

## "Jesus Unveiled" - Mark 9:1-13

Peter, as we saw last week, rightly testified that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus' works certainly testified to the fact that Jesus was in complete control of the universe He spoke into existence. He exercised authority over disease. He exercised authority over the weather, calming the sea by speaking a word. He exercised authority over sustenance, creating enough food to feed thousands. He exercised authority over death.

Jesus was the promised one, the Messiah, who would save His people. Peter recognized it, but the Lord still had work to do with regard to Peter's faith because Peter still had to learn to submit to his Master's will. When Jesus told the disciples that He would be rejected and killed, Peter objected, saying, "*Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!*" That of course, drew a strong rebuke from the Lord.

*"Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."* (Mark 8:33)

How like Peter we so often are! We confess Jesus as Lord. We believe God raised Him from the dead, so we can have a living relationship with Him. We trust Him for our justification, our salvation. But still, we insist on giving Him advice on how the universe should be run.

As Christians, our paramount duty is to live our lives in a manner that brings honor and glory to our Lord. That means that we need to learn to submit to His will. We need to let Jesus call the shots. It is only when we are obedient that we can enjoy the greatest satisfaction possible. It is only when we submit to His program that we can enjoy the peace Jesus promises. We can be thankful in all circumstances. Indeed, we can rejoice, no matter how horrible our present situation might be.

Jesus wants us to enjoy His presence. He prayed for exactly that on the night He was betrayed and delivered up to be crucified.

*"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."* (John 17:24)

I'm looking forward to seeing Jesus unveiled. That's going to be something! It will be more wonderful than any of us can imagine.

In our scripture this morning, Peter, James and John got a sneak preview of what it would be like and it blew them away. Because for a brief moment, they saw the Son of God in all His glory. They saw the Son of Man unveiled.

Now, verse 1 of chapter 9 really belongs in Chapter 8. It is the conclusion of a lesson on submission. Jesus is teaching us that we need to set aside our own, carnal agendas and submit to His perfect will.

*When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful*

*generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:34-38)*

There's the lesson. We must never be ashamed of Jesus or His program. We must be willing to set aside any claim of sovereignty we might have on our own lives because when we do, our Lord will not be ashamed of us when He comes in His glory.

And then, during the same teaching, He makes a startling prediction.

*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." (Mark 9:1)*

Now, like many other prophecies, this one comes with multiple fulfillments. Certainly, the earthquake, the tearing of the Temple veil, and the temporary resurrection of the saints that took place at the point of Jesus' death might be considered a fulfillment. So too, might the resurrection of Christ be considered a powerful manifestation of the kingdom of God. And the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. All of these events powerfully demonstrated the presence of God's eternal kingdom and some of the people to whom Jesus was speaking would be witnesses to all of these. But the closest fulfillment of this prophecy has to be what Peter, James and John witnessed just six days hence.

*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. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (Mark 9:2-3)*

Like many events of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Gospel writers present a slightly different perspective of the transfiguration. So, for homework, I'd like you to read Matthew 17:1-13 and Luke 9:28-36. It helps to read all three accounts in order to get a more complete view of what occurred. From Matthew we learn that the face of Jesus "shone like the sun." Luke mentions that Jesus took the three up on a high mountain to pray, and that His countenance, His face, changed. Also, Luke says Jesus' robe became white and glistened. Here, Mark, who is relating Peter's recollection, focuses only on Jesus clothing. His clothes started shining. They were exceedingly white. He compares the color to snow, and remarks that no launderer on this earth could make clothes do that.

This was a really impressive phenomenon. In fact, it was a frightening phenomenon. Luke tells us that the disciples had been sleeping; they were "heavy with sleep". But this woke them up. It brought them to full attention! I imagine their reaction might have been similar to those who witnessed a theophany on other occasions. Isaiah, for example, said:

*"Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)*

These guys were seeing something utterly amazing ... and terrifying, frankly. And then they noticed something else: Jesus had company.

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

Why Elijah and Moses? Well, Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant. He was called the friend of God and he was greatly revered by all devout Jews. Elijah was a great prophet. Who can forget that amazing victory he won over the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel? And Malachi prophesied about him right at the end of the Old Testament.

