

## Unveiling the Glory of Christ

### Mark 9:1-10

At the heart of Mark's gospel is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But there is another key event which is closely related in which the eternal glory of the Son of God was unveiled before the eyes of three of the disciples. This event is typically referred to as the transfiguration.

The events described at the end of chapter 8 (vv. 27-38) and the beginning of chapter 9 (vv. 1-10) are the pivot point of Mark's Gospel. It is at this point where Peter made his famous confession of faith: "You are the Christ" (vs. 29). Jesus followed that by declaring the necessity of his death and the cost to all those who will follow him: "If anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (vs. 34).

With those two passages the whole gospel of Mark is redirected. It has, as it were, gone over the watershed of its development, and from this moment on the narrative drives towards Golgotha and resurrection. Only then did Jesus, for a moment, reveal to Peter, James, and John his true nature as God in the flesh. "He was transfigured before them" (vs. 2). His face and clothing shone with an unearthly glory, the glory he had with his Father before creation, and "his clothes became intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them" (9:3).



**Main Idea:** The eternal glory of Jesus Christ encourages disciples with the news that their suffering in following Jesus is not in vain.

### 1. What the Transfiguration meant to the disciples.

- The transfiguration must be seen in light of the two previous passages in Mark's account: Peter's confession of Christ (8:27-30) and Jesus' instruction concerning his death and the cost of discipleship (8:31-38). A theme throughout the Gospels is the disciple's persistent misunderstanding concerning the person and work of Jesus. Even when Peter made his faithful confession (8:27) it seems clear that he remained ignorant about what it truly meant for Jesus to be the Christ.
- Vs. 2 – The high mountain reminds us of Mt. Sinai, where Moses beheld the glory of the Lord. It is probably Mt. Hermon which is not far from Caesarea Philippi where the previous scene occurred and which is a high mountain.
- Vs. 3 – The glory shown forth from Jesus was not a reflective glory akin to that experienced by Moses after he would meet with God. The glory of Jesus is one which belongs to his nature. As the eternal Son, his is the glory which belongs to the Triune God. This is the only time any human creature has beheld the Son in such a way. Following his resurrection Jesus was seen in his glorified flesh, that is in the same state that we will have in the age to come; a perfected human nature. But in the transfiguration Jesus was beheld in his unveiled divinity.
- Vs. 4 – Moses and Elijah appear on the scene speaking with Jesus. Both were great prophets and deliverers of God's people. Both had magnificent moments on mountains and had enjoyed direct encounters with God. Here their presence would remind the disciples that Jesus is the ultimate prophet to and deliverer of God's people greater than even Moses and Elijah. Jesus was not a "walk-on" in world history. He was not the leader of a start-up religion

or obscure cult. Jesus stood in continuity with Israel's history as the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham.

- Vs. 7 – The cloud of God's presence would have been another reminder of this continuity harkening back to the Exodus and God's presence with his people in the form of a cloud. The voice from Heaven is similar to what was experienced at Jesus' baptism. Here the command to listen to Jesus would certainly have applied to what he had been teaching them about his impending death which was a constant stumbling block.
- Vv. 9-10 – Jesus comforts them with the assurance of his resurrection. But even then they wonder what was meant by his words. They simply could not seem to grasp the plain meaning of Jesus words either about his death or his resurrection.
- What the transfiguration meant to the disciples was not fully realized until after Jesus was crucified and risen. It was only then that the disciples could fully understand that Jesus was far more than a great prophet or miracle worker sent by God. The transfiguration now stood as proof that Jesus was the Word made flesh, *I Am* made visible. Both John and Peter later wrote about seeing Jesus' glory. It was this undeniable confirmation of the deity of Jesus which would keep them faithful through their sufferings to the very end.

## **2. What the Transfiguration meant to Jesus.**

- Vs. 7 – “This is my beloved Son...” Once again the Father speaks publicly in affirmation of the Son. We must keep in mind that Jesus took upon himself a human nature (Phil. 2:5ff). And in identifying with us in all our frailty he benefited from encouragement. He was now entering into the final stages of his mission. He would soon be in Jerusalem where he would have to embrace an unimaginably cruel death. In preparing him for such a terrible path the Father blessed the Son by this moment when his human nature was outshone by his eternal deity.
- There is mystery here to be sure. Jesus is no less God, no less eternal, no less glorious than the Father and the Holy Spirit. In his humanity Jesus did not lessen himself. He did not cast aside his deity. The emptying referred to by Paul (Phil. 2:6ff) was accomplished not by removing anything but rather by adding. Specifically Jesus “emptied” by taking on a human nature (Phil. 2:7). And it was in his human nature that Jesus identified with his human creatures.
- What an encouragement, therefore, the transfiguration must have been to Jesus. His Father, with whom he shared the same essence, the same authority, and the same glory, now spoke in affirmation of Jesus in his human nature: “This is my beloved Son” (9:7). His eternal glory was allowed, if just for a moment, to be shone forth. The frailties he had experienced during his life among us were momentarily eclipsed by his divine perfections.

## **3. What the Transfiguration means to us.**

- So much of life is painful. This can at times be especially true for Christians who are aware that things are not the way they are supposed to be. Add to this the fact that following Jesus in a world that hates God means that our lives will be troubled. Jesus promised his disciples that the world would hate them. And so many of our brothers and sisters around the world experience this hatred daily. The transfiguration of Jesus reminds us that the sufferings of this present life are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us in the age to come (Romans 8:18).