

A Kingdom Preview

Mark 9:1 – 13

Proposition: This passage of Scripture highlights for us what the glorified state will be like for those in Christ Jesus.

Application: *Look* to the Lord Jesus and *believe*. *Listen* to the Lord Jesus and *obey*. *Learn* from the Lord Jesus and *grow*.

In Valladolid Spain, the city where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, stands a statue that honours his life. At the base of the statue is inscribed a statement in Latin which had been part of Spain's National Motto for years – *NE PLUS ULTRA*. It means “*No more beyond.*” Before Columbus sailed across the ocean, Spaniards thought nothing was beyond them, but a vast expanse of water. It was Spain's pride and glory that their country was the outpost of the world. But Columbus proved that there is *MORE BEYOND*. In the statue, a lion's paw is seen destroying the word “*NE*”, leaving the words “*PLUS ULTRA*” which means “*More Beyond.*” The transfiguration of Jesus is proof that there is more beyond this life. Although death is a bitter pill, we all must taste, sooner or later, this passage of Scripture lays out for us what lies beyond. It highlights what the glorified state will be like for those in Christ Jesus.

Before the Lord was to take His final journey to Jerusalem, where He will be condemned by Jewish leaders and crucified by Roman guards, He gives His three men a glimpse of glory. This morning, we get to have a mountain top experience as we explore the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus.

I. Look – And Believe in the Lord Jesus (9:1 – 6)

Preview of the Kingdom (9:1 – 3): Jesus led Peter, James and John, up a high mountain and gave them a preview of the glory to be revealed at His second coming. Like a movie trailer, they saw in miniature *the kingdom of God*. They witnessed a dress rehearsal of what they will be like in the messianic reign. The mountain upon which this event occurred was likely Mt Hermon near Caesarea Philippi, a mountain that stands about 3000 meters above sea level. Jesus went up this mountain to pray. It was evening (Luke 9:28, 32a). While praying Jesus was transfigured. God's answer to Jesus' prayers was transformation. As we commune with God the indwelling Spirit brings about a change in our inner being (2 Cor 3:18). Mountain top experiences with the Lord help us get through the dark valleys of life. This experience helped prepare Jesus for the cross.

When Jesus took on human flesh, His glory was veiled. Without veiling His glory Jesus would not be able to dwell among us. But on that mountain His glory burst through the veil of His flesh. When He returns, the same glory will be displayed to the whole world.

The Greek word for *transfiguration* is *metamorphosis* – which means *to change form*. *Metamorphosis* is the visible change of outward form as an expression of the true inner being. For instance, tadpoles are transformed into frogs. The DNA of the frog is the same as the tadpole, but the outward form changes. Caterpillars are transformed into butterflies. The DNA of the caterpillar is the same as the butterfly only the outward form is changed. The transfiguration is a picture of our own glorification. The glory of Moses and Elijah will be the same glory we one day will possess when we enter God's kingdom. Just as Peter recognized Moses and Elijah in their glorified state, we who are in Christ Jesus, will recognize each other in our glorified bodies. We will not lose our essential identity. Our body will be transformed but our perfect DNA will be the same. The transfiguration is a picture of the future glory that awaits the child of God (1 John 3:2).

The presence of Elijah and Moses suggests the Law and Prophets bear witness to Jesus.

Presence of Law and Prophets (9:4): Moses' and Elijah's presence were signs that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17). These two men also hint at the two ways the people of God will meet Jesus. When the Lord returns, He will raise the bodies of saints who have died, and He will rapture the saints who are still alive at that time (1 Thess 4:16, 17). Moses died and was buried by God (Deut 34:5, 6a). Moses is a symbol of the risen saints at the return of the Lord. Elijah never died but was caught up in heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Elijah is a symbol of the raptured saints caught up in the air to meet the Lord at His return.

The Law and Prophets were talking with Jesus. What were they talking about? Luke gives the answer (Luke 9:30, 31). They were speaking about His death. Perhaps they rejoiced that once and for all Jesus would atone for sin and then enter His glory.

The meeting was so awesome for Peter, he wanted to prolong the mountain top experience.

Prolonging the Experience (9:5, 6): Peter wanted to make the glory last, so he offered to start a building project. He may have been thinking about the *Feast of Booths*. The *Feast of Booths* recalls Israel's journey through the desert while living in tents. The *Feast of Booths* also points forward to Israel's final regathering as a nation under the rule of the Messiah. Religious Jews believe the Messiah comes to set up His messianic kingdom on the *Feast of Booths*.

Sooner or later, we must come down from our spiritual high and engage in the daily grind of life. It is indeed a great thing to be on a mountain with God but most of life is lived in the valley. Retreats are good for spiritual renewal to prepare us for life in the valley. But if we remain on a spiritual retreat, ministry in the valley may be hindered. Had Jesus remained in His transfigured state He would not have atoned for our sin.

