

Sermon Outline

“Spiritual Warfare”

Matthew 17:14-21

I. Structure of the passage vv. 10-13

A A man makes a request to Jesus vv. 14-15

B The man complains: the disciples are “unable” v. 16

C Jesus castigates the “generation” for unbelief v. 17

A¹ The man’s request is granted v. 18

B¹ The disciples question: “why were we unable?” v. 19

C¹ Jesus explains their unbelief vv. 20-21

Note: Neither Mark (9:14-29) nor Luke (9:37-42) use this structure.

II. Jesus and the Three return to the Nine v. 14a

a. Matthew revives the Moses/Jesus connection

See Ex 32:1-35, esp. vv. 15-20.

Cf. v. 17 with Dt 32:5 and esp. v. 20.

Echo of Ex 17:4? Cf. Jer 4:14; Ps 4:2.

b. The Nine have not been idle, but their ministry ineffective

Unable to effect a cure v. 16

Rebuked for “unbelief” v. 19 (*cf. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8*)

III. The unbelieving generation v. 17

The father’s request *cf. Ps 57:2; Mt 15:22, 25; Mk 9:22-24*

Evil and adulterous Mt 12:39, 45 – a people steeped in unbelief.

The Nine are included vv. 16, 20.

IV. The unbelieving disciples vv. 19-21

The nine disciples apart (alone) v. 19 *cf. 17:1* (of the three)

The disciples given special privilege Mt 13:10-17; 10:5-8

But their authority is not mechanical nor automatic;

It must be accompanied by prayer and faith.

To be in union with Christ is the only source of fruitfulness.

See John 15:1-8.