

Mark 9 Chapter Study

I. The Transfiguration 9:1-13

1And 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.”

Jesus has taken the disciples away from the clamoring crowds of Galilee into the quiet, lush, resort area of Caesarea Philippi.

He’s told them soon they will be heading south for Jerusalem where He will be arrested, suffer, & die

Suffering & death did not fit into their ideas about the mission of the Messiah.

Glory, not suffering, was what they thought the Messiah was destined for. Jesus let them know that glory was indeed His destiny, but that glory would only be entered by a path that led through suffering & shame.

As it says in Hebrews 12:2 — Jesus endured the shame of the cross & now sits at the right hand of the Father.

He knew the cross was going to be a huge trial, not just for Himself, but for the disciples.

While Peter had just declared, on behalf of the disciples, their belief that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus knew that confession would be put to a sore test when they saw Him fixed to a Roman cross.

They needed something to “steel” them for the coming challenge to their faith.

2Now 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. clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

There is really only one “high mountain” in this area — Mt. Hermon.

At 9,200 ft. it’s covered with snow for most of the year & provides most of the water for the Jordan River, the Lake of Galilee & Israel.

From the top of Hermon one can see the length of Israel to the South, the plains of Syria to the east, & the Mediterranean to the west.

It would have been quite a hike for the 4 as they went up the Mount. There are 3 times Jesus took P, J, & J apart by themselves:

- 1) When He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead,
- 2) Here at the Transfiguration,
- 3) In the Garden of Gethsemane.

These were His closest friends among the 12 & the core that held the rest of the disciples together.

Jesus used such times as this to pour extra revelation into them so they could then lead the rest.

After the arduous adventure of climbing the Mount, suddenly the appearance of Jesus went through a dramatic change.

His clothes took on a luminous aspect, like the whitest snow.

If you’ve ever seen pure, white snow when the sun shines on it you get the idea.

You can’t look at such whiteness for long or you’ll go blind.

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

Jesus.

Elijah was the first & accounted as the greatest of the prophets.

Moses was esteemed by the Jews as the greatest man to have ever lived. It was through him that the law of God had come.

The Jews referred to their scriptures as the Law & the prophets. Moses represented the Law, Elijah the Prophets, & they were now both standing alongside Jesus, talking to Him.

P, J, & J could not have missed the implications of this —

Here was Jesus, shining in glory, flanked on each side by the 2 greatest men of history.

5Then 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 he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

Peter - God bless him! He just blurts out the first thing that comes to mind. Have you ever said something you later regretted?

Have you ever thought back to some comment you made and said to yourself—
“Why did I say that?? What an IDIOT!”

Mark’s comment in v. 6 was likely drawn from Peter, from whom Mark got most of his info in writing his gospel.

Peter thought he needed to say something, so he blurted out the first thing to come to mind — and it was just silly!

When in doubt about what to say — say nothing!

Don’t feel the need to come up with something.

Better to remain silent & let people suspect you’re an idiot than to open your mouth & remove all doubt.

What Peter proposed was building 3 little shrines at this lofty place on Mt. Hermon, commemorating this wonderful experience of glorious visitation.

Such shrines were a common feature on hills throughout the ancient world.

But if Peter had been thinking clearly, he would have remembered God had forbidden the construction of such high-places.

He and James & John had not been invited to this place and moment so they could memorialize it with religious shrines.

This was a moment of revelation for them as to just WHO Jesus was.

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

In light of the setting, we ought not think of this cloud as a fog bank that rolled in but as the increasing manifestation of glory that was unloaded on the scene.

The veil between heaven and earth was pulled aside & for a brief moment, P, J, & J were allowed to see the glory of Christ — & to hear the announcement of the Father’s approval.

This put the kibosh on Peter’s plan for 3 shrines — for suddenly they understood that as important as Moses & Elijah were, they had only served to set the stage for Jesus.

The Father didn’t say, “These are my 3 special servants, listen to THEM.”

He said, “This is my beloved SON--- Hear HIM!”

Moses & Elijah whole lives & missions had been simply to prepare the way for

Jesus. They were the shadow — He is the substance.

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

In a brief moment, the glory they'd witnessed was removed.

The rent in the veil between heaven & earth was resealed, & they were left standing there blinking their eyes in amazement.

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.

This revelation of the identity and glory of Jesus was to be kept under wraps until after the Resurrection.

It was meant to be something that would help sustain them through the trial to come.

