

AM Mark 9:1-13 Seeing the Son on the Mountain

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[0:00] Our two readings are from the book of Genesis and the Gospel according to John, respectively. As we've just sung those beautiful lines, Genesis chapter 1, verses 1 to 5.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.

[1:31] Give you a few moments to turn to the Gospel according to John, chapter 1, which is on page 1127.

Actually, it's probably a different page. I've got a different Bible. The Gospel according to John, chapter 1.

We're going to read from verse 1 to verse 9. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[2:44] There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Amen. Amen. Let's again, take up Psalm 27. Again, reading for this morning. The text that we're going to be thinking about together this morning, is from Mark and chapter 9.

The Gospel according to Mark. And chapter 9. The Lord has just been foretelling his death and resurrection.

This is not welcome news to the disciples. The disciple Peter actually rebukes the Lord. To which the Lord replies, Get behind me, Satan.

[4:14] And then he makes it clear, in verse 34 of the previous chapter, that if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

So, that's the context. We have death as a necessity for anyone who would follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then we begin our reading in chapter 9. And he, that's the Lord Jesus, 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.

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

Excuse me. And he was transfigured before them. And his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

[5:29] And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, Rabbi, which means teacher, it is good that we are here.

Let us make three tents. One for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud. This is my beloved son.

Listen to him. And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them, but Jesus only. 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. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.

[6:43] And they asked him, why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come? 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? But I tell you that Elijah has come.

And they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him. Let us pray briefly and ask the Lord for help as we seek to understand his word.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we would see your Son, the Lord Jesus. Please show him to us as we consider your word this morning by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Now, we're going to take a closer look at Mark chapter 9. I have a sheet here which some of the children may be interested in doing.

[7:50] If I leave some copies on the first chairs here, you can come up and get one. We will remain in Mark 9 for the duration of our time together.

But we'll also be considering various verses, some of which we'll look up, some of which we won't. But as we begin, as you find a sheet perhaps, and take it back to your place, perhaps I could pose a question to us all, for us to ponder in our heads and hearts.

a question for us to ponder. We, of course, are walking this earth 2,000 years and more after the Lord Jesus was born and lived and died.

But were we to have been on the earth at the time he was here, and were we to have looked at him, what would we have seen with our eyes?

What would we have seen as we looked at the Lord Jesus? Would we have seen someone who was remarkable, perhaps slightly larger than the people around him, perhaps slightly more muscular or leader-like?

[9:18] Isaiah the prophet comments on the appearance of the Messiah in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 2, and this is what he says, he says, he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

Now I don't think the prophet Isaiah means that the Lord Jesus was not nice to look at, but he surely means that there was nothing physical that was especially different from any other person.

To look at the Lord Jesus was to look at an ordinary man. We wouldn't have paused and wondered, now this is someone who's going to change the world.

There was nothing about his body, nothing about his appearance that said necessarily, I am the Son of God, or I am an extra special person.

If we'd been there in Bethlehem, after his birth, we would have been looking at an ordinary baby. A baby that cried, a baby that looked like a baby.

[10:35] If we'd seen him growing up in Nazareth, playing with his friends, throwing stones, perhaps into the Sea of Galilee, we would have been looking at an ordinary boy.

If we'd been at his baptism at the Jordan River, when John the Baptist immersed him in the water, we would have been looking at an ordinary man.

if we'd seen him teaching from the boat later on during his ministry in Galilee, we would have seen an ordinary person.

And all throughout his life, right up to his resurrection, there would have been nothing to tell us that this person was special, or that this person was unique.

nothing that would tell our eyes to mark this person as unusual, or worth listening to especially.

[11:43] Now, boys and girls, let's think about what we know about the Lord Jesus. Is he God? Yes, he is.

Is he a man? Yes, he is. And he has always been God, and when he was incarnated, he became a human being, but he didn't stop being God.

But there was something about his Godhood that was hidden, wasn't it, during his time on the earth. At Christmas, we may sing a carol, in which we sing, veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity.

We're saying, in that carol, that there is a hiddenness to who Jesus is. Yes, he is God, but we wouldn't have been able to see that with our eyes.

