

# Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”  
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,  
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”  
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

## A Glimpse Of Future Glory

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Mark 9:1-13

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Mark 9:1; that’s on page 844 in your pew Bibles. While you find that let me read you the first two verses by way of introduction.

1 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

This passage reminds us why CONTEXT is the key to correctly interpreting the Bible. Some liberal scholars look at verse 1 and they say that Jesus expected to return and set up his Kingdom within the lifetime of the disciples. After all he said: “Truly I say to you there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power.” But, these liberal scholars will say, all of those people ARE DEAD now and Jesus still hasn’t returned, therefore this proves that Jesus was just a man and that he made mistakes. But that is to completely ignore the context.

Zoom out.

Look at what comes before this story and look at what comes after it. The story of Jesus going up the mountain and coming down the mountain runs from verse 2-29 – we’re just going to look at verses 1-13 today but the narrative continues to verse 29. We don’t get a change of scene until

verse 30 – look at that:

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. (Mark 9:30 ESV)

That's the next scene and what is that scene about? What title does your Bible give to that story? My Bible gives it the title: "Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection". So that's what comes AFTER the story of the transfiguration. Now look at what comes BEFORE – look at chapter 8:31-38 – what title does your Bible give to that story? My Bible gives it the title: "Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection". So this story – the story of the transfiguration – happens BETWEEN two predictions of suffering, rejection, death and resurrection – predictions that Jesus includes us in! He says that this will happen to him but he also says it will happen to us – we talked about that last week. Jesus told his disciples:

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (Mark 8:34-35 ESV)

I am going to be rejected by the world, hated, abused, mocked and scorned. I am going to be KILLED and then I'm going to rise again and if you want to follow me then this is the road that you are choosing. It's a long road. It's a hard road. But it is the road to glory. There is no crown without a cross. Not for me and not for you. This is what lies ahead.

That's what Jesus says – TWICE! That's a hard message! I sympathize with how Jesus was feeling because I had to preach that hard message last week. Let me tell you something friends, no one high fives you after you preach a message like that. No one sends you a thank you card after you preach a message like that. You stand in the pulpit and you tell people that things are going to get worse for them. You tell people that their kids might die in jail. You tell people that they have to CHOOSE between the favour of their family and the favour of God and then you let them stew in that.

For 6 days the text says, Jesus let them stew in that. That's about as long as its been for us – hasn't it? We had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday to stew in that. And now, like them, we need to be encouraged. That is what this story is about.

James Edwards for example says:

The first passion prediction (8:31) has thrown the disciples into a tailspin of bewilderment. What transpires on the Mount of Transfiguration is both a divine assurance in the midst of their consternation and a divine ratification of Jesus' way to the cross.<sup>1</sup>

This experience was engineered by Jesus AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT! This was intended as a GLIMPSE of FUTURE GLORY to buttress them against the difficulties that lay ahead. That's what Jesus meant when he said that some of them would not have to die before seeing the Kingdom of God in all its power and glory – some of them would get a preview. In 6 days some of them would see something that they could share with other believers by way of encouragement.

That's what this is and that's what it is supposed to do.

So hear now the Word of the Lord beginning again at verse 1:

1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 11 And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 12 And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him." (Mark 9:1–13 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

I want to ask 2 questions as we reflect together on this text. The first one is this:

### **What Exactly Did They Experience?**

What happened here? I said that Jesus engineered this experience to encourage them – well let's

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<sup>1</sup>James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 262.

reverse engineer that experience so that we can be encouraged also and the first thing we see when we do that is that they experienced:

## 1. The glory and the majesty of Jesus

The text says Jesus took them up on the mountain:

And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. (Mark 9:2–3 ESV)

Just like Moses went up the mountain and had a special vision of the glory of God when he was discouraged so here the disciples go up the mountain with Jesus and they behold HIS GLORY! This text is FILLED with Old Testament allusions. In addition to the mountain and the cloud Mark makes special mention of Jesus' clothes. He says they were RADIANT, they were INTENSELY and even OTHERWORLDLY WHITE.

