

A Glimpse of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Let's open up to Mark chapter 9. We're going to be reading from verse 2 through to verse 13. And 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. And 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're 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.

[1 : 11] 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 them out to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 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. Well, I wonder if you could have been with Jesus at any one point of his life, just one, right? Which one would you like to have been at?

[2 : 20] Maybe in Bethlehem where he was born with the donkeys and the goats all bleeding around the place, maybe there. Or maybe a little bit while later when the wise men turned up from the east and brought their gifts and gave them to Jesus.

Maybe at his baptism when the dove came down and God spoke. Or when he raised the dead girl to life.

Or maybe when he fed the 5,000 in the wilderness. Or maybe when he fed the 4,000 in the wilderness. When he cured a blind man, made him see.

Maybe when he cut off the soldier's ear and stuck it back on his head. Maybe when he went to the cross. Maybe when he appeared after his resurrection.

Or maybe when he ascended to glory. I wonder what it would have been like to have been there at the transfiguration. That was a special occasion.

[3 : 28] It only happened once. And only a select few disciples saw it. And it's an event loaded with Old Testament imagery.

Now last week, Jesus built things out for us. You can see here on the map, Jesus was on his way from Bethsaida. It's down near the Lake of Galilee.

And he was heading up north to Caesarea Philippi. And on the way, he said some things to them. Remember what he said? Those who lose their life now will save it.

And those who save their lives now will lose it in the future. You see there, chapter 8, verse 35.

This is what he taught them. On the way up to Caesarea Philippi said this to them. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses life for my sake and the Gospels will save it.

[4 : 32] What it means to follow Jesus, if you hear his word and listen to him carefully, clearly, he's saying it's all about denying self-rule. It's all about taking up our cross.

It's all about dying to our self-appointed ways of living and following Jesus. It's about losing our life for Jesus and for the Gospel.

That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus. And the going will not always be easy, but it'll be worth it. I mean, for us to lose our life for Jesus and the Gospel means that we will be saved for all eternity.

And then Jesus promises, you saw there in chapter 9, verse 1. Truly I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God after it has come with power.

That some who are standing with him there when he was on the way to Caesarea Philippi, as he talked about dying and rising, he talked about giving your life and saving your life, some who were with him there would not die until they saw the Kingdom of God come.

[5 : 54] Now, does that raise any connections with you, Mark's Gospel? Well, it should. In Mark chapter 1, chapter 1, verse 15, it says, The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe the Gospel. And here, the arrival of the Kingdom is imminent. And then six days after he said this to them, in chapter 9, verse 2, Jesus has most likely gone up to Mount Hermon, which is a mountain just near, just north of Caesarea Philippi, where he'd been heading to.

So he'd gone up there, he's on that mountain range there somewhere. And at this transfiguration, Jesus gives his inner band of disciples, Peter, James and John, a glimpse of glory, a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

He gives them a glimpse into the future, what it's going to look like, what it really is. And at the same time, he gives us a glimpse into the future, into the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James and John. He's metamorphosised, is kind of the word behind it all. It's the idea of what happens when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly.

[7 : 14] Jesus is still Jesus, right? But he's seen in all his glory with the limitations of humanity removed. And so far in Mark's Gospel, Mark's been revealing who Jesus is bit by bit.

In chapter 8 and chapter 9, his identity is fully made clear, but it's a little bit murky still for those close to him. Peter has the right title for Jesus, but has the wrong content for who Jesus is. It's sort of like an Australian. An Australian is understanding what a mountain is. It isn't until we realise that the mountains in Australia are really hills compared to the mountains of the rest of the world.

Or it's like a student talking about work, but they've got no idea what work is until they join the workforce. Or maybe it's like people talking about how great it will be to be married until they actually get married.

And for some, it's really hard work to be married. In Mark chapter 9, Jesus' identity is further revealed. Peter, James and John, the inner circle, are alone on the mountain and they see Jesus with Moses and Elijah.

[8 : 24] Now, what other mountaintop experiences does that remind you of in the Old Testament? What can you recall in the Bible about mountaintop experiences?

