

## WEEK 40

c. early 5th century  
Catacombs of St. Domitilla, Rome, Italy  
Christ on a throne among two groups of apostles  
before two deceased individuals

**The Requirements for Following Jesus | Mark 8:34-38**  
**The Transfiguration: The Glory of the Son | 9:1-8**  
**The Coming of Elijah | 9:9-13**

*The theology of the Son of Man*  
 = Rev 5:5-6 . . . See, the Lion of  
 the tribe of Judah, the Root of  
 David, has triumphed. . . Then I  
 saw a Lamb, looking as if it had  
 been slain, standing at the  
 center of the throne. . .

**Messiah for Jesus** = Isaiah 52:13-  
 54:8 = man of sorrows, carrying  
 our sorrows, mass rejection,  
 death on a cross, poured out like  
 a guilt offering, resurrection,  
 then judgment and glory.  
 "Suffer many things" Mk 8:31,  
 9:12, 31, 10:33-34, 42, 14:21

**Messiah for the disciples**  
 = Daniel 7:13-14 = clouds  
 of glory, sovereign power,  
 all peoples worship him  
 (mass acceptance),  
 everlasting dominion

## The Requirements for Following Jesus | 8:34-38

- *These verses consist of a group of short, pointed sayings addressing personal commitment to Jesus in circumstances that require courage and sacrifice.*
- *They move beyond the historical narrative of Jesus to the church in Rome harassed by persecution with ranks decimated by overt and covert pressures.*
- *Jesus calls us to the realization that suffering is not only his destiny but ours. The humiliation of the Messiah (8:31) is the mysterious prototype of the Christian.*
- *Calling the crowd indicates that the conditions for following Christ are for all believers not just the disciples. Cross-bearing is not just for church leaders but for all of who confess Jesus as Messiah.*
- *Christ's intention is that those who follow him should not be detached observers of his passion but those who grow in faith and understanding through participation in his sufferings.*

## The Requirements for Following Jesus | 8:34-38

- *Jesus stipulates that those who follow him must be prepared to shift the center of gravity in their lives from concern for self to reckless abandon to the will of God. This is a sustained willingness to say "No" to self so that we may say "Yes" to God. Self-idolatry must die.*
- *This demand is reinforced through the horrifying image of a death march. "Bearing the cross" was not a Jewish metaphor and would have sounded repugnant to the crowd. It evokes a condemned man going to die and forced to carry the instrument of execution.*
- *Cross-bearing was a reality for the early church. And a reality for Jesus (15:21).*
- *This statement exposes the ambivalent concept of life. Life is precious if we are to use it to answer the call to disown self and sacrifice life (8:34).*
- *Christians in Rome were threatened with life for affirming "Jesus and the gospel."*

## The Requirements for Following Jesus | 8:34-38

- *The contrast between ordinary human life and life as an expression of salvation indicates the irony of “save” and “suffer loss” in verse 35. Jesus appreciates the frailty and fleetingness of life. So he enjoins us to “save” it in a deeper sense than ordinary travelers through time.*
- *The linchpin around which salvation swings is “Jesus and the gospel.” Exclusivity is demanded. The locus of commitment is Jesus himself. Only Mark makes this connection.*
- *To make his point, Jesus employs the language of commerce – profit, gain, loss, exchange. The advantage is gained – “the whole world” – but the payment is eternal – “for his soul.” These values cannot really be compared. Winning the world is not even worth a human life, let alone an eternal life. (Psalm 49:7-15)*
- *The absurdity of a man who secures his own life in preference to participation in the salvation provided by God underscore the fateful stakes of denying Jesus.*

## The Requirements for Following Jesus | 8:34-38

- *Each of Jesus’ successive statements reinforces the irony of verse 38.*
  - *The commitment to Christ permits no turning back.*
  - *And a willingness to submit to the will of God even to the cross.*
  - *Suffering with the Messiah is what permits sharing in his glory (Rom 8:17).*
  - *Loss is then defined referring to the final judgment committed to the Son of Man.*
- *The motive for denying Christ is born out of anxiety of one’s life and a basic unwillingness to be made an object of contempt by the world. Peter would fall prey to this (14:66-72).*
- *In 38a, Jesus refers to himself in first person. But in 38b, he uses the most appropriate name for the glory of the Parousia when he will come for judgment. The ironic significance is that the Son of Man and Jesus are one and the same. To deny Christ is to deny the final Judge himself. The criteria for man’s acceptance or rejection before the Son of Man is our loyalty or disloyalty to Jesus now.*

