

The Unveiled Son

Mark 9:2-8

41-43

Open your Bible to the ninth chapter of Mark's gospel...Mark's gospel, chapter 9. We're going to be looking at verses 2 through 8, this morning. Peter's confession, you remember, was the high point of chapter 8. That confession in verse 29 where he says, "You are the Christ," that confession is also recorded in Matthew and Luke. And the full confession that he made on behalf of all the followers of Jesus was, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

That is the apex of Mark's gospel. That is the midpoint of Mark's gospel. Everything leads up to this, everything flows down from this. To acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God is to make the right judgment concerning Him. Peter made that judgment not for himself only, but for all the Apostles and all the disciples who were followers of Christ. What Peter said there is verified in the passage before us. Peter said it by faith, he will now see it by sight.

This is a very important moment in the life of the Apostles and for us as well. Remember, Peter makes this great confession, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God," with the anticipation that the Kingdom would come immediately. But no sooner had he made that confession than in verse 31, "Jesus 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 then after three days rise again."

This was so offensive to Peter and the rest that Peter began to rebuke Jesus in his ignorance. And Jesus turned to him and said, "Get behind Me, Satan, for you're not setting your mind on God's interest but man's."

Peter was committed to the glory but not the cross. He was committed to the exaltation but not the humiliation. This was the introduction of the scandal of the death of Christ which to the Jews was a stumbling block. This is so hard for them to swallow that our Lord needs to lift them up after this massive disappointment. So in verse 38, same day, same time, same place, He says, "The Son of Man will also come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." This is not in place of the glory, this is not in place of the Kingdom, this is not in place of the Second Coming, this is not in place of Messiah's promised reign, He will come...He will come.

It was very difficult for them to handle the word about the death of Christ. It would be even more difficult for them to handle the reality of it as it unfolded a few months from this moment. When He is arrested, they scatter and Peter, the self-confessed strongest of them all who says, "I will never forsake You," denies Christ on three separate occasions and the rest of them disappear in terror. It's a horrendous thing for them, the cross. And they will also suffer as martyrs, virtually all of them but John and John died as an exile, an old man on a rock in the Mediterranean. Suffering was coming. They needed to be able to survive it. They needed to have the strength and endurance to get through it. And consequently, the Lord does something for them that is very rare in the New

Testament, in fact this is the only time, really. He moves their faith to sight. He lets them see His glory. If you look at a list of miracles, you probably won't find this one. If you find a book on the miracles of Jesus, this won't be one of them, and yet this is the single greatest miracle recorded on the pages of the New Testament prior to the resurrection. Let's pick it up in verse 2.

“Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves and He was transfigured before them. And His garments became radiant and exceedingly white as no bleacher on earth can whiten them. Elijah appeared to them, along with Moses and they were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ for he didn't know what to answer for they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is My beloved Son, listen to Him.’ All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore except Jesus alone.”

Why the vision? To anchor them in confidence of the glory to follow the suffering. To anchor them in confidence for the glory to follow the suffering. This is really the high point of this gospel. This is the visible revelation of the nature of Christ. Every one of the four gospels has a purpose that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, John 20:31 gives that purpose and that's the purpose for every gospel. Every gospel is written that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and here is the greatest given on the pages of the New Testament, prior to His resurrection. This is assurance by sight that He is God.

Now these are Jewish men, Peter, James and John, and they know God has appeared in the Old Testament. He appeared, He revealed Himself in visible form and it always some kind of light, a cloud, a light in a cloud like an iridescent cloud, fire, the Shekinah glory. The appearances of God were light phenomena. At the initiation of the priestly service in Leviticus 9, God appears in light. In Exodus verses 7 to 10, God appears to Israel as light. In Exodus 24 God appears to Moses as light. In Exodus chapter 40 verses 34 and 35, the tabernacle is completed and God appears in the Shekinah glory as light. At Kadesh-Barnea, you remember in Numbers chapter 14 where the children of Israel rebelled against God. Again He appears in light.

A couple of chapters later in the sixteenth chapter of Numbers at the exposure of the sins of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, God again appear as light. Numbers 16, the same chapter, at the rebellion of Israel against Moses and Aaron, God appears. In Numbers chapter 20 God appears as light at Meribah where Israel was thirsty. And then when the temple was completed, it is recorded in 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 11 that the glory of God descended on the place. And God was there in His blazing glory in 2 Chronicles 7:1 when the first offering was made in the temple.

Every one of those was an appearance of God in light. God, reducing His nature to a visible light phenomena, unearthly, supernatural, incomparable.

