

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MATTHEW 16:1 – 17:23

Political campaigns have them, so do wars, and stock car races, and business careers, and romances, and even baseball and football games.

They're called **"turning points"**...

A presidential hopeful makes a slip of the tongue
Or a skillful driver goes into a turn and slips under the leader
Or a young salesman lands a giant account...

At the time you didn't realize it, but years later you look back on the moment and see that's where the momentum shifted, the focus changed – it was the turning point. *Chapter 16-17 is the turning point in the ministry of Jesus...*

There were two semesters in Jesus' School of Discipleships. In semester one the disciples learned Jesus' **"Identity."** In semester two they learned **"Destiny."**

Through chapter 15 the point of Jesus' miracles and teaching is to spotlight **who He is – the Christ**. From chapter 17 until the end of His ministry the emphasis is on **where He's going – the cross**. *Identity then destiny – the Christ then the Cross...*

Chapter 16-17 marks the turning point!

Verse 1 **"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven."** Pharisees and Sadducees would be like Republicans and Democrats – Liberals and Conservatives –

Rush Limbaugh and Nancy Pelosi - joining forces. Here's *Hannity and Hilary* teaming up.

Each group believed the problem with the nation was the other.

The only cause powerful enough to bring these opposing factions together was their hatred of Jesus. Now they come questioning His authority – asking for a sign.

Notice they ask for “**a sign from heaven.**” The rabbis taught that demons could perform *miracles on earth*, but only God could perform *miracles in heaven*.

“(Jesus) answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.” The Jews didn't need Kurt Mellious to know what the day would hold. Usually, the sky gives itself away.

A colorful sunset means fair weather – *a colorful sunrise* signals a storm.

When it came to weather the Jews were pretty perceptive, but when it came to spiritual realities a raindrop could smack them in the nose and they wouldn't know it was raining. Spiritually speaking, Jews in the first century were dense.

Jesus had demonstrated power over disease, demons, nature, and sin. He could even manipulate the molecular structure of fish and bread.

There was no other conclusion, but He was God.

Yet because Jesus *didn't come from their schools, and didn't honor their traditions, and refused to bow to their authority* – they rejected the obvious.

Rather than “*Son of God,*” they called Jesus a blasphemer. And this from “[The People of the Book](#)” - the Jews were suppose to be guided by Scripture, yet they ignored the prophecies and descriptions of Jesus.

The Old Testament talked about Jesus’ birth, His nature, His ministry, even His miracles – but the Jews refused to read. Pride had closed their minds.

In verse 4 Jesus says, “**A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.**”

This sign Jesus explained in 12:40, “**For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**” In Jonah 2:2 the prophet cried out from the gullet of the great fish, “**Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice.**”

Sheol or “*Hades*” was the Old Testament abode of the dead. Did Jonah literally die, go to Sheol, then rise from the dead to be spit out on the shore? Or did He just feel like hell in the stomach of the fish? We’re not sure.

But just as Jonah’s body was 72 hours in the fish’s belly – Jesus spent 3 days and 3 nights in Sheol. He was preaching to the Old Testament saints held there.

Today when a believer dies he goes straight to heaven. But in Old Testament times Jesus had not yet opened the door to

heaven, so believers went to Hades.

Hades or Sheol was a spiritual place – located in a different dimension – that apparently, overlaps with the center of the earth. In a few verses, Jesus will use the phrase “the gates of Hell (or Hades.)” Could these “gates” be portals around the globe where the spirits of men transfer from the physical to the spiritual realm?

Jonah was *in the sea*, in a fish, for 3 days – then he reappeared. Likewise Jesus will be *under the sea* for 3 days – then reappear at His resurrection.

Other men have done miracles. But Jesus is the only person who was dead, and was resurrected never to die again. This is the sign that sets Him apart.

The sign of Jonah pointed to the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is saying to the Jews, “If you don't believe in My resurrection, nothing else will convince you.”

“And He left them and departed. Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” Throughout the Scriptures, leaven is a type of sin. Leaven or yeast corrupts by puffing up.

