

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 59, Chapter 16 and 17

Last week in our study of Matthew chapter 16 we ended with an important topic Yeshua raised beginning in verse 24, which is the high cost of being His disciple. Let's immediately go to our Bibles and read from verse 24 to the end of the chapter.

READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 16:24 - end

Briefly in review, our discussion revolved around the idea that what Yeshua says in these 5 verses while new in specifics is not at all new in principle; it has been highlighted in earlier narratives. Perhaps the most foundational statement regarding the basic principle of the high cost of discipleship is found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, when Jesus explains that not only are the Torah and the Prophets not abolished or changed, but that our obedience to them is expected and even will be used to determine our status and place within the social structure and hierarchy of the Kingdom of Heaven. And since Yeshua is the king of that Kingdom on earth, then it is a given that obedience to, and trust in, Him is the core requirement for membership.

So in verse 24 Christ is continuing to define what that core requirement consists of. He says that to follow after Him requires denying oneself and instead carrying our own execution stake (or as in nearly all other English translations, carry one's own cross). This means to put our will in submission to God's will, and this through the king of God's Kingdom, Yeshua HaMashiach. Luke's Gospel says something similar.

^{CJB} **Luke 14:27** *Whoever does not carry his own execution-stake and come*

after me cannot be my talmid.

So any way one chooses to interpret this foundational principle, it is beyond clear that there are requirements (not options) for being a Believer in Yeshua in any kind of meaningful sense; something that is acceptable to God. That is, we can insist that we are a Christ follower (disciple), but that in no way means that the Lord has accepted us as His follower. Let me again quote to you what I see as perhaps one of the most brutally frank, if not terrifying, passages in the New Testament; one that directly addresses this matter.

CJB **Matthew 7:21-23** ²¹ ***"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants.*** ²² ***On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?'*** ²³ ***Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'***

This statement is part of Yeshua explaining that we humans can only know a true Believer, or display ourselves as a Believer, according to the fruit they and we bear; that is, choices, actions, and behaviors are the proof of our faith. **Doing** is the crux of the matter. So when one is NOT thinking and behaving as a true Believer, but nonetheless is insistent not only to everyone around them but even to God that they are, we are faced with the reality that it is God alone who makes that determination and not us no matter how much we might plead our case with other humans or with Him. We also can't create our own standards for that determination. Unfortunately, much of institutional gentile Christianity has done just that by creating various doctrines that redefines the standards for our choices and our works and our obedience to God by saying that His written standard (the Torah) is no longer relevant but even a danger to our faith!

Thus actual God-certification as our being a disciple of His Son goes well beyond walking an aisle in a Church, or saying the Sinner's Prayer, or holding some semblance of a belief in our heart (even if we openly profess it). Our inner decisions and moral choices must change from what has been natural for us, and those changes must also lead to a change in our outward behavior and actions. The Bible calls this "repentance". I promise you this involves exertion; real and actual physical exertion along with mental focus are needed for us to subdue our own will in order to obey God's will in our lives. This change does not come by idle waiting for God to do all the work while we stand by for it to magically take

hold within us. It is somewhat like going to school. We can sign up for school, pay the tuition, and get assigned the various courses we want. But that only has value and meaning if we actually go to the classes, pay attention to the teachers, and do the work. Come graduation time we can plead all we want that we DID sign up for school; but the Dean is not going to accept that as sufficient because we didn't do all that was required of us.

Now for the thorny issue of taking up our "cross" and following Christ. We've dealt with this before but it bears revisiting. It is only a later Christianity, well after it had separated itself from its Hebrew foundation, that translated the Greek word **stauros** into the word "cross". A **stauros** is a stake in the ground used for the purpose of executions. The way it worked in Yeshua's day was that a cross beam was tied to a condemned prisoner's arms and he was required to carry it from wherever he was being held to the site of the execution, where the **stauros** (the execution stake) was located. Once there, the crossbeam along with the prisoner was attached to the top of the beam, forming a "T". Hanging there the prisoner died by suffocation; it was a long gruesome and painful death (sometimes taking a few days). A major and important point for us to know is that crucifixion was not used on Roman citizens no matter the crime. In the Holy Land it was used only on Jews.