God, so, with all of that in mind, let's go back to chapter 8, because there is one moment in the Gospels, there is one moment in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, where his physical appearance is changed, and that's the subject of our text today.

[13:16] Mark chapter 9, sorry, did I say Mark chapter 8? I meant Mark chapter 9. This is a truly remarkable episode in the life of the Lord Jesus, because for the first time, Peter and James and John, even though they believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we know that, Jesus has already asked the disciples who they say he is, and Peter has given the wonderful answer, the true answer, you are the Christ, we know they believe in Christ, but for the first time their eyes are going to see something of his glory, something of the overflow of who he is as God.

So let's look at a few of these details as they make this trip up the mountain. Just to say, you'll have on your sheets, you'll see that this is of course a real mountain, the Bible doesn't tell us which mountain it is.

So some people who study the Bible believe it is Mount Table, others, I haven't written it down, is it Mount Menar? Mount Meron.

Mount Meron. It's important of course for us to know that this is a real place, even if we're not exactly sure which mountain it is in Israel. Verse 2, 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. Now as we've already seen, Peter and James and John, they know Jesus to be God, but Jesus is changed in front of them in such an amazing way that their eyes will tell them also, this is indeed God.

[15:25] Now why does the Lord Jesus take just three of his disciples? And why does he take these three in particular? We can't be sure. The text doesn't tell us why exactly it was Peter and James and John, but we do find out if we read on in the story and we read on to the book of Acts, which tells us what happens after Jesus goes up again to be with the Father, that Peter and James and John were key witnesses.

All the disciples were witnesses. That means they were those who had seen Jesus and could tell others about him. But these three particularly became pillars in the church.

That is significant, isn't it? The Lord wants to give these three a particular vision of who he is so that they would pass that on to others.

Not only as people who had heard of Jesus' glory with their ears, but as men who had seen him with their eyes. We also need to bear in mind that there is a special significance to the number three here that would have been familiar to every Jew who read this passage.

You remember when God was setting up Israel as a nation, he gave them laws, good laws, that would govern the way they lived from day to day.

[16:57] And you remember that if a crime was committed and someone needed to be punished, if a theft or a murder or something else had taken place, how many witnesses were required to establish that claim?

It was two at a minimum, but better three. So we see in Deuteronomy chapter 17 verse 6 and chapter 19 verse 15 which I'll read, it says only on the evidence of two witnesses! or three witnesses! shall a charge be established. It is almost as if the Lord Jesus is taking them as a group of witnesses.

Not witnesses to a crime, but witnesses to something wonderful. Something which, if only the world knew it, that Jesus is God, would transform the world forever.

And it says verse three, how does it happen? How does the glory of God begin to shine through? It's interesting, Matthew and Mark and Luke all tell us about this event and they all mention slightly different details.

[18:18] And that's a wonderful thing about the Gospels. We're given different angles on the same event. So Matthew says, this is Matthew chapter 17 verse 2, you don't need to go there, but he says, Jesus was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.

Luke says, this is chapter 9 verse 29 of Luke, as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered and his clothing became dazzling white.

product. Now, I don't know if you've ever had to sit through the advertisements for the next miraculous cleaning powder or laundry detergent.

You know the kind of advert where they show this is what will happen if you use just an ordinary kind of cleaner, but if you use our product, this is what your clothes or your dishes or whatever it might be, your floor, will look like and it is radiant.

And you wonder how they made the advert. Because your dishes and your clothes never seem to look exactly the same. Now, this is the kind of language that we're dealing with.

[19:42] It's the action of bleaching is what Mark references, but this is far more intense than can be shown on your TV screen or wherever.

This is a white that would hurt your eyes to look at it. And unlike those advertisements which I don't really think ever do the job they promise to do, this is a powerful, potent light.

And we know that because the disciples, in an increasing way through this experience, were frightened. This is a frightening light because people don't just begin to glow.

glow. If you're on the bus, people don't just people don't start to give off light from their face. This isn't an ordinary thing.

This isn't a natural thing. We've noted before this point that all through Jesus' life, there was nothing you could look at to say this man is God.