The same is true with sin - it inflates the ego. At the heart of “S-I-N” is “I”.

The leaven of the Pharisees was **legalism**. The sin of the Sadducees was **liberalism**. Jesus is warning His disciples – and us – to beware of both.

But the disciples didn't get the message. "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

Here was a reoccurring problem...

Jesus viewed the physical world as a window. You miss a window's purpose if you *look at it* – you *look through a window* at what's on the other side. Jesus saw the tangible world as a window to understand spiritual and eternal realities.

Remember when Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again." He didn't get it! He wondered how he could enter a second time into his mother's womb.

When Jesus offered the Samaritan woman a drink of "living water" – the kind of which she'll "never thirst again" - she thought He was about to draw it from a well.

In John 6, when Jesus said "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." We're told many of His own disciples took Jesus literally. They had no discernment. His comments creeped them out and they no longer followed Him.

To Jesus physical life was an allegory that spoke spiritual and eternal truths.

Here Jesus knows the disciples didn't understand what He meant by leaven.

Verse 8 "But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"

Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of

the 5000 and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the 4000 and how many large baskets you took up?” Why would Jesus be concerned over a bread shortage?

After two miracles of multiplication *no bread* would be the least of His worries.

Here’s an important lesson. The reason we have a hard time gazing through the physical to the spiritual realities beyond them – *is our lack of faith*. We stay fixated on the physical because we don’t trust God to provide and protect.

When I trust God for my *daily bread* - then I can feed on *spiritual bread*.

Jesus says in verse 11, “How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? - but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi...”

Caesarea Philippi was built by Herod Philip about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, in the Golan Heights. There was an original city called “Panias” – named after the Greek god Pan. Herod renamed it for the Caesar in Rome and himself.

Caesarea Philippi sat on the southern slope of Mount Hermon - 1150 feet ASL. It was one of the Decapolis - the 10 Greek cities on the Gentile side of the sea.

This was a retreat for the disciples... The Golan is cooler than the Galilee. The area around Caesarea Philipp is rural, wooded, and secluded. This is the turning point in Jesus’

ministry, and now He wants His closest follower's full attention.

“(Jesus) asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Hey, it's test time! The first semester is over. It's time for the exam. Up until now the emphasis has been on Jesus' identity. *What do people say?*

“So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” In ways Jesus resembled each of these heroes of the faith...

Like **John**, Jesus called people to repentance. Like **Elijah**, He worked miracles. Like **Jeremiah**, He was tender-hearted. Like **the prophets** He spoke for God.

But then Jesus asked them, “**But who do you say that I am?**”

Matilda Crabtree was a 14 year-old from West Monroe, Louisiana.

Matilda had a habit of cutting up - and playing practical jokes – with her father. She would try to scare him and at times he'd return the favor.

But one November night Matilda perform one too many of her pranks. She told her mom and dad she was sleeping at a friend's house - instead she stayed home, and hid in her parent's closet. In the middle of the night she started making scary noises. Her dad jumped out of bed and grabbed his .357-caliber pistol.

When he opened the closet Matilda yelled, “**Boo!**” Her frightened father shot her in the neck. His daughter's final words before she died were, “**I love you, Daddy.**”

Here's the moral of the story - **sometimes a case of mistaken identity can turned tragic and lethal.** And here's another example... The wrong answer to Jesus' question will not only cost you your life – it will cost you your eternity.

Jesus asks each one of us, **"Who do you say that I am?"**

Not just, *"Who do men say that I am?"* or *"Who does your mate say that I am?"* or *"Who does your mom say that I am?"* or *"Who does the minister say that I am?"*

Here's the most important question you'll ever be asked – you can't sidestep or dodge or escape this question – it demands your answer. Your eternal destiny is rides on your answer to His question. Jesus asks, **"Who do you say that I am?"**

"Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The word "Christ" is the English translation of the Hebrew "Messiah".

Peter hits the nail on the head. **"Jesus, You're Savior and King. You're God's chosen Deliverer."** Peter gets an A+ on his test. Add him to the honor roll...

