

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/13/05 Brad Brandt

Mark 9:1-13 c**

Main Idea: There's something about Jesus that many don't know, something He revealed to a select group of followers in Mark 9:1-13. It has to do with His kingdom. The account involves three scenes.

- I. Jesus made a kingdom prediction (1).
 - A. The kingdom of God is coming.
 - B. Some of you will see a glimpse of it.
 1. He wants us to know that suffering isn't the end.
 2. He wants us to know that the glory is coming.
 - II. Jesus gave a kingdom presentation (2-8).
 - A. We see Jesus like we've never seen Him before (2-4).
 1. He is in a different form (2).
 2. He is glorified (3).
 3. He is talking with Elijah and Moses (4).
 - B. We see Peter's confusion (5-6).
 1. Peter didn't understand what he saw.
 2. Peter didn't want this mountain-top experience to end.
 - C. We hear the Father's commendation (7).
 1. He reveals who Jesus is.
 2. He reveals what Jesus means to Him.
 3. He reveals what Jesus deserves from us.
 - D. We see things go back to "normal" (8).
 - III. Jesus explained the kingdom plan (9-13).
 - A. He had to die first (9).
 - B. He had to rise from the dead first (10).
 - C. He had to fulfill Scripture prophecy first (11-13).
- Response: Two vital questions...
1. Do you know the real Jesus?
 2. Are you ready to see Him?

So many think they know Him. They've heard about Him over and over again. They know the stories, or at least many of them. And so they assume that because they know some things about Him they really know Him.

I'm talking, of course, about Jesus. Granted, the world is full of people who have never heard about Jesus, but that's another subject, our need to make Christ known to those who've never heard. I'm concerned about another group, a huge group of people that do know about Jesus, that think they know Jesus because of this knowledge.

The problem, simply put, is that their *knowledge of Jesus is incomplete*.

What you don't know *can hurt you*. It's true in many realms. In marriage, for instance, you can think you know your spouse, you can tell yourself you know your spouse, you can tell others you know your spouse, and the fact may well remain, It's true in many realms. In marriage, for instance, you can think you know your spouse, you can tell yourself you know your spouse, you can tell others you know your spouse, and the fact may well remain, *you may not know your spouse*. And if don't, are there implications for the quality of your marriage relationship? Absolutely. What you don't know can hurt you.

You can't live life as God intended unless you know the truth, the whole truth about Jesus. Furthermore, you can't face death with confidence that's founded and grounded unless you know the truth, the whole truth about Jesus.

You say, "What are you talking about, the *whole* truth?" This. Many people know some facts, even a lot of facts about Jesus: He was born to the virgin Mary, lived a remarkable life, did miracles, healed the sick, died on a cross, came out of the tomb, returned to heaven. They know these facts, but they really don't know Jesus. Theirs is a *deficient knowledge*. Something's missing.

I'll put it plainly. There's something about Jesus that many don't know, something He revealed to a select group of followers in Mark 9:1-13. It has to do with His kingdom, the kingdom of God. The Lord wants us to know the truth. That's why He included this passage in His Word.

As we look at the Scriptures this morning, we're about to see Jesus as many have never seen Him before, including us perhaps. We're about to see Jesus from the perspective of heaven. The account involves three scenes.

I. Jesus made a kingdom prediction (1).

Verse 1 begins, "And he said to them." The "and" beckons us to look back into the preceding chapter for context. Context is always important, but especially here. Jesus had just made His first, unveiled prediction of His upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection. Peter subsequently objected, but the Lord rebuked him, "Get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." In other words, "It's the plan of God that I die."

Then the Lord revealed this shocker in 8:34, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and *take up his cross* and follow me." He wasn't the only one that would bear a cross. They would, too.

Then He said in verse 38, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him *when he comes in his Father's glory* with the holy angels."

Think of how this sounded to the disciples. They knew Jesus was the Messiah—they just confessed that fact in 8:29. But this talk about the Messiah dying didn't compute. Indeed, it caused them great consternation and confusion. The disciples needed some encouragement.

