

Mark 9:1-13

¹ And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

² Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "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"-- ⁶ because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. ⁷ And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" ⁸ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. ⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. ¹¹ And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹² Then He answered and told them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him."

¹ And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

The words "and He said to them" is often used as the author linking two events together. So there is some reason to believe that verse 1 of chapter 9 should be separated from the rest of chapter 8. But there are plenty of the reformers who argue that it should remain in chapter 8. They argue that it was a continuation of what was happening in chapter 8.

This is a difficult passage. The million dollar question is, **what is "the kingdom of God present with power"** that verse 1 speaks of.

Well, we have some clues.

First, given the wording, we can conclude that it was a **future** event to the disciples. This means that it had not yet happened.

Second, at least some of them, possibly all of the twelve, **will be alive** to see it.

Third, whatever it is, those observing it **will see** the power of God displayed.

Fourth, there will be something that displays the pure kingdom of God that will exist for eternity under the Lordship of Christ.

Now, what is Christ talking about?

There are lots of opinions by very valid scholars. The **first** and most obvious is that Jesus is referring to **the transfiguration** that some of the disciples are about to see. Almost all of the scholars agree about this. We will delve into this later. The **second** is the **resurrection of Christ**. Certainly that was a powerful example of the Kingdom of God. **Third** is **Pentecost**. It is difficult to deny that Pentecost displayed the power of God in the Kingdom of God. It would have been clear, even to heathen observers, that there was clearly a power displayed here on a distinct group of people.

The **fourth** is the destruction of **Jerusalem**. It was clear that there was an exhibition of power against the enemies of Christ on that day when Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

But every scholar I read said that surely this was not a prediction that the disciples would be alive when Christ returned for judgment at the end of the age.

I would have a tendency to write off the destruction of Jerusalem as the event Christ is talking about. The kingdom of God is generally written about in pleasant terms, positive terms. It is a kingdom of people coming together under the rule of Christ. It is not generally about the punishment of those who are not in that kingdom.

I think it is most likely referring to either the transfiguration or Pentecost. Both were exhibitions of power that were focused on the kingdom of God, the people of God.

But if I had to choose what Jesus was referring to, I would have to go for the context in which He said it. Christ's prediction came 8 days from the event. Mark says 6, which would not include the day he was in and the day that it happened. Luke says 8, which includes both. In the three gospels that this prediction of Christ is mentioned, all three include the narrative of the transfiguration right after it.

The word for kingdom can also mean royal splendor.

So Christ was promising that some of those with him would see the royal splendor of God in their lifetime. They would have had no idea what would come 6 days later.

² **Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.**

Peter James and John were Jesus's inner circle. They were his best friends. And Christ frequently showed them things that He didn't show the rest.

This time he led them up a high mountain.

Christ and the disciples were near Caesarea Philippi at the time. Mt Hermon is nearby. It is 9200 feet in elevation. That would be easily considered a high mountain by anyone's standards. The highest mountain on the east coast is only 6200 feet. The Rockies however, have mountains above 14,000 feet high. So this would have been no small trek. It was likely chilly up in the higher elevations. It would be a tiring climb.

So they were led up the mountain. Other texts tell us they went there to pray. They say that as Jesus prayed He was transfigured.

The word used here for transfigured is the word we get our word metamorphosis from. That word means to change from one thing to another. The most common use of the word refers to the change a caterpillar goes through when it becomes a butterfly. It is hard to believe that God did not create that process in caterpillars to show off something of Himself. He gave us an object lesson in the butterfly of what is going on with us with humans who believe. And Christ went through that process of metamorphosis here in front of the disciples.

This word is used 4 times in the New testament. Here and in Matthew 17:2 it refers to Jesus transfiguring. In Romans 12:2 and in 2 Corinthians 3:18 it refers to the change in the lives of believers brought about by salvation.

So while Jesus was praying, he went through a change. It was a change from a normal human being, to a glorified being.

If we combine all the accounts we find that the **appearance of His face** was altered and shone like the sun. **His clothes** became shining and glistening, exceedingly white like snow, as white as light, such as no launderer on earth could whiten them.

