

## Mark 9:9-13

### “Truth verse theology”

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#### I.     **Introduction**

Mark ends the account of the transfiguration by telling us that after the voice that came out of the clouds ended, “*suddenly they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.*” This is the only place in the New Testament where the Greek word “*suddenly*” is found and is used to signify a change in situation which they had discovered when they had looked around and saw no one but Jesus. What follows is that Jesus issues a verbal prohibition until He after He has risen from the dead, which set in motion then questioning as to what this had meant followed by a second coming question as to the sequence of events that would lead up to that. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of two verbal prohibitions within a short amount of time. ***What is even more amazing is that what Jesus told them not to tell anyone are the two single most important things His followers could ever tell a lost world: What He has come to do and who He is!*** The theology of the Jews and the disciples at this time is what we often see with people today: “*What they wish and desire to be the **TRUTH** they believe instead of way God has ordered as the truth!*” And as is often the case this blinded them to seeing the truth!

## II. Vs. 9-10 The clarification of the cross

Vs. 9-10 As these three came down the mountain having witnessed Jesus transfiguration they were naturally thinking of what they had just observed, then Jesus issued His injunction that they must tell no one what they had seen. These men did not come down the mountain the way they came up, such is often the case when Jesus reveals who He truly is to us. Jesus knew that their minds were still polluted by the popular notions of the Messiah and there was only one thing that could change their wrongly held theology, THE CROSS.

The word used in the Greek for “*tell*” means to “*lead a person through a series of events giving a narrative*”. Used in this sentence it describes the fact that Jesus didn’t just issue a prohibition against communication He lead them through the reason why. What this reveal to us is that the three disciple’s ignorance was not based upon lack of instruction but rather the pollution of WRONG INSTRUCTION. Jesus wanted them to keep silent as to such a time after He had risen from the dead so that He could correct their wrong theology.

They kept the prohibition faithfully while continually question each other as to the meaning the meaning of “*risen from the dead*”. The death of Jesus was something that these three had a difficult time comprehending. What fascinates me is that they locked in upon His dying but not upon His rising from the dead. We see that three things that grab our attention as we look at this section:

1. That they were prohibited from communicating what they had witnessed
2. That they were confused about what Jesus meant by the timing of then prohibition, “*till the Son of Man has risen from the dead*”

3. That they were puzzled about the answer to their question
  - a. The first answer is an obvious as **Jesus didn't want then to speak about something they clearly didn't understand themselves.**
  - b. The 2<sup>nd</sup> answer as to the prohibition was that it was "**time sensitive**"! They were free from restriction AFTER He had risen from the dead. The implication is that this would be the time when they would understand what they had witnessed.
  - c. The final answer with regards to what puzzled them about the phrase has to do with two phrases that are different but often placed as meaning the same things: "*Risen from the dead*" and "*risen **FROM AMONG** the dead*". The idea that dead people would one day rise was **not new** but the idea that **a dead person** would rise **OUT FROM AMONG** the dead was and it was this that they clearly heard Jesus say about Himself and didn't understand.

### III. Vs. 11-13 Through a glass dimly

Vs. 11 The verb tense in the phrase "*they asked*" is imperfect which means that they continually questioned Jesus about "*Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?*" The scribes misinterpreted Malachi chapter 4 verse 5 and wrongly predicted that Elijah would come and pave the way for the Messiah's reign, missing entirely the reason for the first coming. As far as the scribes were concerned they taught about Elijah being caught up in his "*chariot of fire*" in 2 Kings chapter 2 verse 11 as not dying and coming back. The rabbinical tradition was that before the Messiah came Elijah would come and be His herald. And the disciples were very much caught up in this theology that looked for the emergence of Elijah before the coming of the Messiah. To them this signified God interrupting time and instituting the victory of heaven which would signify the victory of

Israel over her enemies. According to this tradition based upon Malachi chapter 3 Elijah would come three days before the Messiah:

- On the first day Elijah would stand upon the mountains of Israel lamenting the desolation of the land. Then he would shout in a voice heard from one end of the world to the other, "*Peace comes to the world, peace comes to the world!*"
- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day Elijah would again stand upon the mountains of Israel and shout this time saying, "*Good has come to the world, good has come to the world!*"
- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day Elijah would stand upon the mountains and shout, "*Yeshuah (Salvation) has come to the world, Yeshuah (Salvation) has come to the world!*"

And with the threefold three-day announcement by Elijah the Messiah would restore all things, mending families, establishing rituals, cleansing the nation by bringing back the exiled patriots. They perceived that with Elijah coming there would be the constant activity of heaven on earth in their interest. **As such they were wondering, "If Jesus is the Messiah what happened to Elijah?"** They took this theology of men and attributed it to God's plan, so Jesus took this faulty teaching and drove them back to the truth that they would not face saying that, "*The people had done what they wanted with Elijah in typology John the Baptist and if they have done that with Elijah what do you suppose they will do with the Messiah?*"

Vs. 12-13 To understand this section, we need to be very careful least we mix up the pronouns, as Jesus is correcting them in the mist of answering them. He changes the subject about Elijah coming first, to that of Himself suffering many things and being treated with contempt. Then in verse 13 He again goes back to Elijah having already come.

"*Indeed*" is a word that means "*It is true*" and is used by Jesus to answer their questioning but it also signifies that Jesus wanted them to think further and to realize that they were asking the wrong question. The phrase "*restoring of all things*" in reference to the for

runner (Elijah / John the Baptist) was setting in motion the suffering, rejection, death and resurrection of the Messiah. **This was the question they should have asked, “Why does the Messiah need to be rejected, suffer, die and raise again?” Their focus was of timing and should have been on substance!** Jesus had already identified Elijah and his timing in Matthew chapter 11 verse 14 where Jesus answered the question proposed by John’s followers concerning His identity, where Jesus says, “*And if you are willing to receive it, he (John the Baptist) is Elijah who is coming.*” Jesus is **not** saying **that John is actually Elijah or that John’s appearance was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy concerning Elijah coming at the conclusion of the tribulation period as one of the two witnesses of described in Revelation chapter 11.** What Jesus is describing in reference to John the Baptist and Elijah is that **John is coming in the spirit and power of Elijah in fulfilling Malachi’s prophecy of chapter 3 preparing the way before the first coming of the Messiah which will be characterized by purifying the son’s of Levi, coming near for judgment.**

It is interesting to compare Mark’s account with Matthew 17:12-13 as Matthew elaborates further saying that Jesus said “*Elijah has come already, **and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished.** Like wise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.*” Then Matthew includes his commentary saying in verse 13, “**Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.**” **The point of emphasis with regards to Jesus words is that it isn’t recorded any where that Elijah would suffer and be rejected but it was prophesied about this happening to the Messiah.** So Jesus is saying, “*Elijah has come and will come but it is written that the Messiah is going to be rejected, suffer and die and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day rise again.*” The real

issue wasn't the timing of the coming of the Elijah but the purpose and coming of the Messiah and the disciples had the wrong focus. Again according to Matthews account Jesus indicated that John the Baptist symbolically fulfilled Elijah's roll as preparing the way in Malachi's prophecy. This is further brought in Luke's account of chapter 1 verse 17 where the angel of the Lord tells John's father Zacharias that John "*will go before Him (**Jesus**) in the spirit and power of Elijah....to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*"