

02.14.10 / Mark 9:2-13

Passage Insight

The events of this passage give the disciples a foretaste of the glory and power of Jesus. Like several other mountain top events in the Bible (the revealing of the Law on Mount Sinai, for example), this is a revelation. God chooses in this moment to reveal some part of His character to humanity, despite the fact that it dumbfounded those who were there. So, the question becomes, "What does God reveal about Himself?"

This event provided the disciples a foretaste of what was to come in terms of Jesus' glory and power. Granted, this glory and power were already fully present in Jesus, as they had been from the beginning of all things, but this was their first glimpse of it in this way as He simply re-assumes the radiance that Has always been His but which He allowed to remain invisible when He took on flesh as a human being. We notice Jesus' glory and power at several points of this passage:

- He becomes visibly different, in a way that the disciples could actually perceive with human senses.
- At the end of this passage, Jesus is asked about the prophecy that Elijah must come first, before the Messiah. Jesus affirms this prophecy and implies that John the Baptist is the new Elijah. Both Elijah and John were preachers of repentance, preparing the way for the Messiah by reminding those of the day to repent in anticipation of the Lord's arrival and to follow God wholeheartedly. In clearing this up for the disciples, Jesus demonstrates His knowledge and command of past, present, and future.
- He is affirmed by God the Father. Consider the fact that this would be tremendous for these men who didn't yet understand Jesus' oneness with God. For them, direct affirmation from God the Father would be the most authoritative and powerful affirmation there could be.

And what more powerful of an endorsement could you possibly hope to hear than the words of the Father regarding Jesus, "Listen to him." The gospel of Mark makes a point of Jesus' calling out to people and having them hear and understand. Here, God the Father does the same.

Moses, whom God used to bring the Law to His people, is clearly connected with the prophets in Malachi 4:4-6, where it says,

"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 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 fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

In Acts 10:43 we read that, "To [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Whether Moses, Elijah, or any other prophet, God makes it clear to us that everything that the prophets of God did and said was designed ultimately to point to Jesus.

Following the transfiguration, Peter found himself at a loss for words, so he sought to put the event into a framework that made sense to him, a very human framework. We would be wise to examine where we do the same, and in so doing completely miss the messages of God. In order to understand what God is saying to us, we must have the proper framework, or context, by which to hear His words. This context is the gospel. This event only makes sense within the context of the cross and the Jesus' resurrection from the dead, for it is only after the resurrection that Peter

(and us as well) is able to see the greater purpose for Jesus' earthly ministry and to recognize that His glory, power, and oneness with God are what make this purpose achievable. This is the reason Jesus tells Peter, James, and John to remain silent about the event until after the resurrection.

The events of our lives today only make sense in the light of the gospel as well. Once we see Jesus' death and resurrection for the good news that it is, we have a context to see that Jesus has the power to lay down His life and to raise it up (power over death and life), that He is the one testified to by the prophets for centuries (fulfilling the many promises that God would save those who love Him), and that His words are the words of life and that they should be listened to at all cost (as the Father says, "Listen to him.").

We cannot separate Jesus' death and resurrection from His other works and teachings, because His other works and teachings only have meaning within the context of His death and resurrection. In other words, if we attempt to worship a version of Jesus who has not suffered, died, and come back to life, we are not worshipping Jesus – we are worshipping a false god of our own design. So instead, let us worship the true Jesus, the one who is one with God the Father, the one to whom we are to listen, the one who is good and faithful to fulfill His promises and to do the work of God, the one who has conquered death, the one who has the power to give us life. Praise God.

Application Questions (feel free to use the ones that best meet the needs of your group)

Dumbfounded by God

- 1) What about God absolutely confuses you? (consider having several people give an answer before moving to the next question)
 - a. What do you typically do to alleviate this confusion?
 - b. How do you try to make God fit into your human framework and understanding as Peter did?
 - c. If you look at this confusion in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, how does it look different?
- 2) Compare the beauty of unparalleled radiance with the plight of a broken world stuck in the cycle of sin. What does it say to you that God would willingly engage in our plight, even if it meant making this radiance invisible for a time?

Listen to Him

- 1) Can you think of times with God when, like Peter, you've focused on doing the talking rather than the listening?
- 2) How do you attempt to understand the mystery of God on your own terms rather than through the lens of the gospel?
- 3) What scares you about listening to God?
- 4) If Jesus' words are always good and true, if He is for us and not against us, and if He desires to give us good things, what can you expect to hear from Jesus?
- 5) How does this change things for you?
- 6) How will you listen to Jesus this week?

Worshiping the Complete Jesus

- 1) Where do you fail to believe that Jesus can truly give life?
- 2) How would your life look different if you believed that Jesus has power over life and death?

- 3) What decisions would you make differently?
- 4) What's behind this lack of faith?
- 5) What's one thing you could do to remove this obstacle to faith?
- 6) When will you take this step?

Sources

- Sailhamer
- Pillar
- BST
- Tyndale