Well, Mount Sinai, I would think, would be high on the list. In Exodus chapter 19, Moses receives the Ten Commandments for the first time. And in Exodus chapter 24, verse 15, Moses is meeting with God.

In chapter 24, verse 15 of Exodus, Moses went up on the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days.

And then on the seventh day, he was called out to Moses in the midst of the cloud. And God spoke to Moses. Or again, in Mount Sinai, in 1 Kings chapter 19, it's called Horeb there, but it's the same thing.

In 1 Kings chapter 19, Elijah also spoke with God in the wind and the earthquake and the small voice. It took him 40 days to get there after he fled from Jezebel, who had killed a great number of the Lord's prophets.

[9 : 31] And the Israelites under Jezebel had rejected the word of God and killed the prophets in Noah, worshipping Baal. Well, what's the significance of Elijah and Moses being there?

Well, Jesus is in a remote place. And here in verse 4, Jesus is accompanied by the great prophets of the wilderness. Moses, under whom the nation of Israel was formed and gave Israel the very word of God.

He gave them the first covenant, the Old Testament. Moses was reviled by his own people at times. He was the one who led God's people out of slavery, to the promised land, heaven, if you like, for the Jew.

The kingdom of God, if you like, was supposed to be, under Solomon's glory, it was fantastic. It's Moses who brings the Israelites into the blessing of God, suffering himself as he does so. And not only that, Deuteronomy 18, to be ringing loud and now clear as well, that there will be another prophet just like Moses who would come and the people are told to listen to him. [10:57] Deuteronomy 18, verse 15, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet, just like me from among you, from your brothers. It's to him that you shall listen.

What about Elijah? Elijah is the appointed restorer of all things. That's who he is. Elijah's presence indicates that the fulfilment of all things has arrived.

That's what we'll see shortly in chapter 9, verse 12. Elijah never died, remember? He was one who was taken up in the whirlwind up to heaven and he was to return when the great and terrible day of the Lord came.

The restoration of Israel is about a great day and a terrible day. It comes with a great day of salvation and a terrible day of judgment as well. And the judgment will begin with the house of Israel, as Elijah spoke of the judgment of God coming on Israel.

Elijah is one who brought the blessings of God to the Gentiles and not the Jews. Luke chapter 4 speaks about it. He tells us that when Elijah didn't go to the widows in Jerusalem, when there were lots of widows in Jerusalem suffering at the time, but he went to the widow of Zarephath, who was not one of God's people, and she survived, she got food.

[12:20] Elijah should remind us that God's people rejected their prophets and killed the other prophets of his day. Elijah didn't listen to his word. Here is someone who suffered before he tasted glory.

He was the one who thought he was the only prophet who was left and was exiled. God had plans for blessing the Gentiles as well. And notice what Peter wants to do.

He wants to build them booths. He wants to make the moment permanent. He's overwhelmed by what he's witnessing. What do I do with this? He's thinking. He's not sure what's going on.

And so Peter, along with James and John, actually terrified at what's happening here. Could you imagine? You're on the mountain, in the cloud, and God speaking, and there's Moses and Elijah. Doesn't know what to say. So he says something about setting up three tents, three tabernacles, three tents of meeting at one level. One for Moses, one for Elijah, one for Jesus. Just like Moses had in the wilderness, where Moses would go and talk with God.

[13:32] What they are seeing in the transfiguration of Jesus, the metamorphosis of Jesus, is this. They are getting to peak into the glorious kingdom of God when Jesus is glorified as king.

The glorified son of man who is king of the kingdom. They are seeing what a very privileged few, very limited number of people have ever seen before they tasted death.

They are seeing what every disciple of Jesus will one day see. Maybe soon. Maybe 10,000 years. But one day, every disciple of Jesus will see it. I wonder what Jesus was talking to Moses and Elijah about.

What was the arm they were having? Well, the good news is Luke 9, verse 31 tells us they were talking about his departure. They were talking about his exodus, literally his exodus.

[14:45] They're talking about the cross where he would suffer death, be buried, and rise again, and bring about salvation for God's people.

And they're marvelling, I suspect, at the way that God has actually revealed his plans and purposes and his categories in the Old Testament. Now, Jesus, it's about to happen.