Why does he say that?

Because the Bible says this in places like Psalm 104:

O Lord my God, you are very great! You are **clothed with splendor and majesty**,  
2 **covering yourself with light as with a garment**, stretching out the heavens like a tent. (Psalms 104:1–2 ESV)

Or this in Daniel 7:9:

“As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; **his clothing was white as snow**, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames (Daniel 7:9 ESV)

Listen, Bible readers understand that if you go up a mountain and a cloud comes down and you see somebody in white clothes that are shining like the sun – you are seeing God! Right?

This is not subtle.

In the past Jesus had been kind of subtle. He would forgive sins and people would scratch their heads and say: “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Or he would speak to a storm and cause it

to still and people would say, “Who is this that even the winds and the waves obey him?” So Jesus could be subtle – but he is not being subtle here. Right? Its hard to think of what could be more direct than this. Jesus takes them up a mountain and causes a big, thick cloud to descend all around them. And then when they were alone in the cloud he is changed and he **BLINDS THEM** with his brilliance by shining like the sun – I think the message here would be very hard to miss! Jesus is working to remove all doubt from the minds of the disciples – **WHY?** Because soon, things on the earth will get very dark and confusing.

Jesus is about to descend into the valley and the shadow of death. He is going to be mocked, beaten, scourged and killed and he knows that will be very confusing and so he gives them a glimpse of his future glory - that’s what this is. Dennis Nineham says it well. He says:

“What was vouchsafed to the three disciples was a glimpse of Jesus in that final state of Lordship and glory to which he would eventually be exalted.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus shows them the glorious end to help them survive the muddy middle. And it was helpful.

The second thing that the disciples experience on the mountain is:

## **2. The unqualified affirmation of God upon Jesus**

They see his glory and they hear his identity and teaching confirmed. God tells them:

“This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” (Mark 9:7 ESV)

Jesus is who he says he is and everything he says is true – **LISTEN TO HIM!**

That sounds a lot like what God said at Jesus’ baptism – except that last bit. Why does God add here that last bit about listening to Jesus? The answer of course, is because Jesus had just said something that the disciples did not want to hear. He had said:

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 after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. (Mark 8:31–32 ESV)

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis Nineham, *Saint Mark*, The Penguin New Testament Commentaries. (London: Penguin Group, 1992), 234.

But they didn't want to hear it. Peter actually took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. They did not want to hear about the cross. They didn't want to hear about a Suffering Saviour – there was nothing in their worldview to prepare them for that and they must have been wondering whether Jesus had lost his mind. They must have been wondering over the course of those SIX DAYS whether they even had the right guy.

We shouldn't fault them for that – even John the Baptist wondered that! When he was in prison and about to be executed he sent messengers to Jesus to find out if he was really the one – do you remember that? Even John when he saw the road ahead wondered if he was following the right guy and so God shows up and he says: “This is my beloved Son! He is who he says he is and he knows what has to be done. Listen to him! He understands. He is doing what I sent him to do. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT GUY! And HE'S ON THE RIGHT PATH. FOLLOW HIM!”

Do you have any idea how helpful that must have been?

Because its hard to believe something that no one else in your generation believes. Its hard to believe something you didn't come to on your own. Its hard to believe in something that might cost you everything. It would have been so easy for them to look away at this point – but God will not let them. He makes it very clear. This is the guy. This is the path. Walk ye in it.