Thus despite the common teaching that Christ was essentially referring to His own death in this passage and that we as His disciples are to vicariously suffer the same kind of death along with Him, on the same type of death instrument that He did (in Christian tradition it was a cross), is not what was meant. He was only using perhaps the most extreme type of judicial death, one all too well known to Jews, as an emotionally charged way to get across the supreme nature of devotion to Him that might be required of those who want to be His disciples. The principle behind our willingness to suffer even this horrible of a death is that the glorious eternal life that awaits His followers (in the world to come) is greater than anything we might have to endure during our present life on earth.

Now... remembering that Matthew wrote these words long after Yeshua's execution, so he had a far more panoramic view of all that happened that we label as verse 24 (that is, Matthew knew of the beginning and end of Christ's ministry, as well as the aftermath), then that is probably why this verse is often taken as implying that Yeshua was foretelling His own death on the cross (and I don't deny that this is a possibility). Yet even if He meant it that way there is no reason to think that His disciples would have understood it that way. For them it

would have been hyperbole used by Yeshua in order to make the forceful statement that they must be willing to endure whatever it takes to follow Him as disciples. The goal of that endurance is to replace natural human thinking and behavior with Godly thinking and behavior that ultimately results in being an eternal member of God's Kingdom.

As a gentile, and as a Believer since I was a child, the symbol of the cross was central to everything that I held dear. And it of course is, and has been for centuries, the primary symbol of The Church. I realize that at least in modern times it is not necessarily meant as an intentional offense to Jews (but it most certainly was meant as offensive to Jews very early on in the formation of a gentile brand of faith in Christ). However when we can internalize the reality that crucifixion was a punishment used only on Jews and not on Roman citizens (who were, for all practical purposes, gentiles), then we can understand why it is nearly impossible for a Jewish Believer to accept the gentile Christian Cross as a symbol of their faith. This in no way is a Jewish Believer's denial of Yeshua's death on a **stauros**, or of His deity or of His resurrection. This is only about symbols; and as I taught early in my teaching of the Torah, this is why symbols of any kind, and especially of the manmade kind, can be so problematic among humans.

Note that never does the New Testament make the cross as symbolic of faith in Messiah Yeshua or of the Jesus movement. In fact the earliest known symbol for Believers as found in the Holy Land is the 3 part symbol so popular in the Hebrew Roots movement today. I have actually taken people to the exact spot in Israel where this was first discovered. So the Christian concept of the cross is something often read back into the New Testament in passages like the one we are currently dealing with. For those that believe that the using or wearing of a Christian cross is key to your identity as a Believer, and so not using it or wearing it is a denial of your Christian faith, just realize that it is only a manmade traditional symbol and not a divine command nor is it something Jesus asked of us. You must decide in your own conscience what to do with this reality; I don't see it as something for another to tell you what you must or must not do in this regard.

Verse 25 continues with the idea of the high cost of discipleship as an extension of verse 24 and it concerns our willingness to go to extreme measures if needed to be a true Believer. Still the fundamental point remains that our ego must be displaced from being the center of our personal universe. We must be willing to

discern God's purpose and direction for our lives and give up, where necessary, our personal ambitions.

Matthew's Gospel has Yeshua offering us what can only be described as a paradox. A paradox is a seemingly self-contradictory statement and yet it is true. So here we have Yeshua offering the divine viewpoint (and reality) that is completely counter to our natural intuition (which is essentially a mirage that most don't realize at the time). The idea here is a statement that must be contemplated on two levels: the ***P'shat*** and the ***Remez***. The simple literal and the deeper hint. The ***P'shat*** sense is that being willing to go so far (if need be) as to die for Yeshua's cause actually gives us a better more meaningful life to live because instead of living our life for ourselves we're living it for God who gave us this life. There are novels written and movies made about people who suddenly are struck and heartbroken at the realization of the abject hollowness of their lives and are willing to take up a meaningful cause that nearly certainly will lead to their own death. But a much shortened life of purpose is worth more to them than what they are currently experiencing (the famous Robert De Niro film "The Mission" is a well known example, as is a 70's art film with Jack Nicholson called The Passenger). However on the ***Remez*** level this speaks of dying to self, meaning to give up everything we currently covet (if need be including our own physical life) in order to follow Christ, because it brings with it the reward of having a pleasant eternal life. On the flip side, refusing to give up our current life (mostly meaning the way we live that follows our natural desires and ego) automatically disqualifies us from being Christ's disciples.

