

Mark Chapter 9

Mark 9:1 "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

“Verily I say unto you”: A solemn statement appearing only in the gospels and always spoken by Jesus. It introduces topics of utmost significance (see note on 3:28).

“Not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom”: The event Jesus had in mind has been variously interpreted as His resurrection and ascension, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the spread of Christianity, or the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The most accurate interpretation, however, is to connect Christ’s promise with the Transfiguration in the context (verses 2-8), which provided a foretaste of His second coming glory. That all 3 synoptic gospels place this promise immediately before the Transfiguration supports this view, as does the fact that “kingdom” can refer to royal splendor.

Many believe that this statement just prior to the transfiguration was speaking of those (Peter, James, and John), who went with Jesus up the mountain and saw Jesus in all His glory. To many, this is a mystery.

Mark 9:2 "And after six days Jesus taketh [with him] Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them."

“After six days”: Matthew and Mark place the Transfiguration “six days” after Jesus’ promise (verse 1). Luke, no doubt including the day the promise was made and the day of the Transfiguration itself, describes the interval as “some eight days” (Luke 9:28).

Six is significant here, showing Jesus' dealings with man had been completed and now He was ready to glorify God. Peter, James, and John were leaders among the disciples. These were loyal. He would allow these three to see His glory and to hear the Father say, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

“Peter, and James, and John” (see note on 5:37). As the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples, these 3 were sometimes allowed to witness events that the other disciples were not (14:33).

“A high mountain”: Most likely Mt. Hermon (about 9,200 feet about sea level), the highest mountain in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi (8:27).

“Transfigured” means to be altered in form, that is, the transformation is outwardly visible. The same word is used (in Romans 12:2 and 2 Cor. 3:18).

From a Greek word meaning “to change” in form,” or “to be transformed”. In some inexplicable way, Jesus manifested some of His divine glory to the 3 disciples (2 Pet. 1:16).

The word transfigured means "to transform or to change". This happened high in the mountain away from the others. This was not for everyone to see.

Mark 9:3 "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."

“Shining, exceeding white”: The divine glory emanating from Jesus made even his clothing radiate brilliant white light. Light is often associated with God’s visible presence (Psalm 104:2; Dan. 7:9; 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 1:14; 21:23).

A “fuller” was one who laundered clothes.

This was a white so bright that it was difficult to see. No cleanser on earth could get it this white, because this white far surpassed any other white on earth. This was Jesus seen in His glory.

Mark 9:4 "And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus."

“Elijah ... with Moses”: Symbolic of the Prophets and the Law, the two great divisions of the Old Testament. The order, “Elijah,” then “Moses,” is unique to Mark (who reverses the order in verse 5).

“Talking with Jesus”: The subject was His coming death (Luke 9:31).

We see here, Elijah as a representative of the prophets and Moses representing the law. This meeting with them on the mountain top seen by Peter, James, and John allowed these three to realize that Jesus truly was Messiah.

Moses died on the way to the Promised Land, and Elijah was carried away into heaven without benefit of the grave. So, we see here also, that these two show that Jesus is King over the quick and the dead. Elijah represented those who are alive in Christ, and Moses represented those who are dead in Christ.

Jesus was about to face the cruel death of the cross. This appearance showed that what the prophets could not bring in the way of salvation, and the law could not bring, the death on the cross would bring salvation to whosoever will.

Mark 9:5 "And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

“Master”: Literally “my master.” A title of esteem and honor given by the Jews to respected teachers. In the New Testament, it is also used of John the Baptist (John 3:26).

“Let us make three tabernacles”: So as to make the 3 illustrious figures’ stay permanent. It is also possible that Peter’s suggestion reflected his belief that the millennial kingdom was about to be inaugurated (Zech. 14:16).

Peter still did not realize fully who Jesus was. They were fully awake; this was not a dream. Three different people would not dream the same dream, anyhow. This statement "that it is good for them to be there" seems as though Peter might be pretty satisfied with his position with Jesus.

Mark 9:6 "For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid."

The word for “sore afraid” is used elsewhere only (in Hebrews 12:21), where Moses trembled at God’s self-disclosure on Mount Sinai.

