

The coming of the Kingdom in power

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[0:00] Okay, well, if what I do this evening is simply give some good reasons for saying Jesus is brilliant, and one application, I think that would be fair enough.

Would you feel it was worth coming to a meeting to be told that Jesus was brilliant? Yeah, okay, well, let's see what we can do. So, we're in Mark's Gospel, Chapter 9, and first thing I'm going to do, oh, I'm going to do an introduction.

Yeah, the introduction really is, this is what it's asking. What can we expect of Jesus? The disciples had been with Jesus for a certain amount of time, and I think they were beginning to get a bit confused.

And what can be expected of Jesus? Is he talking about success, you know, kingdom, kingship, this sort of thing?

Or is he actually talking about failure because he has just been saying he's going to be killed? Or is it failure followed by success? Just what is he talking about?

[1:09] Yes, what is he saying is going to be the future? And how could we be sure that that's right?

I think those are the sort of questions that are going on in this passage. How can we be sure? Because what he's been saying is a little bit disheartening.

How can we be sure that it's all going to end okay? Yes? How can we be sure it's all going to end okay? Let's look at the context. If you've been following this, you will remember that Jesus has just been teaching in twos.

Two things together. So there were two feedings. There was the feeding of the 5,000 in chapter 6, and the feeding of the 4,000 in chapter 8.

And the question that between those two pieces of teaching, did they get the point? That's the question that hangs over that. Are you so stupid you still haven't got the point?

[2:14] And there is the prophecy in Isaiah which mentions eyes that don't see, and ears that don't hear, and hearts that are hard.

And that whole question, are your hearts hard? Do you have eyes but you can't see? Do you have ears but you can't hear? It's there in chapter 8, verse 21.

And do you still not understand? So that whole question is going on. And there are two truths being taught. One truth that Jesus is the Messiah, and they get as far as that in chapter 8, verse 29.

Who do you say that I am? Answer. You are the Christ. So big tick. Well done. They've got that bit. But there's a truth that goes with it. That the truth must suffer. Sorry. The Messiah must suffer and then be raised.

[3:20] And that's what Jesus teaches in verse 31, chapter 8. He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, that he must be killed, and after three days rise again.

And he speaks plainly about this, and he continues to do so. He says, you know, you've got to get this second truth about what is going to happen to the Messiah. And that's the bit that they don't get. If you remember, Peter takes Jesus on one side and says, no, you've got that wrong, Lord. No, that won't happen. And Jesus stingingly says, you are Satan.

You're thinking man's way. So go away. And in the middle of this two-truth thing, this two-teachings thing, we have this lovely example or illustration of the blind man in chapter 8, verse 22, who needed two touches before he could see properly.

Do you remember? The first thing he could see a bit. He could see men like trees walking, verse 24. And only after a second touch does he get the whole thing and see clearly.

[4:34] And that's exactly what's going on with the disciples. Two touches. It's good that the Lord is prepared to keep teaching us if we don't get it the first time.

And there were implications to the teaching about the cross, that following Jesus means that we have got to go the same way.

We've got to take up a cross before we bear a crown. If you will not bear the cross, you cannot wear a crown, as the song says. And this death is the way to find life.

And Jesus talks about that in verse 34. If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it.

Whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. So we're asked to do as Jesus did and embrace, in a sense, death in order to find life afterwards.

[5:33] What good is it if a man gains the whole world but loses his soul? And we must not be ashamed of him in this methodology, in the imprint of this on his ministry and therefore on our lives.

We mustn't be ashamed of him. If anyone is ashamed of him, 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.

If we're ashamed of him in this, he will be ashamed of us at the time of life and glory that's to come. So that's where we got to last time.

And then Jesus says, it's almost by way of proving this. So you'd be sure that I'm not talking nonsense. Chapter 9, verse 1, he said to them, I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.

Jesus has just been talking about his glory. The glory of, he comes in the glory of his Father and the holy angels.

[6:53] And then he says, you'll see this. Some of you won't taste death till you've seen this. So that's a prediction that he makes and let's follow it through.

He promises that some will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power. So that's what we're going to think about. Now what does it mean?

What does he mean by the kingdom of God comes with power? Now he could mean the final end of everything. He could mean that having just spoken about coming to judge everyone in his Father's glory and with the holy angels, because I suppose you could say he means that this will happen within the lifetime of some of his hearers.

And some Bible scholars have said that that's exactly what he meant and that he was mistaken. Because it didn't happen, did it? The final end of the world didn't happen within the lifetime of those people who are standing there. And some, I would say, some Bible scholars have said Jesus was mistaken.

[8:13] Now, there's quite a big watershed. There's a big difference in the way that you understand the Bible there.

Because my understanding of Jesus is he did not make mistakes. That what he said, you can take as being gospel truth. You can say that what Jesus says, God says.