The third thing that the disciples experience on the mountain is:

### **3. The future communion of the saints**

The text says:

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

That's pretty cool – I think its meant to be cool. Now I think we should be careful here to avoid too much speculation about why Moses and Elijah are selected as opposed to some other Old Testament saints. Why not Enoch, Abraham or Noah? Why not Daniel? We really don't know and most commentators are wise enough to admit that. One NT scholar puts it simply:

Pre-Christian Jewish tradition thus does not provide an obvious key as to why Moses and Elijah appear on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

We really don't know and the early Christian church does not seem to have speculated a great deal about that, rather they saw this, at least partly, as a promise of the future communion of the saints. In the *Apocalypse of Peter* for example, which was a book that was respected and circulated within the early church but that was not considered as Holy Scripture, the author says that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus as a foretaste of:

'your righteous brethren whose form ye did desire to see'.<sup>4</sup>

Moses and Elijah are just a foretaste – a sample of the great communion of saints that we will have the opportunity to be a part of in the glorious age to come. Peter, James and John were eager to be a part of that, and this is Jesus saying, "Don't worry boys, you aren't going to miss it. Stick with me and you can hang with them."

Listen, friends, I think the take away here is that you don't need to feel guilty about having a few people that you are eager to connect with in heaven, other than Jesus. Right? Of course, Jesus will be the focus and climax of our experience in heaven but with him God will give us every good thing – including the communion of saints! You will have the chance to sit down with Moses and Elijah, if you want to. N don't make fun of Elijah's hair – I'm going to tell you that right now, but you can do that, you can hang out with them if you want to. You can have a talk with Peter and John or David and Daniel or even the saints from your own family. You can spend some time with your Uncle George or your Great Aunt Mabel – or your mother, or your brother or the child you lost in the womb. They'll all be there and they'll be waiting for you on the other side.

Jesus wanted to encourage his disciples with that and I want to pass that encouragement on to you.

#### **4. The explanation of a prophetic mystery**

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<sup>3</sup>James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 264-265.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 18 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Acordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 103.

Fourthly, the experience ends with a very interesting dialogue about a mysterious Old Testament prophecy. The disciples ask Jesus:

“Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” 12 And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.” (Mark 9:11–13 ESV)

In Matthew’s version we are told:

Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. (Matthew 17:13 ESV)

So the disciples remember that in Malachi 4:5-6 the prophet says that before the coming of Messiah and before the inauguration of his Kingdom Elijah will return – or at least, a prophet like Elijah will return and he will restore all things – that is he will work a great revival and he will show people how to live with each other and before the face of God. But if Jesus is the Messiah – as now they are even more certain that he is – why did Elijah not come first? It seems like we’ve skipped a step – that’s the question that they are asking.

The answer that Jesus gives is quite remarkable. He says that Elijah does come and DID come and the people did to him whatever they pleased – which is WHY the Son of Man must suffer many things. Basically Jesus says that John the Baptist WAS Elijah. There is no doubt of that. Matthew tells us that the disciples understood that – and this wasn’t the first time that Jesus said that. He said it back before John was killed in Matthew 11:

For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and **if you are willing to accept it**, he is Elijah who is to come. (Matthew 11:13–14 ESV)

So when John was alive Jesus said that IF PEOPLE WOULD ACCEPT JOHN’S MESSAGE – he is Elijah who is to come. But, he says here on the way down the mountain, after John has been killed, the people didn’t accept John’s message and therefore he didn’t restore all things.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He is saying that John couldn’t restore all things because God’s people were irreparably and hopelessly BROKEN. THEREFORE the Messiah has to suffer. Do you see that? Do you hear what Jesus is saying? He is saying, we are WAY PAST reform



brothers and sisters. We are WAY PAST what a good example and a kick in the pants can do. God's people don't just need to be reformed they need to be BORN AGAIN. They need to die to sin and they need to rise again in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only after the Messiah has done that can the people of God be restored to the lives they were created to live.

Do you see that? That's what the disciples needed to see. They needed to see why the easy way was never going to work. They wanted Jesus to just pick up the sword and march on Rome and set this bad boy up! Let's get it on! What's all the fuss! What's all the delay? They didn't understand the reality of their situation. They didn't understand how ruined they had been by sin. Setting up the kingdom now would be like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Jesus isn't just going to take the wheel of a sinking ship. He was going to drive that ship into the ground. He was going to bury it in the depths of the earth. And on the third day he was going to bring it back to life.

