

# (Matthew) ch.16:13-17:8

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of divine revelation for understanding Jesus and the foundation of the church against spiritual opposition.*

**Duration:** 50:39

**Scripture:** Exodus 34:29, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 17:1, Matthew 17:6, Matthew 17:8, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Peter 5:1

**Topics:** "Eternal Rewards", "Soul Value"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of valuing our souls over worldly possessions and achievements. They explain that Jesus taught that gaining the whole world would mean forfeiting our souls. The speaker highlights the immense value of a human soul, stating that it outweighs everything the world can offer. They urge listeners to prioritize eternal matters and live for the things of God rather than temporal pursuits. The sermon also discusses Jesus' return and the concept of being rewarded according to our deeds and motives in the day of judgment.

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## Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16 and verse 13. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he began asking his disciples, saying, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said to them, But who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjonas, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. Here we see the midpoint, we can say, in Jesus' ministry, where he revealed himself, or rather we can say the Father gave revelation to the disciples concerning who he really was.

It was not obvious to the others in Israel. And we see that clearly when Jesus asked his disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? Some thought he was John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah, one of the prophets come back to earth. But Jesus was really concerned to know what they thought, whether they had revelation, because everything depended on this.

A revelation concerning who Jesus Christ is. The whole Christian life is founded on this. It is so important to understand this.

He said to them, Who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Thou art the Messiah, the one whom the prophets spoke about, and the Son of the living God. Now remember in the Old Testament, though there were prophecies that pointed forth to the Messiah coming, there is no clear verse in the Old Testament that speaks of the Son of God.

The Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not an Old Testament revelation. It is a New Testament revelation. And so when Simon Peter called Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the living God, it was not on the basis of some Old Testament scripture that he had heard from childhood.

It was a result of a revelation from the Father. And Jesus was quick to point that out. He said, You are blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood, in other words, this is not a revelation that has come to you from man.

Flesh and blood means human abilities, human intelligence, human beings. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. Not your own, not anyone else's.

But my Father in heaven. This teaches us one or two things before we proceed further from here. That divine truth can only be understood by revelation from heaven.

It cannot be understood by mere academic study. You can go to a Bible school and study the Bible just like someone goes to a college and studies chemistry. And he can get a degree in chemistry and you can get a degree in the Bible.

But neither of you may have revelation. There were many Bible scholars in Israel in the days when Jesus was on earth. None of them had revelation.

But this fisherman who had never been to a Bible school, he got revelation. The important thing is revelation. The revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was so convinced of this that when he wrote to the Ephesians, he says in Ephesians 1, verse 15 and verse 17, he says, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, that God would give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation. He doesn't say just study my epistle 20 times and you'll understand it. No, he prays for revelation.

In the second letter to Timothy, in chapter 2, Paul tells Timothy the same thing. He says, consider what I say. Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 7. And the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

In other words, even though Timothy was such a wholehearted and unselfish brother, the best of Paul's co-workers, yet Paul could not give him an explanation of spiritual things. It had to come by revelation. Of course, we have to use our mind.

That's just like saying we have to use our eyes to read the Bible. We need to use our eyes, otherwise we can't read the Bible. We need to use our minds also.

But if the truth of God penetrates only through my eyes, that is my body, into my mind, which is my soul, and stops there, I'm still building on sand. I have to get through beyond the sand of body and soul to rock, which is the spirit, which is the deepest part of man, which is the part of man that God created so that we

can have fellowship with him. And into this region, only the Holy Spirit can penetrate to give revelation.

Our intellect is an attribute of the soul. That cannot help us to understand spiritual truth. It can help us to understand chemistry and physics and maths, but not spiritual truth.

And so we see here Jesus using this word revelation, a word which is almost never found in the Old Testament. It's a distinctively new covenant word, like faith and grace. But though faith and grace are fairly well known in Christian circles, the word revelation is not so well known.

And yet it is a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament. Revelation, not from human sources, not from our own intellect, but by my Father in Heaven, Jesus said to Simon, you are blessed because you got this revelation. It was not through your cleverness that you got it, but the Father in Heaven gave you this revelation, otherwise you'd never have known who I really am.

