

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 5 January 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **“Hear Ye Him!”**

### **Matthew 16:28 – 17:13**

This past week, as I was preparing and studying for this morning’s message, I began to think about the matter of “hearing” Christ’s voice; and as I was pondering what it really means to “hear,” my mind went back to a day when I was about eight years old, in second class. We were near the end of a class session; and my teacher, Miss Niznik, was allowing those who were finished with their seatwork pages to work on something else quietly, while the others were finishing their seatwork. Of course, we knew what was expected of us: when Miss Niznik said that it was time for the next class to begin, we were to put everything away, except for the book that we needed for the next class. We were then to sit up straight, fold our hands, and wait for instructions from Miss Niznik.

Well, I opened the lid of my desk, and was playing, or drawing, or doing something inside my desk; however, I got so caught up in my “own little world,” that I didn’t notice that Miss Niznik had told everyone to put everything away, and to get ready for the next class. I was so zoned out, that I didn’t even notice the commotion of all the other kids’ opening and closing their desk lids, and putting things away. Nor did I notice that the room was now very quiet. All of a sudden, I heard a sharp voice calling my name. Miss Niznik was a cheerful and bubbly teacher, who loved her students to pieces; but on this occasion, she was not pleased with me. I looked up, and realised that everyone else was ready for the next class—everyone, that is, except me. While all the other kids were sitting up straight, with their desks cleared, and their hands folded, I still had my desk lid wide open. That day, before I went home, I was given that dreaded yellow slip of paper called a “demerit.” This means that I had done something that was *not* meritorious; and I had to take it home to my parents, and have them sign it, and bring it back with me the next day. On the slip, Miss Niznik wrote the words, “Deliberate disobedience!” I tried to explain to my parents that I really didn’t hear Miss Niznik; but that explanation didn’t fly! That evening, in the Finley house, my parents and I had a little conference; and it *wasn’t* enjoyable.

Now, for the longest time, I didn’t think that that demerit was fair. I really *didn’t* remember hearing Miss Niznik’s voice telling everyone to prepare for the next class. However, as I look back on it through the eyes of a parent, I now realise that it *was* disobedience. It was true that I didn’t remember hearing Miss Niznik; but the reason I didn’t hear was that I wasn’t *prepared* to hear, and didn’t *want* to hear. I was focused on what *I* wanted to do, instead of being prepared to hear and obey. I had what my parents called “selective hearing.” My parents had learned this term from their family doctor years earlier, when they took my brother David to the doctor to have his hearing checked. After testing him, and finding that his hearing was just fine, the doctor told my parents that it was a case of “selective hearing.” This means that my brother was hearing only what he *wanted* to hear. When it was time to do a chore, or something else that he was reluctant to do, his mind was tuned out.

We are all prone to have “selective hearing”—and especially when it comes to hearing the voice of the Lord. This morning, we will be studying one of the most important passages about the Kingdom of Heaven in the entire book of **Matthew**; and as we do so, we will see how important it is to hear and obey the voice of the Son of God. The title of this message is “*Hear Ye Him.*”

**Read Matthew 16:28 – 17:13.**

**I. The preview of the Kingdom (16:28 – 17:8)**

At the end of **chapter 16**, we found that Jesus and His disciples were standing outside a cave at Caesarea Philippi, at the base of Mount Hermon. While they were standing near the mouth of that cave (which the pagans called “the gates of hell,” since they viewed it as a spiritual portal to the underworld), Jesus told His disciples a profound truth. He said, “*Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” It had been six days since Jesus had said those words; and now, He was about to *demonstrate* His power over Satan, and all the hordes of hell. How did He do this? He did it by taking three of His closest friends up to the peak of Mount Hermon. Here, at the very place where (according to the rabbis) Satan’s demons had once come down to earth to intermarry with human women, Jesus gave them a little glimpse of His glory! We call this event “the Transfiguration.”

