

**Mark 9:2-29**  
**December 17, 2023**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

In preparing for today's lesson, I was conflicted about whether to focus on the Transfiguration event, which is what we'll read first – OR – lead off with an exploration question regarding our second storyline. They are both powerful accounts. I chose the 2<sup>nd</sup> story because I think it hits us where we live or perhaps touches us the most. So with that said....

Q: What situations have you observed in which unbelief was stronger than faith? What are possible causes that allow unbelief to be stronger than faith? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** Do you remember the story of “The Little Engine that Could?” In the story a little blue engine is the only one willing to attempt to pull a stranded train over difficult terrain to its destination. The little blue engine accomplishes the seemingly impossible task by repeating the mantra “I think I can, I think I can.” As cute as this little story might be, all of us know that thinking positively about our own abilities or trusting other people's abilities cannot guarantee success.

One of our storylines this morning is about a father who has a son who has been demon-possessed since childhood. As you can imagine, he is at wits end on finding healing for his son. He has heard about Jesus and takes his son with him in hopes that Jesus would heal his son. When Jesus arrived at the scene, the father describes why he's there and says, “If there is anything you can do, please have pity on us and help us.” You know the ending – “IF YOU CAN? Everything is possible for him who believes.” The father says, “I do believe; help me with my unbelief!”

What I like about this story is that this father probably started with hope that his son could be healed, but after years went by, he became desperate and went to seek Jesus for help. So the father's mantra would not have been “I think I can, I think I can,” but rather confessed to Jesus, “I think I CAN'T, but think YOU CAN!” At that moment, his faith/belief overcame his unbelief, and his son was healed. There is a lot to process here, so let's begin.

**BOOK:**

**The Transfiguration**

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

<sup>11</sup> And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

<sup>12</sup> Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? <sup>13</sup> But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

### **The Healing of a Boy With an Evil Spirit**

<sup>14</sup> When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

<sup>16</sup> “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

<sup>17</sup> A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup> Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

<sup>19</sup> “O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

<sup>20</sup> So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. <sup>22</sup> “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

<sup>23</sup> “‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”

<sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

<sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

<sup>26</sup> The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

<sup>29</sup> He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer. (prayer and fasting)”

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

What the disciples needed to learn was not only the necessity of Jesus' own self-denying ministry for the sake of our salvation; but also the need to join Him in carrying on such a ministry of grace to others in His name. Let us join Jesus in His self-denying ministry by relying upon daily supplies of His divine grace.

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 140-142). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

***Confirmation (vv. 1–8).*** It takes faith to accept and practice this lesson on discipleship, so six days later, the Lord gave a dazzling proof that God indeed does transform suffering into glory. (Luke's "about eight days" is inclusive of the day of the lesson and the day of the glory, Luke 9:28.) He took Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain (it may have been Mt. Hermon), and there He revealed His glory. This event was a vivid confirmation of His words as recorded in Mark 8:38 as well as a demonstration of the glory of the future kingdom (Mark 9:1; John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:12–21). The message was clear: first the suffering, then the glory.

Moses represented the Law and Elijah the Prophets, both of which find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25–27; Heb. 1:1–2). Moses had died and his body was buried, but Elijah had been raptured to heaven (2 Kings 2:11). When Jesus returns, He will raise the bodies of the saints who died and will rapture the living saints (1 Thes. 4:13–18). Jesus will one day establish His glorious kingdom and fulfill the many promises made through the prophets. Christ's sufferings and death would not *prevent* God from establishing His kingdom; rather, by solving the sin problem in God's world, the cross would help to make the kingdom possible.

The word *transfigured* describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. It is the opposite of "masquerade," which is an outward change that does not come from within. Jesus

allowed His glory to radiate through His whole being, and the mountaintop became a holy of holies! As you meditate on this event, keep in mind that He has shared this glory with us and promised us a glorious home forever (John 17:22–24). According to Romans 12:1–2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18, believers today can experience this same transfiguration glory.

The three disciples had gone to sleep while Jesus was praying (Luke 9:29, 32), a failure they would repeat in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42). They almost missed seeing Moses and Elijah and Jesus in His glory! Peter’s suggestion reflects again human thinking and not divine wisdom. How wonderful it would be to stay on the mountaintop and bask in His glory! But discipleship means denying self, taking up a cross, and following Him; and you cannot do that and selfishly stay on the mount of glory. There are needs to be met in the valley below. If we want to share the glory of Christ on the mountaintop, we must be willing to follow Him into the sufferings of the valley below.

