

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.*

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- *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.*

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- *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.*

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- *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).*

The Healing of a Possessed Boy | 9:14-29

- *Much of this story vivid and detailed story is unique to Mark. The point of view is from one of the disciples returning from the mountain after viewing the glory of the transfiguration to the reality of demonic suffering.*
- *Mark's point is that Jesus enters into his glory only after confronting the forces of darkness represented by the demon. The relationship of this story to the transfiguration is similar to the relationship between the baptism of Jesus ("You are my Son whom I love" and "This is my Son whom I love") and the temptation by Satan in the wilderness in chapter 1.*
- *The powerlessness of the disciples when power should have been expected proved disastrous for the father. The healing, in turn, demonstrated what the power of prayer could have accomplished even when Jesus was absent from the disciples.*

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- *14 – The scene is carefully recounted. The disciples were arguing with the teachers of the law likely challenging the disciples over their authority to attempt an exorcism.*
- *15 - Note the unusual disruption occasioned by Jesus approaching. It is Jesus himself which provokes astonishment, not his unexpected arrival indicating the presence of the Messiah.*
- *16-18 –*
 - *Jesus question the scribes who had taken advantage of Jesus' absence to embarrass the disciples.*
 - *But he was answered by a man from the crowd, the father who had brought his son. His respectful address = Peter's in vs. 5. His recounting has the expectation of deliverance based on conviction.*
 - *The boy's physical condition was serious – significant epilepsy occasioned by demon possession.*
 - *The violence of the seizures and the efforts to kill the boy again tell us that the purpose of demonic evil is to destroy the image of God in man.*
 - *That they would attack a child in this way indicates the depth of demonic evil. Compare this to Christ who commands "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them" (10:14).*

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- 16-18 – *continued . . .*
 - *In Jesus' absence the disciples were to stand in his place. So the father came to them. It was reasonable to expect that the disciples possessed the power of their master. And they expected it because they had been commissioned to cast out demons and had been successful (6:7, 13).*
 - *They tried to cast it out but met with resistance they could not overcome. The faith they exercised in the presence of Christ waned when he was away. Their inability shook the father's confidence.*

- 19 – *Jesus' cry of exasperation is weariness close to heart-break (3:5, 8:12).*
 - *Though the disciples had been privileged to be with Jesus, they had been defeated through unbelief. This lack of faith continued to betray the disciples and proved a costly failure here.*
 - *Jesus again groups them with the unbelievers "O unbelieving generation."*
 - *The rhetorical questions "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" express the anguish of the one authentic believer in a world that expresses unbelief. (Note the similarities between how God dealt with unbelieving Israel in Isaiah 63:8-10).*
 - *What patience Jesus has with us! That despite our unbelief he continues to teach us and prepare us to take his place in the world.*

The Healing of a Possessed Boy | 9:14-29

- 20-22 – *The antipathy between Jesus and the demonic realm is evident in the violence the boy experiences when brought before the Lord.*
 - *Jesus' question reveals his deep concern and compassion.*
 - *The father knew the demon would kill the boy if help was not forthcoming.*
 - *And his question betrayed his lack of confidence in Jesus as a result of the failure of the disciples.*

- 23 – *Jesus seizes on the father's words at their highest expression of doubt. "If you can?" should be interpreted "Regarding your remark about my ability to help your son, I tell you everything depends on your ability to believe, not on my ability to act."*
 - *In its struggle with temptation, faith must always free itself from the disastrous presumption of doubt, and place full certainty that with God nothing is impossible (10:27, compare to Isaiah 50).*
 - *The majesty of Jesus becomes most visible when our human resources have become exhausted.*
 - *Through faith, the believer shares in the sovereign rule of God. This is how we experience miraculous power in our lives.*
 - *Jesus therefore calls on that faith that bows its head before the concealed glory of God (11:22-23).*

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- 24 – *The father's response indicates that he understands Jesus' words, for he immediately applies them to himself.*
 - *His cry expresses distress at being asked to manifest radical faith when unbelief is the natural state of human existence. Even while he affirms his faith, he is associating with the disciples and Jesus' conclusion that "This generation is always unbelieving."*
 - *Lord help me when my faith is ready to fail. Lord lead me to the personal relationship necessary to accomplish the release of your power through faith..*

- 25-27 – *Jesus acts quickly when he sees the multitude, because of the "Messianic Secret".*
 - *2X rebuke commanded the demon to cease. A final attack brought the appearance of death.*
 - *The restoration of the boy by Jesus reminds us of the raising of Jairus' daughter. The dethroning of Satan is always a reversal of death and an affirmation of life.*
 - *Exorcisms in Mark follow an escalating sequence. Here the demon resists disciples, demonstrates intent to destroy him, and can only be overcome through the language of death and resurrection.*
 - *This story reminds us of the necessity of Jesus' own death and resurrection.*

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- 28-29 – *Jesus graciously addresses the disciples in private. The "house" was often a point of retreat. 2X rebuke commanded the demon to cease. A final attack brought the appearance of death.*
 - *Jesus emphasizes the theological point – faith is required and faith prays.*
 - *Some spiritual battles can be overcome with less-than-complete faith.*
 - *But some are only won through reliance on the unlimited power of God expressed through prayer.*
 - *The disciples were tempted to believe the gift they had been given was now within their control to exercise at their will. This is a subtle form of unbelief.*
 - *Rather the power of God must be asked for on each occasion in radical reliance upon his power alone.*