What we see here is the glory of God. Christ glowed with light. Christ was displaying the Kingdom of God, the glory of God, with power. He was showing the reality of Christ's person. Christ was displaying His glory, the glory that will be fully visible every moment in the fully implemented Kingdom of Heaven.

This gives us an idea of how the Kingdom of Heaven will be different then than it is now. Everything is corrupt now. It is gray. It does not glow. It bears a curse and sin stains it all. But the kingdom of God **exists** now. And it looks forward to when we will see Christ without restraints. We will see Christ as He is. He will **not need** to go through a process to display His glory. He will be in that glory **all the time**. And to some degree, so will we.

⁴ **And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.**

Why Elijah and Moses?

How could they be present?

What were they talking about?

First, why Elijah and Moses? Elijah was the easier of the two. Mal 4:5 tells us that ⁵ **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**

Jesus had said in Mark 9:11 and 12 that Elijah had to come. He had said that John the Baptist did fulfill that prophesy. But here is the **real Elijah** who **did** come. And it is likely He will come again in the end times.

Moses is a little tougher. Moses was the person who God used to bring the law. If you think about it, Christ was here to fulfill that law. Who better to be present than the man who was used to deliver the law to humanity. What you have in Moses is the embodiment of the law. What you have in Elijah is the embodiment of the prophets.

Now think about this. Where was the law given? On top of a mountain. And here they are on top of a mountain again.

So we really don't know for sure why Elijah and Moses were chosen. But we have clues.

Now, how **could they** be present?

Again, we really don't know how God does what He does. Moses died. Elijah was carried into heaven in a flaming chariot. So it is possible that Elijah never died. But Moses did. We see several places in scripture where the dead come to life for a short period of time. Many believe that both Moses and Elijah are currently both alive with God awaiting the resurrection of their bodies. How they were given bodies is not explained. Others believe that at least Moses was dead and He was brought back from the dead for this. This is simply something that will need to remain a mystery. We don't know how. All we know is that they were with Christ. And it is not too difficult to come up with a theory for **why**. We find from other passages what they were talking about.

Christ was talking about His death that He was going to accomplish soon. Given the response Christ keeps getting from His disciples, it looks to me like this was a mercy that Christ's Father gave to Him. There was no human he could talk to about these things. If He talks to His disciples, they either try to correct Him or they fall apart emotionally. But Christ is looking at the hardest thing He has had to do in His human life. His Father graciously gives Him some people to talk to. And these people are ones who would have a heavenly perspective.

They are not going to try to tell Christ that He **did not need** to die. They knew He **did** need to die.

They are not going to fall apart when Christ opens up to them. They know the eternity that they have in store. It is likely that they have seen it. So they are free to minister to Christ without all the human baggage.

Now, think about this in regards to being the Kingdom of God. Here is the picture of Heaven. We will be surrounded by people we can talk to. These are people we

can share our souls with and do not need to be afraid. We can let out the truth about ourselves and these people will be able to handle it.

We will be there with the saints of old. We will get to meet our Biblical favorites. And it is as real as anything on this planet.

This is a big deal. This is a huge deal. These guys are seeing the **family of God** at their best. They are seeing how **life will be in eternity**. They are seeing what **we have to look forward to**. Christ in a glorified state and all of His children cheering on their Lord and Savior.

Oh how wonderful this taste of heaven must have been. We need to take it in. This is **real**. It will **really** be like this. We will be able to walk up to Moses and Elijah and talk to them. Oh, we may have to wait our turn. But when you have eternity, what is the hurry?

Now, the other passages tell us that the disciples were asleep. So they had missed some of this. How much we don't know. But gradually they came out of their slumber.

We don't know how the disciples knew they were in the presence of Elijah and Moses. But somehow they did. Can you imagine? They just wake up and there is Christ, glowing radiantly. And He is talking to two of the most revered figures of all these guys' childhoods. It is no wonder that they did not know how to act.

Now while some may have silently stumbled around, not Peter.

Peter has to speak up.

⁵ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "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"-- ⁶ because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

This is one of the few places in scripture that actually provides an excuse for Peter saying something stupid.