The account of Jesus’ transfiguration is absolutely stunning; and one of the most stunning things about it is that Moses and Elijah (who had been dead for hundreds of years) appeared on this occasion, and spoke to Jesus! Now, we know, from **Deuteronomy 18:10-11**, that God expressly forbids us to communicate with the dead; and as a man, Christ was subject to the Law. Why, then, did God allow Moses and Elijah to come back from the dead, and to communicate with Jesus? The answer is: they *didn’t* come back from the dead! They did not come back as disembodied spirits at all. How do I know this? Because of what Jesus had told them six days earlier. Jesus had said, “*Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*” That word “*kingdom*” is the key to understanding this passage. Jesus was promising the disciples that *some* of them would see *the Kingdom*; and now, Jesus was making good on that promise.

Now, how, exactly, did Jesus keep this promise? After all, nearly 2,000 years have come and gone: yet, the 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ on earth still has not yet. Jesus promised that some of them would see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom; yet, He has *not* returned yet, and the Apostles are all dead. Did Jesus fail to keep His promise? Not on your life! There *were* some of the disciples who got to see the Kingdom; and their names were Peter, James, and John. They didn’t *live* to see the Kingdom; but God gave them a *vision* of Christ in His Kingdom. What Peter, James, and John were seeing on Mount Hermon was actually a *vision* of the future Kingdom Age! Moses and Elijah did not, as departed spirits, come back from *Sheol*, and talk with Jesus; rather, Peter, James, and John were seeing a vision of a *future* time on earth, when Moses and Elijah *will* have this conversation with the Lord Jesus. Lest there be any doubt of this, look again at what Jesus said in **verse 9. (Read Matthew 17:9 again.)**

Jesus made it clear that what the disciples had just seen was “*a vision.*” The word “*vision*” is translated from the Greek word *orama*, which refers to a supernatural vision, or revelation of the future. Now, I must admit that this is mind-boggling. After all, Peter, James, and John weren’t *dreaming* when they saw this vision; *they were all awake!* They *were* sleeping, at first; but they were all awakened from sleep: and when they awoke, they saw this incredible scene unfolding before their very eyes. In a sense, they were watching these things from the sidelines; yet, they did *participate* in this scene. They were able to *speak and interact* with Jesus while all this was going on. Then, after the vision faded away, they didn’t *wake up*; rather, they were *still awake* (as they had been all along);

and Jesus was still standing there (except without His celestial glory). It was just like when Christ appeared to John on the isle of Patmos, many years later. John was wide awake: yet, John saw visions of the future, and actually *participated* in what was happening around him in that vision!

What is the bottom line, then? The bottom line is that Peter, James, and John were seeing a *vision* of the resurrected, glorified Christ, *in the future 1,000-year Kingdom Age*; and in this vision, Jesus was speaking with Moses and Elijah, who were *also* in their resurrected, glorified bodies. Now, just to be clear, Moses and Elijah have not yet received their resurrected, glorified bodies. Moses' body is still buried up on Mount Nebo; and Elijah (though he never actually died), is not in his glorified, resurrected body, either. However, in the Kingdom Age, Moses and Elijah *will both* be in their glorified bodies! Everything that Peter, James, and John were seeing was *future*; yet, they were able to *interact* in this vision of the future as though it were happening in the present! This was an awesome and fearful event for Peter, James, and John, which was burned into their memories. To the end of their lives, they testified of the day when they beheld Christ in His Kingdom glory! In **John 1:14**, John said, **“And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** In Peter's second epistle, he wrote about the Transfiguration, as well.

### **Read 2 Peter 1:15-21.**

Now, what was the purpose of the Transfiguration? There are several very important purposes for the transfiguration; but all of them have to do with the Kingdom. The number one purpose for this amazing spectacle was **to confirm to the disciples that the Kingdom was still coming!** Jesus knew that it was important to reassure the disciples that the Kingdom was still coming, because lately, Jesus had *stopped* publicly declaring that **“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** The Kingdom had been genuinely offered to Israel; but Israel, as a whole, was rejecting Jesus as their King. Therefore, the Kingdom had been now put on hold; and the message that “the Kingdom is at hand” was no longer being proclaimed. That's why Jesus instructed Peter, James, and John *not* to tell anyone what they had seen until after He had risen from the dead. **(Read Matthew 17:9 again.)**

The fact that Jesus charged Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone what they had seen was an indication that God's *judgment* was coming to Israel. Because Israel refused to believe on their Messiah, the only ones who got to see this incredible scene were His closest disciples. Now, later on, after Christ went back to Heaven, the disciples *did* again affirm that the Kingdom is coming; however, *how soon* the Kingdom will come depends on Israel's response to Jesus. When Israel, as a nation, believes on Jesus, He will return to set up the Kingdom; but not until then. For now, the Kingdom is on hold.

