

**TEXARKANA REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH****SERIES TITLE: MARK 9:1-13 | SERMON TITLE: GLORY INCOGNITO****DAVE WAGNER**

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Here's a question for you: If you were walking the streets of Capernaum 2,000 years ago and Jesus passed by, would you notice him? Do you think he'd be floating two feet off the ground with a halo over his head? Do you suppose he'd be glowing? We know for a fact Jesus was as plain and ordinary as anyone in this room. Isaiah actually tells us he had no impressive physical features which would draw us to him.

You wouldn't know him. He'd look like just another guy. And this is so despite the fact that Jesus possesses so much glory that it nearly killed John when he saw it in the Revelation. Do you notice a big difference between Jesus in the Gospel and Jesus in Revelation? In the Gospel Jesus is just another guy; in Revelation his glory threatens to kill people who see it. What makes the difference?

It's simple, really. Do you know what the word "Revelation" means? It refers to an unveiling. Something is covered up and the cover is taken off; that's what a Revelation is, and that's what the book of Revelation is about: It's about the uncovering, the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

But this means that before Revelation Jesus was veiled; did you know that? Did you know that the Jesus of the Gospels is veiled? There is a covering over him; you are not seeing all there is to see. So in the Gospel Jesus is veiled; in Revelation the veil is taken off. That's what makes the difference.

I say that in the Gospel Jesus was veiled; I should say he was veiled *most* of the time. We've already seen a few times in Mark where the veil slips for a moment; say when Jesus walks across the water, or multiplies the bread, or calms the storm. The veil slips off for a moment and we see a shimmer of brilliance; then the veil is replaced and the vision is over.

But now we come to the Transfiguration. In this story we don't get a mere, momentary slip of the veil; Jesus actually casts the veil aside. And for a moment we get to see the Jesus of The Revelation. This is Jesus uncovered. To put it mildly: You could never just pass This Jesus on the street. On the contrary, if you saw him a mile away there would be no option but worship; and that is so whether you are a Christian or not.

So here's my point today: I have an exhortation for you from this story. This is it: Behold the Glory. Witness the supernatural excellence, the heavenly beauty of Jesus Christ.

### **How is this Story Shaped?**

Let me explain how this story works. You can imagine this text in the shape of a target. In the center you have a bulls-eye; around the bulls-eye you have a circle; then around that circle you have another, larger circle. So bulls-eye in the middle surrounded by two concentric circles.

The bulls-eye is the Transfiguration of Jesus. Imagine Jesus transformed right in front of his disciples. The veil is removed and the heavenly glory of Christ is revealed. The first circle is the elements of the Transfiguration story which enhance Jesus' glory: The cloud, the voice, and the prophets. The second circle is a strange ingredient: it's a layer of suffering wrapped around the Transfiguration story. It includes Jesus' teaching in the end of chapter 8 about his and his disciple's suffering; it also includes Jesus' comments in 9.9-13 about his and the Baptist's suffering.

So we have Jesus' Transfiguration, encircled by God and the prophets who testify to his glory, and it's all wrapped in a layer of bitter suffering for Jesus and his people. That's the shape of the text. Before we finish we'll reflect somewhat on how this picture of Jesus' glory reveals that his is a strange, counterintuitive kind of glory. It's not the kind of Disneyland glory men tend to envision; it's a bitter and painful glory, even a bloody glory. Let's begin by looking at the bulls-eye, The Transfiguration of Jesus.

### **Behold the Glory: Jesus Transfigured**

In 8.38 Jesus spoke of his coming in glory with the angels; this refers to the end of the world when Jesus comes in judgment. Then Jesus says in 9.1 that some of his disciples are going to see the kingdom come with power before they die. The disciples have all been dead 2,000 years, so what could that mean? Did something happen within the apostles' lifetime that could qualify as seeing the kingdom come with power?

Look at 9.2. Mark uses an unusually explicit time indicator to link what Jesus has just said to the Transfiguration Story. Now in this story the excellence of Christ, which he had with the Father before creation, and which he reveals again after the resurrection, is momentarily revealed. It is the same glory which will be revealed when Christ comes again to judge the living and the dead. In other words, it is the glory of the kingdom come with power.

So, very simply, it seems that in the Transfiguration, Jesus treats three of his disciples to a preview of The Second Coming. What they see in the Transfiguration is a sampling of what all men, living and dead, will see when Christ descends again from the clouds.

But this means the glory witnessed in the Transfiguration is End Times glory; in this Jesus is seen not in his veiled state but in the full Revelation of glory which we all still await. The Transfiguration is an invasion of the future into the past. This is sort of like Time-Travel! The three apostles are seeing the future when they look on Christ, revealed in his glory.

