

The Gospel of Mark- Chapter 9 Part 1

If you would please be turning with me in your bibles over to the gospel of Mark in the 9th chapter as we continue our journey of exposition through this book. This is our first week in this chapter and today we will be looking at an event that is called the transfiguration of Christ which is an event that I dare say that most if not everyone in this room is familiar with at least some degree.

It is one of the most significant moments in the ministry of Christ and indeed some bible commentators are quick to say outside of the cross this is the most significant event of his life. It's hard for me to rank moments in the life of Christ as to which is the most significant. Surely his birth ranks up there. The day that God became flesh, as well as, the beginning of his ministry at the baptism of John.

By the way, all of these events came with heavenly announcements. The angels declaring his birth. The voice of God speaking at the baptism and as we will see the voice of God speaking in the scripture we will look at today. So, all of these events are certainly significant to say the least.

Now before we get into the reading this afternoon, let me remind you of what we have been reading because those events are directly linked to this passage of scripture. In fact, in each of the synoptic gospels- Matthew, Mark, and Luke we find this same order of events with nothing else sandwiched between. There is a direct link in these events to the events of last week.

So what did we talk about last week? Do you recall? The Apostles having seen the miracles of Jesus like the blind receiving their sight and the deaf hearing through the revelation of the Holy Spirit are now at a point where they confidently know who Jesus is.

So Jesus asks them, and we saw this last week, who do men say that I am? They said some say John, maybe Elijah. Maybe another prophet. Again, the people clearly knew that there was something significant about Jesus. Must be a prophet and might be the prophet that would prepare the way for the Christ. Nevertheless, the people didn't see how Jesus could be that Christ and for good reason.

You see, Jesus didn't have an army, wasn't calling men to take up arms, and he wasn't speaking out against Roman occupation or anything like that. Jesus was not coming in the power and glory they were expecting of the Messiah. So, the masses for the most part were missing it.

Then Jesus asked them though the question of whom do they say he is and to that Peter confessed he was the Christ. The Messiah. Matthew says the Christ the Son of the living God. The Apostles because the Holy Spirit enable their hearts through the will of the Father were able to look beyond what they thought they knew about the coming of the Messiah and recognized that when Jesus healed the blind, the deaf, the lame, and everything else he did that these too were the signs of Messiah and they confessed him as such.

Immediately following that confession of Jesus as the Christ which is what Mark has been building up to so far, Jesus tells them that his ministry is soon coming to an end. His days are numbered. Tells them he's going to be rejected and suffer and die. Also tells them that after three days he is going to rise again.

The disciples of course did not like to hear that. In fact, Peter rebuked Jesus for his words and was immediately chastised by Christ for seeking a plan for him other than God's eternal plan.

So then, that all said, the true high point of chapter 8 and this book so far is the revelation

that Jesus is the Christ. It is man's confession of who he is. But Mark's goal is not just to show us that Jesus is the Christ. He has bigger goals than that. If you will recall the first verse of Mark says that his is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark still needs to show him fully as the Son of God and this is where it gets exciting. Having now given us the high point in chapter 8 with the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, we now come to chapter 9 we have the revelation not by man, but by the Father that he is indeed as well the Son of God. These events side by side represent the fullness of who Jesus was. He is the Christ and he is the Son of God.

Now that was probably a little more review than normal, but again these events go together. Cannot be separated.

Let's read our passage in its entirety...

Mar 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Mar 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

Mar 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Mar 9:4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

Mar 9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Mar 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

Mar 9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

Mar 9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Mar 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

Mar 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

Mar 9:11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

Mar 9:12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

Mar 9:13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Let's look again to verse 1,

Mar 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Verse 1 seems like the odd verse out so to say. In my bible that is divided by subject, it exists by itself with the transfiguration coming after it. In Matthew and Luke it is included with the last part of what Jesus was saying just prior which was about taking up your cross and following him and went on to speak about when Jesus would come in glory with the holy angels.

So that is the link the coming of Christ in glory or as verse 1 here says here in Mark- with power. Now we know that day in its fullness will come when Jesus comes as is told to us in the Revelation of Christ recorded for us by the Apostle John in Revelation 19.

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Rev 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

The scripture there in Revelation goes on to speak of how he will come with the armies of heaven- that is the angels and how he will have that name written upon him King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is the time period that Jesus is speaking of in Mark 8:38 which immediately precedes our verse.

And then we read verse 1 here and it speaks of some not tasting death till they have seen Christ come in power or as Matthew and Luke relate it the coming of his kingdom and that would make some scratch their heads thinking okay does that mean someone is going to walk this earth alive and never die till that Christ comes or does this mean that the kingdom has already come. There are some that believe that. Some called preterist believe that all the end time prophecies have already been fulfilled.

But again, I think if we look to the context of how this is written and the layout of each of the synoptic gospels the answer is in the transfiguration.

You see in the transfiguration some of them that were there that day with Jesus would see a glimpse of the coming kingdom. They would see Jesus in glory. The transfiguration that comes next in each of the synoptic gospels is the fulfillment of what Jesus promised here in verse 1.