Habakkuk, the prophet, sees a future day of full glory when quote: “The earth shall be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” There will be a time in the glorious Millennial Kingdom of Christ when somehow His glory will literally cover the planet. Until then, all the revelations of God's glory are somewhat partial and somewhat limited. You remember that God said to Moses, “No man can see My face and live,” Exodus 33? “So I'll show you My back parts.” Moses said, “If You don't show me Your glory, I'm not going to lead this people.” God says, “I'll show you My back parts.” Tucked him in a rock and gave him a small glimpse of His glory because the full glory

would have consumed him.

The glorious appearances of God in the Old Testament are no less stunning because they are partial. They are no less divine because they are confined or limited or restrained so that they don't destroy the viewer. But in every case it is to strengthen their faith that God is there, that God is present. The living God has not remained silent and though He is invisible, He has made Himself visible. He is not always shrouded in darkness. He is unveiled in shining light.

When you see those visions, you see that God wants to be heard but He also has made it possible to be seen. But never has God revealed Himself so magnificently and so precisely as in the passage I just read to you when the glory shines through Christ. Christ is in Himself as the God/Man, the purest revelation of God. And here that revelation is supernaturally intensified.

There was evidence that Jesus was God by what He did, but there was no visible evidence in looking at Him. Nobody could see any difference in Him on the outside. And yet, Hebrews 1 says, "He is the brightness of the Father's glory." He is God manifest.

Second Corinthians talks about the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. All of God's attributes contained in Him because He is fully God. He is called the Lord of glory. But that is all veiled through His life and you have to come to the conclusion that He is God by what He does, not how He appears. And the disciples got to that point by what He did, by what He said, "You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God." But as this thing started going downhill from that pinnacle, and headed toward the cross and suffering and rejection, including their own suffering, they needed something more than the faith they had to hang on to. The Lord knew He knew Himself, they needed sight. And so He gave them this vision.

This is not like any other experience anybody has ever had and it totally changed these men. Peter wrote, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty." He said, "We don't follow cunningly devised fables when we speak unto you concerning Christ. We're not giving you some kind of fairy story, some kind of deception. We're not giving you some old wives tale here, we saw His majesty."

When Peter? When we were with Him in the holy mount, 2 Peter 1:16 to 18. John says, "What we write unto you concerning the Word of Life, we've seen, we've touched, our hands have handled. He's been manifest to us." John even says, that's 1 John, in John 1:14, "We beheld His...what?...His glory, the glory as the only begotten of God." We saw it! We saw it!

Matthew records this, chapter 17. Luke records this, chapter 9. Mark records this because this is so very, very important.

I want you to look at four points okay? Don't have a lot of time to cover these but we'll get 'em. Number one, the Son's transformation, verse 2. "Six days later," Matthew and Mark say six days, Luke 9:28 says eight days, the difference is no real big issue, Luke included the day of the promise that the Lord gave in chapter 9 verse 1, "Some of those standing here will not taste death till they see the Kingdom of God after its come with power," that was a promise that some of those there, some of those disciples and apostles, would see His glory. They would see a preview of the Kingdom glory. They wouldn't die before they saw it. In fact, it was six days later. In Luke's case, he counted the day of the promise and the day of the fulfillment. Matthew and Mark just marked the days in between.

Very common thing in Scripture.

“So, Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John.” These guys are the inner circle, His most intimate friends. James and John are brothers, Peter’s the leader. They’re very close to Christ. We find them in Mark 14:33 when Jesus goes in to Gethsemane to pray, you remember, to the Father in anticipation of the cross He takes Peter, James and John again, and takes them with Him for fellowship and to pray with Him. So He takes these three.

Timing is perfect. They’ve heard the great confession. They’ve made the great confession. They affirm who He is. But the cross has knocked them flat, the death of Christ is something they can’t comprehend. It is a stumbling block. So He gives them the promise of the Kingdom but the promise is hard to hang on to so He takes them the next level and says, “Watch, watch, you will see.”

Why did He take three? Deuteronomy says that truth is confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Matthew 18:16 says when you’re dealing with people’s sins in the church, you confirm their response in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Second Corinthians 13:1, Paul says, “When I come to you, the Corinthian church, and I’m going to deal with the people who are there, I’m not going to go willy-nilly through the church but I am going to confirm sin before I deal with it, it will be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses.” In 1 Timothy 5 it tells us that an elder before he’s rebuked must have whatever sin confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses, the proper number of eyewitnesses to confirm the truth...very trustworthy, the most trustworthy, the most intimate of Christ’s followers.