## The Requirements for Following Jesus | 8:34-38

- *The reference to the Father's glory and to the train of angels frames the entire ministry of Jesus as a doxology – a liturgical formula to praise God (like 1 Tim 3:16).*
  - *Jesus can accomplish his mission only if his glory means nothing and the Father's glory means everything.*
  - *But God does not fail to recognize Christ's submission to his will and the humiliation of the cross. And the hour comes when the Son of Man is glorified by the Father for whose glory he lived and died.*
  - *In Jesus' commitment, we find our paradigm of commitment to the glory of God.*



The  
Transfiguration  
– Raphael  
1516-1520

## The Transfiguration: The Glory of the Son | 9:1-8

- *9:1 transitions the call to discipleship to the transfiguration itself. Men who are faithful to Jesus and the gospel will lose their lives. They will “taste death”. But they shall also see open manifestation of God’s power and glory. The solemn introduction “Amen, I say to you” guarantees this.*
- *In the gospel of Mark, the Kingdom of God and the person of Jesus are so tightly bound so as to be inseparable. The Kingdom of God comes with power (9:1) just like the Son of Man comes with glory (8:38).*
- *These events are one and the same and provide an open manifestation of Jesus’ glory. The situation where God’s sovereignty is questioned and Christ’s emissaries are treated with contempt (8:34-35) will be resolved (8:38).*

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- *9:1 confirming “The Kingdom of God come with power” is an exclamation point to this truth*
  - *Christ partakes of suffering and then is exalted. We partake of suffering and are then exalted.*
  - *Christ is humbled then comes on clouds of glory. We are humbled then come on clouds (1 Thes 4:13-18).*
  - *Christ was despised and rejected but then all men acknowledge his sovereign glory. We are despised and rejected but then Christ will acknowledge us so we can share in his sovereign glory.*
  - *Christ was hidden but comes in glorious revelation. We are hidden but then revealed as sons of God.*
  - *Christ was transfigured. We will be transfigured (Phil 3:21).*
  - *Christ receives white robes. We receive white robes.*

## The Transfiguration: The Glory of the Son | 9:1-8

- *This is a warning to those who chose to stand with the world in its contempt for Jesus in his apparent weakness that the situation will be reversed when the Judge shall come with awesome manifestation of his glory.*
- *Mark understands Christ's transfiguration to be an answer to 9:1. And, in turn, the transfiguration is an anticipation of the glory which is to come.*
- *Note 2 Peter 2:16-19 – Peter makes known that the power to be revealed at Christ's second coming is the same as the glory which had been revealed in the transfiguration. This is precisely the relationship of the parousia of 8:38 to the transfiguration of 9:1.*
- *The transfiguration was momentary but a real and witnessed manifestation of Christ's sovereign power which points beyond itself to Christ's second coming. An encouragement to the Christians in Rome that their commitment to Jesus and the gospel was valid.*

## The Transfiguration: The Glory of the Son | 9:1-8

- *9:2-8 serves as a prelude to 14:1-16:8 the same way Isaiah 52:13-15 anticipates 53:1-12. Both offer assurance that despite abandonment by God, Jesus is the Lord's Servant who prospers in the task he has been assigned.*
- *The transfiguration also confirms Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah. And serve to strengthen these 3 disciples' commitment in the face of sufferings they must share.*
- *Reference to 6 days can be traced back to Moses' ascent to Sinai and his vision of the glory of God (Ex 24:12-18, 25:8). Note links (high mountain (Sinai for Moses, Mt. Hermon for transfiguration), limited witnesses, cloud envelops them, 6 days, glory revealed as brightness, recommendation of a tabernacle, Moses at both events).*
- *Before the eyes of the disciples the human appearance of Jesus was visibly altered into the form of material light. The OT glory of God is always conceived as shining brilliance.*

