

Mark 9:2-13 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. ¹¹ And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” ¹² And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

Mark 9:2-13 | The Transfiguration

Well if I were writing that story, I might make this the first scene. And I wouldn't put it before a small group of 3, I'd put it at the climactic moment of the text when as many eyes were on Jesus as possible. I mean it is the part where he glows! And I wouldn't tell the folks that saw it to keep quiet, I'd tell them to go tell it on the mountain. Mark is showing us over and over that it is not enough to just see, we have to be taught what we are seeing. More than that, we have to be transformed to be able to see it.

1. The Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-3 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

Nearly a week has passed since Jesus explained explicitly to his disciples that his story would become one of suffering, rejection, and death. Likewise he told them that after three days he would rise. **This explicit revelation was met with the most intense bewilderment.**

Now I want you to see this pattern in scripture because it is counter to our expectation. **Greater Revelation = Greater Bewilderment and Resistance.** We think the more we see the more we will know and understand. The Large Hadron will reveal the truth of the Higgs-Boson. The James Webb will reveal the mysteries left by the Hubble. The next podcast will explain to me work life balance, and world class performance. But strangely

the mysteries increase. With Christ's revelation, the more explicit the greater the resistance. That's because our knowing him is a relational event, and in our hearts we reject him.

So let's look at this revelation. Jesus takes his three closest disciples. The center of his central group. And they go up on a high mountain. The high mountain is a consistent feature of God's self revelation. It is the place where we go to meet the transcendent. And of course, mountains are the place where the heavens meet the earth. Eden was on top of a mountain, Moses receives the law on top of a mountain, Elijah hears the voice of God in a whisper on a mountain.

On top of the mountain Jesus manifests his glory. Transfigured is a strange word, perhaps the Greek word itself is more accessible, *μεταμορφώθη*. He is radiant, and his clothes become intensely white. I like Mark's simplicity of description, whiter than any launderer on earth could make them. Jesus is a source of light, from him the light comes. Let all your biblical imagination go wild. Jesus is the word of God, and in the beginning the word makes light. He is the "let there be," which makes the light pierce the darkness. Both Luke and Matthew emphasize Christ's face, Matthew saying it shined like the sun. Warm, life giving, enlightening, comprehensive, true.

Mark 9:4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

Two men are able to be seen alongside Jesus; Elijah and Moses. Both long since passed and neither shining, but they stand in agreement with Jesus in a mutual conversation. Let us attend this with a visual imagination. If we were to see this in stained glass on a church window, we'd see Jesus shining on a mountain flanked by Moses and Elijah. Moses the one who went onto the high mountain and received the law of God which he passed on to the people. Elijah the prophet of God who brings justice to the nation. **We'd be right to see Jesus is the culmination of, or agreement between the law and the prophets. He is the light which shines upon them and gives them their meaning.** Luke adds this wonderful insight, they are discussing Jesus' upcoming departure. Oh but the translation hides that wonderful word, they are discussing Christ's *εχodus*. The moment when God ransomed his people by rescuing them through judgment.

2. Incomprehensible Glory

Mark 9:5-6 And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Remember, the Gospel According to Mark is given to Mark by Peter, so Peter gives us this clear insight into what he was thinking. Namely that he wasn't. He didn't know what to

say and was terrified by the experience. But that didn't stop Peter from speaking. Peter basically says, "this is good, you three are good, let's make this more permanent." But it is a misunderstanding all around. Remember the tent or tabernacle or booth, is an earthly location in which the people of God would go to meet God. Moses met God in a tent and when he left the tent his face shined, so that it terrified the people when they saw him.

But in offering the same earthly dwelling for all three, Peter has misunderstood the direction by which heaven would be joined to earth, and the one who would do the joining. You see the gospel is not a story of the ascent of man. That we might form the world into a suitable dwelling place for God. It is a story of the descent of God. And Peter did not recognize that Moses and Elijah were mere men, with a Spirit like his. Christ would not be treated as their equal, his kingdom and dwelling would not be confined as Calvin put it, "to twenty or thirty feet." **The light that shined from Jesus' face was not a reflection of God's glory. It was God's glory.**

Mark 9:7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

I love Luke's account of this, he says that the cloud overshadowed them as Peter was still saying these things. It is one of the most marvelous interruptions in scripture. Peter is talking and then a cloud. Don't think thunderstorm because the cloud is also bright, the from the cloud they hear a voice. The identity of Jesus is named. Whatever thought Peter might have had about the equality of the messiah with the law and prophets is undone. The voice names Jesus, as the son of God, and says. Listen to him.

Mark 9:8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

Jesus is the only available object of this description. God speaks and declares this is my beloved son. I was struggling with this passage this week and I was talking with a friend, and we both recognized that the transfiguration in our minds always seemed a bit superfluous. Not necessarily essential to an understanding of the gospel but more of a bonus. Like that would be nice to see Jesus glow, but what does it show us really? Well consider this identification and then look at the warning that they would receive from Jesus.

Mark 9:9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Jesus tells them, don't share what you have seen until after the son of man rises from the dead. Don't you see! God's beloved son is marching towards death. **Why? For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** Let us return to the thesis statement of mark's gospel, his very first verse.

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Peter had clearly identified Jesus as the Christ just a few paragraphs prior to today's text. But here is what they would not understand, The Christ is the son of God, of like authority and identity with the father. So all that would happen to Jesus in the coming weeks, would be a witnessing of the trials of the son of God. The one who shines of his own glory, not reflecting like the moon, like Moses face, but shining like the sun. They would not be witnessing the taking of a life by a higher authority, but the laying down of a life by the one who has all authority.

3. The Son of God to the Cross

Mark 9:10-11 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. ¹¹ And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?"

The idea of rising from the dead remains veiled to their understanding. And they discussed it among themselves as they walked. But they had a question about Elijah. Why did the scriptures say he would come first? That is before the coming of the Messiah.

Mark 9:12-13 And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

Jesus shows them that the predictions regarding Elijah by the prophet Malachi were indeed references to John the Baptist. The one who came as the forerunner of Christ's ministry. Jesus then points their eyes towards the cross. Look at how the forerunner was treated. The one who merely pointed towards the ministry of the Christ, they did to him whatever they pleased. John the Baptist had already been murdered by King Herod. **The Christ, the son of God, this will be the one who suffers and dies on behalf of the people. This will be his glory.** After the resurrection, Peter would spread the news of the gospel even though it would cost him his own life. He writes to the churches this reminder. And here is what I want us to be left with.

2 Peter 1:16–18 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

This story we are telling of Jesus Christ is not a fairy tale, it is not an allegory, it is not an archetype. It happened. So what will you do with information like that?

