

Eastwood Baptist (9.30 AM, 4/3/'14) **"THIS IS MY SON"** (Mark 9:2-13)

Introduction When have you seen the majesty of Jesus Christ most clearly? At the time of your conversion? Or someone else's conversion? When you or someone else was wonderfully healed? We know what the Apostle Peter would have said, or one thing he would have said. **Read 2 Peter 1:16-18.** Peter's words suggest that as we look at Mark's record of this event, a record which may well have come from Peter in the first place, we should focus on Jesus' majesty, honour and glory, and on the words of God the Father.

Transfigured on the Mountain (9:2-4) This is the first stage of fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy in **9:1**, an event in which the power and glory of the Kingdom of God are revealed in the person of Jesus. And the event happens on a high mountain, probably on Mount Hermon, since Caesarea Philippi is located on its slopes. This is literally a "mountain top experience", but we can legitimately connect it with our own figurative mountain top experiences, times when the majesty of Jesus Christ becomes vividly real to us. Jesus' clothes become "dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them". The dazzling white majesty of Jesus is like that of God the Father, and hence points to his divinity. It is important that we hold firmly to the divinity of Jesus, without losing sight of his humanity. Present with Jesus are Elijah and Moses. There are numerous ideas about the significance of their presence, but I think the best is that they represent the Law and the Prophets, which together pointed to the coming Messiah. At this moment Peter, James and John saw the majesty, honour and glory of Jesus. And so should we!

Hanging On to the Mountain Top Experience (9:5-6) All three disciples are frightened, but it is Peter who speaks in the midst of his fear, and his words suggest that he values the awe-inspiring experience greatly, and wants to hold on to it. As with his declaration that Jesus is the Messiah, there is much to commend in what he says. He declares that it is good for them to be there, and by his proposal to build shelters he shows a desire to worship as well as to prolong the experience. However, the rest of the narrative shows that this experience is not to be prolonged but remembered.

The Central Moment of the Experience (9:7) There is a contrast between Peter's words and the words of God the Father, and it is no accident that Peter recalls these words and not his own in his second letter. It is these words which constitute the centre of the event, and which guide both the three disciples and us in knowing how to respond to it. The voice from the cloud confirms that Jesus is the Son of God, then

says how we are to worship him in his majesty. It is surprisingly simple – we are to ***listen to him***. We worship the Son of God best by obeying him.

Coming Down from the Mountain (9:8-10) The strange and wonderful experience ends suddenly, confirming that it was not an experience to be prolonged. And they come down from the mountain. Tonight I shall look at what happened when they came down, but for now I'll just say that the majesty of Jesus was again displayed, although in a different way, and his disciples experienced some difficulty. Jesus again says that they are not to tell people about their experience yet, again refers to himself as Son of Man, and again speaks of his resurrection. In this context, the title "Son of Man" links with the transfiguration and so with Daniel 7 – Jesus is truly the glorious Son of Man, the one who carries God's authority. This may be less easy to see when they come down from the mountain, but it will continue to be true. They needed to remember this experience, and we need to remember our mountain top experiences, especially when going through circumstances where the majesty of Jesus is hard to see. Jesus' words about rising from the dead also relate strongly to the context. When he rises from the dead, his glory and majesty will again be revealed but this time to many people, and with the purpose of being proclaimed to many more. As Christians, we are the people of a risen Lord, called to worship him and obey him.

Elijah and the Son of Man (9:11-13) It seems that they are not prepared to ask Jesus about what "rising from the dead" meant. Perhaps they were afraid that they might look foolish. Perhaps they were reluctant to seem to challenge him when the voice from heaven had just commanded them to listen to him. So instead they raise a different question. The expectation concerning Elijah is based on Malachi 4:5, where it is prophesied that God will send him "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes". Out of this has risen the idea that he must come "first", before the Messiah. The disciples have come to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, but are puzzled that Elijah has not yet come, except in the very limited form of his brief appearance on the mountain. Jesus confirms their expectation concerning Elijah, but immediately turns their attention to his own identity as Son of Man and Suffering Servant combined. This is both more important and more puzzling to them than doubt about Elijah's coming. Then he returns to the topic of Elijah in the light of this greater topic. Yes, Jesus says, Elijah must come first, and has indeed come. And if his coming has not been glorious and inescapable, that is appropriate to his mission. He has come as a suffering prophet to act as forerunner to a suffering Messiah. John the Baptist is not named but there can be little doubt that Jesus is referring to him.

Conclusion Clearly both Mark and Peter considered this to be a story worth remembering. Indeed, Jesus' command not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had arisen from the dead implies that the story should be told after his resurrection. So why is it worth remembering for us? Certainly because it is an important part of the whole gospel story, and points to the identity of Jesus as the majestic Son of God. But I think that the key moment in the story is when God the Father speaks from the cloud.. We are to remember who Jesus is, to keep in mind his majesty, honour and glory, and therefore to "listen to him". We are to live as obedient servants of the Suffering Servant, the Son of God. If we acknowledge him as Son of God, surely we must obey him, even when his commandments seem hard. And if we constantly remember the majesty of Jesus, who has promised to be with his disciples at all times, we will be strengthened and encouraged when we face difficult circumstances.