I think the point of Yeshua's words are that the required willingness to die to self is an either/or, yes/no, the one or the other choice. It is absolute polarization; there is no middle ground. One way is totally given up for the new way. Otherwise we become what is commonly called a carnal Christian. Which, if one accepts the truth of Christ's unequivocal and clear teachings on the matter, makes the term "carnal Christian" an oxymoron. According to Jesus it is impossible to be both carnal and a Christian. You either give up carnality for faith in Yeshua, or you give up faith in Yeshua to continue carnal worldliness. This is not to say that anyone successfully becomes 100% pure as a disciple, and in practice it is a journey; but it is a both a measuring stick and a goal of our faith.

Verse 26 again adds on to the subject of the requirements of being a follower of Yeshua, as He presents a rhetorical question to His disciples. The point is to emphasize that there is absolutely nothing in this present life, in this present

world, worth the price of eternal life in the world to come (the *Olam Habah*). So, says Jesus, what good is it to be fully invested in the riches and fleeting rewards of today, if the price for having it is forfeiture of our eternal life? So again Christ makes a polarizing demand: it's one or the other. He doesn't mean that a person can't have wealth and also be a follower, but it does mean that the wealth needs to be used for the Kingdom, and its acquisition fully secondary to carrying out God's will.

Remembering who Jesus was and the Jewish culture He lived in, and His unparalleled knowledge of the Tanach, it's probable that when He said these words He was thinking of Psalm 49, because as we've discussed before Yeshua was not introducing a new principle to the Jewish faith, nor was He attempting to create a new and separate faith. Rather He was trying to reform what existed, so He regularly called upon the Prophets, the Torah, and the Psalms... all things familiar to the Jewish culture... to explain what it is that He is instructing. Let's take the time to read this amazingly sober and yet inspiring Psalm that indeed fleshes out the idea of this present life not being all there is.

READ PSALM 49 all

Perhaps the most poignant idea behind this Psalm (besides the fact that you can't take it with you) is that you also can't use your wealth (however little or much) as payment for eternal life. That is not the currency God deals in. So all this is nice and ideal and these are good and inspiring words. But what does it lead to when one comes into agreement with Christ on the matter? That's what we find in Matthew 16:27.

Yeshua goes back to referring to Himself as the Son of Man. I mentioned in earlier lessons that His use of this term Son of Man is meant in 3 different ways. In this case He is referring to the End Times Son of Man from Daniel 7; the one who acts as the divine judge. This is a revelation of who Yeshua will be, the role He will play, and what the Father will give Him as a responsibility and authority to do in the future. In fact, as I've said on numerous occasions, Yeshua always acts within His Father's glory, and not His own. He does His Father's will, and not His own. That is precisely what He says in verse 27. But now we come to yet another Christian dilemma.

Over and over we encounter in the Bible that at the End of history each person will be divinely judged not only according to what they believe, but according to

what they do. Of course both Old and New Testaments explain that in general what we do is the result of what we believe (just like the fruit tree parable that a bad fruit tree cannot bear good fruit and vice versa). Too much however with Church doctrines, believing and doing are separated and compartmentalized. One is even sometimes seen as antithetical to the other. This is also a good time to point out that this principle was not new with Yeshua, He was merely revisiting an old one.

^{CJB} **Psalm 62:11-13** ¹¹ *Don't put your trust in extortion, don't put false hopes in robbery; even if wealth increases, don't set your heart on it.* ¹² *God has spoken once, I have heard it twice: strength belongs to God.* ¹³ *Also to you, Adonai, belongs grace; for you reward all as their deeds deserve.*

Paul received Jesus's lesson well.

^{CJB} **2 Corinthians 5:8-10** ⁸ *We are confident, then, and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and come to our home with the Lord.* ⁹ *Therefore, whether at home or away from home, we try our utmost to please him;* ¹⁰ *for we must all appear before the Messiah's court of judgment, where everyone will receive the good or bad consequences of what he did while he was in the body.*

Doing. Works. Deeds. This is what our earthly life, lived in full co-operation with God, is for. While we can say with confidence that trust in Christ is what brings us to Salvation, that is far too simplistic because Jesus has been laying out in a number of scenarios the requirement for being His disciple. Salvation certainly has its genesis in the moment we come to trust in Him; but that simple acknowledgment is only the shot fired that begins a marathon. That shot is neither the race itself nor does it determine who finishes successfully. Christ employs the metaphor of a newborn infant to describe that moment of Salvation; Paul borrows from it. That is, emerging from the birth canal is but the necessary first moment of a long journey; but birth is not the journey itself nor does it foretell the outcome of our life. So, as Paul says, don't just stay as an infant that can only drink milk, but rather grow to the next stage of trust and discipleship where meat can be digested.

