



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A Moment in Time--pt. 1 (Mark 9:2-8)

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For the interim session, we plan to meet most Wednesdays during the 12noon-1pm lunch hour in House Hearing Room #6. I hope you are able to make many of our studies. We will continue our study in the Gospel of Mark.

There are events in our life that will always be etched in our memories—we can remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when we heard the news.

--I was driving to Wal-Mart in Emporia KS along I-35 on Sept. 11, 2001, when the guys on sports radio 810 were talking about a plane that hit one tower of the World Trade Center and suddenly they burst out and said another plane hit the other tower.

--I was in my small engine mechanics class at Central High School in Springfield, MO on March 30, 1981 when our teacher turned on the radio and we heard that President Reagan was shot.

--I had just hit a beautiful drive, and was looking at an easy shot to the green on the par-5 ninth hole at the Emporia Golf Course when a girl on a cart ask one of my buddies if he was Paul Meinsen. He pointed at me and she drove over to tell me my wife was having our first baby.

Others can remember where they were when they heard the news that President Kennedy was assassinated or Pearl Harbor was bombed. Whether, big or small, national or personal, these types of memories stay with us.

The Apostle Peter had the same thing happen to him. One can sense Peter's excitement, even though approximately 35-40 years had passed since this moment in time.

2 Peter 1:16-18 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"--and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

This event, which was so impressed upon the memory of Peter, is the focal point of our discussion today and is found in Mark 9.

By asking questions, Jesus clearly revealed Himself as the promised Messiah, the Son of God (Mark 8:29; Matthew 16:16). And this information would have energized the disciples since He is the One who was promised to restore Israel back to its glory.

But then Jesus declared that He is going to Jerusalem, not for triumph, but to suffer, die and be raised back from the dead (Mark 8:31). Peter then rebuked Jesus for saying this (8:32), but Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "Get behind Me, Satan." (8:33)

Jesus continued by describing a true disciple—someone who will deny himself, take up his cross and follow Him. The person who desires to save his life will lose it, but the one who dies for Jesus' sake will live (8:34-38). And Jesus then promised that some there will see the kingdom of God come with power. (9:1).

The disciples had to mumbling and fumbling around trying to figure out what in the world Jesus is talking about. He had just shaken their worldview because what He said about the Messiah was not what they had always been taught and believed.

But six days later, the "some" that Jesus promised in 9:1 were about to witness the most incredible event in their lives—and they have seen some great ones: demons cast out, storms calmed, sick and crippled people healed, and even the dead raised— but this one will top them all.

Mark 9:2-8 Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

CAPITOL COMMISSION INTERIM BIBLE STUDIES

CAPITOL BUILDING: WEDNESDAYS @ 12NOON, HEARING ROOM #6

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4THFLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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INTRODUCTION

We plan to take two studies to unpack what the disciples saw on that mountain—even that is not really enough. This study is going to examine the confirmation of Jesus’ Messiahship evident in the transfiguration. The next study will look at the impact of the transfiguration on His mission.

There are three confirmations that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God in His transfiguration event: the transformation of His body, the appearance of Old Testament saints and the declaration of the Father.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF HIS BODY (9:2-3)

Six days after the assuring promise that some there would not taste death before seeing the kingdom of God coming with power, Jesus took some of those--Peter, James, John--to a high mountain. Mt. Hermon seems to be the logical choice, even though it is not possible to know exactly which mountain this event took place. While on this mountain with the three disciples, Jesus was “transfigured” before their eyes.

The Greek word used by the gospel’s author, Mark, was μεταμορφόωμαι (metamorphoomi). This word is translated here as “transfigured”. It always denotes a “radical change” or transformation. It is the root of the word used today in explaining what happens as a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. It was used by the Apostle Paul as he admonished...*do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...* (Romans 12:2; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18).

It seems that Jesus was not changed in His physical nature as He was still a man and not a ghost or spirit, and the disciples still recognized Him. What was “transfigured” was His appearance. Matthew noted that Jesus’ face “shone like the sun” (Matthew 17:2) and Luke recorded that “the appearance of His face became different” (Luke 9:29).

His clothing also became radiant; literally “shining”, a word used to describe the glistening of polished metal or the shining of the stars. They became “exceedingly white”. Mark described them “as no launderer on earth can whiten them.” It is almost as if Mark could not fully express what was seen (Matthew wrote “as white as light” and Luke “white and gleaming”).

There was no natural explanation for what the disciples saw. For a moment in time they were shown the radiance of Jesus. For a moment, they observed Jesus without his veil of humanity; rather, they looked upon His divine glory.

The disciples had seen many signs that revealed Jesus’ divinity. But this was beyond anything they had seen before. Therefore, this display of glory sealed in their mind that Jesus is truly the Messiah. This is understood in the gospel of John when He wrote: *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14--emphasis mine); echoing Peter’s statement “we were eyewitnesses of His glory”.

The disciples witnessed Jesus’ divine glory unveiled, but they also saw that He was not alone.

SO WHEN JESUS SAID, “IF ANYONE WANTS TO COME AFTER ME, THEN HE MUST DENY HIMSELF, TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW ME”, IT WAS TO BE HEEDED.

THE APPEARANCE OF OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS (9:4-6)

Two heroes of Jewish history joined Jesus and the three disciples on the mount. Both of these historical people also showed in a glorious appearance (Luke 9:31). The first noted by Mark was the prophet, Elijah.