We've been longing for this day. We've been longing for this day. And the disciples then hear God speak again. It's the second time that he's spoken these kinds of words in Mark.

Mark, chapter 1, verse 11. You are my son, whom I love. With you I'm well pleased. And here in chapter 9, verse 7, what's it say?

A cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud. God, this is my beloved son.

[15:50] Listen to him. God vindicates his son, confirms who he is, and tells his disciples clearly what to do.

Listen to him. Now, brothers and sisters, we need to be those who listen to Jesus as well and hear the word of God.

Spending time, prioritising time, to hear the scriptures opened up for us. Longing to actually open the scriptures up and hearing what they have to say and listening to the words of life.

Spending time opening the scriptures for ourselves and understanding and hearing God speak to us. Sitting under the scriptures rather than sitting over the scriptures.

Having them shape our lives. Mulling over the scriptures so that God's word shapes our very being from the core inwards out. Now, it's quite obvious that these disciples had not really been listening to him.

[17:08] I mean, Peter didn't want to entertain any idea of Jesus dying. So instead of listening, he had given Jesus a bit of lip. Given his mind.

But remember what Jesus has said. Let's hear again what he says in 8.35. Chapter 8, verse 35. Listen to what Jesus says. Well, pick up verse 34. And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words and his 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.

[18:23] That's what Jesus has just been saying. Those who lose their lives for him now will gain it in the future. Those who save their lives now will lose it in the future.

Think about it a different way. I was trying to rattle through this and think of it in a different way this week. And it doesn't work. Right? But just bear with me for a while. Right? Try this little experiment. What if it was like this? Invest all your money Right? Your life in a company that's guaranteed to pay big time Right?

even if the analysts say it's foolish. And in the future not too far off you will gain a billion times over. spend all your money now on lollipops that taste good and in the future have sugar diabetes no teeth and the bank foreclose on your house.

[19:43] you choose. What makes more sense? It depends if the analysts are right or wrong doesn't it?

Anyway back to the passage for the disciples verses 9 and 10 the transfiguration is all too confusing. As they walk down the mountain they think everything has changed but Jesus tells them to slow down don't go so fast see verse 9 verse 9 chapter 9 verse 9 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.

They just can't work out why Jesus is talking about rising from the dead all the time. What's it mean? Why does Jesus why does the Son of Man have to die then rise again?

Jesus the Christ is here with them now. Surely this is the moment Jesus. What is he talking about rising from the dead? He can't go dying now now is the time to lead the rebellion the revolution bringing in the kingdom of God if Jesus you're the Christ you die who's going to do it?

After all Elijah didn't need to die did he? No. Before he nothing happened to him he straight to heaven don't need to worry about dying Jesus surely God can bring the Son of Man straight to heaven he doesn't need to die first why does the Son of Man need to die first and rise again?

[21:27] They can tell what they've just seen the kingdom of God is here let's get on with it verse 10 they have seen Jesus endorsed by God himself so they kept the matter to themselves questioning what this rising from the dead might mean Jesus can't go dying I mean he's the Christ right?

He's the Christ Elijah has got to come then the kingdom of God is going to come the Christ is here we just need Elijah to turn up and then we're on the way they remember what the scribes have taught them there in verse 11 see verse 11 they asked him why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come before the kingdom of God comes the long dead Elijah must return they've got that much right Malachi chapter 3 verse 1 behold I will send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight behold his coming says the Lord of hosts then listen Jesus has been with Elijah on the mountain and looks like it's time for the kingdom to come they've seen what it looks like on the mountain listen to

Malachi chapter 4 verse 5 behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of