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah (or son of Jonah), for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Peter didn't realize his thoughts had been inspired by God.

Peter thought he was stating the obvious. Simply put two and two together.

Yet Jesus recognizes his answer as revelation from God. Peter uttered a heavy revvy and didn't know it. Sometimes

supernatural stuff happens in *natural* ways.

One morning, something tripped my neighbor's burglar alarm. I walked outside to inspect, and an automated voice kept shouting, "Burglary, burglary, burglary. You are in a restricted area. Leave immediately. Burglary, burglary, burglary."

The alarm was blasting all over the neighborhood.

When we first become Christians we think this is how God speaks. He barks and blasts orders from heaven. We start to sin, and suddenly a voice pierces the heavens, "You are in a restricted area. Leave immediately."

But very seldom is that how God speaks to us.

Most often He penetrates my thoughts with His thoughts. He steers my mind toward what I know is right. A light shines on a truth I've forgotten, or I see a truth in a new way. It happens so naturally, I'm tempted to think it's me, but in reality "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Here, Jesus uses two words that are linguistically related to each other. The word "Peter" and "rock" are from the same root word, but in different genders.

"Peter" is "petros" (the *masculine*). It means "a little rock or pebble." Whereas, "rock" is "petra" (*feminine*) - it refers to "a mountain face - a cliff - an El Capitan."

Ever have a conversation with a friend, and recount it to a third party. Outside of its context it made no sense. You ended up saying, **“Well, you had to be there.”**

In a sense this is what we could say about Jesus’ conversation with Peter.

Imagine, Caesarea Philippi in your mind... A clear spring lined with silver poplar trees bubbles up from under a massive, reddish cliff. Jesus picks a pebble from the brook, and says to Simon, **“From now on you’re Petros, or *little pebble.*”**

He then points north - to the rock wall just over His shoulder. He tells His men, **“On this Petra I will build my church.”** *Peter is the pebble. Jesus is the mountain.*

Jesus promises to build His church – not on Peter - but on his confession.

The disciples grasped this imagery. Throughout the Old Testament, Messiah is pictured as the rock - the cornerstone - the stone that forms a massive mountain.

Peter the pebble, will be a leader in the church, a representative of Jesus. In essence, he’s a ***“chip off the block”*** - but Jesus Himself is ***“the Block.”***

Jesus is the foundation stone on which the church will be built!

There is a principle in Bible interpretation called **“The Law of First Mention.”**

Here is the first reference in the Scriptures of the Church.

The Law states that where a subject is mentioned the first time you'll find crucial understandings.

And here we learn three truths about the Church... Jesus **bought** the Church. Jesus **builds** the Church. And Jesus does **battle** through the Church.

Jesus **bought** the Church. It's not the pastor's church, or the people's church, it's Jesus' church. Jesus has purchased the church with His precious blood.

And Jesus **builds** the Church. Go to the church growth seminars and you'll find lots of people with clever ideas on attracting a crowd – but only Jesus can build a church with muscle and maturity. As God told another would-be temple builder named Zerubbabel, “It's not by might, or by power, but by My Spirit...”

If we'll **be** the church – worship, live the Bible, pray, love each other – Jesus promises to **build** the church. This was the strategy in Acts, and it worked.

Finally, Jesus does **battle** through the Church. Notice “**the gates of hell will not prevail against it.**” A gate is a defensive fortification... This is not hell attacking the church, but the church taking the battle to the forces of evil. The church shouldn't simply defend itself. We should be the aggressor and go on the offensive.

In Pnias – the original city before Phillip built Caesarea – there was a shrine to the Greek god Pan. Here sacrifices were made. It was called “**the gates of hell.**”

To the disciples “**the gates of hell**” represented the pagan culture of the area – *the humanism and hedonism of the*

Greeks. The church was a new community.

Jesus is saying that rather than be overwhelmed by the surrounding Hellenistic culture, Christianity would overcome the Greek culture with love and truth.