Since this will be our subject for Sunday, I'll leave further comment till then.

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

Jesus told P, J, & J to keep the Transfiguration under wraps until after He rose from the dead —

- meaning, after the resurrection,
- that thing where He rose from the dead,
- you know, He would die, then He would live again.

We read this & we ask what they could have been wondering about; it seems pretty straight-forward to us.

But we're looking at it from the perspective of history & knowing what the Resurrection was all about.

They didn't have that perspective & the thought that Jesus —

- the Messiah,
- a word, by the way, which has now for them taken on a very different & expanded meaning because of the Transfiguration,
- could die — was unthinkable!!!

How could One who had just been revealed in such glory, and being honored with the affirmation and praise of the Father Himself, die?

And if death was unthinkable — then the Resurrection was doubly so, for the only way for a Resurrection to occur is if there is first a death.

What P, J, & J had seen in the Transfiguration stirred up a whole set of questions in their minds...

11 And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Based on Malachi 4:5 & 3:1, the Torah teachers said that the prophet Elijah would come as the fore-runner of the Messiah.

Since there is now no doubt in their minds that Jesus is the Messiah, they ask if this teaching of the scribes was correct.

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 I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him."

Jesus reply is two-fold because the Messiah's coming is two-fold. He comes first as the suffering servant to die for the sins of the world. When He comes again, He comes in glory as the conquering King. So Jesus says that Elijah will indeed come as the fore-runner of the glorious Kingly Messiah to restore the nation of Israel to her roots & her faith in her covenant God. But Elijah had come to prepare the way for His first coming too. John the Baptist had served in the same capacity as Elijah, preparing the people for Jesus' mission. One thing before we move on — there are some among the Preterists who use v. 1 to prove that Jesus came again in 70 AD when the Romans conquered & destroyed Jerusalem. Preterism is a fast growing school of thought regarding prophecy, that says that almost all prophecy regarding the last days was fulfilled in the events of 70 AD. The only thing left, they say is for Jesus to come to earth Visibly to establish the Kingdom of God. There will be no Tribulation, no Antichrist, no Rapture, and no Millennium. They say that Jesus came in glory in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. They say this because it erases Jerusalem & Israel as the focal point of God's redemptive plan, they say, and locates it in the Church. In their view, all of the OT prophets, and all of Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 AD. Of course, to make their system work, they have to spiritualize virtually every piece of prophecy and make its fulfillment so esoteric that only specially trained scholars could interpret them. They say that Jesus was referring to 70 AD here in v. 1. But the context makes it quite clear, as virtually every Bible scholar agrees — what Jesus was referring to in v. 1 was fulfilled in the Transfiguration 6 days later, not 40 years later.

P. Expelling A “Tough” Demon 9:14-29

14And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes [Torah teachers] disputing with them.

While Jesus, P, J, & J were away, a crowd gathered around the other 9 disciples. The scribes saw this a a great time to engage the disciple in a debate. They always ended up looking like fools when they tried to debate with Jesus, but the disciples weren't as sharp and they knew it. So they attacked.

15Immediately when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. **16**And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

“What's up fellas? What's the big deal?”

17Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. **18**And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and

becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

To answer what the debate was about a man stepped forward from the crowd.

He wasn't one of the scribes, but just a regular guy.

He had a son who was possessed by a demon who made him mute.

Now — what was the key to deliverance under the Jewish system of exorcism?

Getting the demon to give up its name.

So, a demon who could make its victim mute was an impossible case. This man had brought his son to Jesus but not finding him there, had asked the disciples for help.

They weren't able to deliver the boy, & that's when the debate broke out with the scribes.

They started hammering away at the disciples.

If Jesus was such a hot shot, then why weren't they better equipped to deal with the need at hand.

Once again we see how Jesus is judged on the basis of how closely his disciples follow His example.

19 answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."

If we paraphrased this into something more akin to today's speech we'd read,

"How much longer am I going to have to put up with this stubborn refusal to believe?!?!?"

It irked the Lord in the extreme that a father & his child were going through such torment while his disciples & the scribes were debating theology! These guys were supposed to be the godly men of the day — and they stood there arguing over who was right, while a poor boy's life was literally in danger!

[Wax eloquent ☺ on arguing doctrine while people perish]

Jesus cuts through the debate with the words — "Bring Him to Me."

The solution to the argument was the boy's deliverance.

As the world looks at the modern Church, what do they see, groups of people arguing, or lives being changed — suffering people healed?