Jesus was working a much more drastic plan and the disciples needed to see that.

They needed to understand WHY the cross had to come before the crown. They needed to understand why it could not be avoided for him or for them. You can't just say to people: "Take up your cross and follow me." You have to explain why there is no other way around. And that's what Jesus does here. He has engineered this experience to encourage them and to convince them that the cross really is the only way home.

And that leads us to our second question.

### **What Precisely Should We Do In Response?**

This experience was engineered originally for the disciples – but it was supposed to be shared with all of us. Jesus tells them to share their experience with the rest of the disciples after the resurrection. So the CALL of the cross was for everyone and the ENCOURAGEMENT of the mountain was for everyone. So how are we supposed to benefit from this story? Let me help with that. Let me function here as a physician of souls and apply the remedy of this text to your weariness, fear and confusion. The first thing I would want to say to you is this:

## 1. Remember the majesty of Jesus

Remember what the disciples saw! Peter wanted the people in his church to remember – he said in 2 Peter 1:16-18:

we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16–18 ESV)

Peter reminds his people: “I SAW THE LORD! I saw Jesus HIGH AND LIFTED UP. I know who he really is.

He’s the King!

He’s God!

And he’s coming!

So it doesn’t really matter what the score is. It may seem, friends, like we’re losing now. It may seem like the devil is on a roll – but Jesus hasn’t taken the field and when he does the outcome is assured. The Apostle Paul says that to his people too. He talks about the lawless one – the antichrist and all of his menacing allies and then he says:

whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8 ESV)

Boom!

Right? Yes the enemy has taken the field! Yes he appears to be on quite a roll – but my friends, Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming and he is God and he is King and when his feet touch the ground and he takes his next breath on planet earth – all our enemies will be killed and brought to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

So don’t look at the score. Look to the heavens.

And while you do that:

## **2. Trust in the Word and Will of God**

There was nothing in the cultural worldview of Peter or the disciples to prepare them for a Suffering Messiah. And it was hard to believe something when everyone else in the culture was believing in something else. It would have been easy to cave. It would have been easy to alk away but God said NO. He said:

“This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” (Mark 9:7 ESV)

God said, this is the guy and this is the path. Believe in him and trust in his Word.

Listen to me friends, now is not the time to be lightning the raft by throwing the Word of God over the side. We are going to need the Word of God more than ever in the days that lie ahead. In a world filled with fake news and lying politicians and confusion about the most basic facts of life we need the unchanging Word of God. Now more than ever, God’s way is the way of abundant and eternal life. Now more than ever we ought to see and trust what God says about who he is, who we are and how he has saved us through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

As the world sinks into death and madness, God is exalting his Name and his Word above all things. Trust me on this one – you will see it happen, so stick with the program.

And then thirdly and finally, remembering the Majesty, trusting in God’s Will and God’s Word, see also the light at the end of the tunnel.

## **3. See the light at the end of the tunnel**

You know when I started in ministry everyone kind of looked down on people who over played the whole “heaven and hell” thing. We mustn’t be so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly good, we were often told. We mustn’t be so eager for heaven that we neglect to reform the earth, they said, and there was some truth to that, but now the pendulum has swung so far in the other direction. Now we’re so earthly minded as to be of no heavenly good and so focused on reform

that we have neglected to preach the Gospel!

But Jesus was careful to remind the disciples that the restoration program of John the Baptist failed because sin is serious business and until people reckon with Christ on the cross there is simply NO HOPE for the renewal of human society. Jesus said that. So, you'll have to forgive me if I place LIMITED faith in all human efforts at reform.

My hope is in the return of Jesus Christ. I long for it. And I see in this story a glimpse of it. And you should see it too.

You should believe in it. You should be encouraged by it. Because this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.