

# The Radiant Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn back to the chapter that we read, Mark chapter 9, and it's only a short passage, so I'm going to read it again from verse 2 down to verse 8.

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. His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 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.

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, Lord, this is my beloved son. Listen to him.

And suddenly looking around they saw, they no longer saw anyone with them, but Jesus only. Every year, to mark the end of the Edinburgh Festival, there is a massive fireworks display.

[ 1 : 31 ] Of course, you know this anyway. And that display involves no less, I'm told, than four tons of explosives and 400,000 fireworks.

It's attended by 250,000 people in Princess Street and the Gardens, all of whom want to be part of this grand event, and all of whom want to see the spectacular display of pyrotechnics.

There is brightness. There is brightness. There is color. There is light. There are patterns. There is noise. Every sense is awakened, and the crowd is struck by awe.

They're silent at what they see. There is a sense of excitement and thrill as everybody watches this marvelous sight.

Same thing happens often at New Year. And again, a spectacle of light and sound and glory. Because that's what it's all about.

[ 2 : 54 ] Glory. What does glory mean? Glory means something spectacular. A display of something wonderful.

Something that leaves you silent. You can only just watch as it happens. Your breath is taken away.

And there are many occasions when that kind of thing happens. There's something within us that wants to watch glory. And because we've never really attained in this life to what God planned for us, then what we do is we create our own glory, like the fireworks.

And like so many other events that we create to excite us and thrill us for a while, because it only lasts for a while.

Our pathetic attempts to create our own glory, they don't last very long. And yet they always remind me that we were created as human beings for glory.

[ 4 : 12 ] And something has happened to spoil it, to spoil the original plan that God had when He created Adam and Eve. There's nothing wrong with wanting to see glory.

There's something natural within us that wants to be awestruck. And very often, the glory that we enjoy in this world is good.

I'm thinking at the moment of a lovely sunset over the mountains, perhaps on the west coast of Scotland. I'm thinking of some of the amazing places in the world, like the Grand Canyon in Arizona, where you stand there and you can't see anything because it is just so fantastic.

I'm thinking of the stars on a clear night that display the majesty of the heavens. And again, you feel so tiny, especially when you discover some of the statistics and the sizes and the distances that are involved.

You feel the sense of awe and amazement. Quite naturally so. That's the way we were created.

[ 5 : 35 ]     God has given us that sense of wonder in the universe because He is glory.

And we are meant, we were designed to reflect as the image of God, something of that glory. And so, when you come to a chapter like this, a chapter that displays the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in visible form, you can't help thinking that Mark is stretching the limits of language to try and describe what's going on here.

You can't help feeling that words can't describe the splendor of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the three disciples, they watch Him physically changing, His appearance physically changing and where He exudes light.

As much as you can say, it's no wonder that the disciples were utterly terrified. This was a scene that they had never seen before.

This was a scene that took their breath away. And it's there for a purpose. And I can't help thinking of the contrast that there is between this spectacle as it contrasts with the rest of the life of Jesus.

[ 7 : 14 ]     If you read the Gospels, as I'm sure you've done often, you'll notice that every event is given in an order. It's a story of one episode after another.

And very often, the link word is the word and. And He went here. And someone came. And He went up the mountain.

And there's something that is often routine because He was part of a routine world. But now something different happens.

Something that is different. Something that is spectacular. I'm not trying to suggest, of course, that His miracles weren't spectacular.

We're going to see in a moment that this was not the only display of the glory of Jesus. The entire life of Jesus was His glory. Every element was a reminder of what God had done in the incarnation in coming into this world and being made in our nature so that He could give Himself to death for us.

[ 8 : 22 ]     Yet there's something unique about this particular occasion that we've read so often. Three things. I just, I don't want to go into it in great detail, but I just, in the short time, just want to just follow the story.

That's all I want to do. I want to follow the story. I want us to see the three things that the story includes. One is that He would be transfigured, that His appearance would change.

Then the disciples, the three disciples, and I'm not going to speculate on why these particular disciples were with Jesus. Why not all twelve of them? I'm not going to speculate.