20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

This was a tough demon, one that knew intimidation worked in creating fear in people. It thought to try the same thing on Jesus.

21 So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

Jesus' reply corresponded to the man's request.

He'd said, "If You can do anything..."

Jesus replied, "If you can believe."

You see, while the so-called religious experts on both sides were arguing doctrine, this man with the demon-possessed son understood Jesus was compassionate.

He didn't care about fine points of theology.

His son was tormented & needed help & Jesus was just the One to give it. So with the scribes standing on one side, and the disciples on another, Jesus showed them all that it was not about head knowledge, but about simple faith in who He was and what God wanted to do that mattered.

This is an important lesson for us.

Let's not get so caught up in the pursuit of correct theology & doctrine that we lose sight of the heart of God.

Time in the prayer closet is far more important than that spent in a seminary classroom.

A head full of doctrine can never substitute for a heart full of faith.

24Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

The man did believe in Jesus, & that faith opened him up to the awareness of just how imperfect it was.

That's what genuine faith always does — it reveals its own shallowness. We can only see the Lord when we look in faith, and once we look, we realize how far short our faith comes to really knowing Him.

The one who can truly say, "Lord, I believe" can't help but saying, "But not nearly as much as I should."

The one who thinks he/she is a person of great faith has no idea what faith is or Who God is.

25When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" 26Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. This demon was a tough case — one which resisted Jesus right up to the end.

But notice that in the end, it had to go!

28And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Prayer & fasting are both means by which our spiritual strength & awareness are developed.

Though the disciples had earlier been authorized by the Lord to cast out demons, they'd not continued to hone their spiritual senses. As a result, when they came face to face with this demon, they'd not understood the authority that was theirs in Christ.

Paul makes it clear in Eph. 6 that our real battle is not with or in the physical realm. Our contest is spiritual.

If our battle was physical, we'd concern ourselves with diet, exercise, & weapons-drills to hone our ability to wage war in the natural realm.

Since our battle is spiritual, we need to develop ourselves spiritually. Prayer & fasting are weapons the Lord has given us to secure our position & press into enemy territory.

Without these means, we lose our spiritual edge and strength.

It's unnerving to think that even those men who live with & followed Jesus could have become spiritually dull!

Though they'd cast demons out of people before, they were stymied by this demon all because they'd not maintained the vital link to the reality of the spiritual realm.

Even though they followed Jesus! !!!

Don't miss the point — being a disciple, being a follower of Jesus, doesn't automatically mean you're keeping your spiritual edge and relating to life from a primarily spiritual perspective.

Why you can even be arguing about doctrine, and still be useless as far as the things of the Spirit are concerned!

Q. Jesus Foretells His Death & Resurrection 9:30-32

30 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. 31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." 32 they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

No wonder — He'd been telling them the same thing again & again so it wouldn't be a shock when it came.

But because suffering & death did not fit into their ideas of what was proper for the Messiah, they simply set what He was saying aside.

What He was saying was hard, & because of that, they didn't ask clarification simply because they didn't want to know.

How conveniently we ignore the things we don't want to hear.

R. The Disciples Dispute With Each Other 9:33-50

1. The first is the last vs. 33-37

33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

[Rehearse • "Greatest" Pecking order in the kingdom]

5And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Jesus is not saying that those who promote themselves will be punished by being made last.

He's saying that among His followers, greatness is not found in seeking the highest position, but the lowest.

Earthly social status does not translate into the values of the Kingdom.

In God's kingdom, power & greatness are polar opposites to the ideas of the world.

In the world, greatness is all about how many serve you.

In the Kingdom, greatness is about how many you serve.

And that's why Jesus is the greatest of all — He is the servant of all.

Jesus then used an object lesson.

36 He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He

had taken him in His arms,

Catch that — Jesus called for a child then wrapped His arms around the child, making him feel safe and comfortable in the midst of all these guys.

He said to them, 37”Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”

Children were considered by the men of that culture to be a bother.

It was the duty of women to keep children away from adult men. Jewish men gave off an air of superiority that alienated children.

Not Jesus!

We read that parents brought their children to Jesus to be blessed by Him because they knew He loved the little ones.

Here He’s seen with His arms wrapped around this child in a tender and affectionate embrace.

When a crowd of kids was pressing to get near Jesus, the disciples tried to shoe them away.

They thought that was their job, to keep the riff-raff away from the important Messiah.

But Jesus rebuked them saying, “Do not forbid them, for it is of these that the Kingdom of God is comprised.”