Do you realize that, dear friends, that it's impossible to know Jesus spiritually except through the revelation of the Holy Spirit? We can know about Him, we can read about Him, like children read the stories in the Bible, we can read the stories and know all that Jesus did, but to know Him in that intimate way that the New Testament uses the word know is only possible if we have divine revelation. And this is why when we read the scriptures, it is not enough that we understand it intellectually, it's not enough that we study it with the concordance and other Bible study aids, all of which are good, but that we get on our knees and cry out to God for the revelation of the Holy Spirit, otherwise we shall remain blind as a bat concerning spiritual things, even though we intellectually understand the scriptures, and we will be completely wrong. This is the reason why people have gone astray.

They've tried to study the scriptures merely with their intellect. We need to use our eyes, our intellect, and then seek for the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Do not lean upon your own understanding, we read in Proverbs 3.5, but trust in the Lord.

That is what we need to do. And then Jesus said to Peter, and I say to you, verse 18, you are Peter, and the word Peter means a small little pebble, a tiny wee little stone, but upon this rock, the rock is what? What he just confessed, in verse 16, the Christ, the Son of the living God, on this rock, this revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, on this rock, I will build my church. Peter, you are going to be a little pebble on top of this rock, built on the rock along with a lot of other stones, but the rock itself is Jesus Christ, not understood intellectually, but understood by divine revelation, and the church that is built on this rock, the gates of hell, or the gates of Hades, that is the powers of spiritual death, will never be able to overpower.

Peter himself understood that so clearly, even though there are many today who don't seem to understand that the rock is Christ, and not Peter, because when Peter writes his epistle, it says in 1 Peter chapter 2, and verse 4, he says to the Christians he is writing to, and coming to Christ, he says, as to a living stone, rejected by men, you also, as living stones, are built up. And he refers to Jesus as the choice stone, and the precious cornerstone, in verse 6, and a rock in verse 8. And on that rock of Christ, he says all of us are little living stones, 1 Peter 2.5. When we compare scripture with scripture, it is clear, so that there is no shadow of doubt that the rock is certainly not Peter. Peter is a very shaky foundation for anything to be built on.

It is Jesus Christ who is the rock. And on that rock, the church is built. And when Jesus spoke about the church, he was not speaking about any denomination.

He wasn't speaking about an organization. He wasn't speaking about a building. He was speaking about those who allowed themselves to be built upon this solid foundation, the rock Jesus Christ.

All of them together would be built like the Old Testament temple was built, stone upon stone, stone beside stone, one disciple of Jesus next to another, and through the centuries, the church of Jesus Christ, the true church, the people of God, who gave themselves to be built on the rock. Against that church, the gates of hell, the powers of spiritual death, would never prevail. This is a tremendous assurance we have.

That if we are built on this rock of Jesus Christ revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, we can never be overcome by all the forces of spiritual death because Jesus has overcome them already. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and he has been defeated once and for all. And that victory belongs to us.

In ourselves, we do not have the ability to overcome the powers of spiritual death. But because Jesus has overcome and because we can be filled with the Holy Spirit, therefore, standing together with others, and that's important to understand, not alone, but standing together with others who are also built on this rock, together as one body, we can stand against Satan and he'll never be able to overcome us. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, and verse 18.

We were considering in our last study how Jesus told Peter how Peter himself was a small stone represented by that name which Jesus gave to him. His name until then was Simon. Jesus gave him a new name, Peter, a small stone.

And he would be built upon Petra, which is the Greek word for a large rock on which the church would be built. And that rock is the confession that Peter had just made. In verse 16, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, revelation concerning Christ, Peter had just received from the Father.

And the church that is built on this rock, Jesus said, the gates of hell will never be able to overpower. And then, Jesus went on to say, in verse 19, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. The keys are a symbol of authority, authority in the kingdom of heaven, spiritual authority to bind spiritual forces on earth, to loose people who are in bondage on earth from the bondage of evil forces.