Thus, says Yeshua in verse 27, in the End He will repay everyone for their conduct. That is, there are distinct inevitable consequences for doing and for not doing the will of The Father. This is said in the backdrop of the End Times

(something which 1st century Jews believed they were experiencing). So His disciples to whom He was speaking would have figured that this recompense...whether negative or positive... was going to happen soon; within their lifetimes. To which Jesus follows up with verse 28... a real head scratcher for us who live 2000 years after He said these words.

CJB Matthew 16:28 Yes! I tell you that there are some people standing here who will not experience death until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom!"

A quick glance at this verse, taken in the context of all He as just said, certainly sounds like He is saying that literally some of His 12 disciples will not die until He returns in the Son of Man role as the Great Judge. This would have further confirmed to His disciples that they were living in the Latter Days, and time was short. To try to make sense of His statement the 2 most popular scholarly opinions are that this is either referring to the Transfiguration or to the Resurrection. Nearly all the early Church Fathers saw it as referring to the Transfiguration. The modern evangelical branch of the Church (that often hangs it's doctrinal hat on the theology of Calvin) says it is referring to the Resurrection. There are some ancient Christian writings that seem to think it points to Pentecost. And some others, past and present, believe that this is proof that there is no first and second coming of Messiah (there was only the one) and that the End Times has already happened and lies in our historical past. Frankly, none of these possibilities satisfies as each requires some pretty severe twisting of words, and even jettisoning of basic biblical principles, to get there. I'm not even sure Matthew knew what to make of Christ's words, but rather just passed along what his sources had written down. So I'll offer you another possibility without claiming that this must be it.

Going back again to my teaching that Yeshua refers to Himself as Son of Man in 3 different ways and senses, it could be that we are to take the verse 28 use of the term Son of Man as more or less meaning simply "I" or "Me". He doesn't make any reference to coming in the clouds that would better connect it to Daniel's vision. Further the Kingdom of Heaven is already here. So when He comes a second time, He's not bringing the Kingdom with Him. Rather I think in verse 28 we have a statement about His first coming (meaning His present 1st century advent). But in contrast to verse 28, in verse 27 the Son of Man coming in judgment can only mean a reference to His role as the divine Judge that comes at the End of Days, and I think this because so many Prophets and

Psalms speak of every man being judged according to His deeds, works and actions, but **only** at the End of Days. So verse 27 can only be in reference to His second coming... His return. But verse 28 seems to speak of the here and now of the 1st century, as He stands before His disciples and prior to His death. He's already explained numerous times that the Good News He brings, and that His disciples are to preach, is that the Kingdom of Heaven has just arrived. He's not bringing the Kingdom of Heaven twice (once at His first advent and again at His return because that wouldn't make sense). So perhaps He is making a somewhat veiled reference for His disciples that indeed they are the very fortunate ones that had not yet died but were living to see Him (Christ) establish His reign over the Kingdom. To sum it up: verse 27 speaks of His second coming, while verse 28 is about His first coming.

One other thought that we cannot easily escape but it does make us feel uncomfortable. If I am correct in what this means, might it almost not have to indicate that Yeshua is not entirely sure of the timing of everything that must happen involving Him, whether alive in the flesh on earth or in spirit in Heaven. I would suggest that, for instance, while He knew He would soon be put to death He didn't know all the details surrounding it. He didn't know exactly when or what all the circumstances that would lead up to it would be. He certainly knew His end would come via crucifixion because that's how the Romans put Jews to death in nearly every case; so that was hardly a reach or a mysterious premonition that only He could know. We have proof from His own lips that He was not privy to the same knowledge His Father had. There were things and times that He didn't know.