Just a quick point about this: The "kingdom come with power" looks like a glorified Jesus. The future of this planet looks like a glorified Jesus. This is where everything is headed. Some people think I don't have any eschatology because I don't talk a great deal about it. Actually, I have a substantial eschatology: Jesus Christ glorified, taking over the planet, conforming it all into his own image, subduing it all; every government, every institution, every school and college, every business, every corporation, every country, every city, every county. Then when Christ has subdued everything and everyone he himself will turn it over to the Father and subject himself also to the Father, that God may be all in all.

That's my eschatology. I'm waiting for a hostile takeover by The Power that Sits Enthroned in Heaven. And my goal is to be faithful in the meantime. Anyway, that's a rabbit trail.

What we're doing now is beholding the glory of Jesus unveiled. So now let's look a moment at the radiance of Jesus.

If we ask what it means that Jesus started glowing, the answer is simple: It means that Jesus is a heavenly Personage. Several times in Scripture we run into stories with radiant people, or people whose clothing is blindingly white. Sometimes it speaks of God, sometimes it's an angel. Let me give you a few:

<sup>NAU</sup> **Psalm 104:1** <sup>a</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are <sup>b</sup>clothed with splendor and majesty, <sup>2</sup> <sup>c</sup>Covering Yourself with <sup>a</sup>light as with a cloak, <sup>b</sup>Stretching out heaven like a *tent* curtain.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Daniel 7:9** "I kept looking Until <sup>a</sup>thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His <sup>b</sup>vesture *was* like white snow And the <sup>c</sup>hair of His head like pure wool. His <sup>d</sup>throne *was* <sup>1</sup>ablaze with flames, Its <sup>e</sup>wheels *were* a burning fire.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Matthew 28:3** And <sup>a</sup>his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Acts 10:30** Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during <sup>b</sup>the <sup>1</sup>ninth hour; and behold, <sup>c</sup>a man stood before me in shining garments,

This characteristic of radiance or exceedingly white clothing speaks of heavenly status, divine glory, the supernatural. All that's happening here is Mark is giving further support to the basic idea of this book: Jesus is the Supernatural Son of God come to bring in the kingdom and save sinners. The Transfiguration is another exhibition of this fact, and in a sense, it might be the greatest.

Someone will say, "Isn't the cross the greatest exhibition of the fact, or the resurrection?" Yes, the cross probably is. As for the resurrection, what we're seeing today is a preview of the resurrection. In that way the Transfiguration is exceedingly special. Our place in this is to behold the glory.

### **Witnesses to the Glory: A Cloud, A Voice, and Two Prophets**

Now we turn to elements which witness to Jesus' glory. The first element is the appearance of Elijah and Moses. Remember, this is the first concentric circle.

These two men are probably to be considered the greatest prophets of the old covenant, who had departed the world seven hundred and fifteen hundred years before Christ, respectively. It might seem really random and strange that they should suddenly pop up, but as we look at the details it becomes less strange.

Notice, for example, that Jesus is up on a mountain with his people, revealing his glory to them, soon to be in the presence of an overshadowing cloud and a voice from heaven, and also we have Moses and Elijah present. Any of this sound familiar?

Folks, this is an unmistakable picture of Mount Sinai. Remember Moses brought the people to Mount Sinai, where they all hear God's voice from heaven, and Moses goes up into the cloud, and there he asks Yahweh to show him his glory?

Someone will say, "What about Elijah? He wasn't there then." Right, he wasn't, his time came seven hundred years later when he also went to Mount Sinai and experienced the presence and voice of God. What we have in both cases is this connection with the high mountain, Sinai, Moses and Elijah, along with the voice and perhaps also the cloud.

Well, so what? Why did it happen this way? What's the point of this sort of recreation of old testament events?

The point seems to be to place Jesus squarely into the redemptive story. The Gospel of Jesus is not a completely different thing from God's revelations in the old testament period; the Gospels could actually be titled "The Old Testament, Part 2." The Gospels are the continuation of the Old Testament. There is great continuity.

And Jesus is not simply another notable rabbi in Jewish history. There were many important rabbis, such as Hillel and Shammai, Gamaliel and Akiba. But while they were important they were not part of God's special redemptive history. They were not Old Testament, Part 2. They were just Jewish teachers of note.

Jesus is not a Jewish teacher of note. He's the next thing on the redemptive historical timeline. And even that's not enough: Jesus isn't just the next thing, he's the thing every other thing was pointing to and getting ready for! Jesus is the conclusion and summary and fulfillment of the old testament. Every promise of God is Yes and Amen in Jesus.