Elijah was considered the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. His ministry included confrontations with the idolatrous king and wicked queen of the northern kingdom. He prophesied a coming drought, raised a widow’s son from the dead (1 Kings 17), and called down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18). He did not die a physical death, but was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2). Elijah was prophesied to return at the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6).

The second Jewish hero was Moses. He was considered the pattern of Old Testament prophets. He was the one through whom the law was given to Israel. His ministry involved confrontations with the Egyptian Pharaoh and the 10 plagues leading up to the exodus of Israel (Exodus 1-14). He received the Law from God on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19ff). He was the leader of the Israelites as they wandered in the desert, but he did not lead the nation into

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the Promised Land. Moses also predicted that a prophet like him will come one day in the future (Deuteronomy 18:15)--this foretelling of Jesus.

What does the appearance of these Jewish heroes mean? While there is much symbolism and possible meanings, two seem to stand out. First, Jesus standing with these two prophets symbolized the coming of the long awaited Messiah. Their work, along with the other prophets, pointed to this day; and their appearance with Jesus, showed that the day is here.

Secondly, it showed Jesus' climactic place in the continual work of God. Moses and the Law were not the pinnacle, the Law pointed to Christ. Elijah and his ministry, as great and important as it was, was not the high point of God's work. The work of both prophets culminated in the person Jesus; and His future death and resurrection.

This glorious event overwhelmed the disciples, especially Peter. He threw out a suggestion, probably more from fear and ignorance than anything else (Mark 9:6). It would have been better to have remained silent, but in the amazement of the moment, he offered to be of service to Jesus and the prophets. It is hard to fault him for his idea. As one commentator wrote, "The proposal is simply a clumsy way for a practical man to express his sense of the occasion..."¹

Jesus' glory revealed and the appearance of the great prophets, Elijah and Moses, would be enough to confirm Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, but the God the Father weighs in with one more sign to place a final exclamation point on the event.

THE DECLARATION OF THE FATHER (9:7-8)

Peter did not receive an answer to his terrified statement. Instead, a cloud came down to engulf the scene. This was reminiscent of what took place before in Israel's history. When God came to Mt. Sinai to address the people, He descended in a cloud (Exodus 19). When God entered the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the cloud of glory filled it (Exodus 40:34-35). And when the Temple built by Solomon was dedicated, the building was shrouded in a cloud of glory (2 Chronicles 5:13-6:1). At this moment in time, as God the Father spoke, He did so as a cloud descended upon the mountain.

This statement was very similar to the announcement given when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, nearly two years earlier (Mark 1:11). At both events was the declaration concerned the truth that Jesus was God the Father's beloved Son.

The difference between the two proclamations was the intended audience. At the baptism of Jesus, God spoke to Jesus, "You are my beloved Son..." At the transfiguration, the message was to the disciples "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him!"

In this announcement, God the Father is declaring several things about Jesus. First of all, God is declaring Jesus to be of the same essence as Himself in the sense that a son is like his father. This truth is further taught later by the biblical authors. John emphasized this theme in his gospel (cf. John 5:17-20; 8:19, 42; 10:30, 36-38); even recording Jesus' own statement that "*I and My Father are one.*" (John 10:30). The other apostles repeated in their letters (Romans 1:1-4; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:3, 15; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 1:3; 2 John 3); as does the unknown author of the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:1-4):

Hebrews 1:3 And He (Jesus) is the radiance of His (God) glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Secondly, in calling Jesus His **beloved Son**, God the Father also declared their relationship of divine love. They had a relationship of mutual love, commitment, and identification in every way. And thirdly, by saying, "This is My beloved Son," God was also reminding the disciples who had the right of authority. The command to "Listen to Him" was not just physically hearing what He said, but one was to obey what He said. "Listen" was a command to be heeded.

In bringing this into context, Jesus had declared His Messiahship through the questions to His disciples. He then discussed what the future held in store for Him--a future of rejection, persecution, death and resurrection. Peter vehemently disagreed and Jesus strongly rebuked him. Through this amazing event, Peter was shown that his preconceived ideas and things he may have been taught concerning the person and work of the Messiah were not right. God declared that whatever His Son said was the authority. So when Jesus said, "If anyone wants to come after me, then he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me", it was to be observed.

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APPLICATION

There will be more in the next study but for now, there are two quick points.

A. The transfiguration instructs us as to the true nature of Jesus. After this event, His divinity cannot be denied or refuted (even though people continually attempt to do so). Christ's miracles over nature, sickness, the demonic world and even death were enough, but this sign is an exclamation, "no-doubt-about-it" testimony that Jesus is the Messiah and God's Son.

B. Revelation demands a response. The natural instinct is fear and worship, falling on our faces before Him. But the practical continuation of our response comes at the divine instruction to listen to, that is, to obey Jesus. If Jesus truly is the Lord of Glory and not just a man from Galilee, then we must worship Him and obey Him.

CONCLUSION

Now, let's go back to 2 Peter 1:16-18, which we read in the introduction. Peter is saying that the things they are following were not "cleverly devised tales". What they believe and were teaching were things that they saw--they were eyewitnesses. They were there on the mountain as these things took place.

- They saw His majesty as He was transformed before their eyes.
- They watched as God gave Jesus honor and glory.
- They heard the words from God "This is my beloved Son".

It was truly a moment in time that Peter will never forget.

Through Jesus Christ, the glorious son of God, God can forgive your sins, are you interested?

¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 354.