Then Jesus says to Peter, “**And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...**” Simon, now known as “*Rocky*,” is given a special role in the spread of the Gospel. Jesus hands him the keys to the car - “**the keys of the kingdom.**”

And every time the Gospel spreads to a new people group – *Jews, then Samaritans, then Gentiles* - it's Peter who's on hand to unlock the door.

In **Acts 2** Peter preached and saw 3000 Jews join the Church in a single day.

In **Acts 8** he visited Samaria and oversaw the outreach among the Samaritans.

And in **Acts 10** it was Peter who preached to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house, and for the first time the Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles – not just Jews.

Jesus also tells Peter “**And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**” “**Binding**” and “**loosing**” were rabbinical terms. The priest as God's representative had the authority and duty to apply the Law to specific situations. This occurs everyday in American courtrooms. Laws on the books have to be litigated or practically applied.

This also has to be done with spiritual principles.

Folks need help at times applying a spiritual truth taught in Scripture to their specific situation. This is where authority to bind and loose becomes helpful.

"To bind" is to **restrict**. **"To loose"** is to **release**. Jesus gave this authority to the 12 apostles – and in a lesser degree to pastors and spiritual leaders today.

We'll talk more about *"binding and loosing"* when we get to chapter 18.

Verse 20 **"Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ."** It's not enough to know who Jesus is – that knowledge does you no good - unless you're willing to follow where He's headed.

This is why Jesus didn't want the masses to honor Him as their Messiah. They would've done so, but they wanted a *conquering Savior* – not a *crucified Savior*.

The fickle crowds were not prepared let Jesus *rule in their hearts* – they wanted Him to *rule in Jerusalem*. They wanted a *political kingdom* not a *spiritual kingdom*.

And this was not just the crowd's expectation - it was also true of the disciples. They knew who Jesus was - but they didn't understand where He was going.

And for the next year Jesus tries to alter their expectations.

This begins the second semester - the harder semester - of their spiritual education. Now that they know **His identity** - He focuses on **His destiny**.

And the next verses show just how difficult this will be – just how entrenched their expectations were... Verse 21 **"From**

that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" Peter had just been privy to a heavy revvy. But it's gone to his head. Now he's ready to straighten out Jesus.

Peter must've thought he was the *pope*. He's really just a *dope*.

"But He (Jesus) turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter goes from *revelation* to *devastation* in a matter of minutes.

Just because God uses you profoundly and speaks to you directly - it doesn't mean you can't slip up, and find yourself being manipulated by Satan himself.

From an *instrument of God* to a *tool of Satan* in just four verses! Wow!

When we're saved God forgives us and puts His Spirit within us – but He does nothing to alter our humanness. We still think human thoughts, and are influenced by our human and often sinful perspective. It's not always easy to differentiate between *God's thoughts* - *my thoughts* - and even worse, *Satan's thoughts*.

And there's no magical formula for knowing when it's God speaking or another voice. It takes time, and growth, and

exposure to the mind, will, and Word of God.

It takes humbling my heart with repentance – and saturating my mind with Scripture - and allowing the Spirit to challenge every assumption about life.

Rocks need to remember they're nothing but solidified dirt.

And notice one more point from this passage... Jesus identifies Peter's desire to prevent the cross as an idea inspired by Satan himself. This has been Satan's strategy since the Garden of Eden. Satan wanted to keep Jesus off the cross.

He tried to kill Jesus with sword while a baby in Bethlehem.

He tried to drown Jesus in the storm.

He tried to throw Jesus off the cliff in Nazareth.

This is why Satan used Judas to betray Jesus. No one needed Judas. But Satan used him as a dagger in Jesus' back. He hoped the pain of betrayal would tempt Jesus to abandon the cross and the salvation it would bring.

Unlike Peter, Jesus knew He was destined for *the cross* not *a crown*.

Verse 24 “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

There are scores of people today who agree with Peter's confession. They believe Jesus is the Messiah, but they're not ready to follow Him to the cross.

They agree with *His identity*, but haven't embraced *His destiny*. They want *the Christ*, but they're not sure about *the cross*. And Jesus teaches His disciples you can't have one

without the other. To believe in Jesus is to take up your cross!

