

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Ministry: A Study of Matthew 14–20

### STUDY TEN

## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*

*It is easy to forget when focused on only the humanity of Jesus that He is both undiminished deity and true humanity. Two natures that do not mix but remain in one person forever. That's why He's known as the God-man—undiminished deity and true humanity in one person.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**H**OW easy it is to miss a moment of beauty! Hurry and worry aim to draw us away from these simple, everyday delights. Competition wants to shove aside laughter as complaining tries to kick out gratitude. Blue light from a screen often captures more facetime than a splendid sunset. Life-giving conversations get left behind because of ever-growing, always-screaming to-do lists.

If anyone could have benefitted from slowing down to embrace the moment, it was Jesus' disciples. Every single day, God-in-the-flesh had walked in their midst. They soaked up some of the wisest words ever spoken. With divine deeds, Jesus over and over again leaped over human hurdles, exceeding the disciples' small expectations.

But the disciples rarely seemed to understand just how *awesome* was the One they followed. Familiarity often dulled their spiritual senses. Then, on occasion, God would pull back the curtain in astonishing ways, which really let His majesty shine through.

Jesus' transfiguration in Matthew 16:27–17:13 proved to be one of those pivotal moments. How would the disciples react when they beheld Jesus in His divine array? In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll explore how God relayed truth in that moment that wasn't just for the moment but for life . . . truth not just for them in their time but for us in our time as well!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Offer this prayer to God before you open His Word today:

*Father, You are the God of glory, goodness, and grace. Help me never to forget that. Daily, I want to remember how great a gift You've given me in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for my sins. I pray I would read Your Word today with the same excitement I had when I picked it up the very first time. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the past few passages of Matthew's gospel, the disciples' perspective on Jesus has moved like waves upon the sea—occasionally rising to great heights of insight and then plummeting back down to confusion and misunderstanding.

In Matthew 16:13–20, the waves soared with Peter's declaration of Jesus' messianic identity. Immediately following this declaration, however, the waves crashed back down. Take a moment to review what happened in [Matthew 16:21–26](#) and then read Jesus' concluding statements on discipleship in verses 27 and 28.

Now, we'll do a little interpretation on the front end of our study.<sup>1</sup> Notice the “for” in 16:27. How do verses 27 and 28 relate to 16:21–26, and how do these final two verses reaffirm Jesus' messianic identity? Feel free to use your Bible study [tools](#). You'll find helpful remarks from Pastor Chuck Swindoll on pages 38 of his [Insights on Matthew 16–28 commentary](#).<sup>2</sup>

Now get ready for the ebb and flow of the disciples' understanding to surge to new heights!



## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*



### Observation: The Glory of Jesus

Carefully read *Matthew 16:28–17:13*. Imagine the location. Imagine the people. Imagine the unfolding events. First, describe the thematic connection between 16:28 and 17:1–13. Then note the seven people who were present.

### A Glorious Moment—Matthew 17:1–8

How did Peter respond to Jesus' transfiguration in *Matthew 17:4*? Luke's account adds more color and explanation to the scene. What did he say about Peter in this moment in *Luke 9:33*?

You might recall from an earlier study that this isn't the first time in Matthew we've heard a booming voice from the sky. Compare *Matthew 3:17* and *17:5*. Summarize the elements that are similar and those that differ.



## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*

### A Glorious Insight—Matthew 17:9–13

As Jesus and the disciples discuss the coming of the prophet Elijah, a foundational Old Testament prophecy grounds their conversation. Read it in *Malachi 4:5–6*, and describe what this prophecy said Elijah would do.

The Jewish leaders—and consequently the disciples—assumed this prophecy meant that Elijah would come back to life to prepare for the Messiah. According to *Matthew 17:11–13*, who did this prophecy actually describe (see also *Matthew 3:1–3*)?

