



Chapter 17: God's Beloved Son

The Transfiguration (17:1-19)

This is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke and the chart below shows how useful it can be to compare the different Gospels to get a fuller picture.

Information	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Jesus said some would not taste death until they see him coming in his kingdom.	16:28	9:1	9:27
Peter, James and John were the only disciples with Jesus at this time.	17: 1	9:2	9:28
They went up a high mountain	17:1	9:2	9:28
Jesus went to pray			9:28
They were alone	17:1	9:2	
Jesus' face shone	17:2		
His clothes became brilliant white	17:2	9:3	9:29
Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus	17:3	9:4	9:30
They talked about his death at Jerusalem			9:31
Peter wanted to make three shelters	17:4	9:5	9:33
A cloud surrounded them	17:8	9:7	9:34
A voice came from the cloud which said 'This is my beloved Son listen to him'	17:5	9:7	9:35
God also said that He was pleased with His Son.	17:5		
The disciples were scared but Jesus comforted them	17:6		
Jesus told them not to tell anyone until he had been raised from the dead.	17:9	9:9	

Only three of the disciples were allowed to see Jesus transfigured (or changed) on the mountain. This was a great privilege – by showing Jesus in glory, it gave them a picture of the future kingdom.

This event explains what the Lord said in the last verse of chapter 16:

“Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (Matthew 16:28)

This comes in each of the three Gospels immediately before the transfiguration.

(Note: The chapter division in Matthew is not a problem as there were no chapters and verses when the New Testament was originally written!)

Matthew tells us that Peter, James and John saw Jesus shining with the glory of God and talking to Moses and Elijah about his death. We do not know if this was a vision or if God resurrected Moses and Elijah to talk to His Son.

These two were both important people in the Old Testament and the Jews had expected Elijah, or a person like him, to reappear before God's promised Saviour. Look at Malachi 4:5, 6 to see the passage on which this hope was based (See also Matthew 11:10-14).

Jesus said to the three disciples, “... *Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased*”, and we are told that “*the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist*”.





Jesus knew in advance what type of death he would suffer, but he was tempted to avoid it (John 12:27). The Transfiguration was given to strengthen him to continue to do his Father's will.

Years later Peter referred to the Transfiguration when he wrote his second letter. The whole experience had been so dramatic and wonderful that he knew without any doubt that he had witnessed God giving honour and glory to His Son. His words are shown in the box.

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
(2 Peter 1:16, 17)

Healing the Boy with Epilepsy (17:14-20)

As Jesus and the three disciples descended the mountain after the Transfiguration, they were met by a man pleading for help for his only child. The other disciples were unable to heal him but Jesus showed God's power at work in response to the man's faith.

Verse 15 says that the boy had epilepsy and describes how severe the epileptic fits were. Sometimes the convulsions were so bad that the boy fell in the fire or in water. Mark 9:17-26 adds more details including the fact that the boy was also deaf and dumb. People at that time did not realise that epilepsy is a medical condition and can be controlled by medicinal drugs. Because they found the boy's behaviour so strange they thought his problems must have been caused by a demon. There are no evil spirits inside a person causing them to be deaf and dumb or epileptic!

The boy's condition represented the faithless spiritual state of Israel and Jesus drew their attention to this comparison, before healing him. Jesus spoke to the father and the large crowd that had gathered to see Jesus performing miracles.

"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." (Matthew 17:17)

The boy's illness twisted his body with convulsions; the minds of the people were spiritually twisted and diseased by their sinfulness. They too were desperately in need of healing.

Jesus warns the Disciples about his Death (17:22, 23)

Jesus continued to warn his disciples about his forthcoming death in Jerusalem. He said to them;

"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men" (Luke 9:44).

But the disciples did not understand him, and we read that they were very distressed.

Paying Tax (17:24-27)

Peter was asked if his master paid the temple tax. He replied that Jesus did. Later Jesus told Peter that kings would not expect their children to pay them tax so Jesus was not expected to offer money to his Father. However, Jesus recognised that he should obey those that are in authority (read Luke 20:21-25) and so he paid the tax, not just for himself but for Peter as well.