Let's read on and see how this unfolds,
Mar 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by

themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

Again, this verse or it's parallel immediately follows the promise that some would see him in each gospel. This verse is showing us how the last verse is being fulfilled. We are told here six days later. Matthew says six days and Luke says "about eight days later". There is no contradiction there. Luke says *about 8*. The others say *after six*. So about a week later.

The difference probably has everything to do with how you count days Luke including the day that verse 1 was announced and the day it took place and the other counting the days between. It's all the same after six days and about eight. So, a week later basically no matter how you slice it.

Jesus takes them up to a high mountain. We don't know what mountain it is. The Catholics have a sight named for it in Southern Israel at Mount Tabor and marked it with a large church and each year people make pilgrimages there, but the location seems to be all wrong. Remember Jesus is in Ceserea Phillipi and the highest of mountains there is called Mt. Hermon. This would more likely be the scene of this incident.

But again, scripture doesn't say where and for good reason no doubt because as we will see later Jesus didn't want a shrine built there because of this event which is exactly what they have done on Mt. Tabor.

In verse 2 we see that Jesus takes three men with him. Peter, James, and John. These are the inner three if you will. These are the men closest to Jesus. When you find Christ you find typically these three men there. It was these same three that Jesus took with him in the Garden of Gethsemane when he went to pray before he was crucified.

For whatever reason, Jesus chose to have a closer relationship with these three than the others and has chosen these three men to bear witness of something that was beyond their wildest imaginations.

Scripture here in verse 2 says that he was transfigured before them. That is a very significant word there transfigured. It is from the same Greek word that we get the word metamorphosis from.

You all remember that word from your early days of biology. A caterpillar heads up a tree and begins to form a chrysalis around it and changes into something altogether different. It comes out looking nothing like a worm, but a beautiful butterfly. Spends the first part of its life inching along on branches and then flying around. A complete change in the character.

This is the word that is used here, and this is what took place on that mountain. This was not like when Moses went up on Sanai and his face reflected the light of God so that it shined. As much as that was a miraculous event that had a lasting effect, it did not change Moses. It did not change his nature.

In this event we have something more than a reflection. Something greater. He was completely metamorphosed before the apostles and when it is over he will metamorphosis right back into his earthly form so that others will not know. This is only for these three men right now so they can later bear witness to this event.

Let's look to verse 3,
Mar 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Scripture here focuses on the whiteness of his appearance. A fuller is one that would wash clothes. Had soaps to make things white. Mark said that no fuller could make clothes that white.

They were shining. Luke says glistering. Matthew says that his face did shine as the sun.

That should give us an idea of how bright Jesus was shining in this transfiguration and what you see here folks is a glimpse of the glory that he truly has. A glimpse of the glory that Philippians teaches us Jesus sat aside and took on the form of a servant. This is a glimpse of the glory that he has right now in heaven and a glimpse of the glory that he will have as he comes forth to this earth to conquer sin and usher in his kingdom.

This is more than clothes looking white. This is a metamorphosis of Jesus into the state that he was when he was with the Father. It is the fulfillment that some would see this before they died.

Let's read on,
Mar 9:4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

On this Mount of Transfiguration appears two other men who also appeared in a glorified state according to Luke. These men were Elias which is the Greek way of saying Elijah and Moses. These men of course were some of the most significant individuals of the Old Testament. Moses of course the writer of the first five books of the bible and the one that God chose to deliver his law to the people of Israel.

And Elijah who is often considered to be the chief among the prophets. It is he of course whom God translated into heaven in that chariot of fire.

But here is the thing these two men represent together the law and the prophets. What did the law point us to? Christ. Who did the prophets point us to? Christ. The law and prophets all point us to the need of a Savior and the Savior that was to come.

And these two men they are alive. They're not dead in the ground waiting for a resurrection. They are alive. Scripture teaches us that God is the God of the living. The saints of old are alive and I venture to say they are more alive than they ever were on earth.

But these two men Moses and Elijah in a state of glory themselves are here talking to Jesus as if they are standing in heaven itself. Glory shining all around them.

Mark doesn't tell us what they were talking about. Luke tells us they were talking about his death. The thing a week earlier that he revealed was soon going to happen to him to his apostles. The very thing they didn't want to hear.

Let's read on,

Mar 9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Sometimes when we read a passage it seems like only a minute that these events took place. I don't know how long this event took place a few minutes or even longer. Luke tells us that the disciples were heavy asleep and woke to see this event. Jesus could have been talking awhile to Moses and Elijah, but these chosen apostles wake and see this great event taking place and you know what is really neat here? Peter and the others they knew who Moses was. They knew who Elijah was.

You see they had never seen these men, but they knew immediately who they were. God gives them understanding right away. I don't read in any of the gospels where Jesus said, hey Elijah and Moses I have some people I'd like you to meet. Peter, James, and John were nothing but observers from a distance and yet they knew who they were. I don't know the full significance of that, but I'm pretty sure there is.