So Jesus, my understanding is Jesus doesn't make mistakes. And if you take the view that Jesus does make mistakes, and that the Bible's got mistakes in it and God made mistakes, that's a very different religion to what the Bible actually says.

But the people who said this are very clever, and they've got degrees and PhDs and they've written books. But I don't think we should be bamboozled by that.

And the Bible is quite clear. God doesn't make mistakes. Jesus doesn't make mistakes. So that can't be the correct interpretation. So does he mean something else?

[9:20] What could he mean? There are some people standing here who won't die before they see the kingdom of God come with power.

Perhaps he means, he couldn't perhaps mean, the next step in the kingdom. Not the final step, not the very end of everything, but the next step. You'll see that come.

You'll see the next step in the kingdom. Or he could mean, you will see something highly significant in the kingdom. It won't be everything and the whole thing, but you'll see something which is like that very end, only definitely the same stuff, but not the whole show.

Or maybe he could mean a demonstration of the final kingdom, which is much the same as what I already said. And I think that's what he is saying.

He's not saying the end of the world will come within the lifetime of these heroes, but he's saying you will see something which is like it. Yeah, do you get the, it's like, can I think of an illustration?

[10:32] A sample. Yes, if you, do you get, do we get free samples of things through our letterboxes now? Don't know whether we do. We used to get free samples of stuff, didn't we?

Little bits of tomato sauce in a tiny little sachet and little bits of washing powder. You don't get that now, do you? What is the world coming to?

So you could say, you know, before the end of the week, you will see the power of this detergent. You won't get a complete, what's the word, pack of it.

Just get a little bit, but you'll see what it can do. You see what I mean? And I think that's the sort of thing that Jesus is saying. An act of power, perhaps an act of authority or a revelation of glory or a revelation of judgment.

So with that in mind, let's come to verse 2. And notice this close connection, verse 2. So after six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him.

[11:41] And as far as I could see, this is the only time in Mark's gospel where he makes such a strong connection in time.

Usually we'll say after that or sometime after or no particular time connection. But here he connects the saying to the next event and says six days later.

It's definitely within the lifetime of the people concerned. So I think that's significant. And the same is true in the other gospels too. He makes a close connection.

And this is what happened. And it was just six days later. So let's think of the scene here. And I'm going to ask you for some thoughts on this in a minute. It says, He led them up a high mountain where they were all alone.

It was six days later. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. There was a cloud that enveloped them.

[12:51] That's the bit I'm hiding from you. So we're going to do this again in a minute with a picture. But just, I wonder if you can think of any connections in the Bible.

So the Bible does this. It uses things that people would already know to ring some bells.

Right, if you're of a certain age, if I were to say, she loves you, what would you reply? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, see that's easy, you see. Just those three words, and you know exactly where it's come from.

Well, for the younger people, where does it come from? It's the Beatles song. She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah. She loves, that's the one. It's quite famous in its day, wasn't it?

So you recognize that instantly. And so this is not a competition to see who knows more Bible than anybody else.

[13:52] But it's just really saying this is the way the Bible works. It makes those sorts of connection. if I said, come gather round people wherever you roam, you'd know, wouldn't you?

What would you say after that? It is Bob Dylan. Come gather round people. Yeah, yeah, something like that, yes.

And accepted the surreal. Anyway, I was just trying to think of another illustration. I shouldn't have bothered really, should I? Okay, so here's one from the Bible then.

Verse 2, High Mountain. Does that make you think of anything? If you were a Bible reader, would you think, High Mountain? Hmm. I think Moses.

Yes. So, Moses in the Old Testament went up a high mountain. And anybody else go up a mountain? Sorry?

[15:04] Yes, he did. Yes, he took him up a high mountain there. That's right. Yes. Elijah. He went to a high, did Yeah, and then when he fled, did he not go to a high mountain then?

He ran away, didn't he? Yeah. Okay, so okay, High Mountain. Six days. Now this one, I hadn't noticed this one, but I don't know if anybody picks this one up.

Six days. I'll give you... Hmm? Yeah, there's certainly creation. Yes. I'll show you the next one. I'll show you this one in a moment. Dazzling person or dazzling clothes?

Jacob. Moses when he came down from the mountain. His face shone. Dazzling clothes?

Anybody in dazzling white clothes? Jesus in Revelation. Thank you. Yes, Jesus in Revelation.

Angels in the resurrection, they have white shining clothes.

[16:23] Seem to be something about the heavenly... What's the word for fashion? So if it was cooking, it would be cuisine.

What was it? George? Pardon? Couture. Heavenly couture. Couture. They seem to go about in dazzling white clothes. Seems to be a heaven sort of thing.