If Elijah the forerunner has already come, then who does that make Jesus? It would take more than prophetic insight to help the disciples understand the true nature of Jesus. It took a moment of glory! He isn't merely from God, like Moses and Elijah . . . ***He is God . . . so, listen to Him!***



### Interpretation: Responding to Glory

Let's place ourselves in the sandals of these three disciples to gain a fuller understanding of the meaning of these events. Trek up the jagged terrain and stand on the mountain peak. Though tired, you still look forward to a moment of peace and quiet with a few close friends.



## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*

Suddenly, a brilliant light strikes your eyes. When you lift your hand to shield your face, you realize the radiance is not from the sun above. *It's coming from the Son of Man, our Rabbi!* Then you see His well-worn cloak transform into a spotless white robe, like that of only the wealthiest of kings.

*This is the greatest, most evident confirmation of Jesus' deity thus far in His earthly life.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What are you thinking at this moment? What aspect of this event stands out to you?

While Peter's response in [Matthew 17:4](#) may seem odd considering the spectacle before him, his desire to build shelters wasn't random. Dig around in your [Bible study tools](#) and explain why Peter might have responded this way.<sup>3</sup> Why do you think Jesus didn't indulge Peter's urging? What do we learn from Peter's impulsivity?

What theological truths do we learn about Jesus in this passage?



## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*

*“Listen!” Even in the silence, Jesus is speaking. His change of countenance is a message. And this an awesome interruption as God enters the scene as Peter is speaking and says, “Listen to the one I sent.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: Eyewitnesses

At the end of his life, the apostle Peter wrote of the supreme value of the kingdom of heaven, which included a reflection of his experience on the mountain that day. Read [2 Peter 1:16–21](#) and explain how his eyewitness testimony relates to the transfiguration, Scripture, and our faith.

From this short passage, we easily see how Peter learned true lifelong lessons from that mountaintop moment. Even still, Peter has so much more to teach us.



### Application: Slow Down, Be Quiet, Take Time

Pastor Chuck provides us three practical applications we learn from the three privileged disciples who witnessed Jesus' transfiguration:

1. *Slow down.* If we move too fast, we will never wade out of shallow waters. God wants us to think more deeply and go deeper in our relationship with Him.
2. *Be quiet.* As one wag once put it, “Never miss an opportunity to shut-up.” Sit still before God and listen. Listen to Him. Listen to others.
3. *Take time.* God doesn't hurry to catch up with us, so we must slow down to walk with Him.



## A Terrifying Glimpse of Glory

*Matthew 16:27–17:13*

How has speaking less and listening more benefited your relationships with others and with God? Is there an opportunity to be quiet that is presenting itself to you right now? If so, where? What benefit do you stand to gain from doing so?

When was the last time you simply stopped to soak in everything going on around you? How might practicing slowing down, being quiet, and taking time strengthen your relationship with God?

*When will we ever learn—in this narcissistic, self-centered world—that it is not about us?  
It is all about Him. Regardless what you are going through, it is all about Him.  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

The transfiguration of Jesus reveals to us the resplendence, the magnificence, the majestic beauty of the savior King we serve. May we never forget this and so become dull to His *awesome* nature. Savor every word in Scripture. Enjoy every moment you have with Him because they truly are glorious gifts.



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### A FINAL PRAYER

Offer your own prayer to God today. As you pray, slow down, be quiet, and take time to see what God wants you to take away from this study.

### ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Here, we see a picture of an *inaugurated* kingdom. In one sense, the kingdom of heaven has *already* arrived in the person, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the King along with certain promises like the Holy Spirit indwelling God's people. The kingdom, however, has *not yet* reached its consummation which will occur when Jesus returns to execute His judgment, to defeat Satan and sin and death, and to establish His reign throughout the earth.
3. Other tools we recommend are a whole-Bible commentary, such as the two-volume *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* and *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Pastor Chuck's favorite Bible dictionary is the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. A variety of versions of the Bible are available at [BibleGateway.com](#), and an excellent online Bible commentary by Thomas L. Constable is at [netbible.org](#).