This was an authority that Jesus gave to Peter. Later on, we read in chapter 18 that he gave that same authority to two or three who were in eldership in a church. They would also have the same authority to bind and loose on earth, in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 18.

This authority was not given to anyone in the Old Testament. The promises in the Old Testament were all earthly. The enemies were earthly.

They fought with Philistines, Canaanites, Moabites, Amorites, etc. But in the new covenant, we do not fight with flesh and blood, as we read very clearly in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12. Those who are still fighting with human beings are fit to be in the Old Testament.

Those who quarrel with each other and fight with other believers really belong under the old covenant where they had human enemies. Under the new covenant, Ephesians 6.12 is very clear. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but our enemies are in the heavenly places.

When Satan and his hosts were cast out of the third heaven, the immediate presence of God, they were not cast into hell. They were cast into the second heavens. And that's where the battle rages between earth and the third heaven is the heavenly places where these evil forces, the powers of darkness, have their headquarters.

One day, as we read in Revelation 12, they will be cast down from there to the earth. But right now they are there. And our battle is with them.

And to fight with them, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, as we read in 2 Corinthians chapter 10. Carnal weapons are all right against the Philistines and the Amorites and against human beings, but against the forces of evil, our intellect is no use. It's spiritual power that we need, authority from Jesus Christ.

And Jesus gives this authority. If this authority is not given by the Lord, we have no ability to stand against spiritual forces. But this authority is dependent on our walk with the Lord.

It's not independent of our walk with the Lord. He is not speaking here just about casting out demons. They cast out demons even before the day of Pentecost, as we read in Matthew chapter 10.

And they were given that authority anyway. But, here we read about binding spiritual forces, which is much more than casting out a demon out of an individual. It's binding spiritual forces, forces of spiritual death, that are seeking to infiltrate the church and destroy it.

The church cannot be destroyed by a demon-possessed person sitting inside there, because everyone knows he is demon-possessed. And demons can be cast out by any ordinary believer through faith in the name of Jesus Christ. But to bind forces of spiritual death that seek to bring confusion, division, and conflict and bitterness into a church is a much more difficult thing to do.

It requires spiritually minded, wholehearted people who stand together, two or three, who stand together and bind those forces with the authority that the Lord has given them. This is the authority that Jesus gave to Peter. And where people are faithful in their walk with the Lord and exercise this authority, there the true church can be built in a locality.

And the powers of spiritual death, spoken of in verse 18, the gates of Hades, will not be able to overpower such a church. What are the powers of spiritual death? Anything that brings spiritual death into a fellowship or a congregation, into a church, bitterness, jealousy, strife, the love of money, love of honor, fighting for position, backbiting, gossiping, many of these things bring spiritual death into a church. And there must be in every church two or three in the eldership who are so completely one that they can stand against these forces, bind these spiritual forces.

Because they have overcome these sins in their own life, they can stand against these forces when they seek to infiltrate and destroy the church. So we see here that Jesus gave to his disciples a revelation, the Father gave a revelation concerning Jesus and Jesus spoke to them about the church. This is the first time that Jesus ever spoke about the church.

We see here actually three revelations in this passage. First of all, a revelation concerning who Christ is, himself. Second, a revelation concerning the church, the body of Christ, against which the gates of hell would never prevail.

And then thirdly, later on in this chapter, a revelation concerning the way of the cross, the way of discipleship, the way of taking up the cross and denying oneself daily. None of these were known in the Old Testament. It goes on to say there that he warned the disciples, verse 20, that they should tell no one that he was the Christ.

And from that time, that significant, that it is from that moment that Jesus Christ began to show 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 on the third day. This, again, was not known in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, if you were killed by your enemies, it was the result of your being disobedient to the Lord.

It's when Israel was disobedient to the Lord that their enemies overcame them and defeated them. Whenever Israel was obedient to the Lord, they always defeated their enemies. That was how it was in the Old Testament because their promises were earthly.

