

• *Mark and Luke*

Mark and Luke are now running side-by-side. Luke 9:18–36 is parallel to Mark 9:2–10. Luke 9:37–50 follows Mark 9:14–41. We have now the stories of the transfiguration^{□1} and the demon-possessed boy^{□2}.

□1 9:28-36
□2 9:37-43a

• *Jesus' transfiguration at Caesarea Philippi*

About eight days after the events at Caesarea Philippi^{□1} Jesus and three disciples went to a mountain to pray, and Jesus is transfigured before them.

□1 9:28

1. Confirmation of the need for prayer

1. **It was a confirmation of the need for prayer.** It is typical of Luke that he alone emphasises the purpose of the trip was to pray, and it was as Jesus was praying that the transfiguration took place^{□1}.

□1 9:29

2. Confirmation of their faith in Jesus

2. **It was a confirmation of their faith in Jesus.** Having come to faith in Jesus' Messiahship without any experience such as this one, their faith is now confirmed by something that they see.¹

3. Preparation for suffering

• *A visible proof that Jesus' death would be the fulfilment of the law and the prophets*

3. **It was a preparation for suffering.** The disciples receive a glimpse of the honour that attends Jesus as the divine Son of the Father. But also there immediately follows a conversation concerning Jesus' death in Jerusalem^{□1}. Jesus was given an amazing opportunity to talk to the heroes of the days of the Mosaic covenant. He talks to Moses, the representative of the law and the founder of Israel. He talks to the greatest of the prophets, Elijah. It is His **death** that is the topic of conversation. The triumphant Son of Man whose glory is shining out visibly must suffer! It was a visible proof that Jesus' death would be the fulfilment of the law and the prophets.

□1 9:30-31

4. An assertion of Jesus' uniqueness

• *God's voice – 'My Son'*

4. **It was an assertion of Jesus' uniqueness.** The disciples wish to prolong the occasion. *'Let us make three tents, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah'*^{□1}. But the experience will not be a long one and booths will not be necessary. The suggestion is also putting Jesus on a level with the others: 'Jesus ... Moses ... Elijah' – as if they are equals. It is the same mistake that was made by the common people: 'Jesus ... John ... Elijah ... one of the prophets'^{□2}. But a cloud denoting the divine presence comes down^{□3}, and God's voice directs their attention to Jesus only^{□4}, underlining His person ('my Son'), His work ('my Chosen One') and His authority ('Listen to him!'). Moses and Elijah are nothing compared to Jesus the Son of God^{□5}.

□1 9:33

□2 9:18

□3 9:34

□4 9:35

□5 9:36

• *Faith by the enlightenment of the Spirit*

Again the disciples do not speak of their experience. People are to come to faith by the enlightenment of the Spirit, not by hearing a strange and impressive story of glory appearing on a mountain.

5. A preparation for ministry

• *A severely demonised boy healed*

5. **It was a preparation for ministry.** The next day the disciples return from the mountain^{□1}. Almost immediately they meet with a practical difficulty of ministry. A demon-possessed boy has been brought to the other disciples but they have been unable to help^{□2}. It is unbelief that is the cause of the failure^{□3}. The case is a severe one^{□4} but Jesus heals the boy^{□5} and everyone marvels at the power of God^{□6}.

□1 9:37

□2 9:38-40

□3 9:41

□4 9:42

□5 9:42b

□6 9:43a

Jesus did not stay long on the mountain. His experience with visitors from the heavenly world was a rare privilege even for Jesus. And it was only something to strengthen Him and His disciples for the practical challenges that would face them in the work of God.

• *Witnessing the transfiguration make them know that Jesus is authentic, and that they can trust Him as the Son of God*

The greatness of Jesus' divine glory is shown us side-by-side with the greatness of the human predicament. Even Jesus was distressed by the greatness of unbelief. The question now is: will the disciples profit from what they have seen of Jesus' glory? They were looking for glory but had been warned about suffering. As soon as they come down from the mountain there is a case of great suffering in front of them. And Jesus is in distress because of the unbelief of His disciples and followers. But the glory they have just experienced should sustain them amidst the practicalities of serving God. The experience of glory is not given them just to be a religious experience. Nor did it last a long time. It is something that will make them know that Jesus is authentic, and that they can trust Him as the Son of God amidst an unbelieving world and demonised sufferers.

• *It is not yet a kingdom of visible glory. It is a kingdom of ministry to the needy and the demonised*

They were wanting the honour of an earthly kingdom, but instead will have the honour of ministry. Peter had wanted to build some kind of structure of the top of the mountain so that they could stay there and enjoy the delights of conversation with Moses and Elijah. But instead of talking theology with Moses and Elijah they are being asked to give help to people like the distressed father and his demonised son. The kingdom that Jesus has brought into this world does not have much glory in it just yet. The glory is coming! The disciples are allowed some foretastes of it. But that is only to sustain them. For the moment they are not being commissioned to be ministered unto but to minister to others. It is not yet a kingdom of visible glory. It is a kingdom of ministry to the needy and the demonised.

• *Great experiences of God's glory are only intended to increase our faith and enlarge our capacity for serving God and His kingdom*

They had shown foolish interest in holding on to a great experience, but instead Jesus is inviting faith. 'O unbelieving generation!' said Jesus. The remaining nine disciples had been unable to help the child because of the weakness of their faith. Now Peter, James and John have seen an appearing of the divine glory in Jesus. They have spent time in prayer. They have received an unshakeable revelation of the majesty of Jesus. Will they **now** have the kind of faith that Jesus is wanting? Great experiences of God's glory are only intended to increase our faith and enlarge our capacity for serving God and His kingdom.

Note

1. See fuller exposition in Eaton, Mark (Preaching Through The Bible), ch. 19.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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