That's just the way it was. Peter, James, and John. They went with Him and they were the ones that got to see this sight, this display. But they would also eavesdrop on a conversation that took place between Jesus and two people who had lived in the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah.

But then the last thing that the story tells us is that they would hear the voice of God saying, this is my son. Matthew tells us, in whom I am well pleased.

[ 9 : 41 ] Listen to Him. Everything about this story is a display of Jesus' glory. Not just the change in His appearance.

Everything was God with something to say to the disciples and something to say to us in every generation.

God is making Himself known. Jesus changes in His appearance.

There's something really, truly divine about what the disciples see. There were times in the Old Testament where people wanted to see the glory of God.

If you go back to Exodus chapter 33, Moses asked God, Lord, show me Your glory. And God showed him something. We're not quite sure what it was, but what we are sure of is what God announced to him.

[ 10 : 49 ] His mercy as well as His holiness at that moment. What we're also told in the Bible is that it is impossible for any one of us to see the glory of God.

Why is that? Because we are sinners and we're separated from God. We're unable to see the full manifestation of the glory of God. So although the disciples are allowed to see this display of the brightness of Jesus, this heavenly vision, we also know that they cannot see the fullness of God's glory in Jesus Christ because the full heavenly glory because they are sinners and for their own protection God has to keep something back of Himself.

And yet, they see as much as they are permitted to see on this occasion. His face was altered.

His clothing became dazzling white. Matthew tells us His face shone like the sun. His clothes became white as light. for this few moments.

It's like heaven itself descends to the mountain and they get to see God's ultimate purpose.

[ 12 : 26 ] And sometimes we need moments like this. Let me once again go back to the contrast I was talking about earlier on. It contrasts with the day-to-day, daily routine of going from town to village and teaching and meeting with people and with all the stresses that there were and the conversations that took place.

Many of the people who met with Jesus were hostile towards Him. He knew that many of them hated Him. It was no easy thing for Jesus.

It was no easy thing for the disciples either to follow Him. And I can't help thinking that this is a moment when He takes them and where they need to be reminded of the big picture, God's ultimate purpose which is that one day the dwelling of God will be amongst men.

And we need that too. We need these moments when we need to come away from everything else, from all the stresses of this world. And that includes those of us who are involved in ministry and gospel work.

Well, we should all be involved in gospel work. We need to be taken away and we need to be reminded of who God is, what God has done for us and what God's purpose is.

[ 13 : 50 ] We need to get to see the big picture so that we can go back into that routine and often into that hostility refreshed, rebooted if you like, with a fresh reminder of who we are and what God has done for us.

So this was a display of light. Not just the kind of light that the disciples were used to seeing in the sun.

Matthew tells us it was even more radiant than that. Well, what can be more radiant than the sun? What can be more intense than the sun? Matthew doesn't know. He's unable to find something to compare.

This was something that he had never ever, that they had never ever seen before. This was heaven itself or a foretaste of heaven.

A reminder of what God is ultimately going to do and a reminder where we will ultimately be. in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 15 : 13 ] God's ultimate purpose is to create a new heaven and a new earth where the dwelling of God will be amongst men and women and where we will see the face of Jesus Christ in all his unveiled glory.

And then they saw Moses and Elijah that appeared. Moses and Elijah. I'm not going to speculate tonight as to why it was Moses and Elijah.

I'm sure you've often heard people suggesting quite rightly so that Moses represented the law in the Old Testament and Elijah represented the prophets.

prophets. But I do think it's interesting isn't it to think of the connections that there were between Elijah specifically and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Personally I don't know about you but personally I find more of a connection between Moses and Jesus than Elijah and Jesus. Perhaps you can argue with me on that one but I think of the life of Moses and I think of how Moses represented sacrifice in the Old Testament.

[ 16 : 38 ] It was through Moses and Aaron that God instituted the system of the priesthood and the tabernacle the holy place and the most holy place and the outside of the holy place there was the place the altar of burnt offering that was an essential element an essential element in the worship of the people of Israel.

This was the place where they met with God through the mediator of the high priest and it was instituted through Moses and Aaron his brother.

