

Sermon outline and notes:

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Mark 9:1-8 “Who Jesus Really Is”

Intro. About a week prior to the event of my text, Peter had confessed his faith that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. But soon after that Jesus began to teach them that He was to go to Jerusalem to die on a cross. With that announcement the disciples' hope of an earthly kingdom with Jesus as King was beginning to unravel. In fact, their faith in Jesus seems to decline during the last 6 months before Christ's death. For example, in the hours preceding His death Judas betrayed Him, the disciples abandoned Him, and Peter denied Him. And the days immediately following His death the disciples were afraid and disillusioned. They were very slow to believe that He had risen from the dead.

So Jesus did want to assure His disciples that He is indeed the Son of God, and that His glorification will surely follow His suffering. He knew that their faith needed to be strengthened to weather the storm they were about to experience. Also, Jesus made it clear that discipleship required a commitment that only could come from a strong faith. So here we read of an amazing incident that took place which proved beyond doubt that Jesus truly is the Son of God.

My friend, do you believe deeply in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you have any doubts that He is the Savior of the world? Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins? Do you believe that He is coming again some day, as v.1 indicates, to establish His kingdom on this earth? Or do you believe the ones that Peter warned us about when he said, “There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’” (2 Pet. 2:3-4). Is the second coming of Christ a myth or a sober truth? I hope that my text of Scripture will convince you of the latter. All 4 gospel accounts bear witness to this incident. This is eyewitness testimony from 3 chosen witnesses, which is more than adequate for our faith (Dt 19:15; Mt. 18:16). So let's see first of all:

I. THE HEAVENLY VISION

Three of the disciples, Peter, James, & John, were chosen to receive a special revelation of the deity of Jesus Christ. What a privilege they were about to have! These three were the inner circle of Jesus' disciples.

By the way, you can be in the “inner circle” of Jesus' friends if you want to be. God wants to be as real and close to you as you want Him to be (cf. James 4:8). Do you spend time with God in prayer each day? Are you close to Jesus in your daily walk?

V.2 indicates that Jesus took them up on a high mountain. Some believe it could have been Mt. Herman in Southern Lebanon. It is over 9,000 feet above sea level! Others believe the mountain referred to was in Northern Galilee, rising 4,000 feet above sea level. The highest peak on Skyline drive is about 4000 feet. Mt. Tabor is the traditional site, which is in lower Galilee, but it is only 1,886 ft. I remember going to the top of that mountain when Everett & I traveled to Israel. They must have arrived at the peak in the afternoon after a hard & difficult hike up that mountain. Luke tells us that the disciples went to sleep that evening while Jesus was spending time in prayer. Jesus knew He needed the strength He would receive through prayer to face the great task that lay ahead.

At some point in the evening, the disciples were awakened by the appearance of a bright light. Let's see from our text what happened. Notice that they saw:

A. A Metamorphosis – In the last of v.2 we read that “He was transfigured before them.” The word “transfigured” comes from *metamorphóo* in Greek. We get our word metamorphosis from that word. It describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. It is the opposite of “masquerade,” which is an outward change that does not come from within. So the deity of Jesus that was on the inside, which was normally hidden, radiated on the outside. Momentarily, the physical body of Jesus became transparent and His glory became visible to the stunned disciples. What they saw was the inner glory of Jesus, not a reflected glory.

Now notice specifically the manifestations of the glory of Jesus. For example, they saw glory:

1. In His Face - Matthew 17:2 says His face shone like the sun. Remember, it was night time, and the face of Jesus must have driven away the darkness of the night as brightly as the noonday sun. What a contrast later when Peter and John saw His bruised and bloody face around the time of His crucifixion. Would they remember what they saw on this mountain?

2. In His Clothes, Shining Bright – In v.3 Mark says, “His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.” Probably we are to think of the whole body as giving forth the same mysterious light, which made itself visible even through the robe He wore. As a result, His clothes became brilliantly white, as bright as the snow outside on a sunny day.

Now what does this mean? Mark reports what happened, but he does not at this point explain its meaning. So let's go to some of the eyewitness for the answer & consider together:

B. Its Implication - As I said, the apostle John was one of the eyewitnesses of this event. Later in Jn. 1:14 he wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” When they saw His glory, they had to conclude that He was the Son of God in human flesh. Another eyewitness, Peter, wrote in 2 Pet. 1:16-18, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” After this incident, Peter had no reason to doubt who Jesus was.

We also should see in this transfiguration of Jesus a picture of the majestic glory that Jesus will have when He comes again. I'm looking forward to that day, aren't you?

We too can undergo a metamorphosis to a lesser degree. Rom. 12:2 says that our minds can be renewed in godliness and our whole lives can be transformed into the personalities that glorify God in our talk and walk. Furthermore, 2 Cor. 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” That verse indicates that we can be transformed into the image of God as we behold God daily in His Word. You see, when you become a Christian, God gives you a new heart, a new nature, and His Spirit indwells you. It is His will that the glory of His presence on the inside should become manifest on the outside, in how you live & speak. Your inner joy & peace should be evident, even in the appearance of your face.