Evidently this happened near the time of the feast of tabernacles. This may have inspired Peter to say what he said.

We find in all three gospel records that Peter called Jesus by three different titles. Rabbi, Lord and Master. We can gather from that that Peter must have kept saying this over and over. Now, Peter had interrupted a pretty important conversation to make this statement. And then he kept repeating it.

Really, it is hard for us to put ourselves in his place. Here is Christ glowing like the sun speaking to Moses and Elijah. These guys were simple fisherman. They had never seen heaven intrude into earth's space like is happening now. They had never seen the glory of the kingdom of God like they are seeing it now.

It is interesting that scripture tells us what was really driving this jabbering by Peter. He and James and John were simply scared. They had no place in their mental constructs to put this event. They were frightened. And while for many

people that would have made them speechless, for Peter it just let out what he was thinking.

Here he is again suggesting that the kingdom of God set up shop on earth. Let's start a building program for Elijah, Moses and Jesus. Let's all hang out together. Let's make this a pleasant existence.

Peter must have heard Christ talking about His death, but he just could not bring himself to accept it. He could not bring himself to accept God's will for Christ's life and Peter's life, even though it was revealed to Him.

To Peter, this probably seemed like an enormous opportunity. How could it fail to succeed if they were to start the kingdom on this real estate with Moses, Elijah and Christ? Really, how could it fail? The giver of the law is here to endorse Christ's fulfillment of the law. One of the great prophets is there to explain how Christ was the fulfillment of all the prophecies. Yeah, let's build a shack and start an organization.

But look at the response. I have always read this voice to be an encouraging voice. But the more you look at it, and the more you look at the context, this may very well have been a rebuke to the disciples. And it was clearly directed to the disciples.

⁷ And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

A cloud came and enveloped the disciples in a haze of brilliancy. That is what the word in Greek seems to infer. At this point they would have been close to having their minds blown.

I was trying to imagine what that must feel like. I have had very few times in my life when I experienced anything like that. But I remember going to see the movie "Close encounters of the third kind" when I was in college. In the movie there were UFOs that would shine bright lights and overtake houses and cars and things like that. I was a little spooked as I drove home late at night. As I drove home I saw a car driving toward me on the road. So there were two lights side by side. Then I saw a single light coming out of the distance. I thought it was another car until the light actually situated itself above and right in the middle of the cars light. I remember my heart racing and my brain trying to make sense of it. I think I may have felt a little of the irrational panic that these guys felt.

In my case it turned out to be a train coming down the train track just slightly to the side of the road. But the disciples didn't have a natural explanation for what they were experiencing. A shining cloud came over them. It must have been frighteningly eerie.

So they probably could not see anything. They were robbed of the awareness of their surroundings. And then what happened? A voice. Whoa. That would have taken them over the top.

But then look at what the voice said.

"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

I wonder if Jesus felt like saying "Thank You" to His Father right here. This had to be the exact thing that Jesus wanted too. He wanted His disciples to actually listen. He wanted them to take the things He was saying and get a grip on them. And that is exactly what God told them.

I think it is interesting that first God restated essentially the proclamation that Peter had made about Christ. God restates that, yes, Christ is the Son of God. Christ is who Peter had said He was. I am sure that this did not quickly slip past Peter's mind, or James and John. God is endorsing what Peter had already said. Yes, Jesus is Christ and the son of God.

But then God made a statement that is so completely logical that it would seem to be impossible to miss. It is the most logical application of the truth that came before it. If this is God's beloved Son, what would be the most logical, the most sensible thing to do?

LISTEN TO HIM

How hard is this for **us** to figure out? We have the Son of God. He came to this planet and did a bunch of teaching that He left with us. He told us what He wants from us. He told us what He thinks of His children. He showed us what He would do for us. So, if we **really** think He is Christ, what is the most logical thing for us to do? Listen to what He says and incorporate it into our lives.

But at the end of the day, we have the same problem as Peter. It is hard for us to appropriate that truth into our day to day actions. It is hard for us to believe God when we feel what we feel so strongly. It is just as hard today to do what Peter, James and John needed to do.