So He brings them up into a high mountain by themselves. Luke 9 says to pray. He said, “Let’s go pray.” Something He did all the time. High mountain, I know you’re going to ask, what mountain? We don’t know for sure. Some have said Mount Tabor, that can’t be, that’s too far south and too low. This is a high mountain. They’re in Caesarea Philippi, the region of the north of Galilee and a high mountain in that area would be Mount Hermon...Mount Hermon towers over the Caesarea Philippi region where Peter’s confession in these moments have taken place. Very likely that mountain.

So they’re up there. Ostensibly they’re going with Jesus to pray, something He did a lot and they did a lot with Him, and then this is the most understated description of the most astonishing miracle yet. “And He was transfigured before them.” And you want to say, “Come on, Mark, give us something more than that.” What? One verb and no adverb and no descriptive statement, and no modifying infinities or participles, nothing? And He was transfigured before them? Luke 9 says it was while He was praying that it happened. And Luke 9 also says, “While He was praying and it happened, they were...guess what...sleeping...sleeping.” And that’s exactly what they did in Gethsemane, didn’t they? Later on when He went up to pray, and He took them, Mark 14:37 says, “They were sleeping there,” too.

In asking why they can’t stay awake with Jesus, the answer probably comes in Luke 22:45, looking at their sleeping in Gethsemane it says, “They were sleeping from sorrow.” They were sleeping from sorrow. Sorrow will make you take a nap. A broken heart will make you go to sleep cause you want to get out of it. You want to escape. You want to walk away. You want relief.

That’s what it was, here too. It was a relief from the sadness. They’re devastated by the cross. They don’t yet know it will be a crucifixion, He hasn’t told them that. But He did tell them they would have

to take up their cross so that's a pretty good indicator. This is way more than they can handle and they just shut down and they sleep from sorrow here as they did later.

And while they're asleep and Jesus prays alone, He was transfigured before them. The word is *metamorphoo* from which we get metamorphosis, two Greek words, *morphe* meaning body or form, *meta* meaning change. His form was changed. Nothing changed on the inside, right? He's God. But the outside changed. This word literally means to transform the *morphe*, the form, the body, the exterior. It's used four times in the New Testament and always means a radical transformation. It's used here once and Matthew 17:2 in that text on the transfiguration it's the same verb to describe the same thing. In Romans 12:2 it says as believers we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And in 2 Corinthians 3:18, that great verse, it says that if we gaze at the glory of the Lord, we will be transformed into His image from one level of glory to the next by the Holy Spirit. So we're talking about a radical kind of transformation.

His nature could not change, only His appearance. And that's exactly what changed. His appearance changed. Matthew 17:2; Luke 9:29 says, "His face shown like the sun." Ah.

Listen, these are Jewish men who knew their Old Testament. They knew that when God showed up, He showed up as light. He showed up as light. He showed up radiantly and He was shining like the sun.

By the way, this is not some kind of mental experience. This is a physical appearance for them. This is a real experience, not a vision. Yes, the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus spiritually, but here it happens actually. The blazing glory of His divine nature came through His humanity—pulled the veil of His humanity back. And He was like the sun at high noon.

There's another glimpse of that and it is a vision, but it's the same description in Revelation 1 when John has a vision of Christ. And it says about Him that, verse 16, His face was like the sun shining in its strength...the sun at its highest most glaring moment in a cloudless sky. That's what they saw.

I wish there were more details here, don't you? I mean, come on, Ezekiel gave us a lot more than this, right? The whole chapter. Isaiah gave us more than this. John gave us more than this in Revelation 1, why do we get one sentence?

Well we get a little more. "His garments became radiant," *stilbo* is the word, it means to glitter like flashing facets reflecting back the blazing sun at high noon on a diamond, an exceeding white. Not flat white but blazing white. Luke says, "White and gleaming," like linear lightning.

And then I like what Mark says. He must have had a bad experience at the cleaners. He says, "His garments became radiant and exceeding white as no bleacher on earth can whiten them," *no gonophus*(???) means, used the old word, used to be fuller, a fuller was someone who bleached things away. This is white...white, white, white, blazing white, glittering white like the sun's white.

Jesus always possessed that glory but kept it veiled until this moment. He acknowledges in John 17 that He had the glory from eternity but it was veiled, it was covered until this moment. This is the glory that one day will be fully revealed, Matthew 24, He will come in full blazing glory. And Revelation says the people in the world are going to see that glory and they're going to cry for the

rocks and the mountains to fall on them to hide them from the face of His glory. Matthew 25:31 says the same thing, "He's coming in glory." Revelation 19 describes Him coming in glory, full blazing glory.

