

The Power of Unbelief
(and its powerlessness)
Sermon 51 in the Matthew Series

Matthew 17:14-23

- John's coming was the herald of Messiah's coming.
- John's rejection was the herald of Messiah suffering – as prophesied in Isaiah 53 and elsewhere.

I. From the Mountain Top to the Valley 17:14-16

A. Mountain top experiences never last for long.

B. A Significant Symbolism

Moses was on the mountain with God on Sinai – but when he came down he found the people had already in an uproar and in deep sin.

When Christ and the three disciples come down from this glorious time, they are immediately met with an uproar, opposition and unbelief.

C. Mark's More Detailed Account Mark 9:14-27

Notice the scribes in v. **14**.

Christ in His wisdom takes control – v. **17-18**

v. **19** – Psalm 95:10 -- Forty years long was I grieved *and* disgusted with that generation, and I said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they do not approve, acknowledge, *or* regard My ways. (Amplified Bible)

v. **23-24** – This father wanted no part of the controversy.

D. The Powerlessness of the Disciples v. 16

II. Christ's Rebuke 17:17

A. The Rebuke Itself

B. It was a faithless and perverse generation

In the wilderness -- Moses intercedes.

At the cross – Christ intercedes.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And the angels do not come – and the wrath of God does not fall on the rebels (yet). Instead, God's wrath falls upon His Son.

III. Christ's Compassion 17:18 -21

A. This was a powerful demon

Satan himself cannot stand before Christ. **Hymn -- 81**
As Martin Luther penned – *one little word shall fell him.*

B. Why did the Disciples Fail?

v. 20a – *because of your unbelief.*

C. Moving Mountains

Not literally, but – what is meant? (quoting Hendricksen)
Zechariah 4:7a-- ‘Who *are* you, O great mountain?
Before Zerubbabel *you shall become* a plain!

1. “The mountain of difficulties that Zerubbabel would face would disappear” as God intervened.
2. “No task assigned by the Lord is going to be impossible to perform when the person who receives the mandate is and remains in trustful contact with God. No burden will then be too heavy to bear, ‘With God all things are possible’ (19:26). ‘I can do all things through him who infuses strength in me’ says Paul (Phil. 4:13). “