And Jesus gave it to them in the very next verse. Verse 1—"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." Notice the twofold prediction Jesus gave to His listeners.

A. The kingdom of God is coming. He'd just predicted that He was going to die. They assumed a Messiah who died couldn't fulfill kingdom predictions. They were wrong. The fact is, His death was part of God's plan for reestablishing His kingdom on earth, indeed, at the very center of that plan. Yes, the kingdom of God is coming, He announced. A second prediction...

B. Some of you will see a glimpse of it. "*Some who are standing here* will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." Note His words. *Some*—not all, but a select group. *Some who are standing here*—remember, Jesus is speaking to a crowd of people; something is going to happen to some of that crowd. What's that? Before they *taste death*—a way of saying, before they *die* (and that's what He just predicted would happen to both Him and His disciples, they would bear crosses, they would die). But *before* they died they would see something—they would have an experience they would never forget. They would see *the kingdom of God come with power*—this was the hope of every Jew; it was God's promise to the world in the Old Testament. Since Genesis 3 Satan has been having *his* day in this world, but God is

going to have *His* day. God's kingdom is coming. And Jesus told that group, some of you would see it before they died.

You say, "What's Jesus talking about?" We see the answer, at least in part, in what happened next, the *transfiguration on the mountain*. On that mountain Jesus permitted some of His followers to see a sneak preview of something that would encourage them greatly. They needed to know something. We need to know something. He wants us to know something, two important guarantees...

1. *He wants us to know that suffering isn't the end.* And two...

2. *He wants us to know that the glory is coming.* Suffering, yes, there's no escaping suffering, not for Jesus nor for His followers. But it's not the end. The glory is coming.

Are you struggling with the Lord's plan, beloved? Do His purposes seem to be causing you consternation and confusion? Be encouraged by what you're about to behold. In scene one Jesus made a kingdom prediction. In scene two...

II. Jesus gave a kingdom presentation (2-8).

Verse 2 sets the stage. "After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone." Mark, as does Matthew, says the event occurred "after six days." Luke says it happened "some eight days later." There's no contradiction. Mark and Matthew are counting just the days *between* the day Jesus made the prediction and the day the transfiguration occurred. Luke is apparently counting all the days involved, including the day of the prediction and the day of the transfiguration.

It's probably more than coincidental that it was also after *six days* that God's voice came from the cloud on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16).

Peter, James, and John accompanied the Lord. Why these three? Jesus permitted the same three disciples to see Him raise Jairus' daughter, as well as later to be with Him in Gethsemane. J. Vernon McGee offers an interesting perspective, "He didn't take them because they were His little pets or superior to the others. I think that they were the weakest of the apostles, and He had to carry them along with Him like babies or they would not have come along at all." I'm not sure I agree with saying they were the "weakest," but they were weak—just like us—and the Lord took them as witnesses who would later tell the story of the privilege sight they were about to observe.

He took them to a "high mountain." The traditional site is Mount Tabor, but Tabor is only 1,800 feet high and is in the south of Galilee. Caesarea Philippi (which is where Jesus was just before heading to the mountain; 8:27) is in the north. It seems more likely this is Mount Hermon which is indeed a "high" mountain (as Mark says), some 9,200 feet high. It's also not far from Caesarea Philippi.

It probably took them the better part of a day to hike up Mount Hermon, again we're talking heights that are some 9,000 feet above sea level and 11,000 feet above the Jordan Valley. The effort was worth it.

When they stopped they were all alone. Luke indicates the purpose of the trip—Jesus went up the mountain *to pray* (9:28). In fact, while Jesus prayed the other three got sleepy and started to doze off (9:32). Then it happened, something so amazing that it removed all thoughts of sleeping!

Let's put ourselves into the story. In so doing we see four things...

A. We see Jesus like we've never seen Him before (2-4). Notice three details.

1. *He is in a different form (2)*. "There he was transfigured before them." The Greek word for "transfigured" is the term from which we get *metamorphosis*. The term appears only four times in the Bible: here, in the parallel account of Matthew 17:2, and in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18—the latter two texts express the Christian's progressive change into the likeness of Christ.

