



Mark 9

An OCF Bible Study

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What is Jesus referring to when He says, *some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power (9:1)*? The Transfiguration. Peter, James and John were the “some” Jesus was referring to.

Jesus led Peter, James and John up a mountain (v. 2). He took on a stunning new appearance right before their eyes: *And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them (Mark 9:3).*

What did the Transfiguration represent? What was Jesus doing? He took on the form of deity thus revealing His glory to the three disciples. Based on 2 Peter 1:16, Matthew 24:30 and Mark 8:38 the transfiguration is interpreted as a glimpse of the future glory of the Son of God at His second coming. A second interpretation based on John 1:14 and Philippians 2:6-9 might indicate that the transfiguration represents the glory of the preincarnate Son of God. Jesus is in essence saying to them, “Since I came to earth as a man, my glory has been concealed, but now I’m going to let you take a peek. I’m going to let you see what I will look like in all My glory when I return.” The Greek word for transfiguration, *metamorphoo*, from which we get our word “metamorphosis,” describes a complete change of form and substance—like going from a caterpillar to a butterfly.

Jesus had just told His disciples some hard news—that He would suffer, be rejected, and die on a cross (8:31) and they too must walk that very same road that He walked (8:34). Imagine how the disciples must have felt upon hearing that! It would have been easy for them to lose confidence in Jesus after such a “negative” statement. The Transfiguration would address their fear and confidence issues.

What was the purpose of Moses and Elijah showing up (v. 4)? When they saw Moses (who died 1,400 years earlier) and Elijah (who died 900 years earlier) right in front of them, the disciples saw evidence of life beyond this life. These two men were alive. It gave them visible proof of the resurrection. It gave them confidence in Jesus’ claim to resurrection. They could now approach their mission with no fear! Some say He was joined by Moses and Elijah as a sign that He was about to fulfill the Law (which Moses represented) and the Prophets (which Elijah represented). **How does Peter respond (v. 5)?** He was apparently uncomfortable with the pregnant silence, so instead of saying nothing, he blurts out. We also see that Peter spoke out of fear: *they fell on their faces and were terrified (v. 6).*

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them. What was the symbolism of the cloud to the Jewish people (v. 7)? This is a familiar cloud, the sign of God’s presence. It was the pillar of cloud that guided Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22) and the cloud, which enveloped the Tabernacle as well (Numbers 9:15). **How did God tell the disciples to respond to Jesus?** This is my Son whom I love—so *listen* to Him.

What does listening to Jesus mean to you? What are some of the ways we can listen? Taking time to be quiet. Quit talking. Meditate. **What is chief way He speaks to us?** Through the written Word of God—the Bible.

What’s the reasoning behind the statement, *Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come (v. 11)*? The coming of Elijah before the Messiah is clearly prophesied: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes (Malachi 4:5).* So the disciples are probably wondering, “If Jesus is the Messiah, then where is Elijah?” **There is a sense in which Elijah has already come. What is that?** He has come in the person of John the Baptist, fulfilling the prophecies about Elijah coming. John was not a reincarnation of Elijah, but he did minister in the role and spirit of Elijah. John the Baptist was a type or a picture of Elijah.

What’s going through the worried father’s mind (vv. 14-24)? Where is he spiritually? The father voiced his confidence in Jesus, imperfect as it was, and asked Jesus to strengthen his faith. He was an unbelieving believer, namely, a believer whose faith was weak.¹ And he was desperate.

Application: Do you have any areas of unbelief? Areas in which your faith is weak?

Jesus had previously given His disciples power to cast out demons (3:15), and they had done so successfully (6:13). But here (v. 28-29) they are unable to do so. Why couldn't the disciples cast the demon out? Evidently they were ineffective because they believed that the power to cast out demons, that Jesus had given them, was now inherent in (part of) themselves. It was not. It was still God's power, and it came directly from Him. Therefore they needed to acknowledge their dependence on Him, for power, in order to be successful.² They were trying to do things in their own strength.

What were the disciples arguing about (v. 33-34)? Who would be the greatest. They all counted on Jesus to take over the world as "King Messiah," and the debate was about who was most worthy to be Jesus' chief associate. **What does this indicate?** They still had a wrong understanding of the concept of kingdom. It was not to be a political kingdom. There are no cabinet positions up for grabs. They also had a pride problem.

What did Jesus mean by, *If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all* (v. 35)? The way to be first was to voluntarily take the lowest place of service and live for others instead of self. Greatness in His kingdom depends on sacrificial service. The desire to be praised and to gain recognition should be foreign to a follower of Jesus. Jesus wants us to embrace last as a choice, allowing others to be preferred before us. This was a lesson in humility, which the disciples needed.

Why did Jesus use a child as an illustration of true greatness in the Kingdom of God (vv. 36-37)? In that day and culture, a child was the least significant person. Children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard. By using "a child" as His object lesson, Jesus was saying that service involves caring about people, even insignificant people such as children.

What was John's concern (v. 38)? It had to frustrate John and the other disciples that a stranger, not one of them, and yet apparently a follower of Jesus, successfully cast out demons, when they had just failed (v. 18).

How did Jesus respond (vv. 39-40)? "Don't stop him. If he has enough faith in Me to use My name (motive) in casting out demons, he is on My side." There are many that may be wrong in some aspect of their presentation or teaching, yet they still set forth a biblical Jesus in some manner. The power of the gospel does not depend on the preacher's personality or methodology. The Gospel will have its way in the hearts and minds of the people who hear.

Application for us today? Street preachers

Jesus is talking about how to deal with sin (v. 43-48). What is the problem with taking Jesus' words literally? The problem is that bodily mutilation does not go far enough in controlling sin. My body parts do not cause me to sin. Sin is more a matter of the heart than of any particular limb or organ.

Since we can't take Him literally, what message is He trying to convey? Sin can often be conquered only by radical action. We should take prompt and decisive action against anything that might lead us away from our allegiance to Jesus. Be intentional when it comes to battling sin. Take the battle seriously.

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¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, www.soniclight.com), pp. 124

² *Ibid*, pp. 125