But now, under the new covenant, Jesus has inaugurated a new way, a new and living way, where God allows his dead children to be overcome by their enemies, even to be killed. Jesus himself was killed. The early Christians were thrown to the lions, burnt at the stake, and God didn't rescue them.

God didn't rescue them from the fire like he rescued the Old Testament saints, Daniel's three friends from Nebuchadnezzar's fire. No, this was a new age. And in the midst of that suffering, they were to glorify God.

That was something greater than was possible under the Old Testament. But Peter, who had been steeped in Old Testament theology, couldn't understand this. And many Christians can't understand this today.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, God forbid it, Lord. This should never happen to you. Why should you be overcome by your enemies? You are so faithful.

He couldn't understand the new covenant. And Jesus turned around and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. There we see the contrast.

Just a little while ago, Jesus told Peter, Blessed are you, Simon, because you have received revelation from my father. And maybe Peter was a little puffed up because of that word that he had been selected to get revelation. That Jesus had given to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

And we see how quickly Satan got into him. How quickly Satan gets in when we are puffed up with a word of praise that someone gives to us. If we are not alert.

It is when we have received revelation, when we have been privileged to see that which other Christians haven't seen. When we have been blessed with authority that God gives to us that he hasn't given to others. That is the very moment when we are most in danger of being overcome by Satan.

Are we going to build a church against which the gates of hell will not prevail? Then we need to be alert ourselves that Satan does not prevail against us. But Peter had not learned that lesson yet. Because Satan did prevail against him within a few seconds of Jesus saying that he would build his church against which the gates of hell will not prevail.

For we see here Peter becoming an instrument in the hands of Satan to speak forth words which were contrary to the will of God. And yet when you look at those words they don't look as though they are so evil. Was Peter saying something sinful? Was he saying something wicked? No.

Out of a human compassion and pity for his beloved Lord he said Lord don't ever go to the cross. Don't let suffering and death come to you. And that was the voice of Satan.

That was the voice of Satan trying to turn Jesus away from the cross. And that's something for us to remember too. That the voice that tells us to avoid the pathway of the cross in our life is always the voice of Satan.

And we need to be just as bold as Jesus was to turn around and recognize that and say get behind me Satan. You are a stumbling block to me. For you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's.

And that clearly teaches that God's interest is always the way of the cross. Man's interest is to avoid it. And when we go man's way we become a stumbling block to Jesus.

So may God open our eyes to see not only Jesus not only the church but the way of the cross as being the way to build that church. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 16 and verse 23. We were considering in our last study how Jesus told Peter about the church and about the suffering that he himself that Jesus himself was to undergo in Jerusalem.

He told all his disciples that. And Peter could not understand this and out of human sympathy for the Lord tried to prevent him. And Jesus turns around and says to Peter Get behind me, Satan.

You are a stumbling block to me for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's. And then Jesus said to his disciples verse 24 If anyone wishes to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. In the Old Testament everything was compulsory.

You had to pay your tithe whether you liked it or not whether you believed in it or not. You had to go to Jerusalem if you were a male three times a year whether you felt like it or not. You had to offer the prescribed sacrifices.

Everything was compulsory and that was distinctive a distinctive feature of the Old Covenant. But in the New Covenant everything is voluntary if anyone wishes to come. There is no compulsion here.

Nothing is compulsory. Because when something is compulsory it is no longer an act of love. And Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments.

If you don't love me don't keep them. You are back under law. Obedience in the New Covenant has to spring out of love unlike in the Old Covenant where it sprang out of fear or out of the hope of reward.

Likewise this matter of following Jesus we read here in verse 24 If anyone wishes to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. So we see there that it was not only Jesus who had to go the way of the cross. He turned around and told his disciples that they also had to go the same way themselves.

There was no other way for them if they were to be his disciples. This was the New Covenant. This was not like the Old Covenant where the Philistines and the Moabites and the Amorites would be under your feet.

But rather they would overcome you humanly. But you would overcome spiritual forces and you would overcome the lust in your flesh as you walk in the footsteps of Jesus and overcome sin. Sin and Satan are the big enemies in the New Covenant age and the world.