^{CJB} **Matthew 24:32-39** ³² *"Now let the fig tree teach you its lesson: when its branches begin to sprout and leaves appear, you know that summer is approaching.* ³³ *In the same way, when you see all these things, you are to know that the time is near, right at the door.* ³⁴ *Yes! I tell you that this people will certainly not pass away before all these things happen.* ³⁵ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.* ³⁶ *"But when that day and hour will come, no one knows- not the angels in heaven, not the Son, only the Father.* ³⁷ *For the Son of Man's coming will be just as it was in the days of Noah.* ³⁸ *Back then, before the Flood, people went on eating and drinking, taking wives and becoming wives, right up till the day Noah entered the ark;* ³⁹ *and they didn't know what was happening until the Flood came and swept them all away. It will be just like that when the Son of Man comes.*

So in a similar way to how it will be for mankind, when Christ is given the signal to return to earth it will be as much an anticipated surprise to Him just as it will be to Believers living on earth IF... big word, IF... we have learned the biblical truth. But to all other humans His return will be a shocking and befuddling surprise.

I think we can encapsulate the overriding message of verses 24 - 28 by saying that Believers are not given the option of being passive observers or even only gushing admirers of Jesus. If we try to be, then it couldn't be more strongly stated that we will not be classified in God's eyes as Believers. We also cannot be spectators sitting on the sidelines, reading about all the great stuff Jesus said and did. He's our leader and our example and we are to do to as He did. Nor can we think that what He says was meant primarily for the 12 Disciples... things for only His inner circle to do... or perhaps even mostly for the Jewish Believers of the 1st century. We have obligations and He has been laying them out. Discipleship is a full contact sport (so to speak), no matter the hardships that might be involved. No one that calls him or her self a Believer is exempt.

Let's move on to chapter 17.

READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 17 all

Chapter 17 begins with the proverbial bang; what has become known as The Transfiguration. With very little lead up other than a notice that Yeshua has taken 3 of His disciples with Him to a high place, and that it happened 6 days after the final words of Matthew chapter 16, suddenly an amazing thing occurs that Yeshua must have anticipated. An event that was not only His purpose for ascending the mountain but also for bringing the 3 trusted witnesses along with Him.

We may never fully understand the mystery of what occurred; and this is bothersome enough to many Bible scholars that they deny that it did happen. But can we understand what it means? I think we can. And it begins with a consistent background theme that we find from beginning to end in Matthew's Gospel; it is that Jesus is the second Moses. And so that I'm not misunderstood: Yeshua is presented as a higher and better Moses because He was and remains the one thing that Moses could never be: the divine Son of God that saves.

As always we must begin with the historical context and the focus of that context must be the culture it sprang from: a Jewish culture. Yeshua never does or says

things, or uses terms, in a vacuum such that they sit well apart from what the Jewish culture might understand or expect. If God has taught me anything over the decades, it is that while He is no respecter of persons, He does respect cultures and societies such that the miracles He does and the teaching He inspires takes place within the context of those familiar and particular cultural elements. He will not operate in a way with African tribal members that is the same as for people who live in the modern urbanized West because if He did, the meaning of what He does would not be fathomable. So the first thing we must look for in the Transfiguration is what about it was deeply Jewish and steeped in Israelite history and tradition.

CJB Exodus 34:28-35 ²⁸ *Moshe was there with ADONAI forty days and forty nights, during which time he neither ate food nor drank water. [ADONAI] wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Words.* ²⁹ *When Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, he didn't realize that the skin of his face was sending out rays of light as a result of his talking with [ADONAI].* ³⁰ *When Aharon and the people of Isra'el saw Moshe, the skin of his face was shining; and they were afraid to approach him.* ³¹ *But Moshe called to them; then Aharon and all the community leaders came back to him, and Moshe spoke to them.* ³² *Afterwards, all the people of Isra'el came near; and he passed on to them all the orders that ADONAI had told him on Mount Sinai.* ³³ *Once Moshe had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.* ³⁴ *But when he went in before ADONAI for him to speak, he would take the veil off until he came out; then, when he came out, he would tell the people of Isra'el what he had been ordered.* ³⁵ *But when the people of Isra'el saw Moshe's face, that the skin of Moshe's face shone, he would put the veil back over his face until he went in again to speak with [ADONAI].*

Moses went up to a high place, and Yeshua went up to a high place. At that high place Moses's face transformed and began shining with rays of light, and at that high place Yeshua's face transformed and His face shone with light like the sun. To the 3 Jews Christ took to observe, the Moses connection would have flooded into their minds. But what if this had taken place in Rome in front of a bunch of gentiles? They would have been clueless because nothing about it fit Roman culture.