[20:45] Nothing around his body, nothing on top of his head, nothing in his face, nothing about him and his body that would say, I am the Son of God.

This is the first time anything like this has happened. We have a tiny taste of it in the Old Testament. The closest we get to someone glowing is when Moses, of course, went up the mount and he's given access to God.

But it's very clear there with Moses that the light doesn't come from Moses, does it? It's reflected onto Moses from God's glory.

From which we can see a couple of things. Number one, this kind of light is God's glory. Number two, Moses only had a reflection.

But what Jesus had here, what Jesus shows here, is not a reflection, is it? It's an unveiling. It's coming from him.

[21:57] It's coming from Jesus himself. Alright. Now let's move on. There appear two figures that we know from reading the Bible.

Elijah and Moses. And it says in verse 4, they were talking with Jesus. Luke tells us that they are talking especially about what Jesus is about to do.

His death on the cross. His departure at Jerusalem that's just around the corner. We have to understand that to the Jews, as indeed to us, Elijah and Moses are incredibly important people. They are, in a sense, the standout leaders of God's people in the Old Testament. Moses, he is the first person to hear God's name in Exodus 3.14.

He has a privilege that is greater than that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob even, who weren't told God's name. He is allowed to see a bit of God's glory.

[23:06] He is used by God to lead God's people with signs and wonders, with blood, and with hailstones, and with darkness, and with plagues, out of Egypt.

He is a leader who is gifted to do incredible things. And of course, he is the one that God entrusts the law to, his holy law.

And Elijah, Elijah is the one who, at a time of terrible, terrible abandonment of God in Israel. He is the one who calls Israel back.

He is the leader who has the contest with the prophets of Baal. He is the leader whom God uses to call down fire from heaven. Moses is the standout deliverer, and Elijah is the standout prophet of the Old Testament.

We could say that they represent for us the law and the prophets. This way of summarizing everything God did for his people in the Old Testament. Now, as great as Moses and as great as Elijah might be, the purpose of this episode on the mountain is to show us that they are just servants of the Lord Jesus.

[24:35] Jesus. And we see this in the next few verses. Let's read on. Peter, of course, is afraid. He didn't know what to say. And as he's speaking, verse 7, a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud.

Now, let's just pause for a second. the cloud in the Old Testament, we're already thinking about Moses. That's associated, isn't it, with the presence of God.

God's voice has come before out of a cloud. And we're meant to be thinking of God when this cloud appears. This is what the voice says.

this is my beloved son. Listen to him. See, Peter had began to talk.

He began, I think we could say, to babble, to fill the air with words, and to say, let's build a tent, three tents, one for you, Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

[25 : 51] An equal treatment for each person. But when the voice comes, it doesn't mention Moses, it doesn't mention Elijah, it only mentions the Lord Jesus, and what terms it uses.

This is my beloved son, listen to him. It's almost as if Moses and Elijah have been brought into the picture in order to be left to one side.

Do you see that? Moses and Elijah, are so inferior to the Lord Jesus, despite their greatness, they are so inferior to him, that they aren't even mentioned by the divine voice.

And whose voice is this? It's the voice of God the Father, isn't it? It's the voice of God the Father.

Now, there are a great many wonderful things that the scriptures teach us.

The scriptures teach us the right way to live. The scriptures teach us wisdom. The scriptures teach us the wonderful works of God from creation to new creation.

[27 : 05] But, brothers and sisters, the central message of the scriptures is, I think, summarized in this sentence. This, the Lord Jesus, is my beloved son.

Listen to him. when we come back this evening, Lord willing, we'll be looking at how Peter talks about this time in his life, and then he goes on to say, well, the scriptures too, are all about the lesson we learned on the mountain.

They're all about Jesus. Paul will tell Timothy that the scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through Christ Jesus.

This is the message of the Bible. That Jesus is God's son. He is one with God and he is able to save.

Now, verse 8 perhaps brings us back to the ground. If we've been transported, and if we've heard the voice of the Father, suddenly, this is what happens.

[28 : 25] As the cloud clears, the disciples are terrified. Peter has just realized that he has been speaking when he should have been listening.