But Peter couldn't understand that and if we don't understand that we are a stumbling block or a hindrance to the Lord's work. Every person who does not understand the way of the cross is a stumbling block to the Lord. And there are many Christians today many preachers who do not understand the way of the cross.

All such are a stumbling block to Jesus. A hindrance to the total testimony of Christ and the Church. Jesus said to Peter you are a stumbling block to me.

You are a hindrance to me. Even if you are as blessed as Peter was to have got revelation yet you can become a stumbling block. And if Peter had continued that way he would have continued to be a stumbling block and a hindrance even though he got revelation from the Father.

But Peter got light. He got revelation not only on Christ but on the Church and the way of the cross. This is the threefold revelation we need too.

A revelation concerning the person of Jesus Christ who He really is. The Son of Man the one who came in our flesh and the Son of God eternally existent with the Father who came down to earth in our flesh to deliver us from sin and Satan and the world. A revelation concerning the true Church of Jesus Christ which is not a denomination not a building not an organization not even a congregation but those who have allowed themselves to be built on the rock Jesus Christ who have become disciples who are built together to be one body one building against which the gates of hell will never prevail the powers of death will never be able to overcome them.

And further revelation concerning the cross the way of the cross as the way to build that Church the way by which Satan has no more power over us. Verse 25 Jesus went on to explain what the taking up the cross really meant. Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

What life is Jesus speaking of here? It's not just our physical life there is an instinct within us to preserve and protect our physical life. There is also an instinct within us to preserve and protect our soul life our reputation our dignity. And Jesus said if you seek to preserve that you will discover in eternity that you have lost the real spiritual life that Jesus came to give.

But if you are willing to give that up and lose it for my sake you will find in eternity that eternal life in your spirit that Jesus came to give. So it's not just a question of saying I believe in Jesus Christ not just a question of saying I repent and I believe in Jesus and then just living for myself. What is the characteristic of this life that we have received from Adam? The primary characteristic of that life is that we live for ourselves.

Our aim in life is to seek our own honor and our own gain. And we live for ourselves. But the life that Jesus came to give is a life that lives for God.

Jesus did not live for himself he lived for God. He lived utterly and totally for his Father. And he was willing to give up everything in order to live that life for the Father.

That is the only life that will remain for eternity. And so Jesus said are you willing to give up this life this earthly life and all its benefits and advantages and everything that this world can offer this life then you will find that eternal life that you can keep for all eternity. And then he gave them a profit and loss question.

In verse 26 What will a man be profited, he said, if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Now that's not a word that Jesus spoke to the multitude. It's very important to remember. We often quote that verse to unbelievers.

But that's the verse that Jesus spoke to disciples. He says what will you gain if you gain everything that this world can offer, honor, money position greatness, pleasure ease, comfort and think of all the things that the world can offer. And that's the meaning of gaining the whole world.

In other words, every single thing that the world can offer. Maybe you develop yourself in music and sport and travel and you live comfortably in a nice house and you accomplish so many things and everything is for this world. And at the end of it all, you haven't allowed your soul your personality to be transformed by partaking of God's nature, partaking of eternal life.

What is the use of that? There are people who try to get the best of both worlds as they say. In other words, have a good time here and then get into God's presence and enjoy heaven and paradise for all eternity as well. It just doesn't work.

Jesus said here that if you gain the whole world, you forfeit your soul. In other words, if your goal in life is to get all that this world can give you can forfeit your soul. You can lose your soul.

And what can you give in exchange for your soul? This verse teaches us that the value of one human soul is more than the whole world and everything that this world can give. It's so important for us to understand that greatness and position and money and everything this world can give is absolute garbage compared to the tremendous privilege of partaking of God's nature during our one earthly life. What can you give in exchange for your soul? Think of all the things in the world.

Put them all in a balance and the human soul will be heavier. If only we would be gripped by this we would live much more for the things of eternity than for the things of time. And when shall we realize this? It's good if we realize it now.

If we don't realize it now, we're going to get a surprise when the Lord comes again. He speaks about His coming in verse 27. For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels.

