

Is Jesus Fully God?
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Matthew 17:1-13

What do we mean by the expression, “*right under one’s nose?*”

Sometimes we’re so distracted we miss what’s right before us; even something very important. It’s usually a problem of focus.

Big Idea: Jesus came to earth as a man to reveal God’s glory to humanity. Yet, he is not just a historical figure who gave us a pattern for living. He IS the living and saving Son of God. The question is, do we live our lives as if we’re convinced of that?

Matthew 17:1–13 (ESV)

The Transfiguration

17 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, 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 white as light. **3** And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” **5** He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” **8** And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” **10** And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” **11** He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. **12** But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” **13** Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

- Just a week earlier Jesus had told His disciples of His coming death and resurrection. They were understandably shocked and confused.
- Jesus explained what it would cost to follow Him: taking up a cross, losing your life to save it, giving up the whole world rather than losing your soul.
- Now Jesus climbed a high mountain with His inner circle of three: Peter, James, and John. There he was “transfigured.” (**mětamōrphōō**, *met-am-or-fō´o*¹) His appearance took on a supernatural, glorious glow.
- Moses and Elijah appeared for a conference with Jesus.
- **Of all the Old Testament characters, why Moses and Elijah? Why would they be significant to Jews of that day?**
- Luke’s account (9:30-31) tells us what they were discussing: ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.²

In Matthew 5:17 (ESV) Jesus said:

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

- In typical fashion Peter excitedly speaks before he thinks: *“This is good!”*
- Mark 9:6 “...*he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.*”
- Verse four: **Why do you think Peter wanted to build three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah? What is the significance of the words, “he was still speaking when...?”**
- In verse five God the Father speaks with supernatural specificity: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”* When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were rightfully terrified.
- Then, in an instant it was again just them and Jesus. *“Get up, fear not.”*
- Verse nine: **Why did Jesus tell them to keep this a secret?**
- In verses nine through thirteen the disciples are pondering Malachi’s prophecy that Elijah must come before the Messiah. They might have been wondering why Elijah wouldn’t come and spare Jesus from death. Jesus repeated what he had said in

Matthew chapter 11: ¹¹ *“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist...
¹⁴ ...he is Elijah who is to come.”*

- The Elijah the Jews were seeking came in the form of John the Baptist.
- Back to this amazing event itself. One might ask: Why did God choose to reveal Himself to these three disciples in this spectacular way?
- These disciples had been with Jesus through His entire miraculous ministry. A week before Jesus had asked, *“Who do people say I am?”* Peter testified: *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (16:16)
- **Why was it essential for God the Father to provide them with this supernatural affirmation of the deity of Jesus** (verse nine gives a hint. Also 2 Peter 1:16; John 1:14)? **How did this experience change the disciples’ view of who Jesus? How does this apply to us today? How does the awareness of God’s presence change how we live?**
- Truth: Our testimony about Jesus is only as strong as our experience WITH Jesus. We can’t be a convincing witness unless we ourselves are convinced!
- One might say, *“I understand why Peter, James, and John were convinced about who Jesus is and what He came to do. I’m waiting for that supernatural experience with Him so I TOO can be convinced.”* **What would you say to them? How would you explain why YOU are convinced of who Jesus is? What gives us all that confidence?**
- Wiersbe: *“Peter could not share his experience with us, but he could share the record of that experience so that we could have it permanently in the Word of God. It is not necessary for us to try to duplicate these experiences; in fact, such attempts would be dangerous, for the devil could give us a counterfeit experience that could lead us astray.”³*
- Jesus’ inner circle needed a supernatural experience because they didn’t have a completed Bible like we do. We need to be careful not to seek sensational signs to convince us about who Jesus is. Scripture is enough.
- I’ve never had a transfiguration experience. But I have had a transformation experience. We call it regeneration, the new birth.

- Though we can't share in the experience these three disciples had, if we are paying attention, God will give us "glimpses" of Jesus' glory.
- Craig Blomberg writes: *"If 16:21-28 stressed the need for Jesus' passion, here Matthew provides a balancing reminder of Jesus' coming glory. Three disciples are privileged to come to an advance viewing. Even as we must today avoid the heresies of the so-called health-wealth gospel...it is equally important to note that God does give us from time to time foretastes of glory. But we cannot predict when and how he will provide them, we dare not demand them, and for most people they will probably remain the exception rather than the norm...We should be grateful for whatever glimpses of glory God graciously gives. They often provide crucial sustenance for us during hard times, but they will not do away with hard times altogether."*

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So, What's the Takeaway?

- Often when we are studying the Bible certain verses seem to leap off the page. For me, in this text, it's verses five and eight.
- The last words of verse five are the voice of God Himself: *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."*
- Verse eight says: *"...when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only."* The word only (monos) comes at the end of the sentence for emphasis. The disciples must focus on Christ alone. He will prove sufficient for their needs.⁵
The same could be said of us.
- The last words of John 12:21b (KJV 1900): ²¹ *"...Sir, we would see Jesus."*
- When I was a boy I saw that engraved on a plaque on a pulpit so that every preacher was reminded before they spoke: *"...we would see Jesus."*
- When the cloud of God's glory evaporated, the three disciples looked up and saw ONLY JESUS. They saw Him in a new way as never before.

- Here's the question: In every situation and circumstance of my life do I see Jesus for who He really is, the living, loving, saving Son of God?
- Has being busy and doing good become a "fog" that obscures my view of the One I'm serving?
- Is Jesus real to me, or more of a distant example of how to live?
- Is "Christian" a brand name I wear or a cross I'm willing to bear?
- When I'm fearful, do I look up and see Jesus the Prince of Peace?
- When I slip into sin, do I look up and see the One who died for my sin?
- When I'm out of answers, do I look to the only One who has answers?
- To have a healthy Christian life we need to regularly climb above the chaos and confusion to focus on the One who gave us eternal life, the saving Son of God.
- We need to live out the words of Hebrews 12:2: *"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*
- This week may our prayer every day be that: *"...we would see Jesus."*

¹ Strong, J. (2009). *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 47). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Lk 9:30–31). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 444). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Blomberg, Craig L.. *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (The New American Commentary) (p. 264). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.