## The Transfiguration: The Glory of the Son | 9:1-8

- *Moses and Elijah have special significance in proclaiming the coming of the end.*
  - *Moses appears as the representative of the old covenant and the promise of the death of Jesus shortly to become reality. He was also the shepherd of the first exodus.*
  - *And Elijah is appointed restorer of all things (1:2, 9:12, quoting Malachi 4:5-6). The presence of Elijah indicates that the fulfillment of "all things" has arrived.*
- *Jesus is about to launch a second exodus. Peter perceives that, with the presence of these historical attendants to Jesus, a second exodus has already been fulfilled. Thus, Peter's supposed anxious recommendation is not as far fetched as it first appears. And thus, he desires to build new tents of meeting where God can again communicate with men.*
- *Peter is anxious to recognize the promised glory now, prior to the sufferings Jesus announced were necessary. He failed to recognize that the transfiguration was only a taste of future glory, not the reality now.*

## The Transfiguration: The Glory of the Son | 9:1-8

- *The rebuke of Peter is God again expressing his love for his Son. Now for the second time since 1:11 the Father reaffirms his approval and Jesus' dignity as the transcendent Son. The timing is precisely when Jesus affirms what obedience requires (8:31).*
- *The affirmation of Jesus as the unique Son of God leads to the admonition to "listen to him!" Duet 18:15 links this to the promise God would raise up a prophet like Moses. What are the disciples to hear? Jesus new teaching on the fullness of his Messiahship including his humiliation, rejection, suffering and death.*
- *When the cloud lifted, Moses and Elijah were gone. Jesus alone remains as sole bearer of God's new revelation of the cross and resurrection. Moses and Elijah can help him no more. The way of the cross the Son of Man must walk alone.*
- *But the transfiguration has disclosed that Christ alone is the new Tabernacle of divine glory. His word and deed transcend all past revelation.*

## The Coming of Elijah | 9:9-13

- *Peter is deeply impressed with Jesus' stature as the Messiah and the transfigured Son of God, but he and the other disciples still find the necessity of the passion incomprehensible (9:5, 30-32).*
- *The acceptance of resurrection teaching can only follow suffering teaching. The resurrection will indeed be the trigger for the disciples to fully understand the fullness of what being the Messiah means.*
- *The disciples obeyed Jesus' command to silence but were puzzled by it.*
  - *They likely understood the concept of the resurrection of the dead at the last day (12:18-27). But they did not understand it in reference to the Son of Man.*
  - *Jesus' reference to resurrection may have led them to expect a duplication of Elijah's translation (8:31, 2 Kings 2:17).*
  - *Remember, they were not planning on waiting for Jesus' parousia. They had just seen a glimpse of it and were ready for it to become reality now.*

## The Coming of Elijah | 9:9-13

- *Hence the question about Elijah.*
  - *The presence of Elijah suggested that the consummation of the ages was imminent. But if this is true, where is Elijah who must prepare the people for the judgment of God (Mal 3:1)?*
  - *It is probable this question masks a rejection of Jesus' announcement of his suffering. For the presence of Elijah would make such suffering unnecessary (a "skip to the end" approach).*
  - *The "teachers of the law" however had evolved the Scriptures to teach that Messiah would not even know himself nor begin leading the people to repentance until Elijah came and anointed him.*
  - *If Elijah immediately precipitated the Messiah and the end, what room for suffering remains?*
- *Jesus acknowledges that Elijah must come first and restore all things (Mal 4:5-6).*
  - *Necessity of suffering for the Son indicates that Elijah's job cannot mean what the disciples think.*
  - *John, like Elijah, suffered at the hands of a wicked woman and a weak king (1 Kings 19:2, 10).*
  - *The disciples did not understand the sufferings of Jesus, or of John, or of Elijah.*
  - *The vindication of John's ministry came through his death as he initiated the ministry of Messiah and the beginning of the end. The vindication of Christ's ministry came through his death. The vindication of our discipleship comes through our obedience unto death (8:38, Heb 11:13).*