Wiersbe explains, "The word...describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. It is the opposite of 'masquerade,' which is an outward change that does not come from within." By definition the word means, "to change; to transform the essential nature of something; to change into another form." And that's what happened to Jesus on that mountain. He *took a different form*.

The fact is, God is a spirit. In order for finite human beings to know Him, God has chosen to *reveal* Himself. We know that the second person of the triune Godhead existed before He entered the world in the form of a man. What "form" did the Son of God utilize prior to His incarnation? Isaiah saw the Lord and wrote this in Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple."

You say, "Can we be sure Isaiah saw the second person of the triune Godhead?" John said he did in John 12:41, "Isaiah said this because *he saw Jesus' glory* and spoke about him."

We may well see the Lord in another form in Exodus 3. It's the account of the burning bush. Exodus 3:2 states, "There the angel of the LORD appeared to him [Moses] in flames of fire from within a bush."

So when we see the Son of God prior to His incarnation we see Him in splendor. That changed at Bethlehem. He took a different "form" as Philippians 2:6-7 explains, "Who, being in very nature God [KJV "being in the *form* of God], did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature [KJV, "the *form*"] of a servant, being made in human likeness."

After His resurrection Jesus apparently took on still another "form," as Mark 16:12 indicates, "Afterward Jesus appeared *in a different form* to two of them while they were walking in the country." Luke 24:16 records, "But they were kept from recognizing him."

So on the mount Jesus assumed a different form. What kind of form? Simply put...

2. *He is glorified (3)*. "His clothes became dazzling white [KJV says, 'exceedingly white like snow; the word *stilbein* is elsewhere used for the glistening beam of burnished gold or brass, as well as of the golden glare of the sunlight], whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." Mathew's description reads like this (Matt 17:2), "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." Luke describes the moment this way in Luke 9:29, "As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning."

In every other miracle in the gospels Jesus is the giver of grace. In this one He is the receiver of glory. He is transformed for a few moments from His earthly form into the glorified form He will exhibit when His kingdom comes in its fullness. It's that glory He had in mind a few months later when He prayed this to His Father in John 17:5, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

We say that Jesus was changed while on the mountain. To be accurate we must assert that the real transfiguration occurred thirty-three years earlier at Bethlehem. That's when the Son of God was truly *metamorphosed*, when He took human form. Cole rightly points out, "On the mount of transfiguration Jesus was but re-assuming His own true form, even if only temporarily."

The way Mark tells the story makes us recall another trip up a mountain, and another transfiguration of sorts. Moses led Joshua up onto Mount Sinai in Exodus 24, and while there Moses was unwittingly transfigured by

the glory of God (Ex 34:29). The glory that Moses demonstrated was but a reflected and fading glory (2 Cor 3:7, 13). In contrast, the glory Jesus demonstrated on the mount was His own.

Mark gives us a third detail in verse 4.

3. *He is talking with Elijah and Moses (4).* "And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus."

Why did Elijah and Moses appear? We can't be sure. Moses has been dead for over 1400 years and Elijah about 900 years, but here they are. Both men had previous experiences with conversing with God on mountains: Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 31:18) and Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:9ff). They both had seen God's glory. They both left the earth mysteriously: Elijah in a chariot of fire, and Moses died on Mount Nebo and was buried by God in a grave known only to God.

They seem to serve as representatives of the Law and the Prophets, in other words, the Old Testament or Old Covenant. Their presence seems to endorse the fact that Jesus has come to fulfill and even supercede the old order.

Kent Hughes comments, "Moses was the great lawgiver, and Elijah was the great prophet. Moses was the *founder* of Israel's religious economy, and Elijah was the *restorer* of it. Together they were an ultimate summary of the Old Testament economy."

Mark says they "were talking with Jesus." About what? Mark doesn't tell us. Luke does in Luke 9:31, "They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." His *departure*. They were talking about His upcoming death on the cross.