I've lost my place now. Cloud. A cloud. Yeah, Moses went up on the mountain. There was a cloud at the top.

There was a pillar of cloud and fire, wasn't there? Symbolizing what? Okay, thank you.

So it's like the presence of God, isn't it? But in an obscured way. Yeah. Solomon's temple got filled with a cloud and it's so much so that the priests couldn't do what they were aiming to do.

[17:27] The presence of God sort of overruled that. Yes, the cloud is the presence of God. Any other clouds? Is it a cloud?

The glory leaves the temple. Yeah. And, okay, do you like to look at the references that I've got and see how many of them coincide with what we're thinking?

Exodus 24. Exodus 24.

Why did I put one? I don't know why that is. Oh yes, this is going up. You, Moses, come up to the Lord. You, and Aaron, Nahab, and Abihu. So it's three people plus Moses go up the mountain, which is an interesting parallel.

Verse 9. No, do I mean verse 9? Yeah, they went up and they saw the God of Israel. Yes, there's something of his glory.

[18:37] Verse 15. When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain.

I think that's an interesting parallel there. Six days on the mountain. It's not the sixth day, which it is in Mark, but it's still the sixth. So I think you identify that as an echo or a reminder.

Exodus 34. Exodus 34. Exodus 34.

29. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.

So that's a radiant face, the radiant face of Moses. 1 Kings 19 is the Elijah one. Yeah.

[19:59] In 1 Kings 19 verse 8, he goes and runs to Horeb, the mountain of God, and God meets him there. Matthew 28.3 is the angels.

So it says, there was a violent earthquake for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow.

The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. So something quite fearful. When I come back from Sri Lanka, I'm so used to seeing ladies wearing saris and skirts and blouses and blokes wearing black trousers and white shirts.

I come back and I see people going around with grey, shapeless, what do you call it, jogging bottoms and hoodies and things and you just notice, oh, I'm back in England again.

You can tell from the dress code, that was what I was thinking of, dress code. And here in, yeah, here's it in Matthew 28 is the angels' dress code.

[21:22] They wear clothes as white as snow. It just seems to be the thing in heaven. And Daniel 7, 9 has got quite a number of these things together.

Daniel 7, this is the, the ancient of days, his clothing was white as snow, the hair of his head was white like wool.

So there's a whiteness about God himself and if you go to verse 13, the son of man comes with the clouds of heaven.

so that the divinity, God, clouds, that connection. And Psalm 104, which I hadn't thought of and then I thought we could have sung this if I knew the tune to it.

He wraps himself in light as with a garment. He wraps himself in light. There's a song there, isn't it? Da, da, da, da, da, da.

[22:27] There's probably several songs.

Anyway, that puts us, so this, this event is actually pulling on lots of strings if you see what I mean. and it's reminding us and making connections with lots of things in the Bible already. Mountains, place where you go to meet God, like Moses did.

God himself, the cloud, whiteness and brightness and shiningness. It's all connected to other things in the Bible.

So let's, like Moses on the mountain, only more so. So let's look at the sequence of events. So we have Jesus and we have, ooh, let's do that bit again.

[23:26] So Peter, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain where they were all alone and then he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

So it's him who is transfigured. So we presume that he becomes shining as well, but the detail that's added is that his clothes became dazzling white as well.

So you have this awesome transformation. Incidentally, the word that's used to be, although transfigured is our translation, it simply says transformed.

It's the same as being transformed by the renewing of your mind. It's the same sort of word as that. But Jesus was transformed. Something changed in his appearance.

And there appeared before them, verse 4, Elijah and Moses who were talking with Jesus. Now how did they know they were Elijah and Moses? Perhaps the people overhearing heard it.

[24:36] Perhaps Jesus introduced them. Perhaps Jesus told them afterwards. No, they must have known beforehand. And the disciples, Peter said to Jesus, Rabbi, it's good for us to be here.

Let's put up three shelters, three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. And you ask, what on earth is he thinking?

What is he talking about? Let's put up three tents. Have you brought three tents with you? How are you going to put up three tents? Why are you going to put up three tents? What's the idea of three tents?

So it seems to be to say, let's make this a bit more of a permanent situation. Let's find a way of extending the duration of this.

You'd like somewhere comfortable to sit. We'll go and get tea as well. Anybody like tea? Let's sort of just set this up nicely. I don't know what he's thinking.

[25:39] It says he didn't know what to say because they were scared silly. Tents. I don't know what. I'm not sure that's what would come to my mind if I was scared silly.

I think I'd run away. And then it says, a cloud appeared and enveloped them or overshadowed them. So that must have been pretty scary. And a voice comes from heaven.

And the voice says these three things. This is my son, my beloved. Listen to him. And suddenly, all that's left is Jesus and them.