The Father interrupted Peter’s speech and focused their attention, not on the vision, but on the Word of God: “Hear Him!” The memory of visions will fade, but the unchanging Word abides forever. The glorious vision was not an end in itself; it was God’s way of confirming the Word (see 2 Peter 1:12–21). Discipleship is not built on spectacular visions but on the inspired, unchanging Word of God. Nor do we put Moses, Elijah, and Jesus on the same level, as Peter hinted. It is “Jesus only”—His Word, His will, His kingdom, and His glory.

The three men were not allowed to tell the other nine what they had seen on the mount. No doubt their explanation after His resurrection brought great encouragement to the believers who themselves would experience suffering and death for His sake.

**Correction (vv. 11–13).** The disciples now understood God’s plan much better, but they were still confused about the coming of Elijah to prepare the way for the Messiah. They knew the prophecies in Malachi 3:1 and 4:5–6, and that their teachers expected these prophecies to be fulfilled before the Messiah appeared (John 1:21). Had Elijah already come and they missed him, or was he yet to come? Perhaps the appearing of Elijah on the mount was the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Jesus made two facts clear. First, for those who had trusted in Him, this “Elijah” was John the Baptist, for John had indeed prepared the way before Him. John had denied that he was Elijah come from the dead (John 1:21, 25), but he did minister in the “spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:16–17). Second, there would be a future coming of Elijah, just as Malachi had predicted (Matt. 17:11), before the time of Great Tribulation. Some students connect this with Revelation 11:2–12. The nation did not accept John’s ministry. Had they received John, he would have served as the “Elijah” God sent; and they also would have received Jesus. Instead, they rejected both men and allowed them to be slain.

### **Power Comes from Faith (Mark 9:14–29)**

The Christian life is “a land of hills and valleys” (Deut. 11:11). In one day, a disciple can move from the glory of heaven to the attacks of hell. When our Lord and His three friends returned to the other nine disciples, they found them involved in a dual problem: they were unable to deliver a boy from demonic control, and the scribes were debating with them and perhaps even taunting them because of their failure. As always, it was Jesus who stepped in to solve the problem.

The boy was both deaf and dumb (Mark 9:17, 25), and the demon was doing his best to destroy him. Imagine what it would be like for that father to try to care for the boy and protect him! Jesus had given His disciples authority to cast out demons (Mark 6:7, 13), and yet their ministry to the boy was ineffective. No wonder the Lord was grieved with them! How often He

must be grieved with us when we fail to use the spiritual resources He has graciously given to His people!

Since the disciples had failed, the desperate father was not even sure that Jesus could succeed; hence his statement, “If you can do anything” (Mark 9:22, NASB). However, the father was honest enough to admit his own unbelief and to ask the Lord to help him and his son. Jesus did cast out the demon and restore the boy to his father.

The main lesson of this miracle is the power of faith to overcome the enemy (Mark 9:19, 23–24; and see Matt. 17:20). Why had the nine disciples failed? Because they had been careless in their personal spiritual walk and had neglected prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). The authority that Jesus had given them was effective only if exercised by faith, but faith must be cultivated through spiritual discipline and devotion. It may be that the absence of their Lord, or His taking the three disciples with Him and leaving them behind, had dampened their spiritual fervor and diminished their faith. Not only did their failure embarrass them, but it also robbed the Lord of glory and gave the enemy opportunity to criticize. It is our faith in Him that glorifies God (Rom. 4:20).

**Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 142-145) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

#### 4. JESUS’ TRANSFIGURATION (9:2–13) (Matt. 17:1–13; Luke 9:28–36)

##### a. *His glory displayed* (9:2–8)

This event confirmed Peter’s confession (8:29) and fulfilled Jesus’ prediction (9:1). It also served as a prelude to Jesus’ Passion (14:1–16:8). Despite His impending death (8:31–32), He assured them by this event that His return in glory (8:38b) was certain and that their commitment to Him was well-founded (8:34–37). Future glory would follow present suffering for Him *and* them.

9:2–4. The words, **after six days** link the transfiguration to Jesus’ prediction in verse 1. The event occurred on the *seventh* day after the prediction—a day reminiscent of fulfillment and special revelation (cf. Ex. 24:15–16).

Matthew gave the same time sequence, but Luke stated that the transfiguration occurred “about eight days” later (Luke 9:28). Luke’s general reference reflects an alternate method of measuring time in which part of a day was counted as a whole day (see comments on Luke 9:28).

**Jesus selected Peter, James, and John** (cf. Mark 5:37; 14:33) **and took them up a high mountain where they were all alone** (*kat’ idian*; cf. 4:34). The unnamed location was probably a southern ridge of Mount Hermon (about 9200 feet) about 12 miles northeast of Caesarea Philippi (cf. 8:27; 9:30, 33). This is preferable to Mount Tabor in Galilee. The “high mountain” was an appropriate site in view of God’s previous self-disclosure to Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai (Horeb; cf. Ex. 24:12–18; 1 Kings 19:8–18).

