

CLOSE-UPS OF JESUS THROUGH THE LENS OF MARK - Part fifteen

Wednesday, September 30th, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

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Mark 9:1-13 - THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION - "And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." [2] 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."

Many people wonder about this event in the gospels. What actually happened here? What does it have to do with my life today? What are the lessons we are to learn from it?

- 1) **A further unfolding of revelation about Jesus** – Mark 9:1 - "And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'" These are difficult words to interpret. The key seems to lie in understanding the words, "....**see the kingdom of God after it has come with power**". If the words are linked with **8:38** they seem to refer to the second coming of Jesus. The problem with this interpretation is the first disciples *did* die before that day would come. It probably makes more sense to link the coming of the kingdom in **9:1** with the account of the transfiguration described in **9:2-4**.

This also seems to be born out by Peter's words in **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 account of the transfiguration follows right on the heels of Christ's explanation of His suffering and death - **Mark 8:31-32** - "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. [32] And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him." Jesus seems anxious to demonstrate that the cross is not the end of the story. This experience on the mount would be very encouraging to the disciples when they faced persecution and death for the name of Jesus. After seeing Jesus on the mount, could they doubt the reality of His coming one day with His holy angels (**Mark 8:38**)? It's a glimpse behind the curtain of death.

2) **A visible demonstration of the truth of Peter's confession** - Mark 9:2-4 - "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."

A) **FIRST**, Peter comes to grasp the uniqueness of Jesus as the Christ (Mark 8:29, Matthew 16:17).

B) **SECOND**, Jesus verifies Peter's words as being true and Spirit directed (Matthew 16:17).

C) **THIRD**, on the mount, the voice of God from heaven says the same thing about who Jesus was (9:7). This witness to the uniqueness of Christ is repeated and underscored to make sure we have an accurate picture of Jesus' identity.

3) **The presence of Moses and Elijah** - Mark 9:4-5 - "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." Their presence on the mount is more than just a sensational manifestation. They demonstrate in *picture* what the disciples had already learned in *theory* in **Mark 8:27-29** - "And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" [28] And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." [29] And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."

Jesus was greater than both the *law* (Moses) and the *prophets* (Elijah). These both found their fulfillment in Him. Their purpose was summed up in Jesus Christ. He is the end to which they both pointed.

4) **The command to "tell no man"** - Mark 9:9-10 - "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." The reason for this command is the same as we studied earlier in **Mark 8:30-31** - "And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.[31] And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." While the disciples were now *beginning* to understand who Jesus was, they still had no clear picture of *how* He would suffer and die and rise again to build His kingdom (9-10).

It's one thing to hear something said. It's another thing to have it really sink deeply into the heart. Jesus knew that *only His resurrection* would cement these truths powerfully into their lives.

5) **What about Elijah?** - Mark 9:11-13 - "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."

Some of the Scribes and religious leaders (as some still do today) thought that Elijah would appear on the

scene before Jesus (the "**Messiah**") would come. Of course, Elijah had come long ago and died. Notice how Jesus takes and applies the prophecy of **Malachi 4:5-6** - "**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. [6] And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.**"

Jesus uses this prophecy the same way the **angel of the Lord used it in Luke 1:11-17**. He applied it to John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Jesus uses their question to point to His own rejection and death (**9:12-13**). Just as they had rejected and killed John the Baptist, so they would also reject and kill Him. Nothing had changed in their hard hearts.

- 6) **Peter's response to the mountain experience - 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.**" Is Peter's request on the mountain a good one, or a bad one, or a bit of both? It certainly is understandable. Why might it also be a bit dangerous? How are the great revelational and moving times in our Christian walks supposed to effect us? How does the revelation on the mount relate to the accounts that unfold in **9:14-31**?