Now, why else did God give Peter, James, and John this incredible vision? He gave it to them in order **to confirm that the Old Testament had not lost its validity.** Jesus didn't come to *destroy* the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament Scriptures); rather, He came to *fulfil* the Law. Think about it! Here were Moses and Elijah (who had lived in the *Old Testament age*), having a conversation with Christ about His death on the cross (which would soon unfold *in the New Testament age*); yet, this whole conversation was actually taking place *in the future Kingdom age*. This shows the harmony between the Old Testament and the New Testament! Jesus didn't *overthrow* the Old Testament Law; rather, He brought it to its *completion*, through His death on the cross for our sins; and one day, He will fulfil all that the Old Testament *and* the New Testament Scriptures have foretold about the coming 1,000-year Kingdom!

Now, was there another reason for the Transfiguration? Yes, there was. **The Transfiguration also confirmed the need of Christ's death on the cross.** Let's look at a parallel passage of Scripture in **Luke**, and see what else we can learn about this conversation between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

## Read Luke 9:28-31.

Only six days before the Transfiguration, Jesus told His disciples that He would soon go up to Jerusalem, where He would *"suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."* How did the disciples respond to this revelation? They denied it. In fact, they actually argued with the Lord! Peter, in particular, *"rebuked"* Jesus, and said, *"Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."* But how did Jesus respond to this? He addressed Peter as *"Satan,"* and informed him that he was *not* savouring the things that be of God. (In other words, Peter was *not* concerned about God's plan of redemption, which would be accomplished through His death on the cross.) Instead, Peter was savouring the things that be of men. In other words, he was thinking only about *his* part in the coming Kingdom—in a *selfish* way. He was thinking of all the honour and prestige that *he* would have in the coming Kingdom.

Peter's head was getting big. Can you imagine, then, the sting it must have been to Peter to be called "Satan"? That had to hurt! Yet, it was exactly what Peter (and *all* the disciples) needed to hear. Christ had chosen Peter to be the first pastor of the Jerusalem church, after His return to Heaven; so it was vital that Peter hear, from the mouths of these two Old Testament heroes, that Christ's *"decease"* (His death) was absolutely necessary in order for us to be saved!

Now, there is one more reason for the Transfiguration. Another purpose of the Transfiguration was **to give the disciples a glimpse of our future.** You see, the kind of resurrected body that Jesus had in this vision is the kind of resurrected body that Moses, Elijah, and every other saint, will have. *All* the redeemed, from every dispensation of history, will one day partake of the *"resurrection unto life."* This glimpse of the future Kingdom Age not only gives us an idea of what the risen *Christ* looks like; it also gives us an idea of what *we* will look like! **Philippians 3:21** says that our resurrected bodies will be *"fashioned like unto his glorious body."* **First John 3:2** says that *"we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."*

Now, let's break this down. First of all, Matthew says that Elijah and Moses *"appeared in glory,"* just as Jesus did. They literally shone! The Bible says that believers, in their resurrected bodies, will literally shine to varying degrees, depending upon how faithfully they served the Lord on earth. **Daniel 12:3** says that after the resurrection, *"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* Another thing you'll notice about Moses and Elijah is that they *"appeared"* from seemingly out of nowhere—just as Jesus did after the resurrection, when He appeared in the upper room. (Evidently, we will be able to appear and reappear in our resurrection bodies, too.) You'll also notice that **Elijah and Moses' topic of conversation** was Christ's death on the cross. Even in the glorious Kingdom age, we will not cease to speak of Christ's death on the cross for our sins. We will never tire of talking about the awesome price that Jesus had to pay to redeem our souls!

In **Matthew 13** Jesus said, *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."* If we take the Scriptures for what they plainly say, then we must take this statement literally. If Moses' face shone when he came down from God's presence on Mount Sinai, how much more will *our* resurrected bodies shine when we are in the presence of the Sun of righteousness? We literally will shine like the sun! Old John Newton wasn't merely being poetical when he wrote, "When we've been there then thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun." My friend, if you have repented of your sin and received God's gift of salvation, *this* is your future! The Scripture says, *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."*

We've looked at several reasons why Christ gave this vision of His glory to the disciples. However, there is one more reason why He did it. (And it is the most important one of all.) This leads me to our second point.