Jesus **was transfigured** in the presence of the three disciples (cf. 2 Peter 1:16). “Transfigured” (*metemorphōthē*, cf. English “metamorphosis”) means “to be changed into another form,” not merely a change in outward appearance (cf. Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). For a brief time Jesus’ human body was transformed (glorified) and the disciples saw Him as He will be when He returns visibly in power and glory to establish His kingdom on earth (cf. Acts 15:14–18; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; Rev. 1:14–15; 19:15; 20:4–6). This was dramatically portrayed by

the supra-earthly whiteness of **His clothes**—a comment unique to Mark, probably reflecting Peter’s eyewitness report.

Two significant Old Testament men, **Elijah and Moses**, appeared miraculously and were conversing **with Jesus** (cf. Luke 9:31). Mark’s mentioning Elijah first is likely due to his emphasis on Elijah in this context (cf. Mark 8:28; 9:11–13). Moses, in the role of Israel’s deliverer and lawgiver, represented the Law. Elijah, defender of Yahweh worship and the future restorer of all things (Mal. 4:4–5), represented the Prophets. Both were prominent mediators of God’s rule to the nation of Israel (cf. Ex. 3:6; 4:16; 7:1; Deut. 18:15–18; 1 Kings 19:13; Acts 7:35). Their presence attested Jesus’ role as the Messiah.

9:5–6. Peter’s impulsive response, using the Hebrew title **Rabbi** (cf. 11:21; 14:45; also cf. “Teacher” in 4:38; 9:17; 10:35; 13:1), indicates that he did not understand this event. He said **it was good for them to be there**, implying that he wished to prolong the glorious experience. His idea that they build **three shelters** (tents of meeting, booths; cf. Lev. 23:33–43), **one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah**, confirms this and may imply that he viewed all three as being equal in importance. Thinking the kingdom had come, **Peter** felt it appropriate to build booths for the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). Unwittingly or not, Peter (cf. Mark 8:32) was again resisting the suffering which Jesus had said would precede the glory.

Mark’s explanatory (*gar*, “for”) comment is set off as a parenthesis. It shows that Peter, as spokesman, responded inappropriately because (*gar*) **they were so frightened** (*ekphoboi*, “terrified,” a strong adjective used only here and in Heb. 12:21 where it is translated “fear”; cf. the verb *phobeomai*, “be afraid,” in Mark 4:41; 16:8) by this dazzling display of supernatural glory.

9:7–8. God the Father’s response to Peter’s suggestion set forth the true meaning of this event. The **cloud that enveloped them** (Jesus, Moses, Elijah) signified God’s awesome presence (cf. Ex. 16:10; 19:9) and from it came His commanding **voice**. Once again, as at Jesus’ baptism, the Father placed His unqualified endorsement on His beloved **Son** (cf. comments on Mark 1:11). Jesus’ sonship sets Him above all other men including Moses and Elijah.

**Listen to Him**, actually means, “Be obedient to Him.” This reflects the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15 (cf. Deut. 18:19, 22 also) and serves to identify Jesus as the new and final Mediator of God’s rule in its present and future form (cf. Ps. 2:4–7; 2 Peter 1:16–19). Jesus succeeded Moses and Elijah, who suddenly disappeared leaving no one **except Jesus**. Their work was done, and they were superseded. Jesus, not Moses or Elijah, is now God’s authorized Ruler and Spokesman.

#### *b. His command to silence (9:9–10)*

9:9. On their descent from **the mountain Jesus** told the three disciples to keep silent about **what they had seen** till after His resurrection. Their misunderstanding of His messianic mission (8:29–33) was still evident at the transfiguration (cf. 9:5–6, 10; and comments on 8:30).

This was Jesus’ last command to silence recorded by Mark and the only one on which He set a time limit. This implied that a time of proclamation (cf. 13:10; 14:9) would follow this period of silence. Only from the perspective of the Resurrection would they understand the transfiguration and thus be able to proclaim its meaning correctly.

9:10. The three disciples were perplexed by Jesus’ command. **They kept discussing among themselves ... what “rising from the dead” meant**. They believed in a future resurrection, but were puzzled by the unexpected announcement of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

#### *c. His declaration about Elijah (9:11–13)*

9:11. The presence of Elijah at the transfiguration (v. 4), the confirmation of Jesus as Messiah (8:29; 9:7), and His reference to the Resurrection (v. 9) suggested that the end of all things was near. If so, where was **Elijah** who **must come first** to prepare the nation spiritually for the Messiah's coming? (cf. Mal. 3:1–4; 4:5–6) Perhaps the disciples thought Elijah's work of renewal would mean the Messiah would not need to suffer.