The cross was a symbol of complete subjugation to the will of Rome.

The Romans invented the horror called crucifixion not because of its efficiency.

There were much cleaner and quicker ways to kill a person than crucify them. The cross was deliberately bloody, and vicious, and cruel, and torturous.

The Romans used crucifixion to make a statement to the masses.

Crucifixions were always carried out by roadsides or on mountain tops. Places where the victims were seen publicly. The cross was a reminder that despite what freedoms the Romans extended to their subjects - at any moment those privileges could be pulled out from under them. Roman authority was supreme and complete.

In reality everyone had the rights of the man hanging on the cross.

Jesus said to follow Him required *three steps...*

First, **deny yourself**. Stop thinking selfish, self-centered thoughts.

Second, **take up your cross** and submit to new authority. Live for Jesus.

Third, **follow** in Jesus' footsteps. Think, and say, and do like Jesus.

It reminds me of Tom Mauser. His 15 year-old son, Daniel,

was shot at the Columbine High School massacre. Months after losing Daniel, Tom spoke out against gun violence. He's now been touring the country sharing his talk...

And every time Tom speaks he wears a pair of Reebok tennis shoes. They were Daniel's shoes. Tom is literally following in His son's footsteps... *Deny yourself... Submit to Jesus...* then lace up His sandals and *follow Him*.

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Life is like a slab of meat – a perishable commodity. Hold on to a T-bone steak. Put it in your pocket or briefcase – it'll spoil. The only way to keep some meat is to eat it! Let your body assimilate it, and it lives in you. You keep it by giving it away.

Life is also a perishable! Hold on to life - view it as your exclusive possession - do with it as you please – and it will wither in your hands... But give it away! Let your life be assimilated into the will and life of Jesus, and you will live forever!

Verse 27, **“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.**

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

This is an astounding statement. There were people

listening to Jesus who would see the Son of Man coming in His glory. That's an event still future.

We see what Jesus meant by the statement in chapter 17...

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.”

Remember Caesarea Philippi was at the base of Mount Hermon. Jesus takes His disciples to the mountain top. It probably took 6 days to climb the 9200 feet.

Once on a trip to Israel I talked our guide to drive to the top of Hermon.

A part from a military installation there's nothing there. No archaeological digs, shrine, or monastery – only a barren peak and a surreal, almost-mystical feeling.

The folks in our group felt like we were standing on holy ground.

On the day Jesus and His three disciples, ascended to the peak of Hermon it was holy ground. The disciples were treated to an amazing, astonishing sight...

Jesus was **“transfigured”** before His disciples.

Our word **"metamorphosis"** is derived from the Greek word translated **“transfigured.”** it describes a change that occurs from the inside out.

When a caterpillar becomes a butterfly – it's a metamorphosis.

Suddenly, the veil of Jesus' humanity was peeled back, and His supernatural glory was allowed to radiate, and shine, and

pulsate through His mortal body.

The brilliance of His *Godhood* burned through His *manhood*. Notice what we're told, "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light."

When Moses saw God's glory His face glowed with a *divine shine* – but the shine wore off. It was a *reflected glory*. Here Jesus is not reflecting, but *radiating glory*. It comes from within - not without. This glory burns from within His nature.

During His first visit to earth, Jesus' glory was not always as apparent...

A newborn baby covered in fluids and blood... A sweat-drenched carpenter with saw-dust in His hair, and splinters in his hands... Even a backwoods teacher from Nazareth... didn't look glorious. There was nothing about Jesus' appearance, or exterior that would tip us off to Jesus' divinity... until we come to Matthew 17...

For a moment the glory Jesus possessed - and will possess - for all eternity was placed on display. His humanity was peeled away. His glory shined.

Verse 3 "And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him."

This was not a reincarnation, but a reappearance of Moses and Elijah. Moses represented the Law - Elijah the prophets. Moses was the founder of Judaism. Elijah protected Judaism from the idolatry of the evil Ahab and Jezebel.

Moses and Elijah appeared to show that the glory of Jesus is greater than both the Law and the Prophets. The preeminence belongs to Jesus.