Don't miss their perspective on the cross. The cross wasn't the end, merely His means of *departure*. The Greek word is *exodon* from which we get the English "exodus." Jesus' death wasn't a tragedy He endured, but an exodus He accomplished. By means of His death He delivered captives from sin's bondage.

That's why there's hope for you and me today. No matter how many your sins and how great your sinfulness, you can be set free. He will set you free if you'll come to Him. It's why He came. Look at Him here, my friend. See Him on the mountain. See Him so that you might appreciate fully who went to Calvary's mountain a few months later.

There's the first thing we see in our text. We see Jesus as we've never seen Him before.

B. We see Peter's confusion (5-6). "Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)"

Mark says Peter didn't know what to say. Luke says Peter didn't "realize what he was saying (NASB)." Luke 9:34 specifies, "*While he was speaking* [emphasis added], a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud."

Two things are clear...

1. *Peter didn't understand what he saw.* Luke specifically states that Peter and the others "saw His glory" (Luke 9:32). They saw it, but didn't know what to make of it. Can you blame them?

2. *Peter didn't want this mountain-top experience to end.* Luke's account seems to indicate that Peter said this, "Master, let us make three tabernacles," just as Moses and Elijah were leaving Jesus (9:33). In other words, Peter is saying, "Don't let them leave, Jesus. We'll fix a place for them to stay!"

Mountain-top experiences are great, but the Lord doesn't intend for us to live on the mountain-top. Not in this age. That's the next age. If you want to live for Jesus in this age you must be willing to go down into the valley, as Jesus does in the next scene, to go down into the valley of suffering.

There's a lesson here. It's great to come to church—it can be a mountain top. We need to come to church. But coming to church is supposed to prepare us to go serve Christ (and suffer for Him if need be) in the real world. That's a mark of a true disciple.

C. We hear the Father's commendation (7). "Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'"

In the Bible the presence of God is often connected with a cloud. God came to the Tabernacle in a cloud. At the dedication of the temple built by Solomon, a cloud filled God's dwelling place. Here we see another cloud. We also hear a voice, God the Father's voice who reveals three important truths about Jesus.

1. *He reveals who Jesus is.* There should be no question as to the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Hear the Father's announcement, "This is my Son."

2. *He reveals what Jesus means to Him.* "Whom I love," the Father proclaims. Mark doesn't record everything the Father said. Matthew adds, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased (Matt 17:5)."

It's tough for a parent to watch their children grow up. One specific challenge is to see them head out into the world on their own and in many cases, live at a lower standard of living. When I moved out, for instance, I left my parent's home with lots of luxuries and moved with Sherry into a two room apartment. Think of how the Son of God's standard of living changed when He left heaven. Think of what that lowering meant for the Father as well as for the Son. "This is my Son, *whom I love.*"

3. *He reveals what Jesus deserves from us.* Note how the Father interrupted Peter: "This is my Son, whom I love. *Listen to Him!*"

Listen to Him. Ponder that command. It's the key to successful living. Don't do your own thing. *Listen to Jesus.*

It's significant that the Father put the disciples' attention, not on the spectacular visual effects of His Son but on His Word. "Hear Him!" He said. Wiersbe rightly points out, "The memory of visions will fade, but the unchanging Word abides forever. The glorious vision was not an end in itself; it was God's way of confirming the Word." A lot of folks keep looking for the spectacular. They want mountain-top transfiguration events. But God didn't promise to duplicate that experience, not for the disciples or for us. What He told them (and us) is that we need something more than experiences. We need to *listen to His Son.* Wiersbe's reminder is essential, "Discipleship is not built on spectacular visions but on the inspired, unchanging Word of God."

Peter himself made that point. About thirty-five years later he wrote a letter and talked about his experience on the mountain. He wrote in 2 Peter 1:16-18:

"We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but *we were eyewitnesses* of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when *we were with him on the sacred mountain.*"

It was a great experience, Peter said, to be on that mountain with the glorified Christ. But we have something

better. "Better?" you say. Yes, that's what Peter said in the very next verse, 2 Peter 1:19:

"And we have the word of the prophets *made more certain*, and you will do well to pay attention to it." Being on a mountain with Jesus is great, but we have something better, something "more certain" than an experience. We have the written word of the prophets. We have the Scriptures. And Peter says, with counsel he received from the Father that day on the mountain, we need to *pay attention to it*.