Supernatural things have a way of frightening people who are just used to seeing natural things. Probably because it was night made it more frightening.

Mark 9:7 "And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."

“A cloud ... overshadowed them”: This is the glory cloud, Shekinah, which throughout the Old Testament was symbolic of God’s presence (see note on Rev. 1:7; Exodus 13:21; 33:18-23; 40:34-35; Num. 9:15; 14:14; Deut. 1:33).

“A voice came out of the cloud”: The Father’s voice from the cloud cut off Peter’s fumbling words (Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:34).

“This is my beloved Son”: The Father repeated the affirmation of His love for the Son first given at Jesus’ baptism (1:11). The parallel accounts of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35), also recorded these words, as does Peter (2 Pet. 1:17).

“Hear him”: Jesus, the One to whom the Law and Prophets pointed (Deut. 18:15), is the One whom the disciples are to listen to and obey (Heb. 1:1-2).

When the children of Israel were going to the Promised Land, a fire led them by night and a cloud by day. The presence of God was in the cloud. This cloud also, had the presence of the Father God. The voice coming out of the cloud made this even more frightening. All three of the disciples heard the voice of God say that Jesus was His Son.

Mark 9:8 "And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves."

In the account in Matthew, we read where the disciples were so afraid that they fell on their faces, and Jesus came and reassured them that all was well. And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone.

This is not exact Scripture, but this is what it was saying. This would be very frightening. One thing that puzzles me a little, is how they knew the other two were Moses and Elijah. Perhaps, their understanding was opened by the Lord.

Mark 9:9 "And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead."

“Charged them that they should tell no man” (see note on 8:30).

“Till the Son of man were risen from the dead”: This looks to the time when the true nature of Jesus’ messianic mission became evident to all, that He came to conquer sin and death, not the Romans.

“Son of man” (see note on 2:10).

Don't you know these three disciples wanted to tell the other disciples this happening? This had to burn within them. These three had to be very close to have shared so many things.

Mark 9:10 "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."

“Questioning ... what the rising from the dead should mean”: Like most of the Jewish people (the Sadducees being notable exceptions), the disciples believed in a future resurrection (John 11:24). What confused them was Jesus’ implication that His own resurrection was imminent, and thus so was His death.

The disciples’ confusion provides further evidence that they still did not understand Jesus’ messianic mission (see notes on verse 9; 8:30). Not until after the Resurrection did the disciples fully grasp the importance of some of Jesus’ sayings.

Even though they had been told that Jesus would die on the cross and the third day rise again from the dead, somehow it had not soaked in; and they hadn't realized that it was really true.

Mark 9:11 "And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?"

“Elijah must first come” (8:28-29). The scribes’ teaching in this case was not based on rabbinical tradition, but on the Old Testament (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). Malachi’s prediction was well known among the Jews of Jesus’ day, and the disciples were no doubt trying to figure out how to harmonize it with the appearance of Elijah they had just witnessed.

The scribes and Pharisees also no doubt argued that Jesus could not be the Messiah based on the fact that Elijah had not yet appeared. Confused, the 3 disciples asked Jesus for His interpretations.

In Matthew 17:13, the disciples realized that Jesus was speaking of John the Baptist when He spoke of Elijah.

Matthew 17:13 "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

In fact, it follows the same statement Jesus made here (in verses 12 & 13).

Mark 9:12 "And he answered and told them, Elijah verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought."

Jesus actually asks a question here by way of answering the question (in verse 11).

"Elijah verily cometh first": Jesus affirmed the correctness of the scribal interpretation of (Malachi 3:1; 4:5), which must have puzzled the disciples even more.

Mark 9:13 "But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."

"Elijah" refers to John the Baptist.

"Elijah is indeed come": Jesus directly addressed the disciples' question. The prophecies of Elijah's coming had been fulfilled in John the Baptist. Though certainly not a reincarnation of Elijah (John 1:21). John came in the "spirit and power of Elijah," and would have fulfilled prophecies if they had believed (see notes on Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17).

