

# GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

## 51 – Seeing the Son of Man

Announcements:

11/21 @6:30 -

Men's  
Discipleship  
- Question 3

~~11/23 @7:00 -~~

~~Prayer~~  
CANCELED

~~11/24 @6:30 -~~

~~Grace Group~~  
CANCELED

11/27 @8:30 -

Sunday School

**ICE BREAKER:** What is the most difficult saying of Jesus? (you get to define how you would define difficult in this case!)

**READ:** Matthew 16:24-28

Just like last week, we find ourselves faced with another highly controversial passage. And also like last week the controversies center around trying to understand exactly what Jesus means in one portion of one thing he spoke in this passage. Here it is this: What does Jesus mean when he says that there were “some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (Matthew 16:28). One commentator notes that there are no less than seven “common” interpretations: (1) the transfiguration, (2) the resurrection and ascension, (3) Pentecost, (4) the spread of the Church, (5) The development of the Gospel message, (6) The destruction of The temple, and (7) The second coming of Christ. Today, instead of diving into all of these individually, I would like to focus on the issues that make this difficult, then try and make a decision as to which of the above options makes the most sense.

The most visible issue comes with the assertion that SOME will not see death before the son of man comes into his kingdom. While this is kind of a “duh” type of phrase, it bears saying: “some” is difficult because it doesn't mean none and it does not mean all. So if we are going to take Jesus at face value, when whatever we assume this means happens, a portion of the disciples must be alive and a portion must be dead. Thus, if it is too close in time (like the transfiguration) then none are dead but if it is too far away (like his second coming) then they will all be. Whatever Jesus is talking about, we need to make sure that we make room for the assertion that “some” will not see death to carry weight. But this really leads us to the bigger issue.

The biggest issue here comes in understanding the genre of this statement. Jesus is speaking in what we would call the “prophetic voice”. Therefore, however we choose to understand this, we do so knowing that as a prophetic statement, it is designed to be hard and even a little cryptic. A sign of true prophecy is that it is hard to understand until all is fully revealed. So what “some” means will only make full sense when all of them fully see. What it means that the Son of Man comes in his kingdom will truly only make sense when we see fully the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. And here we need to understand the prophetic concept of “multiple epochs of fulfillment”. In other words, prophetic speech is usually spread over multiple eras and instances of coming true. For example, Isaiah speaks of the captives returning home. This was true when it spoke geographically of the Israelites coming back from exile, it was also true as we see the salvation of those who trust in Jesus and it is also true when we think of it in future times as referring to Christ coming back and calling us all home. And this, I believe, becomes the key to a full understanding of this verse.

The best way to understand the “coming of the kingdom” is to understand this as a sort of compression of all that it means for Christ to be exalted. So it does mean that at his resurrection and ascension, surely the disciples did see the Son of man in glory. So too at Pentecost, as the truth of how the church would grow and flourish and be led by the Spirit was revealed, we can understand this as the coming of the Kingdom. And we know and believe that he is coming again, and truly that is when all peoples will see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. In other words, it is best to leave a bit of mystery in this passage, knowing that no matter what, his people will see his glory!

**FOR REFLECTION:**

- What general lessons about understanding prophecy can this passage teach us?
- What does it mean that we see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom?
- How can contemplation of the kingdom be an encouragement for us?