Notice how Mark writes about this same event.

^{CJB} **Mark 9:1** *Yes!" he went on, "I tell you that there are some people standing here who will not experience death until they see the Kingdom of God come in a powerful way!"* ² *Six days later, Yeshua took Kefa, Ya'akov and Yochanan and led them up a high mountain privately. As they watched, he began to change form,* ³ *and his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than anyone in the world could possibly bleach them.* ⁴ *Then they saw Eliyahu and Moshe speaking with Yeshua.*

Did you catch the difference in Mark's Gospel as compared to Matthew's? There is not a mention of Yeshua's face shining with light. Mark's attention is instead focused on Jesus's glowing white clothes (something rather common in the mythological Greco-Roman god system). So while there is a proper sense of awe in both of these accounts, the connection of Christ to Moses is not made by Mark. Why? Because the Jewish Matthew was writing for an audience of Jewish Believers, while Mark was writing for an audience of Roman gentile Believers. Thus in Mark there is little discernable connection made between Moses and Jesus, while in Matthew it is front and center. Jewish culture expected the "prophet like me" that Moses spoke of; Roman culture knew nothing of it. The glowing faces of Moses and Yeshua had a specific meaning of historical connection for the Jewish culture; it wouldn't have had any meaning for a Roman culture. Therefore Matthew emphasized the glowing faces while Mark ignored it. This in no way disparages Mark nor makes his Gospel inferior to Matthew's. Their accounts were written for consumption by different cultures.

Verse 3 tells us, without explanation, that Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared and stood there with Yeshua. One of the first things Bible scholars question about this event is: how did those 3 disciples know that those men were Moses and Elijah? One had been gone for 1300 years and the other for perhaps 800 years. So it's not like there were ancient photographs of them. Here's why I think the disciples knew who they were. Yeshua has been teaching them that He is the End Times Messiah and Peter was the first to grasp it. I suspect that if not all of the remaining 11 disciples by now, probably at the least Jacob and his brother John also finally understood. I admit this is my speculation, but there is little better to go on as to the rationale for Yeshua choosing those particular 3 to accompany Him up the mountain not as mere companions but as eyewitnesses to this astounding event.

Elijah was predicted to come back when the Messiah appeared at the point in history of the Latter Days. Moses was **the** central figure of the Israelite religion;

even greater than Abraham in some ways. In fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that the Essenes had an expectation of a reappearance of Moses in the Latter Days (probably commensurate with the appearance of the Messiah) as reported by the Dead Sea Scrolls researcher John C. Poirier. How prevalent that expectation was in other parts of Jewish society I do not know. So from a Jewish standpoint two of the greatest figures in biblical history were present and because we get such an abbreviated story of this overwhelming event, who knows if Christ might not have told the 3 disciples what was going to happen and who to expect to show up.

But the next question for Bible students is: why those 2 particular figures? Far and away the most universal take within Christianity is the same one that Davies and Allison conclude in their Commentary on this chapter of Matthew. To quote them:

"Jesus, it would seem, takes Moses's place and supersedes Him."

That is, Yeshua obsoletes and replaces Moses. And if one sends Moses into obsolescence then so along with Him goes the Law of Moses. Simple. I've explained on numerous occasions that it flabbergasts me how such elite Bible scholars who bring so much needed light upon the Holy Scriptures can look at the evidence they dig up and draw such strange conclusions from it. These are the same two Bible scholars that were adamant that Jesus was clear in Matthew chapter 5 that He did NOT abolish the Torah and the Prophets, and then they turn around here in their commentary on Matthew 17 and essentially say that He did.

There is only one logical explanation for such conclusions and it is self-evident; Christian Tradition always trumps the Bible. And of course Christian Tradition is that Jesus erased everything, every Prophet, and every divine covenant that came before Him despite the fact that Jesus says the opposite, and nothing in the New Testament says that. There is also nothing in the words of this passage of Matthew 17 that would remotely imply that somehow the presence of Moses and Elijah together with Yeshua indicates that Yeshua has just sent the Torah, Moses (and, I suppose, Elijah) into Redemption history's dust bin. In fact in the Gospel accounts there is no meaning given to the Transfiguration at all. It is merely reported as having happened, who saw it, and nothing more.

We'll continue with the Transfiguration and what we ought to take away from it,

next time.