Well, Luke 9:32 says, "When Jesus was transfigured they became fully awake and saw His glory." That's why John said, "We beheld His glory," John 1:14. They saw it and, of course, it was incomprehensible to them.

But the scene changed, it wasn't just Him. The glow from the sun's transformation to the saints association, verse 4, "Elijah appeared to them along with Moses." Whoa...and they were talking with Jesus. Was this really Moses and Elijah? Yes. But aren't Moses and Elijah glorified spirits in heaven? Aren't they part of the just men made perfect, the spirits in heaven? Yes. Don't they wait to get a glorified body until Daniel 12:2 says, "The establishment of the Kingdom and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints? Yes. However, for this occasion provided them a visible form. And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses and they're talking with Jesus.

I'd like to hear that conversation. What were they saying? I'll tell you exactly what they were saying. You say, "How do you know what they were saying? Because it's in the Bible and I will promise you, I only know what's in the Bible, I have never had a vision, I married one, but I haven't had one. Now...precisely my sentiments. Listen to what it says in Luke 9:31, "Two men were talking with Him and they were Moses and Elijah who appearing in glory." See, they're in a glorified form, too. "And they were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." What's the subject? His death....His death, they're talking about His death...talking about His death, the subject matters.

I suppose the disciples might have thought they would be talking about the Kingdom and the glory and the overthrow of the Romans and the establishment of the Messiah's throne over the whole earth. But they're not. They're talking about His death because that's what the transfiguration event is intended to communicate to the disciples, that He has to die and it doesn't negate the glory but it isn't some interruption of the plan. Here are Moses and Elijah talking about the death of the Messiah. Again, these are two men and two very special men and the testimony of these two men is a confirming testimony cause they're two witnesses and they're talking about the death of Christ, Moses and Elijah. You mean, Moses and Elijah are aware that the Messiah must die? You mean that this stumbling block to all of us which we cannot understand is part of the plan and Moses and Elijah affirm this? That's exactly what this is about.

Moses is the greatest leader in Israel's history, rescuer of the nation from captivity, its greatest general, can we say? God was the one who drowned Pharaoh's army but Moses was the victor by divine power. In authority he was a king, though he never had a throne. In message he was a prophet. In service to God he was every bit a priest, serving God on behalf of His people. He was the author of the Pentateuch, the agent by which God gave His holy Law. He's the greatest. If you're going to have somebody give testimony to the fact that the Messiah needs to die, you couldn't get a better witness than Moses, unless it was Elijah. He could stand with Moses because he fought against every violation of that law. He battled the nation's idolatry and he battled it with great courage and words of judgment and he validated his preaching with miracles. There are only two miracle eras in the Old Testament, the time of Moses, and you know what the miracles were, they were in Egypt and the time of Elijah. You can read them in 1 Kings 17 to 19, 2 Kings 1 and 2. There was no law giver like Moses and there was no prophet like Elijah. Moses gave the Law, Elijah was His greatest

guardian. Here are the most trustworthy eyewitnesses. No one could bring the apostles more assurance and confidence that the death of Jesus was in the plan than to hear it from Moses and Elijah, the very men that they look to as the heroes of the Old Testament faith.

So this is in the plan. And here they are, in glory, confirming the glory to come talking about Jesus' death. So you have it all there. His death is a part of it, but His glory is coming. And they actually appear, I just read, "In glory," in some form like Christ. That shouldn't surprise you because we're going to have a body like unto His glorious body. That was a glimpse there.

Well, Peter, of course, has to talk. So in verse 5, Peter said to Jesus, and you would think after the last thing he said he would have kept his mouth shut when he rebuked the Lord for saying He was going to die and Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan." That would scare the life out of me. But he blurts out again, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here." Well I understand that. Matthew says he called Him Lord, Luke says he called Him Master. I think he went, "Lord, Master, Rabbi," self-deprecating, you know, doing everything he could, picking every good word he could to not do what he did the previous time. Be as respectful as possible. "It's good for us to be here."

"I have a great idea. Let's make three tabernacles. One for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Why did he say that? Verse 6, "He didn't know what to answer for they became terrified." Can I make a suggestion. If you don't know what to say, don't say anything. It's kind of a basic principle. Keep your mouth shut. Holy fear is mixed with stunning, exhilarating wonder at the most divine and incomprehensible experience of their lives. But what's running through his mind still is, this problem of suffering has got to go away. He's not giving up on this. He's a tenacious guy. So his plan is this, let's end all this here. We'll make the tabernacles and we'll finish off this deal right here and we'll go right into the Kingdom, this is good...this is good. Moses and Elijah are talking about the cross. Peter interrupts their conversation. He wants to establish the Kingdom on the spot.

