



## DEVOTIONAL FOR MATTHEW 17-18; MARK 9; JOHN 7-8

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AUTHOR: MACKENZIE TURNER

I'll admit it: I don't like riddles. They often feel like they're set up to trick me and make me feel foolish. Sometimes, I just don't have the energy to try and figure them out. Ever feel that way reading the Word of God? Yeah no, me neither... (sarcasm intended).

So far, we've been exploring passages where Jesus performs incredible miracles, signs, and wonders, sparking controversy in the Jewish world. All these acts were done through the authority given to Him by the Father. In Mark 3:15, Jesus even granted this same authority to His disciples—to preach and cast out demons.

But there's a catch, which might feel like a riddle in Matthew 17 and Mark 9. When the disciples couldn't cast out a demon from a boy, it was more than just a simple failure—it pointed to a deeper issue. Let's unpack what's really going on here.

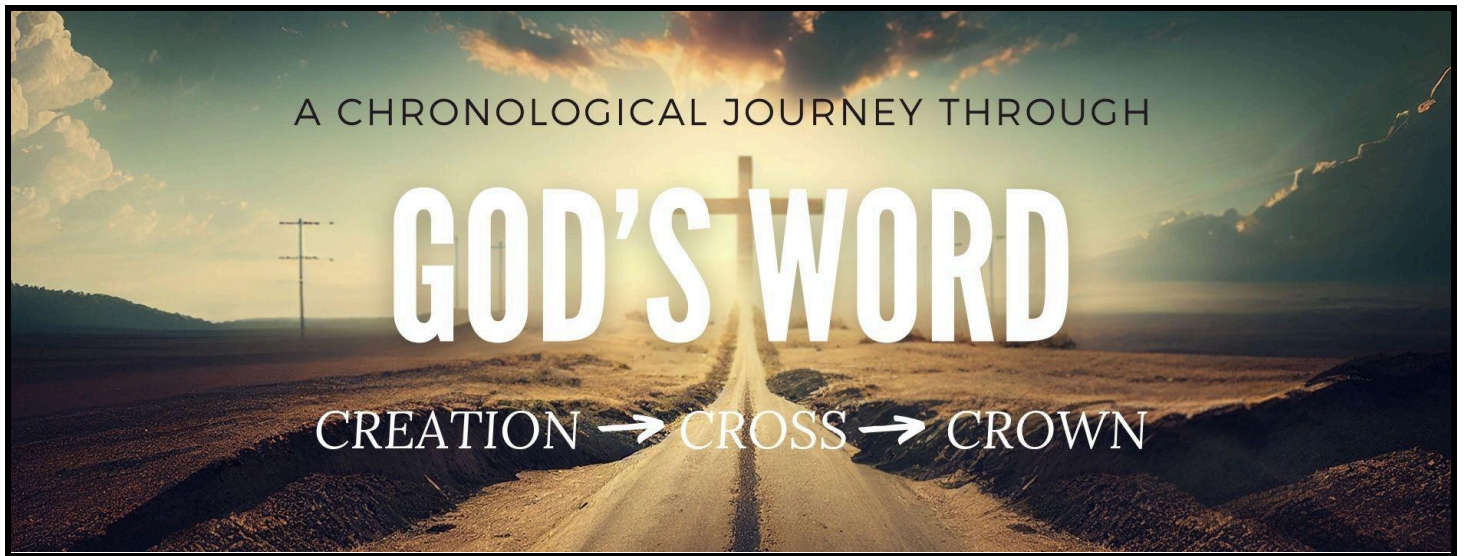
### **The Core Issue: Faith and the Heart**

Jesus makes it clear that the problem was the disciples' lack of faith. He later tells them privately that overcoming such spiritual challenges requires "prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29 KJV). But it's not that prayer and fasting are tools to manipulate God to do what we want. Instead, they help us let go of our selfish desires and align our hearts with the Father's will. It's a heart issue.

### **Faith Is a Matter of the Heart**

The Bible defines faith as "the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). And since "faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17), it's clear that faith is deeply connected to the heart's posture.

The disciples certainly believed in Jesus. (But even Satan is a "believer" in that sense.) When Jesus refers to a "mustard seed of faith" (Matthew 17:20), it's not about how much faith we have, but the quality and authenticity of it. A mustard seed is small, yet it symbolizes a faith that is aligned with God's will. When our hearts are truly in alignment, that small amount of faith is enough to activate the authority God has given us.



### **The Example of the Centurion**

Consider the centurion in Matthew 8:8. We don't know much about his background, but his words reveal a deep understanding of God's divine identity and authority. When he spoke, it reflected a heart that grasped who God is. Jesus, in agreement, further clarified this principle to his disciples then completed the miracle.

### **Walking in Authority Through Aligned Faith**

We've been given authority over many things on this earth. When we align our hearts with God's will, we can put that authority into real action through faith.

John 14:12-14 Reminds Us: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

And Jeremiah 29:13 confirms that "you will seek me and find me when you seek me with ALL your heart.

### **Questions:**

1. Do you feel the need to repeat your prayers as though the Lord hasn't heard them yet? How does this showcase your current state of faith?
2. Do you have an expectation of God about when, how, where, etc, He 'should' answer your requests? How does that showcase your heart's true alignment?
3. Do you rank physical miracles over matters of the heart? Why?