

Exegetical Notes, Mark 9:1-13
“Transformed”

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Mark 9:1-13

Verse 9:1

And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

- Jesus promised that some of those who were there that day would not die before they saw him in the glory and power of God’s Kingdom.

Verse 2

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them.

- Six days later Peter, James, and John saw Jesus as he will appear in the Kingdom of God.
- This happened when Jesus was alone in a remote place with just these three men.
- Peter, James and John form the first group of the disciples. See exegetical notes on Mark 1:14-20.

Verse 3-4

His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

- See the description of Jesus in his Kingdom appearance in Revelation 1:12-16. Jesus assumed his heavenly appearance as the three disciples watched.
- The Old Testament Prophets Elijah and Moses were talking with Jesus. Moses received the Old Covenant by which salvation was first offered to Israel at the time of the Passover. He represents the fulfillment of the promise of God that comes to all humankind in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament book of Malachi (4:5-6)

promises that Elijah will come to earth before the Messiah comes in his fullness to “set things right.” His presence, too, shows that all is ready for the Messiah to take his place.

Verse 5-6

Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters --- one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

- The disciples were overwhelmed by the appearance of Jesus in his heavenly splendor. (See Revelation 1:17) Peter suggested that they build monuments to commemorate the moment and the spot where this happened. He does not know what else to do.

Verse 7

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

- The disciples were unable to handle the vision of the transformed Jesus. His appearance overwhelmed them. So God descended as he often does in the Old Testament in the form of fog or a cloud. The mist hides his splendor because human eyes cannot comfortably behold it. That is what happened here. God came down and enveloped the group in a cloud or fog to note his presence but hide his glory.
- God spoke from the cloud, declaring his love for Jesus and telling the noisy Peter, to be quiet and listen to Jesus.

Verse 8

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

- After God spoke, everything returned to normal.

Verse 9-10

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

- Because people are not able to understand what happened, Jesus tells the three disciples not to tell anyone, not even the other disciples, what they have seen until after his resurrection. The disciples follow his instructions. The news was not shared with anyone until the

resurrection. However, the idea of resurrection perplexes the disciples.

Verse 11

And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

- See Malachi 4:5-6. The Old Testament clearly says that Elijah must come before the Messiah is to be revealed in his full glory. The three disciples just saw this happen for Elijah stood on the mountain with Jesus and Moses. Their question seems out of place because the prophecy was just fulfilled as they watched. It shows that they still do not fully understand God’s plan. See Mark 8:33.

Verse 12-13

Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much, and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

- Jesus’ response to the disciples’ question about the coming of Elijah moves on several layers. First, they have just witnessed the coming of Elijah on the mountain. In this, the prophecy of his coming is fulfilled. Second, Malachi says that Elijah will come “before the great and terrible day of the Lord.” This refers to the second coming of Jesus and the judgment that will fall upon the earth. Many scholars believe that Elijah and Moses will be the two witnesses spoken of in the book of Revelation. See Revelation 11. In this understanding, the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. Third, many read Malachi to say, “One like Elijah” will appear to prepare the way for the Messiah. The Gospels give this role to John the Baptist. See Matthew 11:10 and 17:13.

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