Which is something we often do, isn't it? When it comes to the Lord. We often speak when the Lord calls us to listen. God the Father has spoken clearly.

This is my beloved son. Listen to him. And suddenly, verse 8, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus, I believe it's in Luke 9, he tells us that the Lord Jesus came close to the frightened disciples.

He came close, sorry, pardon me, this is in Matthew 17. Matthew tells us verse 7, Jesus came and touched them, saying, rise and have no fear.

[29 : 45] See, I think the Father has, in some sense, deliberately put fear, the fear of the Lord Jesus into the hearts of the disciples. We're right to sense that we should be reverent, we should be on our knees, but then, in a way that is so characteristic of the Lord, fear is followed by comfort.

When we hit the floor on our knees, the Lord lifts up our heads. Jesus came, not only did he speak to them, but he touched them. And then verse 8 of Matthew 17, and when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Again, it's almost as if Moses and Elijah have come in order to be put to one side, put in their rightful place at the feet of Jesus.

And what a message this is for us. Jesus has fulfilled the law and the prophets. Everything they were building towards is found in fulfillment in him.

He is God's message. He is God's word. John Calvin says that when the father enjoins us to hear Jesus, he appoints Jesus to be the supreme and only teacher of his church.

[31 : 11] Isn't that amazing? And we return full circle. This experience started with Jesus and the disciples. disciples, then he was joined by Moses and Elijah and then finally they are taken away to underline and underscore that it is only the Lord Jesus who is needed.

It's only the Lord Jesus that we need. To borrow some words from the poet T.S. Eliot, he said in his poem Little Gidding, we shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

And in some ways the disciples have arrived where they started on the mountain. But maybe they know Jesus, certainly in a new way, for the first time.

There's no doubt that he is the Son of God. And so in closing, three quick points, key points for us to take on with us.

And they have to do with our eyes, with our ears, and with our mouth. So boys and girls, I hope you're listening. What do we do when we hear the voice of the Father as we've heard his voice this morning, saying, this is my beloved Son.

[32:46] Listen to him. here are three ways we can respond. Number one, we can look to Jesus with faith. See, the scriptures point us again and again to trust Jesus.

To trust Jesus above everything to save us. He is able and he is willing. To trust Jesus to guide us, for he is able and he is willing.

God so let us look to him by faith. Secondly, let's listen to him with care. God promised Moses in Deuteronomy 18 that there would be a prophet like him.

Moses was a powerful prophet. Like him to whom the people must listen whatever he said. God and that was a promise of the Lord Jesus.

We must listen to Jesus whatever he says. Again, above all, that means that we listen to Jesus and hear his promises to save us.

[33:58] We hear his invitations. He is the one who says, come to me, all you who are weary. Are you feeling weary? Jesus says, come. He says to sinners, come to me, leave your sin, trust in me.

We are to listen to him with care. He is also the one who from time to time rebukes his people. He tells us where we are going wrong and where we need to turn back to him.

So, listening to Jesus means listening to his warnings and his rebukes as well. Finally, with our mouths, let us confess him before men until he comes.

So, with our eyes, let us look to Jesus with faith. That's your first key point if you're doing the sheet. Secondly, we have to listen to him with care.

That's our ears. And third, what about our mouths? Well, there is something for our mouths to do. We are to confess him before men until he comes again.

[35:18] To confess him before men until he comes again. Isn't this the whole reason why Peter and James and John were shown this visible glory of Jesus?

So that they might confess him before men. And we find out how they did that, how they began to do that in the book of Acts. You shall receive power, Acts 1.8, when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you shall be my witnesses.

Yeah? We also see this just before Mark 9. At the end of chapter 8, the Lord Jesus says, for whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. In other words, if we've seen him, then we must say so. If we've seen that he is God's Son, then God calls us to confess that before others.

Sometimes it will be hard. Sometimes there will be a big cost. But let us confess him before men until he comes again.

[36:42] The Lord Jesus is the only Son of the Father. He is the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God.

Let us look to him, let us listen to him, and let us confess him together. We're going to sing. We're going to We're going to