He speaks about His return to earth and will then recompense or reward every man according to his deeds. In other words, we must live as those who are one day going to stand before Jesus Christ in the day of judgment to be rewarded according to our deeds. In other words, according to what we have lived for.

Not just our actions but the motive behind those actions. That's what gives quality and value to our deeds and actions. And everyone's going to be rewarded.

And Jesus said we must live with eternity in view, with the judgment seat of Christ in view so that we have no regrets in that day. Then we must choose the way of the cross now. Verse 28.

Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. The beginning of that kingdom, that is. That was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down in power and the kingdom of God was established on earth in a small way in those 120 people who were meeting together in the upper room.

The church today is a miniature of the kingdom of God which will one day cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The Son of Man coming in His kingdom in its initial stage is here in the church. Its final stage will be when Jesus returns in glory with the Father, in the glory of His Father with His angels.

And so verse 28 is referring to the fact that some standing right there with Jesus at that time were not going to die until the day of Pentecost came. We know that Judas Iscariot died among those 12 disciples and perhaps any others who were listening there. And there we need to see what the church is.

It's the beginning of the kingdom of God which will one day cover the whole earth. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 17 and verse 1. And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, His brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them.

And His face shone like the sun and His garments became as white as light. This was six days after they had this revelation given to them concerning Christ and the church and the cross as we considered in our last three studies. And now Jesus gave them a little glimpse of that glory that was His before the worlds were created.

And that will one day be manifested through His body when He comes back to earth to rule. But at that particular time when He was on earth, that glory was hidden. It was inside.

But it was concealed in a body like ours. With flesh like ours. He was transfigured before them.

In other words He allowed that inner glory the glory as of the only begotten of the Father to shine through Him. And Peter and James and John saw it. His face shone like the sun.

His garments became as white as light. And then we read that Moses and Elijah appeared to them and talked with him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Lord it is good for us to be here.

If you wish I will make three tabernacles here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Moses represented the Old Testament law. And Elijah represented the Old Testament prophets.

So in the persons of Moses and Elijah there on the mountain we had, we could say a complete representation of the Old Testament which was often referred to as the law and the prophets. And here was the physical embodiment of the law and the prophets in Moses and Elijah. And Peter was so excited.

There was some supernatural way in which Peter recognized Moses and Elijah. None of the disciples had ever seen Moses or Elijah or even pictures of them. But when they saw these two people speaking to Jesus, spiritually they recognized that this was Moses and this is Elijah and this is how it will be in heaven when we get there.

There will be no need for introductions. There will be a spiritual recognition as to who each person is. And Moses and Elijah stood there with Jesus and Peter was so excited about this.

He said, I will make three tabernacles. It was wonderful to be in the company of these heavenly people. But while he was still speaking, a bright cloud, verse 5, overshadowed them and a voice out of the cloud said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

Hear him. We need to see the significance of this statement in the context of what Peter had just said. Peter said, let's make three tabernacles.

One for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Jesus Christ. In other words, he was putting the Lord Jesus Christ along with Moses and Elijah on the same level. And the father was very quick to point out that that was wrong.

When we put Jesus on the level of Moses and Elijah or of other human beings, immediately a cloud comes between us and heaven. For he is not like Moses or Elijah. He is God's beloved son.

He is unique. He is God, manifest in the flesh. Though he was on earth as the son of man in our flesh, yet we must not forget who he really is.

And not only that, there was something else that God also wanted to point out to Peter. That the old covenant represented by Moses and Elijah was passing away. And that Jesus had come to establish a new covenant that now our years are to be attuned to Jesus, not to Moses and Elijah.

Not to great men of God unless we hear Jesus through them. This is such an important lesson. For man has a tendency to worship other men, to make other men their idols.

And God is very jealous for our spirit that we should not have any idols in our life. Not only idols of wood and stone, but not even idols of great men of God. Even if those great men of God are so unique as Moses and Elijah, when we begin to admire them to the extent where they begin to take the place that Jesus should have in our heart and life, immediately a cloud comes between us and the Father.