*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Malachi 4:5)*

Together, Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. They represent all of the scriptures that were available at the time. Recall what Jesus said to the Jewish religious elite?

*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39)*

But here again, we get a little more information from Luke.

*And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:30-31)*

“Spoke of His decease.” They were talking to Jesus about His death on the cross. And notice, if you will, that it was Jesus who was going to accomplish it. That’s an interesting turn of phrase. Yes, Jesus was going to be crucified by sinful men, but Jesus remained in complete control of the process. As recorded in John, Jesus said:

*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.** I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17-18)*

That’s what Jesus, Moses and Elijah were talking about. Peter, James and John were witnesses to the discussion. They had to be thinking, “Wow, this is way bigger than we had imagined!”

*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"—because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. (Mark 9:5-6)*

Okay, first of all, this illustrates an important life lesson for all of us: If you don’t have anything to say, don’t! Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt. This is Biblical, by the way.

*Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. (Proverbs 17:28)*

But of course, that wasn’t in Peter’s nature. I don’t know what he was thinking. Maybe, “Hey, we’ve got Moses, Elijah and Jesus right here in the same place and wow, they’re shining like the stinking sun! Let’s throw up some tents to keep the rain off!” I don’t know. But there he goes again trying to give Jesus advice.

*And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7)*

It is another rebuke, but this one came from God the Father. We get a little more from Matthew, who describes the voice as saying:

*"This is My beloved Son, **in whom I am well pleased.** Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5)*

But in each account, there are two important pieces of information communicated. **Point one:** Jesus is the eternal Son of God and He is loved by the Father; the Father is really, really happy with Him. **Point two:** Because of that, you need to listen to Him. You need

to take His commandments to heart and do your utmost to carry them out. What Jesus says goes!

Now, when the boys heard this voice, they reacted. Mark doesn't mention it, but Matthew does.

*And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. (Matthew 17:6)*

They hit the dirt! They pressed their faces into the ground, sucking sand. I would not be at all surprised if they covered the backs of their heads with their arms. Jesus had to bring them around, to comfort them.

*But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." (Matthew 17:7)*

And it was only after this that they looked around.

*Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. (Mark 9:8)*

*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. (Mark 9:9)*

Peter, James and John were eye witnesses to an utterly astounding event. The kingdom of God was revealed to them ... in power. Peter recalls this in His second epistle.

*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, **but were eyewitnesses of His majesty**. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18)*

But Jesus said they had to keep it to themselves until after the resurrection. Jesus was really explicit with these guys. He told them what was going to happen, what **had** to happen. We saw it back in Chapter 8.

*And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)*

Why didn't they get it?

*So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. (Mark 9:10)*

Well, at least they were being obedient. They did keep it to themselves, but they were still confused about the resurrection thing. I don't think they really bought the fact that Jesus had to die. It was really hard for them. But they were trying to figure it out. How was the Kingdom going to come? What was going to happen?

*And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Mark 9:11)*

Well, the short answer to that is "That's what Scripture says." We already read it:

*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Malachi 4:5)*

But Jesus was really tender and patient with them. He just explained:

*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? (Mark 9:12)*

Jesus confirmed the truth of their doctrine. It came from inspired scripture. So, it will come to pass; Elijah is coming first. But guess what is also in those same Scriptures?

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

You can't cherry-pick, guys. You must believe the whole counsel of Scripture and Scripture reveals that Messiah is going to come the first time as a suffering servant. Then He hits them with what should have been an "aha!" revelation:

*But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him." (Mark 9:13)*

Elijah has also come! They were looking for Elijah to come but he already had! Jesus had already taught them that.

*"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. **And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.** He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matthew 11:11-15)*

The Kingdom of God was at hand. Messiah was present. But Messiah wasn't going to save His people by leading a glorious revolt against the occupying Roman armies. Jesus would save His people by going to the cross, enduring the wrath of Almighty God, taking the hit for me, taking the hit for you. Jesus would endure the death penalty for our sins but after three days, He would rise again and He sits now in glory at the right hand of the Father interceding for all who would believe.

Those who do believe will one day get to see Jesus in all His glory. Peter, James and John got a sneak preview. But you who confess Jesus as Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead will get to enjoy Him forever. Jesus Christ, the Son of Almighty God, has been unveiled!