

Confusion after the Transfiguration

Mark 9: 9-13

Our text follows the miraculous encounter on the Mount of Transfiguration. Three of the disciples were privileged to accompany Jesus on the mountain as He was transfigured before them, revealing His glory. They had walked with Jesus for several years, but they had never seen Him in all His glory.

No doubt this was an experience these men would never forget – an event that comes once in a lifetime. However, as wonderful and miraculous as it was, the disciples were having trouble processing everything they had experienced. (I am certain we would have responded in much the same way.) As they make their way down the mountain, still talking with Jesus, their confusion and lack of understanding increases.

Our journey with the Lord is a journey of faith. We are blessed to have the written Word to guide our lives, but we also are trusting in one we have never seen. The Holy Spirit offers continual guidance as well, but we too find ourselves confused, lacking understanding at times. We must seek the Lord and His wisdom in those times of confusion and uncertainty. As we examine the [lessons](#) within the text, I want to consider the thought: [Confusion after the Transfiguration](#).

I. The Admonition of Jesus (9-10) – As Jesus and the disciples descend from the mountain, He admonished them regarding their miraculous encounter. Consider:

A. The Declaration (9a) – [And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.](#) We cannot imagine the excitement of these three men at this moment in their lives. They had experienced the unhindered glory of the Lord and witnessed Him speaking with Moses and Elijah. They surely understood that they were greatly privileged to be allowed to witness such an event. But, as they were coming off the mountain, Jesus charged them with a very specific request – they were to tell no one of the events they had encountered, at least not yet.

- Likely this added to their confusion and lack of comprehension of the day's events. They had encountered a great miracle; why would Jesus want them to remain silent about it? Regardless of their confusion, Jesus had given a command and they were expected to abide by it.
- Although this reveals a simple truth for our lives, it is certainly worth our consideration. We are expected to follow the guidance and leadership of the Lord, even if it doesn't make sense to

us at that particular time. We will not always understand what the Lord is doing, but we must remain faithful. The flesh often dislikes particular passages of Scripture, but that doesn't give us the right to ignore them or refuse to abide by them. We must be willing to submit our lives wholly unto the Lord.

B. The Duration (9b) – *And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.* While Jesus had admonished the disciples to remain silent about the transfiguration, they were not expected to remain silent forever about the matter. Once Jesus had been crucified and risen from the dead, they could tell others of this miraculous encounter.

- Why would Jesus not want the disciples to speak of this until after His resurrection? Jesus knew that many were ready to make Him their King. Like the disciples, many were confused regarding His earthly ministry and purpose for coming. He had not come at this time to be crowned King of Israel and establish His kingdom. He had come to die upon the cross as the atonement for sin. Had the disciples spoken of the glory they had encountered on the mountain, the peoples' desire to make Jesus their King would have intensified. Speaking of the revelation of His glory at this moment in time would have hindered the work Jesus knew He must accomplish. He was committed to the Father's will, and that included dying to atone for sin!

C. The Confusion (10) – *And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* Following the admonition of Jesus, the disciples became confused. They pondered His words, and asked one another what Jesus meant about rising from the dead. Clearly we know that Jesus spoke of the resurrection following His crucifixion, but the disciples had yet to grasp that truth.

- In their defense, the resurrection had not yet happened. However, this was not the first time Jesus had spoken to them concerning His impending death and resurrection. In fact, just a few days prior He spoke of being rejected by the Jewish elite, dying at the hands of sinful men, and after three days rising again. These comments brought the rebuke of Peter. They had heard these words before, but as of yet they could not understand or receive them. It appears the disciples had a case of "selective hearing."

- We may not like to admit it, but we have been guilty of the same. We often quote those verses that bring comfort to us, or agree with our plans at that particular moment. However, we tend to ignore or claim a lack of understanding regarding those passages that bring conviction or do not agree with the path we have chosen. I have said many times, I have more trouble with the passages I do understand than those I don't. God's Word is clear; we must abide by it!