Verse 8—"Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus." Immediately, after the Father's commendation...

D. We see things go back to "normal" (8). What's normal? It's the picture of Jesus many folks today have, a Jesus that looks like us. No shining glory. No radiant splendor. No terrifying brilliance.

My friends, Jesus did become like us, indeed He did. He became a man, but never forget this. Never forget what you've just seen, *who He really is*.

And I must hasten to say this. We'd better get used to the view of Jesus that we've seen today. That's how He will look the next time we see Him, on the day we leave this world and stand before Him (see Rev 1:12ff.).

What's the right way to respond to Jesus, to the *real* Jesus? Matthew tells us how Peter, James, and John responded in Matthew 17:6, "When the disciples heard this [heard what? When they heard the Father's announcement about His Son], they fell facedown to the ground, terrified." These men had been with Jesus for over two years, but on this day they saw Jesus as they'd never seen Him before. He is the brilliant Holy One, the One who is so dazzling in His perfection that to be in His presence is to have your sinfulness exposed. He's the One Moses and Elijah predicted, the Messiah who came to establish the kingdom of God. He's the One and only Son of the Living God, the One that the Father loves, with whom the Father is well pleased, and concerning whom the Father says, "Listen to Him!"

He's not a name to which you give lip-service by merely signing some decision card. He is the Savior you must receive, the Master you must follow, and the King you must serve.

Have you ever fallen to your face before God in the presence of *that* Jesus? I invite, yea I *urge* you to respond to the real Jesus today.

You say, "So do we stay on our face before Him?" No. Matthew adds this comforting follow-up in verses 7-8, "But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid.' When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus." He who deserves to be feared takes away our fear in this age of grace.

One final scene before we leave our text. We've seen the kingdom prediction in verse 1 and the kingdom presentation in verses 2-8. In scene 3...

III. Jesus explained the kingdom plan (9-13).

Verse 9—"As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen." Stop there. Don't tell anyone about this, He said. Don't tell them about my glory. And note the next word, *until*.

The reason Jesus told Peter, James, and John to keep quiet was due to the kingdom plan. "What's the plan?" you ask. The plan is that some things had to happen to Jesus *before* He demonstrated His glory. What things? He mentions three things in the final scene of our passage.

A. He had to die first (9). Don't tell anyone..."until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." The glory

was coming, but first He had to die. He was born to die, to give His life as a ransom payment for sinners (Mark 10:45).

B. He had to rise from the dead first (10). "They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant." The disciples didn't understand what He mean, but they sure caught what He said. They were to keep quiet about His glory until after He *had risen* from the dead. He had to die, yes, but then He would conquer the grave. And He did!

C. He had to fulfill Scripture prophecy first (11-13). Verse 11—"And they asked him, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?'" It was common Jewish teaching that Elijah would come before Messiah. The disciples knew that Jesus was the Messiah. Where was Elijah? they wondered. Why hadn't He returned yet?

Jesus replied in verses 12-13, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."

According to Matthew 17:13 Jesus was talking about John the Baptist and the disciples knew it. "They did what was written about him," Jesus emphasized, "and they will do what is written about Me." Before My glory is seen, I must die first. I must rise from the dead first. I must fulfill all Scripture prophecy first. It's the kingdom plan.

Brothers and sisters, this is a passage that should give us great hope today. Why? Because He did die. He did rise from the dead. He did fulfill Scripture prophecy. The glory is coming. *He* is coming in glory.

John was on that mountain and he wrote about this hope. He put it this way in John 1:14, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." We saw His glory, John said. *We saw it!*

But it's not just past tense, as John made clear in 1 John 3:2, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*"

Response: Two vital questions...

1. *Do you know the real Jesus?*
2. *Are you ready to see Him?*

[Mark Sermons](#)