Because they did reject both John the Baptist and Jesus, there will be another who will come in the spirit and powder of Elijah before the second coming of Christ (see notes on Matt. 11:14; Rev. 11:5-6).

"They had done unto him": The Jewish leaders rejected John the Baptist (Matt. 21:25; Luke 7:33), and Herod killed him (6:17-29).

"As it is written of him": No specific Old Testament prophecies predicted that Messiah's forerunner would die. Therefore, this statement is best understood as having been fulfilled typically. The fate intended for Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-2), had befallen the Baptist (see notes on Matt. 11:11-14).

Jesus was just saying that the spirit of Elijah was present in John the Baptist, and John had already been beheaded when Jesus spoke here. Many believe that one of the two witnesses in Revelation is Elijah. Elijah is a mystery, because he did not go the way of the grave. He was accompanied to heaven by a chariot of fire.

Verses 14-29: Jesus handles a difficult case of demon possession.

Mark 9:14 "And when he came to [his] disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them."

The nine who had remained behind.

It seems that they ran to Jesus to greet Him, when they saw Him coming and left the scribes that had been questioning them. The people had grown to a multitude. The multitude partially followed Him because they had heard of the miracles He had done. Possibly, many of them had needs in their own lives.

Mark 9:15 "And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to [him] saluted him."

His teachings were not like the teaching of the law. They gave hope to the common people.

Mark 9:16 "And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?"

We see here, that Jesus did not avoid the scribes, but asked them, why are you asking them questions? Why don't you just ask me?

Mark 9:17 "And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;"

“Which hath a dumb spirit”: The boy had a demonically-induced inability to speak, a detail found only in Mark’s account.

The demon caused the boy to be unable to speak normally.

This man, who brought his son to Jesus, didn't even wait till the scribes answered Jesus. He grabbed Jesus quickly and told Him of his problem.

Mark 9:18 "And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

“They could not”: The disciples’ failure is surprising, in light of the power granted them by Jesus (3:15; 6:13).

This problem was; that this young man had seemed to have more than one side to it. He was dumb and could not speak, but he also had something similar to epilepsy. It seems the disciples had tried to deliver the man, and they were unable to do it.

Mark 9:19 "He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me."

“O faithless generation” (Psalm 95:10). The word “generation” indicates that Jesus’ exasperation was not merely with the father, or the 9 disciples, but also with the unbelieving scribes, who were no doubt gloating over the disciples’ failure (verse 14), and with unbelieving Israel in general.

Jesus had just about been filled completely up with the lack of faith of the Pharisees and scribes, but worse than that was the lack of faith of His own disciples.

Mark 9:20 "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming."

A person with this severe a problem could not be handled by just one person. Those, "they" that brought him were possibly friends helping the father.

This evil spirit did not like being in the presence of Jesus the Christ. He acted up immediately and tried to harm the boy who had been brought to Jesus.

Mark 9:21 "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child."

Jesus knows all, so He didn't ask the man how long this had been for His benefit.

Mark 9:22 "And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us."

"To destroy him": This demon was an especially violent and dangerous one. Open fires and unfenced bodies of water were common in first-century Israel, providing ample opportunity for the demon's attempts to destroy the child.

The father's statement added to the pathos of the situation. The boy himself was probably disfigured from burn scars, and possibly further ostracized because of them. His situation also created a hardship for his family, who would have had to watch the boy constantly to protect him from harm.

It was probably, given to show the utterly hopeless condition of the boy and the desperation of the father in pleading for Jesus to have compassion and help them.

Mark 9:23 "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth."

"All things are possible": The oldest manuscripts omit "believe", thus making the phrase "If you can" a question or exclamation on Jesus' part. The issue was not His lack of power but the father's lack of faith.

Though Jesus often healed apart from the faith of those involved, here He chose to emphasize the power of faith (Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6). Jesus healed multitudes, but many, if not most, did not believe on Him. Luke 17:15-19.

Faith is the most powerful force a man can have. This statement of Jesus' was for the man and for all generations to come. Pray and believe.

