

## When Did Elijah Come?

Matthew 17:9 ¶ 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."<sup>10</sup> And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?"<sup>11</sup> He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things."<sup>12</sup> 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."<sup>13</sup> Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Why the command to silence until after the resurrection?

There is no gospel to preach until after Jesus has completed his mission; the whole truth about Jesus will be preached as good news, but first he has a cross awaiting him.

- After Peter's confession of Jesus being the promised Messiah, Jesus predicts his humiliation and death; now, again, after this foretaste of Jesus' eventual glory, Jesus predicts his coming suffering and death.

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- In these verses we also have an explanation about the OT prophecy of the coming of Elijah before the coming of God's kingdom (Malachi 4:5). Elijah has come in the person of John the Baptist. Both Jesus and John will have similar fates. The fate of John the Baptist is but a premonition of what was to happen to Jesus.

**Matthew 11:13** For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup> And if ye are willing to receive it, *this is Elijah, that is to come.* <sup>15</sup> *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*



400 BC Malachi 4: <sup>5</sup> ¶  
**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come.**

**ASV Matthew 17:11** And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things: <sup>12</sup> but I say into you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would. Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

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**Malachi 4:5 ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come.**

- Jesus agrees with the scribal tradition that Elijah is to come and restore all things before the Day of the Lord.
- "Elijah" has come in the person of John the Baptist; he has fulfilled the role of Elijah in preparation of the last days.
- <sup>ASV</sup> **Matthew 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup> And if ye are willing to receive it, this is *Elijah*, that is to come. <sup>15</sup> He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

## “Tell No One”

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- This experience shared by these 3 disciples makes them unique bearers of the truth about Jesus. After the cross and the resurrection they will be able to tell everyone what they could not tell before.
- The Greek word (*horama*) can indicate either a vision or an objective sight or manifestation. The fact that Peter wanted to make tents for the three and that it was seen by James and John points to an objective manifestation.

## Healing and Faith

<sup>ESV</sup> Matthew 17:14 ¶ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, <sup>15</sup> ¶ said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. <sup>16</sup> And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered, "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." <sup>18</sup> And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. <sup>19</sup> Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" <sup>20</sup> He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." <sup>21</sup>

- The Greek word used to describe the boy's condition literally means "moonstruck"; ancient physicians believed that phases of the moon affected a sick person's behavior, if the behavior was bizarre. (Latin *luna* for moon, our word "lunatic"). The boy was apparently suffering from epileptic seizures of a violent nature, such that were self-destructive.
- The father had come to Jesus because he believed (faith) Jesus could heal his son; he addresses Jesus as Lord. Did he have as much faith in the disciples' ability to heal his son?

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- Jesus' response was one of exasperation and reprimand. Frustrated by the breakdown of the dawning kingdom in his absence reflected in the powerlessness of his disciples. "It is almost as though Jesus had been wasting his time, and his task--soon to come to its end--is thankless." (Davies/Allison pg. 288) "How long..." ? Not long, he had already given his passion prediction twice.
- **Jesus easily and instantly heals the boy by a command of exorcism.**

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- ❖ Had the disciples been threatened by the unbelief of the crowd? Were they less confident in the absence of Jesus? Were they attempting to heal by self-reliance?
- ❖ To whom was Jesus speaking? Just to the crowd? Or also his disciples? Had they retrogressed in their faith to the same as the crowd? Probably both but with differing degrees. His lament goes beyond this present situation to the whole faithless generation of Israel who had refused to believe in his message, supported by his miraculous deeds.
- ❖ **This event seems to have reminded Jesus of the continual unbelief of Israel. The phrase, "Bring him here to me" reflects his impatience. Jesus easily and instantly heals the boy by a command of exorcism.**

## Healing and Faith

**17 And Jesus answered, "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." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. 19**

- ❖ **These words not only express his personal disappointment in yet another instance of unbelief, but beneath the surface we also see Jesus' consciousness of his heavenly origin and destiny.**
- ❖ **"faithless and twisted generation"      The lack of belief in Jesus stems from a moral failure to recognize God at work in him; no lack of evidence but from a willful neglect or distortion of the evidence.**
- ❖ **This event seems to have reminded Jesus of the continual unbelief of Israel. The phrase, "Bring him here to me" reflects his impatience. Jesus easily and instantly heals the boy by a command of exorcism.**

## Healing and Faith

**19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" 20 He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." 21**

- The disciples had previously exorcised demons: (Matthew 10:1 ¶ And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.) Why had they failed on this occasion?
- “your little faith”  
  
*ESV* Matthew 6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
- *ESV* Matthew 8:26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.
- *ESV* Matthew 14:31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
- *ESV* Matthew 16:8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?"

## Healing and Faith

**20 He said to them, "Because of **your little faith**. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a **grain of mustard seed**, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."**

Not to be taken literally; it was a proverbial expression for overcoming impossible or improbable situations

**1 Corinthians 13:2** And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

What was there about their "little faith" that was so ineffective? The two words are a translation of one Greek word (oligopistia, oligopistia), a combination of two words to form one. By "small faith" Jesus is probably referring to their poverty of faith. Perhaps their experience in chapter 10 was now looked upon as a new possession of their own—a kind of magic. They may have thought they could go through a routine or ritual and the demon would come out, relying (trusting) more on method than on the power of God.

What is the difference between “little faith” and “faith like a grain of mustard seed”?

The disciples had tried, but had failed in their attempt to heal the boy. Why?

Poor faith or lack of faith seems to be the connotation of “little faith” =ineffectual

While the words “little faith” may sound less serious than “unbelief”, here it is contrasted with “faith like a grain of mustard seed.”

True faith, even the smallest amount=effective. Faith is trust in the power of God to provide in time of need, to heal, or deliver from danger.

Can overcome even the most impossible of situations.

Faith is a precondition for God acting and working in our lives.

**Matthew 13:58** And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

The power is not in faith but in its object — God.



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**Mountainous difficulties can be removed by the exercise of faith in God as the size of one mustard seed!**

The use of the mustard seed for faith suggests that it is something that can grow; see 13:31-32



Used in our text to refer to something of great difficulty, not literally a mountain.

“...and nothing will be impossible for you.”

**BUT**

“He does not mean that God will give us whatever comes heedlessly into our minds or mouths. In fact, since there is nothing more contradictory to faith than the foolish and unconsidered wishes of our flesh, it follows that where faith reigns there is no asking for anything indiscriminately.” John Calvin, Commentary on Matthew.

The only limit of what can be accomplished by the person of faith is the will of God.