9:12–13. In reply, **Jesus** made two things clear. First, He acknowledged on the one hand that **Elijah does come** (lit., “is coming”) **first** (before the Messiah) **and restores** (“is going to restore”) **all things** through spiritual renewal (Mal. 4:5–6). On the other hand this does not remove the necessity for **the Son of Man to suffer much and be rejected** (cf. Ps. 22; Isa. 53, esp. v. 3).

Second, however (**but** in Gr. is a strong adversative), **Jesus** declared that indeed **Elijah has come** already. In a veiled way Mark recorded how Jesus identified John the Baptist as the one who fulfilled at Jesus' First Advent the role function expected of the end-time Elijah (cf. Mark 1:2–8; Matt. 17:13; Luke 1:17). Jesus gave John his true significance which John did not even recognize about himself (cf. John 1:21; comments on Matt. 11:14).

The expression, **They have done to him everything they wished**, denotes the ruthless, arbitrary suffering and death John experienced at the hands of Herod Antipas and Herodias (cf. Mark 6:14–29). In like manner Elijah suffered persecution at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel (cf. 1 Kings 19:1–3, 10). What these antagonists did to Elijah and John, people hostile to God would do to Jesus.

John the Baptist fulfilled the Elijah prophecy (Mal. 4:5–6) typically at Christ's First Advent. Yet Malachi's prophecy (Mal. 4:5–6) indicates that Elijah himself will also appear just before Christ's Second Advent (cf. Rev. 11).

#### 5. THE CURE OF A DEMON-POSSESSED BOY (9:14–29) (Matt. 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–43)

This episode of desperate human need and the disciples' failure contrasts sharply with the glory of the transfiguration. It shows the reality of living in the world in the absence of Jesus.

The disciples from whom help could be expected (cf. Mark 6:7) were powerless. Mark 9:28–29 provides the key to understanding this incident. In Jesus' absence they must live and work by faith in God, expressed through prayer. The extended account (in contrast with Matt. and Luke) and the vivid details once again suggest the input of Peter's eyewitness report.

9:14–15. **When** Jesus and the three disciples (cf. v. 2) returned **to the other nine disciples, they saw a large crowd gathered around** the nine and **Law teachers arguing with them**. The subject of the dispute is not stated.

**As soon as** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) the crowd **saw Jesus** they became greatly amazed (*exethambēthēsan*, “alarmed”; cf. 14:33; 16:5–6) **and ran to greet Him**. Their astonishment was not due to some afterglow from the transfiguration (cf. 9:9) but to the unexpected yet opportune presence of Jesus in their midst.

9:16–18. Jesus **asked** the nine **what** the argument was **about**. **A man in the crowd**, the father of the demon-possessed boy, explained the situation to Jesus. Respectfully addressing Jesus as **Teacher** (cf. v. 5), the father said he had **brought** his **son** to Jesus for healing because the boy was **possessed by a spirit** (cf. comments on 1:23–24) who deprived **him** of his power of **speech** (and hearing; cf. 9:25). Also the demon often convulsed him with violent seizures symptomatic of epilepsy. The demon's attempts to destroy the lad (cf. vv. 18, 21–22, 26) show again the purpose of demon possession (cf. comments on 5:1–5).

The father's appeal to **the disciples to** exorcise **the** demon was legitimate because Jesus had given them authority over evil spirits (cf. 6:7).

9:19. **Jesus** addressed the crowd but especially His disciples with deep emotion (cf. 3:5; 8:12). **O unbelieving generation** emphasizes the characteristic cause of all spiritual failure—lack of faith in God (cf. 9:23; 10:27). The rhetorical questions further reflect Jesus' continued distress over His disciples' spiritual dullness (cf. 4:40; 6:50–52; 8:17–21). Yet He intended to act with power where they had failed, so He commanded, **Bring the boy to Me**.

9:20–24. **When the demonic spirit saw Jesus**, he **immediately** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) **threw the lad into a violent seizure**, reducing him to utter helplessness (cf. 9:18).

In reply to Jesus' compassionate inquiry, the **father** said his son had experienced such pathetic and near-fatal convulsions **from childhood**. The lad's condition was long-standing and critical. The words, **If You can do anything**, indicate that the disciples' inability to expel the demon (v. 18) had shaken the father's faith in Jesus' ability.