II. The Explanation of Jesus (11-13) – True to His character, Jesus patiently explains what He meant, seeking to strengthen their faith and understanding. Consider:

A. The Question (11) – *And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?* It is interesting that they were contemplating the resurrection and yet they asked Jesus why the scribes had said that Elijah must come prior to Messiah coming and establishing His kingdom. They were still confused about all they witnessed that day. These men genuinely believed that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. He had already come to earth, but they had just encountered Elijah on the mountain. Jesus will explain this to them in the coming verses.

- I would like to offer a line of thought for your consideration. *Malachi 4:5-6 – Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: [6] And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* Malachi prophesied that Elijah would return to earth prior to the day of the LORD. This speaks of the Day of Judgment following the Tribulation. Some believe Elijah will be one of the two witnesses spoken of in Revelation. If that is true, and Elijah is one of those witnesses, this portion of prophecy would be fulfilled then. Just some food for thought.

B. The Confirmation (12a) – *And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things.* Jesus affirmed to the disciples that the Word of God was sure and trustworthy. Elijah would come first and turn the peoples' hearts toward the Lord. They are unaware at this moment, but Jesus was actually speaking of John the Baptist, coming in the spirit of Elijah, preparing the way for Jesus and His earthly ministry. John and Elijah shared many similarities in their appearance, demeanor, and ministry. John was actually the last of the Old Testament prophets.

C. The Consideration (12b) – *and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.* Clearly the disciples were focused on having seen Elijah on the mountain. While he should not have been their focus, we can understand their excitement. They had visibly seen a man whom they had read of in Scripture. He was a mighty prophet of the Lord, taken up in a chariot of fire, escaping death. These men were excited to have been in the presence of one used so mightily of God. However, Jesus sought to restore their focus to what was most important. The Scripture had prophesied that Elijah must come, but it also spoke much of the suffering and death of the Son of man, Jesus Christ. Jesus wanted these men to understand that He would soon give His life on Calvary to atone for sin. His coming as Savior and Redeemer of the world should have been their focus.

- It is easy for us to look at this passage and become critical of the disciples, but in our human nature we are very much the same. Theologically speaking, we know the death, burial, and resurrection is the theme of the Bible, but how often do we focus on the Gospel or speak of it to others? We tend to focus more on the aspects of Jesus' miracles than we do His great sacrifice

for our sin. People get more excited about His walking on the water or healing various diseases than they do His drinking the cup of God's wrath in our place. There are likely more messages preached on David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale, Elijah and the chariot of fire, and other miraculous passages than there are on the sufferings of Christ for our sin. I am not minimizing any portion of Scripture, but we must never elevate any Bible character or event above the finished work of Christ for our salvation!

D. The Illumination (13) – **But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.** Jesus declared that the prophecy of Elijah had been fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist. He was not a reincarnation of Elijah, but one who came in the spirit of Elijah. John came preaching a message of repentance, declaring Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His preaching and boldness ended up costing him his life. Having said all of this, the disciples understood that Jesus was speaking of John the Baptist fulfilling the prophecy of Elijah. **Matt.17:13 – Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.**

Conclusion: There can be no doubt that these men had witnessed a mighty miracle. They had encountered the Lord in unveiled glory, speaking with saints of old, Moses and Elijah. Unfortunately their focus was more on the visitors than on Jesus Christ. They had trouble comprehending His words regarding the resurrection. They walked with the Lord, but often lost focus and had difficulty understanding.

We must maintain a close relationship with the Lord, spending much time in the Word and prayer. The Lord will provide wisdom and understanding to those who genuinely seek it. **James 1:5 – If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.** Are you struggling with faith and understanding? Come to Jesus for the wisdom you need. Have you believed in Christ by faith unto salvation? He came to earth as the atonement for sin, dying on the cross to secure our salvation. If you have not responded to His gracious offer of salvation, I urge you to come to Him today!