offense even though He was not obligated to do so (Matthew 17:26-27).

Q Why were only Peter, James, and John taken up the mountain?

A Jesus often chose these three as close witnesses during key moments of revelation, including the transfiguration and later in

Gethsemane, so their testimony could confirm what they saw (Matthew 17:1; Matthew 26:37; 2 Peter 1:16-18).

Q Why did Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus?

A Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets, together they symbolized the entire Old Covenant testimony pointing to Christ as its fulfillment (Matthew 17:3; Luke 24:27; Romans 10:4).

Q What did the bright cloud represent?

A The cloud symbolized the presence of God, just as the cloud led Israel in the wilderness and filled the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 13:21; Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11).

Q Why did the Father say listen to Him?

A God was declaring that Jesus now held the final authority, surpassing the Law and the Prophets, because He is the Son through whom God now speaks (Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Q Why were the disciples afraid when they heard the voice?

A Throughout scripture, people often fell in fear when encountering God's direct presence because His glory revealed their human weakness (Ezekiel 1:28; Daniel 10:9).

Q Why did Jesus tell them not to speak about the vision yet?

A The full meaning of the transfiguration could only be understood after the resurrection confirmed who Jesus truly was (Matthew 17:9; Romans 1:4).

Q Why did the scribes teach that Elijah must come first?

A They were referring to the prophecy in Malachi that Elijah would appear before the day of the Lord, but Jesus explained that John the Baptist fulfilled that prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 17:12-13).

Q What does restore all things mean in Matthew 17:11?

A The restoration referred to preparing Israel for the coming of

the Messiah by calling the people to repentance and turning hearts back to God (Luke 1:16-17).

Q Why did Jesus call them an unbelieving generation?

A Many in Israel continually rejected God's works and the testimony of His prophets, even while witnessing miracles firsthand (Matthew 17:17; Matthew 12:39).

Q What did Jesus mean by faith the size of a mustard seed?

A He was showing that even small but genuine faith in God has the power to overcome obstacles that appear impossible (Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6).

Q What does moving mountains mean?

A In Jewish language this phrase described removing great obstacles or accomplishing what seemed impossible through God's power (Zechariah 4:7).

Q Why did Jesus say prayer and fasting were needed?

A Some spiritual struggles require deeper dependence on God, and prayer and fasting express humility and reliance on His strength rather than our own (Matthew 17:21; James 4:7-10).

Q Why were the disciples grieved when Jesus predicted His death?

A They expected the Messiah to reign immediately and had not yet understood that His suffering and resurrection were necessary for God's redemptive plan (Matthew 17:23; Luke 24:25-27).

Q What was the two drachma tax?

A It was the annual temple tax used to support the temple service in Jerusalem, originally commanded under the Law of Moses (Exodus 30:13-16).

Q Why did Jesus say the sons are exempt?

A As the Son of God, Jesus was not obligated to pay a tax for

His Father's house, but He chose to pay it anyway to avoid unnecessary offense (Matthew 17:26-27).

Q Why did Jesus perform the miracle with the fish and coin?

A The miracle demonstrated His authority over creation and showed that even when He humbled Himself, He still possessed divine power (Matthew 17:27; Colossians 1:16).

Q How does the transfiguration connect to the coming kingdom?

A The event gave the disciples a preview of Christ's glory that would soon be revealed in power during the judgment and kingdom transition within their generation (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34).

Q What did the transfiguration teach the disciples about Jesus?

A It showed them that Jesus was not just a teacher or prophet but the divine Son whose glory surpassed Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:2-5; Hebrews 3:3-6).

Q Why did Moses and Elijah disappear leaving only Jesus?

A This symbolized that the Law and the Prophets had completed their role and that Christ alone now stands as the final authority (Romans 10:4; Hebrews 12:24).

Q What does this chapter ultimately reveal about Jesus?

A It shows His authority over the Law, over demons, over sickness, over the temple system, and over creation itself (Matthew 17:3; Matthew 17:18; Matthew 17:27; Matthew 28:18).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 17:1-27; Matthew 16:27-28; Luke 9:31; Hebrews 1:1-3; Daniel 7:13; Malachi 4:5-6

† Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho; Irenaeus, Against Heresies Book 4; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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