It's interesting, Luke 9:31 tells us what Jesus, Moses, and Elijah talked about. "(They) spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

It was a crucifixion chat-room. They talked about the ultimate sacrifice.

And I'm sure Jesus was hoping His disciples would eavesdrop, but from Peter's next comments the conversation must've sailed right over their heads...

"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The Feast of Tabernacles was coming up on the calendar.

During the feast Jewish families built thatched tents in their yards, and slept under the stars. It could be Peter wanted to celebrate on the mountaintop.

Verse 5 "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid." God in heaven interrupts Peter's ramblings. There's a time to talk, and a time to hush and listen...

It had been 600 years – since the time of Ezekiel - that the Shekinah glory of God shone in Israel. Suddenly, the glory cloud returns, and the Father speaks...

And notice the Father's instructions concerning Jesus, "Hear

Him!"

Peter didn't want to hear about Jesus' suffering, and sacrifice, and crucifixion. He preferred to savor the mountain-top experience - bask in the glory.

Peter, James, and John didn't understand they were given this experience – not as an end in itself – but as preparation for the road ahead. Hey, when God gives us glimpses of glory it's sometimes to prepare us for suffering and sacrifice.

Hebrews 12 says of Jesus “for the joy that was set before Him, (He) endured the cross...” It's easier to *endure sacrifice* once we're *enlightened with glory*.

Verse 7 “But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”

At the Father's voice they *fell on their faces*, but the voice of Jesus lifted *them to their feet*. We need to hear both voices – the voice of *greatness* and *grace*.

“Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.” This was a vision that none of the three disciples who experienced it would ever forget.

In 2 Peter 1:16-18 Peter recalls, “(We) were eyewitnesses of (Jesus') majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the excellent glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.” Near the end of his life

the experience was still vivid.

Verse 10 “And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Malachi 4:5 predicts Elijah will appear before Jesus’ Second Coming. The Jews expected Elijah to come before the Messiah.

“Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.” Jesus doesn’t deny the prophecy in Malachi...

“But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.” John wasn’t literally Elijah, but he came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

John was not THE Elijah, but A Elijah. The Jews didn’t grasp the dual comings of Jesus, so they assumed if Jesus was the Messiah Elijah would precede Him. In John an Elijah had already come, but the Jews rejected him – as they will Jesus.

Verse 14 “And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.” The Greek word translated “epileptic” is unfortunate. The OKJ is more accurate. It reads “lunatic.” The word literally means “moonstruck.”

In Eastern culture there was a superstition that if you slept outside and the moonlight shined on your face it could drive

you nuts - turn you crazy.

Thus the phrase "lunar – tic," literally means "struck by the moon."

Of course, the boy in question was not moon-struck but demon-struck.

The desperate father says in verse 16, "So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." Sadly, the disciples were powerless over the demon.

"Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me."

Author Kent Hughes writes, "These are fitting words for the Church today, which is so well-equipped, rich, and instructed, and yet so often powerless.

We cannot, and dare not, duck the Master's diagnosis."

Jesus has power over Satan. Do we have faith? "And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast him out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

Simple faith can alter landscapes, both topographical and social. Through faith we can mow down mountains. Nothing is impossible for people who have faith.

Notice the contrast in this passage - *faith as a mustard seed - problems like mountains*. And we think our faith has to be equal to our foe – *not so*.

Hey, it's not our faith that moves mountains - it's the hand of God.

All we need is enough faith to move the hand of God. And God is so willing to work on our behalf that's never much – just a seed-size faith.

Then Jesus adds in verse 21, **“However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”** The disciples had cast out demons before – but apparently, not all demons are equally determined. When faced with a stubborn demon we need an extra dose of spiritual strength. Prayer and fasting fortifies our faith!

Fasting detaches me from the flesh. Prayer attaches me to God.

Jesus is saying you can't take on a determined demon unless you've been working out spiritually. Prayer and fasting prepares you for the heavyweights.

“Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.”

Tonight, we end where we started... We know *who Jesus is*, but are we headed *where He's going*? Will we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus?