

After the disciples have come to the realization that Jesus is the Messiah ^{□1} and have been themselves summoned to the way of the cross^{□2}, they are given a confirmation for their faith^{□3}.

□1 8:27-30

□2 8:31-

9:1

□3 9:2-13

1. First faith then confirmation

1. **Great confirmations of God's reality generally follow faith.** The Jews wanted signs without their having to believe^{□1}. It is generally the other way round. Faith is first; God's confirmations come afterwards. After the disciples rose to high faith in Jesus^{□2} God gave some of them the special privilege of seeing the divine glory in Jesus. Jesus' sonship was confirmed to them.

□1 see

8:11-13

□2 8:27-30

The transfiguration took place six days^{□1} after the disciples' confession of faith in Jesus as God's Messiah. There is a connection between the events of 8:27-9:1 and those of 9:2-13. The disciples did not have to wait long before a confirmation of their faith came.

□1 9:2

2. Privilege the Preparation for Responsibility

2. **Great privilege was the preparation for great responsibility.** Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him to an unidentified mountain ^{□1}. Clearly the mountain was not far away, and it was high^{□2}. Mount Tabor is one traditional site but does not quite fit the requirements. It was about 350 metres above the plain. Yet it was not so high and there was a fortress on the top according to Josephus. More likely the mountain was one of the Mount Hermon area, which arose to much greater heights and was near to Caesarea.

□1 9:2

□2 9:2

The loneliness of a mountaintop makes it an ideal place to receive a revelation from God. We recall that Moses received a revelation on a mountaintop after waiting for six days^{□1}. Only three disciples had the great privilege of seeing Jesus' glory. Peter, James and John would each have great responsibilities in the church. Each of them would endure great sufferings for Jesus later in their lives.

□1 Exodus

24:15

3. Divine glory

3. **The disciples were rewarded with a sight of the divine glory.** Previously, they had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but then it was purely a matter of faith. Now it is a matter of sight. Faith is first; sight comes later. At first the Christian must take what God says on trust; later things that he has **believed** may become **visible**. Bright white light shone through Jesus' clothes and their whiteness became whiter than anyone in the world could wash them ^{□1}. It was the divine glory. The divine nature was becoming partially visible so that the disciples received confirmation of what they had already believed. It suggests also that 'Messiah'^{□2} implied deity. The predicted Messiah of the Old Testament is a **divine** Messiah.

□1 9:3

□2 8:29

4. Fulfilment of Israel's scriptures

4. **The three disciples received confirmation that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Scriptures of Israel.** Two figures appeared to Jesus: Moses and Elijah^{□1}. Moses was famous as the mediator of the law. Elijah was famous as the greatest of the prophets. Elijah's 'return' was predicted in Malachi 4:5. The Mosaic law predicted also a Moses-like figure who would be a perfect spokesman for God^{□2}. The prophets of the Old Testament period were only an interim measure until the great 'Prophet like Moses' appeared. The disciples were allowed to see that Moses, Elijah and Jesus were agreed and were in harmony. Jesus was the fulfilment of the purpose of God in world-history, a purpose in which God had previously used Moses and Elijah, and that had been written down in the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets.

□1 9:4

□2 Deut.

18:15,18

5. The coming Kingdom is connected to the past

5. **The presence of three disciples ensured that the new events of God's kingdom would not abolish or ignore what God had done through Israel.** The three leading apostles would never be able to doubt the authenticity of the revelation of God to Israel. The Christian faith would never be able to be entirely new revelation without connections with the past. The leading apostles were (at a very early stage of events) made to know that Jesus was the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. The development of the church would never be able to disregard the past because the spiritual giants of Israel's history had been present and had been involved with the ministry of Jesus.

Peter thought that some kind of response was needed. 'And Peter answering, said...' ^{¶1}. He speaks of his joy at being present ^{¶2} but wants to turn the occasion into a lengthy stay ^{¶3}. But his response arose out of sheer bewilderment and fear^{¶4}. Peter had never experienced anything like this; he did not know that such things were possible!

¶1 9:5
 ¶2 9:5
 ¶3 9:5
 ¶4 9:6

6. Suffering on the pathway to Glory

6. The dramatic experience soon passed and the future would not be quite as glorious. The two great heroes of the past were soon covered by a cloud. God did not want Moses and Elijah to be the ones to interest the three disciples ^{¶1}. A voice from heaven confirmed the divine Sonship of Jesus^{¶2}. The disciples were now told what the reader of Mark's Gospel has known since Mark 1:11. The voice had previously assured Jesus of His Sonship^{¶3}. Now the same voice gave like assurance to the three leading apostles^{¶4}. 'Hear him!' – the phrase comes from Deuteronomy 18:15, 19. Jesus is God's final voice to the church and to the human race. All other figures disappear^{¶5}.

¶1 9:7a
 ¶2 9:7b
 ¶3 1:11
 ¶4 9:7b
 ¶5 9:8

• Experiences "not for sharing"

The disciples are not allowed to share with everyone what they had experienced^{¶1}. Dramatic experiences are not always for sharing, and the people of Israel must not be raised to feverish excitement about a Messiah whom they will understand in purely political terms. When Jesus is crucified and risen there need be no restraint in preaching Jesus' Messiahship^{¶2}. Peter will mention in writing what happened to him on this day ^{¶3}.

¶1 9:9
 ¶2 9:9
 ¶3 see 2 Pet 1:16-18

• Elijah's Restoration

The reference to 'resurrection' ^{¶1} was not understood, although Jesus had mentioned the matter before^{¶2}. The disciples also wondered about the appearance of Elijah. Is what has happened the fulfilment of what they have heard the scribes say, based on Malachi 4:5? Jesus' answer is that Elijah has already come. *Elijah does come first and restores all things*^{¶3}. Just before the coming of Jesus there was someone who came and 'restored' the Old Testament preaching, bringing the common people back to where they were under the preaching of the Old Testament prophets like Elijah. Jesus is referring to John the Baptist.

¶1 9:10
 ¶2 8:31
 ¶3 9:12a



• John the Baptist

Yet the coming of 'Elijah' in the person of John the Baptist was not a glorious and triumphant coming. Nor was Jesus' future one of complete triumph. *Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?* asked Jesus^{¶1}. They must not think that the glorious arrival of the Messiah is just yet. There were predictions that the Messiah would suffer^{¶2}. Nor was there much public glory and triumph for John the Baptist. *But I tell you, Elijah has come and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.* The Old Testament prediction warned that for some Elijah would bring judgement. ^{¶3} It implied that some would reject him.

¶1 9:12b
 ¶2 see Isaiah 53:3
 ¶3 Malachi 4:6

• Glory – an encouragement

The point is: the glory of Jesus is only an encouragement. There is a lot of practical work to be done and much suffering before they would again see Jesus in glory. The Son of Man must suffer. 'Elijah' – John the Baptist – had to suffer also. Suffering comes first, along the pathway to glory, and they need to know it.

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