

2026-02-22

“This Is My Beloved Son”

Mark 9:1-13

Why do we believe what we believe? People believe a variety of things, especially about Jesus. Generally, we believe something because that is what we have been told or taught. It is always good to back up what you believe with some type of evidence or experience. The more evidence and experience we have to strengthen our faith and trust in Jesus, the more confidence we have when sharing our faith in Jesus. To believe in Jesus just because you have been told to or taught seems a bit shallow. Jesus knew what His disciples were going to go through after His crucifixion. All of them would desert Him **during and after His crucifixion**. It wasn't until after He appeared to them that they really believed who He had claimed to be. They needed this resurrection experience and the evidence that Jesus was alive and had conquered death to deepen their faith. All of them needed to see Jesus alive in order to believe, including Thomas. Jesus also knew what His disciples were going to experience after His ascension. Ten of the eleven would be murdered because of their faith in Jesus. Their faith could not be shallow. It had to be deep. They had to believe without any doubt because of the pain, suffering and torture they were going to experience. If their faith did not run deep, they would stumble (Matthew 13:21). The deeper and stronger our faith in Jesus is the more convincing our faith will be to other people.

What we believe about Jesus is most important in life. Some people may not think so, but it is. It is our job as Christians to help people believe correctly about Jesus. Not everyone will agree with us. That is their choice. It is always good to ask a person why they believe what they believe. Try to understand why a person does not believe the way we do. We should be ready to answer their question, why do we believe in Jesus? Peter understood how important this was. He wrote, *“Set up Christ as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence”* (1 Peter 3:15). What would you tell a person? Why do you believe in Jesus? Does your answer help a person believe in Jesus? Does your life choices and your decisions help people to see that you really do believe in and follow Jesus? Jesus has been teaching His disciple through actions and lessons that He is the Messiah, the Anointed One sent from God. He is God in human flesh. They are beginning to believe. They still have a long way to go, a lot more to believe and many more changes to make in their lives.

Mark 9:1 *“And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.’”*
Some people believe this verse should be connected with the last verses in Chapter

8, when Jesus concluded His discussion with the people, *“When He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”* Since none of the disciples are alive today on earth waiting for the second coming of Jesus, this teaching that *“some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power”* must refer to something else. Most people understand this to mean the resurrection and ascension of Jesus or the Transfiguration which follows this statement. Peter, James and John were the three who witnessed the Transfiguration. And 11 of the 12 apostles witnessed the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Both events can be seen as *“the kingdom of God present with power.”* These were both done so that the disciples who witnessed them would have a deeper faith in Jesus as Lord.

Verses 2-3 *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”* Jesus intentionally took Peter, James, and John, the leaders of the disciples, away from everyone else so they could see a glimpse of the glory of Jesus that was out of this world. These three above all the others needed to solidify their belief that Jesus is the Messiah. They saw Jesus transfigured, which means they saw Jesus in all of His glory as He appears in heaven. This was **not a blinding white** that prevented them from seeing anything else since Elijah and Moses appeared to them. This was a **pure, bright white** which allowed them to see everything clearly, without any corruption. This must have been a beautiful sight to behold. So beautiful it frightened them to see things so heavenly.

Verse 4 *“And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.”* Elijah and Moses appeared to Peter, James and John. There seems to be a little distance between them. I don’t think Elijah and Moses introduced themselves to the disciples. I don’t know that there was any interaction between Elijah and Moses and the disciples. Elijah and Moses came to talk with Jesus not to Peter, James and John. Luke tells us that they spoke to Jesus about His exodus, His departure, His death. It is less than 6 months away. How did the disciples know it was Elijah and Moses? Maybe they had pictures of these men hanging up in their homes. No, they did not. Maybe Elijah and Moses were wearing name tags. Probably not. These disciples just knew. Maybe that is the way it is going to be in heaven. We will just know who people are. Why Moses and Elijah? These two men represent the two witnesses of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets that reveal who Jesus is. (Luke 24:27).