Suddenly when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. And that's it. That's this event. It's interesting, isn't it?

It doesn't stay. It's a bit like a bubble. It's there and then it's gone. But I think this is what Jesus was referring to. You're going to see the kingdom of God in something of its power and glory.

[26:51] You're going to see something to assure you that it will turn out right in the end. Because what you're seeing is not a temporary, although you see it temporarily, he's telling us what the real underlying state of affairs is.

Because he doesn't say, this is momentarily my son. He says, this is my son. That's who he is. That doesn't change.

And he's my son whom I love. Let's look at that. It passes very quickly. At the end of Phil Grimm's progress, doesn't he say, and behold, I woke up and it was all a dream.

All that's happened, but it's all gone now. Now, this isn't a dream, but there's a visionary quality to it, isn't it? It's seeing something that then the shutters go back down.

You can't see it. It passes very quickly. And it was like, well, it's like all sorts of things. This is my son.

[28:10] Do you want to do any thoughts on that? This is my son. Any places where it says, this is my son? Because it does say it in Psalm 2. Yep.

Okay. Yep. The baptism of Jesus. I think it says it there. Yes, this is my son with whom I am well pleased.

Psalm 2, I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me, you are my son. It's about the king. It's the king being the king. You are my son. Psalm 2.

The son whom I love. Do you know this one? Take your son whom you love. It's Isaac.

Is that what God says to Abraham and Isaac? I'm not trying to be confusing with all these quotes, but... He did say my son, my son.

[29:14] He did. Yes. Yes, he did. Yeah. My son, my son. God knows that people love their sons. Fathers love their sons.

I think that the Abraham one is really quite poignant because it's take your son, the one you love, and offer him as a burnt offering. That's what happened, isn't it?

Take him on the mountain, offer him as a burnt offering. Do you remember that? Sorry? Hebrews 1. God has spoken in various ways in time past, but now has spoken to us son-wise, through his son.

Thank you. Hebrews 1. 1. Yes. Yes. Thank you. Yeah.

That's quoting Psalm 2. Yeah. Yeah. So, these, we've got the kingship of Jesus. We've got also the sacrifice of Jesus.

[30:22] We've got the being of Jesus. The function of Jesus as the radiance, as the person through whom the radiance of God's glory is seen.

And these are not things that, although the vision passed off, passed away quickly, the truths that it speaks of remain there.

Oh, it's also like Deuteronomy 18. Do you know Deuteronomy 18? I thought it was Deuteronomy 18.

Yeah. Yeah. Deuteronomy 18 from verse 14.

Yes, that's there in verse 15. Right back in the days of Moses, God promised that prophecy wouldn't end with Moses.

[31:39] Verse 15, the Lord your God will raise up from you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him. In a sense, there was a succession of prophets like that.

But if you like, there's the, the great prophet, the final one through whom we learn from God, we learn of God, those things that nobody can improve on.

Nobody can show us more of God than Jesus did. So it's like that as well. Yeah. Listen to him.

Yeah. Listen to him. So, I ask the question, what's left behind when, when this, you know, the lights have gone off this scene and we're just back to normal life, if you like?

Well, the voice doesn't say you've got Moses and the voice doesn't say you've got Elijah.

[32:51] Incidentally, there's a discussion about Elijah that follows on presumably because of Elijah being on the mountain and Jesus seems to make it fairly clear that the prophecies of Elijah have been fulfilled in John the Baptist and he has come and he's, he's restored all things.

That's why I said, indeed, it might have a question mark after, indeed, he restored, that's what the scribes say, that's, I mean, how do we, to understand that? He got beheaded and that's what will happen to the Son of Man, in fact.

But anyway, he doesn't focus us on that. What he focuses us on is this, listen to him. When the vision's gone, the words remain.

What are we to do? Listen to him. Can we not get back up the mountain again? Well, no, you're not invited to do that.

Well, what should we do then? Listen to him. How are we supposed to live the Christian life if we're not up mountains all the time?

[34:12] Answer. Listen to him. What's the way to be a disciple in this world where we can't see the glory yet?

Answer. Listen to him. It's a, ask the question, do we listen to him?

Do we say, the one thing that I've got, that I have got, is the words of Jesus and the one thing that I am going to do is listen to what he says. And when it says listen, it means put it into practice, obviously, doesn't it?

It doesn't mean listen and then discard it and then judge it or listen and say, well, I'll take this bit but I won't take that bit. It's saying, you, what you have left after this amazing vision and after all that Moses did and all that Elijah did, what you've got is this, the words of Jesus, listen to him.

It's a good thing to go into the week with it. What am I going to do this week? I'm going to listen to Jesus. How am I going to live this week?

[35:24] By listening to him. What am I going to do with his words? I'm going to take them on board. Listen to him. Let's sing number 516.

516.