Christ is God's Son. **LISTEN TO HIM.**

For instance, just one quote.

Matthew 6:33-34

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

That is just one thing that Christ said. It is all encompassing, but it is just one thing. Will we hear Him? Will we listen? Will we believe? Will we obey? It is God's Son saying it after all. We should have a great deal of empathy for Peter James and John. They were simply having trouble doing what we have trouble doing.

One of the other parallel passages tell us that when the disciples heard the voice say what it said, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. That is partly

what lends me to believe that the voice wasn't one of pleasant encouragement. I get the idea from the context that it was a rebuke.

Peter is still trying to set up the kingdom. None of the guys is really getting with the program. God had to send people directly from His presence for Christ to have someone He can really talk with. So God takes these guys to the woodshed. And he tells them LISTEN UP!!!

Luke tells us that when the voice had ceased, Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise and don't be afraid". That is probably something they really needed to hear. It is frightening, and should be, when God Himself gives you a dressing down. At this point they needed encouragement. They needed to hear that they weren't doomed for their failure. They needed to know that they didn't need to be afraid of God's judgment toward them at this point. But they better get the point.

⁸ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

Just as suddenly as Moses and Elijah arrived, they departed. Now, with the cloud gone, they were back to life as normal. It is just them and Jesus.

They had been given a glimpse of the glory of the kingdom. I doubt that memory ever left them. They had a vision into eternity. But that was not how their lives would be.

We need to be like the disciples in this regard. We have got to accept that God may give us great spiritual experiences. But inevitably they will not remain in our day to day existences. To walk in Christ means to walk in hope. And all hope is future based. We are not going to have a heavenly physical reality on this planet. It is not going to happen. And it is not supposed to happen. We are going to have trouble. But we have Christ. And we do well to listen to Him in this life, even when we experience a different life than what we expected.

⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

I don't know how Christ could have made his death any clearer. But they just seemed to continually miss the point.

And Christ commanded them to keep quiet. But to this time, he gave a time limit. Angie had asked the question in Sunday School. Were the people that Christ told not to tell anybody given a time limit for that gag order? We haven't seen any until now. Well here the disciples were given the limit. And I suspect that the same time limit was probably inferred to those other people as well. Once Christ died and rose again, there would be no reason to hide His glory at all.

¹⁰ So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

For us this seems simple. Rising from the dead means rising from the dead. But for some reason they could not understand that. They could not believe it. And they essentially did not do what God had said- Hear Him.

¹¹ And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹² Then He answered and told them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him."

So the disciples finish with a question. Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?

I don't know why Christ didn't quote Malachi, but He didn't. He simply told them that it must happen. And when he does he will have a ministry that restores. That is exactly what John the Baptist did.

Then Christ threw in a question of his own. It was probably in an effort to help them to see what was coming. He knew they were having issues with this concept of Christ's death and resurrection. So He threw this question at them.

And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?

If they were to read Isaiah 53, how could they make sense of that with their current expectations? Really they couldn't. And most Jewish people today cannot make sense of it either. Some Rabbi's refuse to allow their students to read this passage and discuss it. Yet it is there, and the disciples needed to do business with it. They had to read the whole word of God. And they had to receive it as if they know nothing and the word of God tells the truth.

Then Christ goes on to say that Elijah had also come. And they treated Him badly as well. Other parallel passages say that they then understood that Christ was talking about John the Baptist.

Well this morning we have seen the glory of God. Now we have a chance to use our imaginations in the way they were intended. We can imagine what this must have been like. Because the reality of it is the destiny for every believer. If we are to face what we must face in this life, we must have this hope fixed in us. The eternal Kingdom of God where the glory of our Savior shines is a reality. We too, like the disciples, will see Christ in His Glory among God's people. That reality far surpasses any of the good things we taste now. Last week we saw Christ say that if we want to come after Christ, we must disown ourselves, take up His cross and follow Him. This morning we see where He is leading us to. This is the destination. And it is worth it. Hang in there. It is worth it. And it is real.

Acts 14:21-22

²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."