## II. The proclamation from Heaven (vv. 5-8)

**(Read verses 5-8 again.)** The most important purpose of the Transfiguration was to teach us that we must *"hear"* Christ's words! Peter, James, and John really needed this experience, because only six days earlier, they had dared to *contradict* Christ's words about His coming crucifixion. The disciples needed to understand that they *must always* hear and obey Christ's words, even if they couldn't understand what their Lord was doing.

Can you imagine what an impression the Transfiguration must have made on Peter, James, and John? There in front of them stood (in vision) two of the greatest prophets of God who ever lived, discussing *the death of the Son of God*—the very thing they had denied would happen! Yet, as important as the testimonies of these two men were, their testimonies paled in comparison to the *third* testimony that they heard that day. God the Father Himself spoke from Heaven, and informed the disciples that *His Son's words* were far more important even than Moses and Elijah's words. The Father didn't say, "Hear Moses and Elijah"; He said, *"This is my beloved Son; hear ye him."* God the Father was confirming to Peter, James, and John that the Man whom they had been following for nearly three years was His Son, and the Messiah of Israel. God was strengthening their faith for what was coming. Soon, Jesus would die a criminal's death on the cross; and when that moment came, God wanted Peter, James, and John to have it settled in their hearts that Jesus truly *is* the Christ, the Son of the living God. Even though they wouldn't understand what was happening, God wanted them to be able to cling to the truth of *who His Son is*, so that they could strengthen their brethren, and encourage them to *wait* until that "third day" that Jesus had been telling them about—that day when He would arise from the grave, and conquer death!

By the way, as the Father spoke from heaven that day, everything that He uttered came from Scripture. God *always* honours His written word! Let's look at the Scriptures that the Father was citing.

**Read Psalm 2:1-12.**

**Read Isaiah 42:1.**

**Read Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19.**

When the Father said, *"This is my beloved Son,"* He was referring back to **Psalm 2**, where He had said, *"Thou art my Son."* When He said, *"In whom I am well pleased,"* He was referring back to **Isaiah 42**, where He had said, *"Behold my servant...in whom my soul delighteth."* And when He said, *"Hear ye him,"* He was referring back to **Deuteronomy 18**, where Moses (speaking of the coming Messiah), had said, *"Unto him shall ye hearken."* My friends, we *must* hear the voice of the Son of God! By the way, when I say "hear," I'm not merely talking about going to church, and letting God's words fall on your ears for 45 minutes each Sunday. The *sound* of God's words may register in your ear drum; but if you do not *obey* His words from your heart, then you have not really "heard." To God, there *is no difference* between "hearing" and "obeying." Let's see what God said about "hearing" in **1 Samuel 15**.

### Read 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

In **verse 22**, the word “*obey*” is used two times; and both times, it is translated from the word *shemoa*. And guess what the word *shemoa* literally means? It means “hearing”! The verb *shama* is used more than 1,000 times in the Old Testament; and it is translated as “**hear**” 785 times; as “**hearken**” 196 times; as “**understand**” 9 times; and as “**obey**,” “**obeying**,” or “**obedient**” **89 times**. Are you getting the picture? You cannot truly *hear* the Son without obeying Him. There may be some here today who need to “hear” God’s command to repent and believe on the Son, so that you may be saved! The Bible says, “***See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.***” The Father has spoken; and He declares that his Son has died on the cross for your sins, and risen from the dead to conquer death for you, so that you might be saved. This is called “the Gospel”; and we must obey this message. *How* do you obey the Gospel? By *believing* it! You must believe, with your heart, that your own righteousness can’t get you into the Kingdom, and that you need *Christ*, and *His* righteousness. To be saved from the Lake of Fire, you must stop thinking that you are a good person, and agree with God that your way is perverse. You must admit that you are an unworthy sinner, and that Jesus lived the perfect life that you cannot live, and died in your place. You must turn to Christ, from sin, and surrender your life to *Him*. (This is called repentance.) Will *you* surrender your life to Christ? The Bible says, “***Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***”