Mark 9:24 "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

“I believe; help thou mine unbelief”: Admitting the imperfection of his faith, mixed as it was with doubt, the desperate father pleaded with Jesus to help him to have the greater faith the Lord demanded of him.

He had a certain faith; but it was confession of his undeniable inner turmoil and doubt that marked his faltering faith as truly authentic, if imperfect, trust. Before God honesty is a wise course.

The father here was so desperate; this was a last resort with him. His heart was broken that his son had this problem. He had waited so long and tried so hard to believe, He was believing with everything he had left.

He knew his own faith had not been enough in the past and asked the Lord to help him have enough faith. He called Jesus, Lord. In doing so, he said: whatever happens, it is up to you Lord.

Mark 9:25 "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, [Thou] dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."

“The people came running together”: Noting the growing crowd, Jesus acted without further delay, perhaps to spare the boy and his anguished father any further embarrassment. Also, the Lord did not perform miracles to satisfy thrill seekers (8:11; Luke 23:8-9).

“I charge thee”: Jesus’ absolute authority over demons is well attested in the New Testament (e.g., 1:32-34; 5:1-13; Luke 4:33-35). His healings demonstrated His deity by power over the natural world. His authority over demons demonstrated His deity by power over the supernatural world.

This crowd (including the scribes), ran over there to criticize the Lord and His disciples. They had already been disputing (the scribes and the crowd), about this boy's condition. Take note of how Jesus delivered him. First, Jesus spoke to the evil spirit and told it to come out of the boy. Jesus called it by name: "deaf and dumb spirit".

Mark 9:26 "And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead."

Satan had power over this boy, but this spirit had to obey the voice of Jesus. When Jesus said, "come out", the spirit threw the boy down one more time and came out. This poor boy was so exhausted that he lay there as dead. The people thought he was dead.

Mark 9:27 "But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."

Jesus lifted this boy up and that is what He really does for us.

Mark 9:28 "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?"

These disciples had been praying for the sick and casting out demons as they ministered. This particular evil spirit was much harder to cast out. This spirit had been in this boy for a long time and was deep seated.

Mark 9:29 "And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

“This kind”: Some demons are more powerful and obstinate, and thus more resistant to being cast out, than others (Matt. 12:45; see notes on Dan. 10:10-21).

“But by prayer and fasting”: Perhaps overconfident from their earlier successes (6:13), the disciples became enamored with their own gifts and neglected to draw on divine power.

While some manuscripts omit “fasting,” it seems crucial to the context. Jesus does not seem to have resorted to prayer in the course of this healing. Perhaps He refers to a life-style of prevailing prayer that yields a reservoir of spiritual power for just such a crisis as this.

Jesus was teaching a principle here. Some illnesses and demons are so severe that just prayer will not make them well. Fasting for three days will bring great results. Jesus was teaching the principle of fasting here.

Mark Chapter 9 Questions

1. In verse 1, there are some here that shall not die till after when?
2. Who did Jesus take with Him to the mountain?
3. What does transfigured mean?
4. What happened to Jesus' garment?
5. Who appeared with Jesus?
6. Who represented the prophets?
7. Moses represented what?
8. How do Moses and Elijah represent the alive and dead?
9. Why do you suppose these two appeared with Jesus?
10. What did Peter want to do to show great respect for the three?

11. What made them so afraid?
12. Where did God's voice come from?
13. What did God the Father say?
14. When the three got up off their face, who was left?
15. They were not to tell about the transfiguration until when?
16. What did they ask Jesus about Elijah?
17. Who did Jesus say represented Elijah?
18. Why is Elijah such a mystery?
19. How were Jesus' teachings different?
20. What kind of spirit did the man's son have?
21. What did the foaming, gnashing and falling down indicate was this disease?
22. Who had tried to deliver the boy and couldn't?
23. What did the father ask Jesus to have for him?
24. Why did Jesus ask him how long he had the evil spirit?
25. What did Jesus tell the man he must do?
26. What did the father answer Jesus?
27. What is possible to those who believe?
28. What did Jesus say to the evil spirit?
29. What did the people think had happened to the boy when the evil spirit left?
30. Why could the disciples not cast out the demons?