[Greatness • Billy Graham, Nursery, classroom]

2. Us & Them vs. 38-41

38 John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.” Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. 40 he who is not against us is on our side.

While the disciples who followed Jesus had lost their spiritual edge and were unable to cast the demon out in vs. 14-29, they encountered a guy who was not one of the 12 who had taken the lesson of Jesus to heart and was casting demons out of the afflicted.

The disciples told him to stop it since he wasn’t one of the official 12. Jesus told them they were incorrect — let the guy go on.

The kingdom of God was bigger than their narrow experience of it and God has servants in many places they were not aware of.

41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Anything done in the Name of Christ, that is indeed consistent with the will of God, will not go unrewarded.

This is an important word for those of us who like to draw tight little lines around the Kingdom of God, settling in to an Us/Them mindset. Denominations, movements, groups, factions, labels do not define the Church.

The Church is made up of all those, regardless of color, culture, ethnicity, and even denominational label, who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior.

Jesus makes it clear here that we ought to be far more concerned with the things

that unite us than the things we disagree on.
But it seems the opposite has been the case.

3. Don't offend v. 42

42"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

Jesus says this as His arms are still wrapped around that child.

His lesson on greatness is not over.

Not only is greatness defined by sensitivity to the weak & needy, the least & last, Those who abuse the weak & needy, & who cause them to turn away from God because of their poor example, well, it would be preferable if they drowned in the deepest sea before such a thing should happen!

Because our example has such a powerful impact on others, Jesus gives a sobering word of warning about the imperative of practical holiness

4. Be vigorous about holiness vs. 43-50

43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— 44where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'

This is a quote from Isa 66:24, speaking of the judgment of hell.

45And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— 46 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' **47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— 48where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'**

In 3 rounds of hyperbole, Jesus issues a bold challenge to personal, practical holiness.

It was a common form of Jewish moral teaching to use hyperbole, or exaggerate speech to make a point.

Jesus obviously did not call for literal amputation of a hand, foot, or eye, because we don't sin with just one of each.

The problem isn't our hands, eyes or feet; it's our hearts and what they long for. Jesus' point is obvious by the use of this hyperbole — take drastic action to ensure you don't fall into sin.

Who cares if others consider you a religious zealot!

If you do what you do because you want to walk in purity before your God, who gives a rip what anyone else says???

You see, Jesus marks the inevitable progression that comes if we allow compromise.

If we tolerate a little sin, like a weed, it can grow to take over the whole field of our hearts, and then, we stand in danger of being lost.

I'm not going to go into the debate now on whether or not you can lose your salvation.

What I want you to see here is that Jesus says if we aren't radical in our pursuit of holiness, then YES — hell awaits!

- Christian — Don't dabble with sin.
- Don't live a compromised life.
- Don't leave some little indiscretion unrepented of.
- Don't adopt a lazy and causal attitude toward immorality.
- Draw the line well back from sin, not along the edge of danger.

49 “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.

A day of judgment is coming — even for Christians [explain]

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 • No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 13 if anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 14 if anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

We may be able to fool the people around us, but the Lord will not be fooled — He sees & knows where we're compromised.

50 Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

[Explain about salt]

“Have salt in yourself” means, “Don't make moral compromises.” This is the great danger & condition of the Church in America today.

Because we don't face persecution & live in the midst of such incredible prosperity & opportunity, it's easy to adopt worldly values & priorities that conflict with the values & priorities of the Kingdom.

And the whole time we can look to our brothers & sisters in Christ as though we're doing fine.

As we're flipping around the stations on the TV, something comes on the screen our spirit tells us to turn off.

But the flesh says, “Hey — hold on, don't be such a prude!”

“What's the problem with just looking. You're not hurting anyone.”

“And it's not like this is going to lead to something worse.”

“And besides, as a Christian, you ought to be informed as to this kind of stuff.”

“Yeah, that's it; this is research to help you be a better witness.”

The result of that kind of slight compromise is the dulling of your spiritual edge, and the greasing of the skids of your moral sense so that it will be easier next time to make the same or an even more dangerous choice.

I call this “decisional inertia.”

The more choices you make to compromise, the easier compromise becomes.

Conversely, the more you chose righteousness, the easier it becomes to continue in that course.

Be a “salty” Christian — one with some spiritual backbone and mettle.

Don't be a “powder-Christian” — one who's so mired in compromise that when a spiritual challenge comes you have nothing to offer.