I think of the whole theme of glory through the book of Exodus from the very beginning when Moses stood in front of the burning bush which again was a display of the glory of God and how all the way through the book of Exodus there was the fact that Moses was familiar he was so familiar with God he knew him face to face.

I think of Exodus chapter 24 where Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and the 70 of the elders of Israel they went up again another mountain and they saw the God of Israel there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone like the very heaven for clearness and he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel they beheld God it's one of the strangest verses in the Bible isn't it they beheld God and they ate and drank this was fellowship with God eating and drinking in the presence of God and again here they are again fellowshiping with the son of God as one of themselves God and man there are so many connections between Moses and Jesus Matthew's gospel tells us that when Moses and Elijah appeared and they were talking together it tells us that they talked about his exodus his departure the accomplished departure of the Lord

Jesus Christ and of course by so doing they were referring to his death they were looking towards his death on the cross as the means whereby you and I would be delivered from the power and the dominion of sin and its effects Elijah's accomplished departure took place when he was taken away from this world when he was at the end of a life of obedience and faithfulness to God he had a unique death well he didn't die at all God took him took him to heaven in a chariot in a whirlwind a chariot of fire appeared and took him straight to heaven but although we can wonder at the uniqueness of Elijah's ending in this life and the way in which God took him away from this world there's actually a sense in which that will be the experience for all of God's people when they reach the point where they have to depart this world because their departure is simply a removal from this life into glory itself and the presence of God so many things we could say about Moses and Elijah did Jesus was this a particular moment in his ministry where he needed encouragement there were times he needed strengthening and encouragement we read that angels were sent to encourage him and to minister to him

[ 20 : 50 ] I'm thinking of after the temptation in the wilderness for example maybe this was another moment when Jesus where this was an appropriate time for Jesus to be strengthened with reference to what he had to face in his death on the cross and here was the entirety as it were of the Old Testament being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ I don't think we want to think of Moses and Elijah as having been taken out of heaven on this occasion I would rather think of heaven coming down there's a meeting here between heaven and earth in the person of Jesus Christ and that's of course why Peter wanted to build three tents verse 5

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 well I don't know about you but I can understand why Peter said this because for Peter it just didn't get more marvelous than this for Peter his experience his response is so typically me anyway I'm sure it would be your response as well he loves this moment this moment where he gets to see this glimpse of heaven itself for Peter it doesn't get any better than this so what do you do when you're enjoying something you don't want it to go away you don't want it to end you want it to stay that way but in suggesting this little permanent community of tents he didn't really know what he was saying what he was saying was this

I want both worlds I want heaven to be created where I can see it where I can manage it in a form that I can cope with this is enough for me he was saying I love this it's enough but that's our idea isn't it and what such an idea fails to take into account of is what is God's plan this wasn't God's plan at all because the earth because this heavenly earth was an impossibility in that the earth was still under the power of sin it was still separated from God and there could not be any human involvement in heaven whilst there was sin unpaid for

Jesus had to go on to the cross and to fulfill what needed to happen in order to pay the price of our sin only then could we be reconciled to God and only then could we have the gift of everlasting life only then could we enter into the dwelling of God with men which will take place as it tells us in Revelation at the end of time heaven cannot happen while the earth is in its present sinful form estranged from God the whole creation is groaning Romans 8 tells us heaven can't happen for us unless the same glorious transcendent resplendent Jesus descends into the abyss of agony and his death on the cross

Peter can't have it like this well not yet anyway he has to go back with Jesus they have to face the inevitable if Jesus is going to fulfill the father's will and if he is going to be the sin bearer which he is willing to do so here we have an instance where God lovingly ignores Peter he lovingly ignores him not because Peter's desire was necessarily a wrong one but because it didn't accord with the will of God the last thing that happened in this story is that they heard the father's voice because the time came when Moses and Elijah disappeared and all that was left was Jesus a cloud overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said this is my beloved son in whom