Jesus took up the father's words of doubt, **If You can**, to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father's ability to trust in God who can do what is humanly impossible (cf. 10:27). Jesus then challenged the father not to doubt: **Everything is possible for him who believes** (cf. 9:29). Faith sets no limits on God's power and submits itself to His will (cf. 14:35–36; 1 John 5:14–15).

The father's response was immediate (*euthys*). He declared his faith (**I do believe**), but also acknowledged its weakness: **Help me overcome my unbelief!** This brings out an essential element of Christian faith—it is possible only with the help of the One who is its Object.

9:25–27. **When Jesus saw that a curious crowd was converging on the scene** (apparently He had withdrawn briefly), **He rebuked** (“ordered”; cf. 1:25) **the evil** (lit., “unclean”; cf. 1:23, 34) **spirit** with two commands: **come out ... and never enter him again**.

With a final burst of violence on his victim and a scream of rage (cf. 1:26), the demon fled. **The boy** lay limp in utter exhaustion looking **like a corpse** so **that many** concluded, **He's dead. But Jesus ... lifted him ... up**. Mark's parallel wording in the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter (cf. 5:39–42) suggests that breaking from Satan's power is like passing from death to life. To accomplish this in a final, irreversible sense necessitated the death and resurrection of Jesus Himself.

9:28–29. These verses conclude this incident and explain why the disciples failed. **After** going **indoors** (lit., “into the house”; cf. 7:17; the location is unnamed) the **disciples asked** Jesus **privately** (*kat' idian*; cf. 4:34) **why** they could not expel the demon.

Jesus explained, **This kind**—probably demonic spirits in general rather than a special type of demon—**can come out only** (lit., “is not able to come out by anything except ...”) **by prayer**. The disciples had failed because they had not prayerfully depended on God's power. Apparently they had trusted in past successes (cf. 6:7, 13) and had failed.

Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts have “prayer and fasting” at the end of 9:29 (NIV). Perhaps the words were added early by some scribes to the textual tradition to support asceticism. But the words, if original, refer to a practical means of focusing one's attention more fully on God for a specific purpose, for a limited period of time. NIV.

**Church, C.L. (1998). *Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 437-438). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

**GOD'S KINGDOM COMES (9:1–13)**



Jesus encouraged the crowds (8:34) and His disciples that some of those listening to His teaching on costly discipleship would not die (“taste death”) until they saw that God’s kingdom had come in power. The two most probable interpretations of this difficult saying are that (1) God’s kingdom came in power at the resurrection and at Pentecost (Rom. 1:4; Acts 1:8), or (2) the transfiguration served as an anticipation of the powerful coming of God’s kingdom at Christ’s second coming.

Jesus’ altered appearance at the transfiguration offered the disciples a preview of His resurrection glory. Peter again spoke for the disciples who desired to build booths so they could “package” the experience of glory. That God’s seal of approval comes on the heels of Jesus’ commitment to the way of the cross is no accident. Only after Jesus had risen from the dead would the disciples be able to share God’s vindication of the Suffering Servant-Son.

Jesus’ reference to the resurrection perhaps sparked the disciples’ interest in the coming of Elijah. Jesus shifted their focus to the crucial question: not why Elijah must first come but why the Son of man must suffer. A suffering servant is what the Scriptures demand—other than that Mark did not answer this question any more than he did Jesus’ “Why?” (15:34). “Elijah” (John the Baptist) finds his significance as forerunner of the suffering and death of Jesus.

### **PRICE FOR NOT PRAYING (9:14–29)**

The disciples learned that their inability to exorcise a demon—and fulfill their commission (6:7)—resulted from their failure to pray. The father of the afflicted boy expressed doubts about Jesus’ ability to help him. Jesus responded that “everything is possible for him who believes.” The father’s plea captures the dilemma of many hesitant believers: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (9:24). Jesus responded to the man’s feeble faith. Healing of the boy who resembled a corpse sets the stage for further teaching concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection.

***Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (p. 625). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

### **Transfiguration and Teaching (Mark 9:2–29)**

*The passage*—The transfiguration, recorded in 9:2–13 has deep and rich theological implications. This scene included Moses representing the law, Elijah representing the prophets, and Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of both. Both Moses and Elijah had triumphant departures. The exodus of Jesus would be a greater triumph than either of the others.

The earthly body of Jesus was not able to contain the divine effulgence. This may be comparable to the resurrection body which will be given the redeemed for eternity. It is a wonderful foretaste of glory, both for the apostles and modern-day Christians.

The experience of the twelve in 9:14–29 is as modern as today. They were powerless in their ministry, due to the fact that they were prayerless.

***The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 9:2-29. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.***

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