Perhaps you *have* obeyed Christ’s call to salvation; and by God’s grace, you *are* saved. However, you know, deep in your heart, that there are areas in your life where you are refusing to believe God’s Word, and where you are being flat-out disobedient to His Word, and His will. Like Peter, you are daring to tell the Lord that He is *wrong*, and that *your* way is right. You are listening to your own faulty reason; and by doing so, you are actually cooperating with the enemy (who, by the way, is licking his chops, and is waiting to pounce on you, and devour you)! Perhaps you are not hearing Christ’s command to read and study His Word, and to hide it in your heart. Your spiritual life is dry and withering, because you are not talking to Him in prayer; and your lack of communion with the Lord is causing friction with everyone in your life. Perhaps you view church attendance as an option, instead of a command from the Lord; and not only are *you* suffering from spiritual malnourishment, but your *church family* is suffering because of your absence. It has been said, “When you are tempted to take a Sunday off, and you think that the absence of one person won’t make too much difference at church, you place your [pastor] in the same position as a fellow trying to type with one key missing. He can make substitutions...but the result is never the same as when he [has] *all* the members of the congregation.” Perhaps you have drifted so far from the Lord, that you are scarcely hearing His voice at all. His voice is like a small, muffled sound in the background, because you have allowed His voice to be drowned out by the sounds of the world, and by the screams of your own lustful thoughts and desires. Just as I didn’t hear my teacher’s voice when she called me to clear my desk, you are not hearing your *Master’s* voice when He calls you to cleanse your hands, and purify your heart. You are caught up in your own little world, and are not preparing your heart to hear and obey Him. Like a grieving dad whose child won’t ever ring him, or talk to him, Christ is sadly waiting to hear from you; but the only time He hears from you is when you want something from Him *now*, or when you’re complaining that things aren’t going *your* way.” Christian, if any of these descriptions remind you of yourself, then your heart needs revival. You *need* His Word! You need real, vital communication with the Lord, every day. You *need* His house! You *need* His people! You need *Him*! You need to surrender your stubborn will to the Lord, and obey everything that He commands you to do—immediately, completely, and out of a heart of love. He is your God and your Messiah; and He deserves to have your whole heart. “***Hear ye him!***”

### III. The parley of Jesus and the disciples (vv. 9-13)

(Read Matthew 17:9-13.) As Jesus walked back down from the mountain with Peter, James, and John, He charged them not to tell anyone about what they had seen, until He had risen from the dead.

Now, at this point, they were very confused. They had heard that the Elijah must first come before the Messiah could appear; and they right about that. Malachi had prophesied, ***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”*** Yet, as the disciples looked around, they didn’t see any signs of Elijah anymore. If the Kingdom was coming, why didn’t Elijah stick around, and appear to all the people of Israel? Once again, Jesus had to remind them that *John the Baptist* was the one who had come to fulfil the Elijah prophecy. He wanted them to understand, though, that just as His forerunner, John, had been put to death, so He must be put to death, as well...and soon.

By the way, the work that Elijah began was wonderful; yet, John did not succeed in “restoring all things.” Many people’s hearts *did* turn to the Lord through John’s ministry, and many families were restored; yet, most of the nation rejected his message. John was an amazing man; but his task was not completed. What does this mean, then? It means that in order for Malachi’s prophecy to be fulfilled, there must be yet *another* “Elijah”—an ultimate Elijah—one who *will* restore all things. I am here to tell you that that Man is Jesus of Nazareth!

**Read Acts 3:18-23.**

**Conclusion:** My friends, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who will restore all things! He is coming back to this earth to set up His Kingdom; and only those who have received a new, righteous heart from Him may enter. To enter the Kingdom, you *must* hear the Son! You must obey His call to believe the Gospel. You must repent of your sin, and trust in what Jesus did for you on the cross, so that He may clothe you with His robe of righteousness. If you have never truly believed on Him, please do so today! **And Christian, this message is for you, too.** Has your ear grown dull to Christ’s voice? Is His heart grieving because you hardly spend any time with Him, and scarcely obey Him? If so, get right with Him today! Ask Him to forgive you, and cleanse you; and then prepare your heart to hear, trust, and obey His Word!