Are you being transformed? Has your life changed since becoming a believer? God is known and reflected and honored in the world by the transformed life of the believer. This

transformation will be complete when Jesus comes again. We are told that when we see Jesus, we shall be like Him (see 1 John 3:2).

II. THE HEAVENLY VISITORS

It says in v.4, “And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.” Why would Moses & Elijah appear with Jesus at this particular time?

A. The Purpose of their Visit - We know that before Him, all His life long, there stood the certainty of the Cross. But now the cross was more clearly in view. He was about to do something that was more difficult than you can imagine. So they encouraged Him to carry out His mission by reminding Him of the Father’s constant love (v.7b) and of the glory that would follow His suffering (Heb. 12:2). Their visit was similar to the visit of the angel to strengthen Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

B. The Subject of their Discussion – Mark tells us that “they were talking with Jesus,” but he doesn’t report what they were talking about. But Luke tells us one of the topics of discussion. They were talking about “His departure” (9:31). That “His departure [literally exodus]... at Jerusalem” refers to the Lord’s bitter suffering and death on the cross needs no proof. According to that same verse it was something to be “accomplished.” Right before Jesus died on the cross, after He had completely drunk His cup of suffering, He cried, “It is finished.” The term could also include a reference to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. This was likely in view of the fact that Jesus was comforted by their visit.

Now why is it that Jesus had to go to Jerusalem to die?

1. To Fulfill the Law & the Prophets – God’s Word is true. His promises must not fail. Now keep in mind that Moses gave the Law, and Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. They appear as witnesses that Jesus is the one of whom they spoke in old times, and of whom they wrote that He would come. The coming of Jesus, & His death to save us, was predicted in the Law. The Old Testament sacrifices and the other rituals and commandments pointed to His sacrificial death. The prophets predicted the death of Christ in Isa. 53, Psa. 22, & in other prophecies. What was about to take place in Jerusalem would accomplish the divine purpose of God which He had planned from eternity. So their presence and their speech were the acknowledgment that Jesus was the One they had seen from afar (cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Luke 24:25-27).

2. To Save *Their* Souls - We know from Heb. 9:22 that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Whatever they discussed, they surely recognized that the eternal salvation of human souls was at stake. And they themselves had an interest in the Savior’s shed blood on their behalf as well. His yet unpierced hands held the keys of life and death. The Cross of Jesus Christ had a backward as well as a forward power, as was brought out by Paul in Romans 3:25.

Friend, Jesus was willing to go to the cross to suffer & die for your sins. Has He saved *your* soul? Have you accepted His sacrifice on behalf of your sins?

C. The Implications of their Presence – One truth that comes out is this:

1. The Dead in the Lord Are Alive! – Though Elijah never tasted death, Moses did die. Their souls were not asleep or annihilated. These men were more alive than they had ever been while on earth! God is the God of the living. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:8, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” When we die, we do not have to wait until the resurrection day, but we go to be with the Lord immediately upon death. Our spirit never dies!

2. We Will Recognize our Departed Loved Ones! – In v.5 we see that somehow Peter recognized Moses & Elijah. How many of you have a close family member in heaven today? Well we see from this text that we will recognize and renew fellowship with our loved ones when we get to heaven. After we die, we still maintain our separate identities. Out of the millions or even billions in heaven, you will be able to recognize your loved ones.

Based on this verse I expect to see my grandfather Felker again. We called him Boone Pa. I will see both of my grandmothers. I will see my mother & sister again. I will not have any trouble recognizing them out of the millions or billions in heaven.

3. His Exodus Assures our Exodus! – If Jesus tarries His coming, we will face death. Yet when death comes, it will be a true Exodus for us. We will go forth from the land of bondage, and pass through the divided sea, not into a weary wilderness, but into the light of the love and the blessedness of the land where our Brother is King, and where we shall share His reign. Can you face death with such faith?

4. When Jesus Comes Again, His Saints Will Come With Him – In 1 Thess. 3:13 Paul talks about “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” Then Colossians 3:4 says, “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” We will share in His glory & victory. So though the road may be difficult when you follow Christ, look beyond the present difficulty & see the glory that shall be yours some day!

These are good reasons to believe in Jesus! He gives hope for the future:

Next, notice:

D. The Reaction to their Presence - In v.5 Peter said, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” The trouble with Peter was that too often he spoke first and did his thinking afterward, if at all. In fact, v.6 says, “he did not know what to say.” Well, if you don’t know what to say, it is best to keep your mouth shut! Why would Moses & Elijah need a shelter anyway? They are heavenly spirits! Now the point is they wanted to stay on the mountain top of experience. He would prefer to avoid the needs of the valley & suffering of the cross.

It is a very real temptation for us all, that of avoiding unwelcome duties and shrinking from rough work, on the plea of holding sweet communion with Jesus on the mountain. I hope you enjoy coming to worship, but we can’t stay here. We need to go & minister to people in Jesus’ name. When we gather for visitation, it is always a temptation to linger long in fellowship with one another, but instead, we must go out and visit in the name of the Lord. For discipleship means denying self, taking up a cross, and following Him; and you cannot do that and selfishly stay on the mount of glory. There are needs to be met in the valley below. If we want to share the glory of Christ on the mountain top, we must be willing to follow Him into the sufferings of the valley below.