And that's just what we see in this story. Jesus fits perfectly into the old testament narrative, because he's of a piece with it. He's peerless in this sense; so this whole scene serves to reveal his unique glory.

If that weren't enough, the glory cloud of the old testament forms, and God's voice gives direct testimony to Jesus. The testimony is about Jesus' sonship, which is the point of the Gospel. It includes a command to hear what Jesus says; this command implies a call for faith in and obedience to what Jesus says, of course.

Well, there are a few other elements which serve to enhance Jesus' glory, albeit in a funny way. Notice how Peter offers to make three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah? It's as if Peter envisions the three persons as equally important and he offers to get to work for them; that's when the Voice comes and singles out Jesus alone as his Son, who should be heard and obeyed. It's possible the Voice is clarifying just who is in the center of this gathering.

Then there's Peter's use of "rabbi" for Jesus while Jesus is radiating heavenly glory. "Rabbi"? Not quite, Peter. Talk about an inadequate designation of Jesus in this scene. Jesus isn't a rabbi; he's the God the rabbis claim to serve and worship, come down to earth.

But what's the point here? Mark wrote this for the church of Christ. I think he wanted us to behold the glory of Jesus, that our souls might feed on that glory. That's the point.

**Glory Drenched in Blood: The Suffering of Christ and His People**

But now we move on to the second circle, the outermost layer. And it is a bitter layer. This is the part of our text which is most strange, unexpected, and undesired ☺

I've been showing you the radiant glory of Christ. I have now to tell you that glory is drenched in blood. It's a bloody glory. This isn't the glory men envision, full of ease, pleasure, acclaim, and idle entertainment. This is a glory that pierces like nails and cuts like the lashes of a whip. It strips naked and strangles to death. Are you interested in that kind of glory?

Recall that our Transfiguration story is tightly connected with the preceding statements of Jesus about his own crucifixion and the subsequent sufferings of his people. Jesus says those sufferings are necessary. And he promises he will one day come in glory, a glory which he will give to those who have waited for him. But it isn't a neat and tidy glory; it isn't a glory without breaking a sweat. It is not a bloodless glory. This glory is pouring blood, it's drenched in blood, drowning in blood!

This glory is costly. It hurts and stings and keeps you up at night. It gives you unbearable soul ache.

The end of our text has Jesus describing that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the prediction of Elijah's coming. And Israel did to John whatever they wanted. And it hurt. The Messianic Glory let John be arrested and thrown into a dungeon. It let him rot there while Herod had his drunken, debauched parties above. It let John wonder whether Jesus was actually the Christ. And then it sent an executioner to take his head off his shoulders.

And this same glory involves an agonizing Christ; one who suffers such spiritual torment as to sweat blood in the garden. This glory drives Jesus to the point of asking God to find another way to save the people. That's the kind of glory we're talking about.

What I'm trying to say is that the radiance of Jesus Christ is one which is enhanced by suffering, scorn, and death. When the world treated Jesus ingloriously, it served to reveal even more glory in him. Moreover, the path God appointed for Jesus to walk was a path which ended in glory; but it passed through a Sea of Blood; suffering, shame, deprivation, all of this Jesus passed through on the way to his glory and, in a sense, it forms an essential ingredient of his glory.

And the path Jesus walked he commands that we walk. We also are headed for unspeakable glory. God himself is going to honor us. Wicked men will bow down before us. We shall judge angels. But if we think we will find a way to get to this glory without swimming through the same Blood Sea Jesus passed through, we are mistaken. Of course some Christians do pass through,

seemingly, very easily. God is free to give his own things to whom he pleases. But the Word of Christ forbids us from expecting, much less demanding, such a bloodless Christianity. Jesus commands us to seek glory. Then he tells us we will get there by blood. By Jesus' blood, and by our own blood.

So here's what we have. Behold the Glory of Christ. It is a Glory Incognito. You'd pass him on the street and not notice him. Or you'd pass him as you enter Jerusalem, while he's hanging naked and bloody on a Roman cross. And you'd notice him, but only long enough to spit at him as criminal filth.

The reason the glory is incognito is not that the glory fails to express itself. The real reason is that it's drenched in blood, and men don't see blood as glorious; they see it as shameful and horrific. Men see a cruise to the Bahamas as glorious. That's because they're blind. The real Glory radiates from the Mount of Transfiguration, and from Mount Sinai. And it's covered in Blood. The Blood of a lamb, and the Blood of the Christ.