Verse 5 *“Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’”* When Peter answered, it is not that Jesus asked him a question he needed to answer. Peter is just being Peter and speaking before he thinks about what he is saying or

what should be said. It seems that Peter puts all three of these men, Moses, Elijah and Jesus on the same level. He is ready to build a tent, a shrine to each of them. He is ready to worship all three of them. Peter has not learned what Jesus is trying to teach him. Peter needs to learn who Jesus is! **All of us need to learn who Jesus is!** Peter has made the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, then he says something like this that makes us wonder what Peter really believes about Jesus. When we get to heaven we will see everyone in heaven with a perfect, glorified, powerful, spiritual body. We will be like Jesus (1 John 3:2). Should we worship them all because they all look like Jesus? No, when we get to heaven we will be like them too. We worship only our Creator, God Almighty, our Redeemer, Jesus. Peter is still in his sinful, fallen state. He sees these perfect, glorified, powerful, spiritual people and he is in awe. He does not want this place or this event to be forgotten.

Verse 6 *“Because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.”* Often what we say reveals our ignorance and lack of understanding. Peter spoke because he was very afraid. He thought with such a great event something had to be done to remember this. There was no criticism from Jesus, Moses or Elijah that we know about. **The disciples are given a direct command from God.**

Verse 7 *“And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’”* If these disciples thought the Transfiguration of Jesus was glorious, now the Shekinah glory of God overshadowed everyone, including the disciples. This is the Shekinah glory of God that led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for 40 years (Exodus 40:38). This is the Shekinah glory of God that filled the Tabernacle of meeting (Exodus 40:34-35). This is the Shekinah glory of God that filled the Temple of God in Jerusalem after Solomon built it (1 Kings 8:10-11 / 2 Chronicles 5:13-14). These disciples are overshadowed by the Shekinah glory of God! Amazing! Then God speaks. He announced who Jesus was and commanded the disciples to **hear Him**. Included in this hearing is **listening** and **obeying**. This announcement and command are for us and everyone. Jesus is God the Son. When you believe who He is we must **hear Him, listen to Him and obey Him**. The fruit of your life or the lack of fruit in your life will show God and others what you truly believe about Jesus.

Verse 8 *“Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.”* One moment the disciples were overshadowed by the Shekinah glory of God. The next second, it was gone. As quick as it came, it was gone. Not only was the Shekinah glory of God gone but the two witnesses, Elijah and Moses were gone too. It was just Jesus and the three disciples, back to normal. You talk about a mountain top experience; this tops them all.

Verses 9-10 “Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.” As Jesus got closer to His crucifixion, He does not want to give the Pharisees any reason to have Him arrested and killed before His time. Jesus trusted these three disciples to not speak about this glorious event to anyone until after His resurrection, not even the other disciples. **The disciples obeyed Jesus.** Yet, they still questioned what rising from the dead meant. They heard Jesus speak about this to Moses and Elijah but they had little experience to help them understand. And after seeing Jesus in His glorified, powerful state, there was no way He was going to die.

Verse 11 “And they asked Him, saying, ‘Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’” Why did Peter, James and John ask this question? They had been taught that Elijah must return to earth before the Messiah comes. They just saw Elijah. They know that Jesus is the Messiah. Is this it? Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Is this the end of the age? Is Jesus going to establish His kingdom?

Verse 12 “Then He answered and told them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?’ The disciples **were taught right** about Elijah. He will return before the second coming of Jesus. He is one of the witnesses spoken of in Revelation 11:3. From the description of their power in 11:6, Moses is the second witness. Elijah will return again, but this experience on the mountain was not the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5. That is still to come. What the disciples and the Jews **were taught wrong** was the prophecy of the suffering and death of the Messiah (Psalm 22 / Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

Verse 13 “But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.” Elijah will come before the return of Jesus (Revelation 11:3). Did Elijah come before Jesus’ first coming, at His incarnation? In a way, yes (Matthew 11:14). But it was different. John the Baptist represented Elijah. So why the Transfiguration? Peter, James and John needed this experience to fully believe that Jesus is their Messiah. They are to Hear Him, Listen to Him and obey Him. God will give us evidence and experiences in our lives so that we fully believe that He is our God and Savior. What are we to do? Hear, listen to and obey Him!

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