Now Peter speaking to Jesus says that they should make three tabernacles. What is going on here? Peter and the other disciples for that matter believe still that the coming kingdom is upon them. In fact, they believe that right now is that moment when the Lord would tabernacle among men.

Peter says let's build a structure. Three. One for the law. One for the Prophets and one for you the Messiah. Let's do this now. Peter was longing for the kingdom folks to be fulfilled and he was longing for that kingdom without a cross. Without the death that Jesus spoke of.

Scripture goes on to say here,

Mar 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

Peter said this without thinking everything through. Put yourself in the place of Peter or the others, we wouldn't know how to respond either. Scripture here indicates that Peter was speaking out of fear. The sight of Christ with his face shining like the sun caused the Apostles to fear.

And this is when their fear grew even greater. Look here,

Mar 9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

As if the brightness of Christ was not enough this cloud now comes over them. Not an ordinary cloud. This is a cloud of glory. The same kind of cloud that no doubt covered Sinai as Moses spoke to God like a man face to face. That shekinah presence of God.

When the Father descended at Sinai scripture says,

Exo 19:18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

When the presence of God came upon the tabernacle it was like smoke and fire.

These men are not seeing a fluffy white cloud in the shape of smiley face. These men are being overshadowed by the same God that overshadowed Moses with thundering and quaking of the earth. In Luke it says they fell to their knees because what else are you going to do when you stand in the presence of the shekinah glory. Matthew adds they were afraid over the voice of God.

Now listen again to what the Father says from this cloud of glory. He says this is my beloved Son. Mark again set forth this gospel to prove Jesus was the Christ and he was the Son of God. Chapter 8 he is revealed as the Christ. Chapter 9 in a glimpse of his coming kingdom he is revealed as the Son of God.

The Father says hear him. Hear the one whom the law pointed too. Hear the one whom the prophets looked too. Hear Jesus my son. Hear Jesus the Christ. Hear the truth of what he says.

Oh, folks if we would only grasp the significance of the words spoken here. If only we would grasp the significance of what is revealed here in this text.

Then we read,
Mar 9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

And just like that it was all over. Moses gone. Elijah gone. The presence of the Father gone. Jesus no longer in a state of glory. The last thing they heard was they were to hear Jesus and hear him they would.

Let's read on,
Mar 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell

no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

I imagine these men were bursting inside to get back and tell the others. Peter probably couldn't wait to tell his brother Andrew. This is one of those events that seems like a game changer so to say. Jesus says don't tell anyone till I'm risen from the dead.

Again, as we spoke of a couple of weeks ago when he charged the blind man not to tell. There was more to the gospel message that needed to be told. A gospel without the death, burial and resurrection is a gospel that is severely lacking and in fact a gospel that cannot save.

You think these men would ever forget what took place here high on this mountain. I don't think so. James died relatively early and we don't have any writings of his, but we do of Peter and John.

Peter wrote,

2Pe 1:17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

2Pe 1:18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

John also seems to reference this when speaking of Jesus and his nature in chapter 1 of his gospel.
Joh 1:14 And the Word was made 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.

This is the moment that John beheld the glory of Jesus in its fullest extent. The day he would never forget.

After something like this you would have no doubt as to who he was would you and hopefully

after an event like this you would have no problem in picking up your cross and following him wherever he may lead.

Now look here again,

Mar 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

The apostles just didn't get what the death and resurrection was yet. It won't be till John sees the folded napkin that he will understand. It won't be till Peter sees a resurrected Jesus that he will understand.

Right now, they don't understand that he must die for the remission of sins and the gospel must be preached to every nation before he comes to the fullness of his kingdom. They still have a lot to learn in these next few months.

Now as we end let's cover these last three verses together.

Mar 9:11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

Mar 9:12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

Mar 9:13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

The strongest argument of the scribes and pharisees against Jesus was that Malachi spoke of the coming of Elijah first to prepare the way. We have talked about this in our last two Wednesday nights and last Sunday so we aren't going to labor long on this, but for those that weren't here to know what was said, the Old Testament ends with two hopes. The coming of the Sun of Righteousness and the coming of Elijah to prepare the way.

Scripture and the testimony of Jesus show us that this appearance of Elijah was indeed

fulfilled through John- the voice of the one crying in the wilderness.

Now that is where we will end today, but before we go let me ask you today, do you know this Jesus that we have spoken of today? Do you think of him as a good person and prophet? Or do you know him as Jesus Christ Son of the living God. I hope that is the way you know him today and I hope you know that that same Jesus put aside his glory to come to this earth to die for you so that you might be saved.

I hope you know that death could not hold him and he is alive today and the glory that was seen on this mountain was just a glimpse of the glory that he is in today in heaven at the right hand of the Father and a glimpse of the glory that he will have at his return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Scripture says that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Will you confess him in this life while you have a chance or will you bow on broken knees in the judgment to come when it will be too late.