[ 26 : 03 ] I am well pleased this is my beloved son Matthew tells us in whom I am well pleased why do we need to listen to that voice what is so important about this announcement what is so relevant to you and I as we sit in church this evening why do we need to hear God the father saying to his son Jesus of Nazareth this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased I mean what's it to us what the relationship is between the father and the son in the Godhead in heaven what relevance does that have for us it has every relevance because if this is not the case then we have no hope of being right with God perhaps you're reading these words and there's something about these words that actually makes us feel quite uncomfortable isn't it when we hear

God saying about this person Jesus of Nazareth this is my beloved son this is someone in whom I am well pleased and we know that we feel uncomfortable because if God is the only way that God can say that about anyone is if that person is perfect sinless because God himself is sinless and sin results in the anger of God and so if this person brings out the pleasure of God the perfect pleasure of God there's got to be something about this person he's got to be perfect he's got to be sinless or to use the Bible's terms righteous and the reason we feel uncomfortable is because we know we are not righteous we know that we are fallen and that we are sinners that we are guilty and that if we were to stand before

God this evening then he would be able to point to every sordid dark shameful event that has taken place in our thoughts and our words and our actions there is no hiding from God and so when you come to a statement like this which is so radically different this is my son in whom I am well pleased our response is well I'm a million miles from there but what if and here's the bit what if that perfect righteousness could be ours what if God could say tonight about me this is my son in whom I am well pleased what if he could say about you is it possible for God to say that about you this is my daughter in whom

I am well pleased what if we could have the righteousness of Jesus Christ the righteousness that we don't have by ourselves the gospel says we can have it the gospel says that on the cross Jesus took all our shame and our badness and our guilt on himself he became guilty of all the stuff that makes us so ashamed when we would think when we think of standing before God tonight and the stuff that God sees in all its detail Jesus became guilty of our sin and he took the punishment for it and his righteousness became ours on the cross so that our standing as we trust in

Jesus as we accept what he has done on the cross by faith as we take the gift that God gives to us this evening we can say that we are right with God and that God loves us with an everlasting love through the Lord Jesus Christ that's why we need to hear Jesus that's why God's command to us tonight is listen to Jesus because that's what he has to say to us come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and burdened and I will give you rest he tells us tonight that he is the good shepherd he tells us tonight that he is the way the truth and the life and that no one can come to the father except through him so as we look at this passage once again

[ 31 : 42 ] I'm sure it's a passage that a story that you've read very very often I want us to see not just one place where we see the glory of Jesus because it's tempting to read a passage like this and say well this is the real Jesus this is the real son of God because he's described to us in the brightness and the splendor of his glory but I want us to remember this evening that this is only one incident the whole life of Jesus is his glory the disciples the very same disciples who saw this heavenly display on this occasion as they followed Jesus they also saw him at his lowest in the garden of

Gethsemane they were the same ones who witnessed the same Jesus kneeling before his father and saying father if it be possible take this cup from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done and that was as much the glory of God in Jesus in giving himself on the cross for you and me as his splendor at the top of the mountain because the glory of God is what he has done for us as lost sinners to receive us for himself I hope you've already discovered this greatness the splendor of Jesus and if so I would hope that with with me we will want together to worship him all the more for what he has done but if you don't know him then come and accept what

Jesus has done for us and ask him to come into your life to reveal himself to you to make himself known to you and to bring you into his kingdom so that you too will have the forgiveness of sins and so that you too will be born again and be raised to newness of life let's pray our father in heaven we thank you for our time together and we pray that you will speak to each one of us many of us here tonight who need encouragement many of us who need instruction many of us need to be challenged we need to be forgiven and we pray Lord also for anyone who's not a Christian this evening that you will bring them into your kingdom through your word through the Lord Jesus Christ in his name amen we're going to sing together in closing in Psalm 27 it's the

Sing Psalms version and it's verse 4 to verse 8 it's on page 32 Psalm 27 the Sing Psalms version page 32 and verse 4 one thing I'll plead before the Lord and this I'll seek always that I may come within God's house and dwell there all my days we're going to sing from 4 to verse 8 and we'll stand to sing back to Me throughout Me Who Parts are the Lord before the Lord