But he had...oh by the way, Matthew says he added, "If You wish." This is humble. He's not asking for a tent for himself and James and John, just the glorious ones. He's wanted the Kingdom from the start. His excitement is heightened by what he sees. He hates the idea of death. He knows Elijah is supposed to come at the end, Malachi 3 and 4, and get this, the timing of this event is in the month of Tishri, six months before Passover when He will die. And in the month of Tishri, a special event was happening right at this time in Jerusalem. You know what it was? It's called the Feast of Tabernacles. And what did it commemorate? It commemorated God leading the Exodus from Egypt. What perfect timing. This is the time we commemorate the Exodus, what a great time to have our Exodus right now. We've got Moses, we've got Elijah, we've got Jesus in glory, let's just have the Exodus out of this corrupt life of bondage into the glorious Kingdom.

Peter's got his theology pretty well wired. Forget dying, let's just go to the Kingdom. You know, the picture here is really powerful. As one writer said, "This shows that Jesus is not a walk on in the divine economy." This is Moses, this is Elijah. The presence of Moses and Elijah signify that this is God's Son, the King who will reign in glory and here they are talking about His cross which means that's a part of the plan, that's not an interruption. Peter said what he said, back to verse 6, cause he didn't know what to answer, that he was so afraid. And sometimes when you're afraid, you just blurt out things. And what you have here is simply what was going on in his mind came out of his mouth. Let's launch the Kingdom now, forget the death and suffering. It's the same old deal he said before when he got rebuked.

So you have the Son's transformation, the saints association, and then the sleepers suggestion, bad suggestion, there's one more thing, the sovereign's correction. This is amazing. Verse 7, "Then a cloud formed," guess who showed up? "A cloud formed overshadowing them," Matthew 17:5 says, "A bright cloud and it engulfs Jesus, Moses and Elijah." They're engulfed. It symbolizes the Lord's presence. Luke says Jesus, Moses and Elijah entered the cloud, they're all engulfed in the arrival of God. "Then a voice came out of the cloud." Friends, this is the third witness. Moses is one, Elijah is two, here's the third witness, "This is My beloved Son," Luke adds that the voice said, "My chosen One." Matthew adds, "In whom I am well pleased." And here comes the Father's testimony. He says this, "Listen to Him...Listen to Him."

Shut your mouth, Peter. That is a very direct rebuke. He has just been rebuked by Jesus and now he gets rebuked by God Himself. "Listen...listen," listen to what? "Listen to what He has to say about His death. Listen to what He has to say about His death."

The Kingdom will come in its time, listen to what He says about His death. The transfiguration, obviously, is a glimpse of glory, but its main point was to demonstrate that the glory is later and the cross was now. When the disciples heard the voice, says Matthew 17:6, "They fell face down to the ground and were terrified, just flat." I love this. "Jesus came to them, touched them, said, 'Get up, don't be afraid,'" and you go back to Mark, "Tender touch and verse 8 says, "And all at once they looked around, saw no one with them anymore except Jesus alone." Phew.

The preview of the Kingdom is gone. Kingdom's not going to come. The only one left is Jesus and He's not in glorious form anymore, it's Jesus alone and He's on the road to the cross and they will follow. That's the plan and that's the message the Apostles preached, didn't they? They preached Christ, crucified and risen again.

Someday, according to Philippians we will appear ourselves in a body like unto His glorious body. Someday we'll have that experience, but in the meantime, in the meantime, we suffer for the sake of the cross, we suffer for the sake of the gospel because it's suffering, then glory. They had a hard time with the cross, as you can see. They eventually got the message, but it wasn't easy and I imagine that when it was hard to handle the suffering, they remembered this experience, the glory will come, and they gave us their witness, "We beheld His glory...We were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

I'm so thankful that the Lord did not skip the cross, aren't you? For it was there that He made Him who knew no sin, sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Father, thank You for the Word of truth, for its convicting power, its clarifying might, its enabling energy. Thank You for what it does in our lives. We are not just hearing facts, we're not just going through a story, we're living a reality, a spiritual reality and it's so powerful in us. We thank You that the cross was not kind of interruption, some kind of mistake, some kind of deviation, the cross did not cancel future glory. Thank You that it was always in the plan. What greater testimony than Moses, Elijah, and God Himself listened to the necessity of the cross. We thank You for that cross by which we have been redeemed and we patiently wait in Your time the glory that is set before us. Amen.

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