the children to their fathers lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction before the kingdom of God comes in power Elijah must return and he will be involved in the turning of the hearts hearts to the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers a great repentance will come about in verse 12 Jesus confirms that what they've heard is true confirms that Elijah does come first and yet the reality is he has already come he's not to come in the future he's already come in the past verse 13 who is he none other than John the Baptist who he met in chapter 1 John the Baptist had the clothing of Elijah the camel's hair John ate what Elijah ate locusts and wild honey he had the message that Elijah had repent from your sin you can check out 2 Kings chapter 1 verse 8 Mark chapter 1 verse 6 or indeed Matthew chapter 11 verse 40 makes explicitly clear Jesus clearly says that if you're willing to accept it John the Baptist is the Elijah who was to come John the Baptist prepared the people for the kingdom Elijah's coming was now not in the future Elijah's coming had already happened in the past and they had done to him whatever they pleased another Jezebel a scheming wicked Herodias wanted him dead another Ahab a weak willed Herod had him killed John's suffering and rejection do not disqualify him from fulfilling Elijah's role nor will Jesus' sufferings and discredit him from being the long awaited Messiah in fact it is the only way for glorification he must suffer for the sins of the world it's in this way that the kingdom of God will come what the disciples need to understand is that the coming of the kingdom must be extremely close now that Elijah's come and what the disciples need to understand is that glory comes only after humiliation suffering death and rising of the Lord Jesus Elijah has come the kingdom of God is now but not quite yet for the disciples in the next few days from this moment onwards Jesus will suffer many things be rejected by the religious leaders of the day killed and rise from dead as he said he would now we who live this side of the cross we can look back and go yeah the kingdom of

[26 : 17] God came Jesus is king of glory king of the Jews the rule of the nations he has ascended to the right hand of the father on high and now we are in a period of grace before he comes to wrap it all up and bring in this glorious kingdom of God this great and terrible day of the Lord it's now but not quite yet it's kind of like in the last days or the last minutes of the second half of extra time of the world cup grand final that's the time we're in right now and there are only seconds on the clock to go before full time whistle is blown and it's a draw and we need to win and now more than ever we need to listen and heed what Jesus says for one day we will see him coming on the clouds in glory with the angels on high and the time will be up the kingdom of God will come in final glory and we will see

Jesus bright shining robes so we need to listen to Jesus don't we 2 Peter chapter 1 is a clear and good passage to remember ourselves remind us of after resurrection Peter was a changed man prior to the resurrection he's putting his foot in his mouth getting it wrong seeing dull he never sees it clearly but after the resurrection of Jesus he gets it and then he goes and can speak right and Peter's the one who listened to God's word he gave his life he lost his life for the gospel and so saved it as did all the apostles as have done countless others in various ways down through the ages he spoke about the scriptures being even more certain because he saw the transfiguration of Jesus it was something equal to his experience of seeing

Jesus after the resurrection I imagine listen to what he says in 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 16 onwards for we did not follow cleverly devised myths 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 honour and glory from God the Father and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven for we were with him on the holy mountain and we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns of the morning star rise in your hearts knowing this first of all that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the holy spirit the scriptures are where we hear God speak clearly let's pay close attention to the scriptures the parts we like and the parts we don't particularly like because they confront us there are sufferings before glories there was for Jesus there was for his disciples there will be there is there might be for us in fact the promise is anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted so we need to listen to Jesus Jesus wasn't just a prophet in a continual stream of prophets as the Mormons will say he was the last prophet of God he's the last prophetic voice of God

God has spoken fully and finally in his son Jesus wasn't just a man as the JW's will say Jehovah's Witnesses will say right Jesus was fully God fully man Jesus didn't just give us a moralistic ethic of life as so many would want to say today he suffered to save us from the consequences of our sin and Jesus isn't irrelevant as so many in our culture today believe he is the Lord of the universe the Daniel 7 son of man he calls us to give up our lives for him in order to save it he speaks to us in his word and God the father tells us to listen to him we need to listen to Jesus the suffering servant save life now lose it in the future lose life now save it in the future we need to listen to him suffering now glory is to come we have seen a glimpse of the kingdom of

[31 : 51] God listening to Jesus and living for him is and always will be worth it so let's pray together our father in heaven thank you for this glimpse into glory thank you for giving us your living word thank you for giving us your son who suffered and died and rose again that we might be saved help us to follow him obediently knowing that his way is best and that as we count the cost that we would not complain and that we be prepared to give up our own self rule over to your rule day by day amidst the turmoil of this world trusting that you are good and father we do long for that day when we'll see Jesus fully and finally in glory with the heavenly angels coming in the clouds of power pray that many might come to trust him before that day and that you use us as your disciples to make many many more prepared for that day we ask you in

Jesus name Amen Amen