Fellowship is disturbed. And if we are sensitive, we will hear the voice from heaven saying to us, Don't put Jesus on the same level as these other men. Don't put these other men on the same level as Jesus Christ.

He is to be Lord of your life. This is my beloved son. Hear him.

It was alright to listen to Moses and Elijah up until now, but now you have to listen to Christ. It also teaches us that there is no need for a mediator between us and Jesus Christ. If you want to know the will of God, if you want to hear what God is saying to you, you don't have to go to a prophet or a preacher or a pastor or an apostle or to Mary or to anyone before you approach Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament it was like that. When David wanted to find God's will, he had to go and ask the priest. He used the Urim and Thummim.

The Old Testament kings had to go to the prophets to find out what God's will was, whether they should attack their enemies or not. That's how it was. God revealed His will through the prophets.

The book of Hebrews, which is the one book in the New Testament which seeks to explain the difference between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant, begins with these words. Hebrews 1.1 To the fathers, God spoke through the prophets. But in these last days, God has spoken to us through His Son.

And it's important for us to see that difference. And that's why God spoke to Peter there and said, Now, the time has come for Moses and Elijah to move out of your vision. Now you need to see Jesus and hear Him.

Thank God that we don't have to go through anyone to the Lord Jesus. Each one of us can go directly to Him. In fact, this is one of the promises of the New Covenant.

As we read in Hebrews in chapter 8 and verse 11, they won't teach everyone his fellow citizen and everyone his brother saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me from the least to the greatest. The least person in the church can know the Lord directly, can know God directly as a father. There is one God and one mediator between God and men.

The man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2 5. And so all this is symbolized in this action of God bringing a cloud between Peter and himself. And the voice saying, Now it is time to hear my beloved son.

A new age is dawning. Thank God for the ministry of Moses and Elijah. Thank God for the ministry of great men of God.

Thank God even for the written word symbolized by Moses who brought the written law and the written commandments of God to the Israelites. But it's possible for us even to have the written word come between us and God. As we considered in an earlier study, we can study the Bible intellectually and not see Jesus there, not hear Jesus.

It's possible to read the Bible and to hear Paul and not hear Jesus. Not hear the Holy Spirit. That's when we studied intellectually and then we need to come back to this verse.

We need to see Jesus, not Moses or Paul or Elijah or Peter. We need to hear Jesus. Not just Peter or Paul or John.

And when the disciples heard this, Matthew 17 6, they fell on their faces and they were much afraid. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Arise, don't be afraid. It's amazing how often Jesus used those words towards his disciples.

Do not be afraid or fear not, as we read in the King James Version. Do not be afraid. One of the most oft-repeated commands of Jesus to his disciples, do not be afraid.

A word that all of us need to hear in this day. Jesus does not come to bring fear. Fear is from the devil.

Whenever fear comes into your heart, you can be sure that's not from God. 2 Timothy 1.7 says, God has not given us the spirit of fear. The spirit of fear concerning anything, concerning the future, concerning your health, concerning your children, concerning your family, concerning anything in the world, is always from Satan.

God drives out fear. Jesus always sought to drive out fear from his disciples. Arise and do not be afraid.

A word, perhaps, that some of you need to hear today. Arise and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes, Moses and Elijah had disappeared.

They saw no one now. Only Jesus. And that's a beautiful picture of how the new covenant should be.

Hearing only Jesus. Verse 5. Seeing only Jesus. Verse 8. Does it mean we don't care for other men of God who preach the word of God to us? No.

There are many exhortations in the New Testament that says we have to give double honor to those who labor with the word of God in our midst. More honor than to other believers. But, only if they point us to Jesus.

The greatest preacher is the one who leads people beyond himself to Christ. Who leads people beyond himself to see Jesus. Who opens the word so that we can see Jesus in the word.

And that we can hear Jesus beyond the voice of the man. That is the meaning here. God uses human instrumentality even today.

He has set in the church apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, shepherds. But, the ultimate aim is that all of us may come to see Jesus ourself in our spirit. And hear him through all the human instrumentalities that God uses.

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