Yet the words of Peter do convey something positive. His words of excitement convey some idea of the pleasure which the saints will experience when they at last meet the Lord Jesus at His second coming, and meet the saints who have gone before. The feelings of which Peter had were just a foretaste of what will be ours in full experience. We shall all say with one heart and one voice, when we see Christ and all his saints, “It is good for us to be here.” The good news is that when that day comes, the joyful experience will never end!

Finally, our story not only tells of a heavenly vision, and the heavenly visitors, but it also tells of:

III. THE HEAVENLY VOICE

We read in v.7, “And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’” Before we talk about the voice from the cloud, let us consider the cloud itself. This was not just a normal atmospheric cloud that happened to overshadow that mountain peak at this particular time. I say that because the gospel of Matthew points to the brightness of the cloud. Remember, this took place at night. It was not bright, as if smitten by the sunlight, but its whole substance was luminous. This was the same glory cloud that was manifested in the days of Moses & the wilderness march. This cloud of God was manifest at the tabernacle & temple. This was the same cloud that was manifest at the baptism of Jesus. This would be the glory cloud that would receive Jesus at His ascension.

Now why did the glory cloud of God appear at this time? It gave a visible manifestation of the presence of an invisible God. There was no doubt but that God was present on this occasion, & God was the One who spoke from the cloud.

The cloud also served as sort of a chariot to carry Moses & Elijah back to their heavenly abode, yet Jesus remained on earth. Aren’t you glad that Jesus was willing to stay on earth and face the cross? How He could have wished to go back to heaven with them!

Next, a voice was heard from the cloud, no doubt the voice of God. If the disciples failed to understand the full significance of what they had just seen, God made it clear what it all meant. Notice the message that was given in the last of v.7:

A. Jesus Is God’s Son - Moses & Elijah were servants of God. But Jesus is the unique Son of God, the second member of the Trinity. Both the transfiguration & the voice confirm this.

B. Jesus is God’s *Beloved* Son – Any father should love his son, but God the Father had great reason to *so* love His Son. He knew that Jesus was willing to resist temptation and go to the cross obedience to His father.

Does God take delight in *your* obedience to Him?

C. Therefore, We Should Hear Him - God concluded His brief speech with two of the most important words in a believer’s life: “Hear Him.” God the Father focused their attention, not on the vision, but on the Word of God that Jesus spoke. The memory of visions will fade, but the unchanging Word abides forever. Discipleship is not built on spectacular visions but on the inspired, unchanging Word of God. So we are to hear, heed, submit to the authority of Christ’s Word. And the present tense indicates that we are to continue to hear Him. Keep reading & hearing the words of Jesus all your life. He is the great Teacher; those who want to be wise must learn from him. The grand question that concerns us all is not so much what people say, or ministers say, or what the church says, or what councils say, but what *Christ* says. He and only He will never fail us, never disappoint us, and never lead us astray.

Are you hearing & reading the words of Jesus? I believe we should come to church & hear the words of Jesus in Sunday School & the worship services.

Now why are we to hear Jesus? We are to listen to Him because He is God’s Son. Jesus is no mere man. He speaks the very words of God. We should hear & read the Law & the Prophets, represented by Moses & Elijah, but we should especially hear the words of Jesus. Notice in v.8 that right after God spoke from heaven, Moses & Elijah left, and they only saw Jesus. He should be the focus of our attention. We don’t put Moses or Elijah on a par with Jesus. Furthermore, we should “hear Him” because of the words of Scripture. Moses said in Dt. 18:18-19, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ‘And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.’” The presence of Moses on the mountain

with Jesus also indicates that Jesus is the prophet he had predicted. The voice was a clear confirmation of the fact that Jesus is the great prophet that was to come. Jesus is the Messiah that was promised.

Haven't you been in class when a teacher gave an important assignment. The only problem is you weren't paying attention and you didn't do the assignment. As a result, you got an F on the assignment.

Well it is far more serious when you don't hear & heed the words of Jesus. Notice that God warns that if you do not hear & heed the words of Jesus, He will require it of you. You will be held accountable. Have you heard or read all the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible? If not, are you obeying the command of v.7? Are you yielded to the authority of Jesus' words in the Bible? That is God's command to every believer.

Conclusion: The vision of Jesus transfigured, the visitors who accompanied Him, & the voice from heaven all bear witness that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Savior that God sent. He carried out His mission to die for us on the cross, to pay the penalty of our sin.

Do you believe the Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God? If not, what more proof do you really need? We have the eyewitness account of 3 apostles who testified through the gospel accounts that Jesus is truly God's Son. Are you listening to Him, and obeying Him as Lord of your life? If not, today is the day you need to repent, believe in Jesus, and make things right with God.

Sources: Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); Virtus E. Gideon, *Luke: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 9 [Luke] (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Jerry Vines, *Great Events in the Life of Christ* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1979), 48-59; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

Also, compare sources from parallel passages: Matt. 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36; John 1:14.