The three disciples had a vision of God's glory now they hear God's voice.

II. Listen – And Obey the Lord Jesus (9:7, 8)

Presence of God (9:7, 8): A cloud guided Israel through the desert. A cloud rested on the temple in Jerusalem. A cloud is a symbol of God's presence. A cloud is also a symbol of the Lord's return (14:62). The same voice that was uttered at Jesus' baptism, now spoke at His transfiguration. Peter later wrote about this event (2 Pet 1:16 – 18).

Notice what God said about Jesus.

My Beloved: God the Father and God the Son are not like business partners running the cosmos. The closest example we have of a *beloved relationship* is between a father and his son. Not only is Jesus *beloved* by God He is also God's *Son*.

Son: A few days earlier Peter declared Jesus to be the Son of God. Now God Himself declares Jesus as His Son. Jesus is not just a Rabbi; He is not just a Prophet; He is not an angel; He is not any of the things culture or religions make Him out to be. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, and we are to give constant heed to Him.

Listen to Him: This is a command! *Listen* means to hear in order to obey. *Listen* is a day-by-day hearing of the Word of God and a day-by-day doing the Word of God. We will not be able to listen to the Lord Jesus, until we first know Him as our Lord and Saviour.

God's high regard for Jesus came from three parts in Scripture – the law, the prophets, and the writings (Ps 2:7b (My Son); Isa 42:1c (Beloved); Deut 18:15d (listen)).

A movie trailer is a foretaste of a full feature film. Like a movie trailer the kingdom preview was not the full-length reality. The kingdom drew near but the kingdom was not set up. The kingdom will be set up only when the King returns. The time between the kingdom preview and the kingdom reality is the church age. The church is the means through which God achieves His salvation plan for the nations. Jesus' alone reigning in our hearts is more than enough to live a godly life in this dark and sinful world.

Sometimes Jesus calls us to a mountain top to commune with Him. Other times He bids us to go into the valley to serve Him.

III. Learn – And Grow in the Grace of the Lord Jesus (9:9 – 13)

Perplexed Disciples (9:9, 10): The men going down the mountain were not the same men who went up the mountain. Spending time with the Lord always leaves a mark on us. Time spent with the Lord Jesus brings about some change in our inner being. It is no use to go into the

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valley and minister to others until we have first communed with the Lord on the mountain top. We should not go down into the field of service until we have first gone up the hill to the place of prayer. The place of prayer is where we receive power to serve.

Peter, James and John were likely eager to descend the mountain and share with the rest of the disciples what they had witnessed. So why did Jesus issue a gag order? Because the cross comes before the crown. Atonement for sin comes before the reign of the Saviour. Jesus' complete messianic profile includes both the cross and the crown. The disciples would not be able to grasp the crown until they first witnessed the cross. They would not be able to grasp the reign of the Lord Jesus until they first witnessed the resurrection of the Lord. The message of the transfiguration could only be understood in light of the resurrection. After the resurrection, proclamation would be the order of the day!

Priority of Elijah (9:11 – 13): The scribes were not in error to believe that Elijah will come before the return of the Lord (Mal 4:5, 6). The presence of Elijah prompted the disciples to ask this question: “*If you are the Messiah, why did Elijah only appear now?*” Elijah will appear as the forerunner, before the day of judgement to warn Israel to repent and return to the Lord. As people repent and return to the Lord broken family relationships are restored. Family is dear to God's heart and a relationship with the Lord mends broken families.

Before the crown there is a cross. And when we bring together all the Elijah passages in Scripture, we find they point to two comings of the Messiah. Jesus first comes as a Saviour and then He comes again as a Sovereign. John the Baptist as a type of Elijah appeared before the Saviour in the Spirit, power and ministry of Elijah. Before the return of Jesus as the Sovereign King, the real Elijah – the Elijah of the transfiguration – will come. Elijah has come and Elijah is coming again. Jesus has come and Jesus is coming again.

In closing, *look to the Lord Jesus and believe!* Jesus came to redeem sinners. He came to reconcile us to God. He came to atone for our sin. Jesus alone is more than enough to deal with the greatest problems we face.

Listen to the Lord Jesus and obey. How do we listen to the Lord? Do we go hike into the woods, sit below a tree and wait for the still small voice? Do we search the pages of a Christian book seeking to hear God's voice? Do we wait for a dream or a night vision from the Lord? We hear the voice of God through the Word of God. Scripture is the only sure voice of God. Once we have heard His voice through His Word then we obey.

Lastly, *learn from the Lord.* What are we to learn? Learn what His plan and program is for the end of days, so that you might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus.