

# The Gospel According To Mark

## Part Fourteen

**Mark 9:1** [New King James] *“And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.’”*

To understand the last part of this verse we have to realise that what was about to happen to Peter, James and John was a vision of the future coming Kingdom of God.

When we read Matthew’s record of this event in **Matthew 17:1-9** Jesus Christ told them not to tell this **vision** until after His resurrection.

**Mark 9:2-8** [New King James] *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah,’ because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.”*

Jesus Christ had made the decision to go to Jerusalem and face the cross, this event was heavenly confirmation of this decision, also confirmation of Moses the law-giver and Elijah the greatest of prophets, all confirming Jesus Christ as consummation of their work.

The presence of the cloud indicated the very presence of God the Father, [**Exodus 16:10; Exodus 19:9; Exodus 33:9; 1 Kings 8:10**].

This was a very precious time for the disciples, they had been shattered by Jesus’ statement He was going to Jerusalem to die.

What they experienced on the Mountain of Transfiguration would have given them something to hang on to, even if they did not understand.

**They had also seen the glory of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.**

Why the booths?

These were referring to the temporary dwellings that they would live in during the Feast of Tabernacles [booths], which pictures the 1,000 year reign of the “*firstfruits*” of the Kingdom of God mentioned in **Revelation 20:4-5**.

[For more details please download and study our article ‘*God Ordained Christian Festivals And Holy Days*’ listed under the sub-heading ‘*Covenants*.’]

**Mark 9:9-13** [New King James] *“Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Then He answered and told them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.’”*

Jesus Christ told them **not** to mention what they had just experienced, because as yet they did **not** know the true meaning of His Messiahship.

**Only after the cross, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit would the Messiahship of Jesus Christ be clearly understood.**

Another thing that Jesus Christ said equally puzzling was that Elijah had already come in the person of John of Baptist who had done an Elijah-type work of preparing the coming of the Messiah, [**Malachi 3:5-6**], then imprisoned and murdered by Herod.

**Humans today and throughout the generations, have values that are so different to those of the Creator God, and the Kingdom of God.**

The Jews looked for the Messiah to give them physical relief from their present physical problems, that included being under the rule of Rome.

Jesus Christ focuses on deliverance from sin as being a far more important deliverance from physical suffering and political oppression.

**Our understanding must go beyond what Jesus Christ can do for us in the physical life to our eternal life that is dependent on freedom from the penalty of sin.**

**Mark 9:14-27** [New King James] *“And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, ‘What are you discussing with them?’ Then one of the crowd answered and said, ‘Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.’ He answered him and said, ‘O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.’ Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, ‘How long has this been happening to him?’ And he said, ‘From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’ When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!’ Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, ‘He is dead.’ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.”*

Jesus returned from the mountain top to a delicate situation. This inability of the disciples to cast out a demon in this case had given the Scribes and Pharisees an opportunity to belittle them and their Master.

**In Mark 6:13 we read that they had driven out demons while on their mission to the villages, why not now?**

**What Mark is showing is how our battle with Satan and our sin is an ongoing difficult struggle. Victory can only come through faith in Jesus Christ, and the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, not through our own efforts, [John 15:5].**

**Mark 9:28-29** [New King James] *“And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So He said to them, ‘This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.’”*

**Only when we have a close relationship with God can we accomplish things that are outside the physical realm, and total faith in Jesus Christ is essential, as we read in verses 23-24.**

**Such a faith is not something we can “work up,” it is essentially a gift from God, as it is One of the “fruits” of an active indwelling of the Holy Spirit, [Galatians 5:22-25].**

**Mark 9:30-31** [New King James] *“Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, ‘The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.’”*

Jesus Christ now left the north country where He was relatively safe, taking His first step towards Jerusalem and the cross that awaited Him.

Jesus wanted to make sure that His group of chosen disciples received the message He brought, and they were to continue to preach, so He avoided the crowds.

If we compare these recorded words to those of **Mark 8:31** we see that one phrase is added, *“the Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men.”*

There was a traitor in the little band of men and Jesus Christ knew it, He could see the way the mind of Judas was working, and maybe He was making a last appeal to the man in whose heart there was forming the purpose of betrayal.

**Another thing that the disciples did not yet grasp was the resurrection.**

This was a wonder too great for them, a wonder that they only grasped when it became an accomplished fact.

Yet they were afraid to ask Jesus Christ what He meant by *“rise again.”*

Reading this account of Jesus Christ and His disciples we can be amazed that the disciples did **not** grasp that which was so plainly spoken by Jesus Christ.

Would we be any different in the same circumstances?

**The human mind has an amazing faculty for rejecting that which it does not wish to hear or see.**

**People still accept parts of the Christian message which they like and agree with, yet refuse to understand or accept the rest.**

**Mark 9:32-35** [New King James] *“But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, ‘What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?’ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’”*

**This incident shows just how far the disciples were from realising the real meaning of Jesus’ Messiahship.**

Note when Jesus Christ asked them what they had been arguing about they had nothing to say, it was the silence of shame.

It is amazing how anything takes its proper place and acquires its true character when it is done in the presence of Jesus Christ.

**Psalms 139:1-4** [New King James] *“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.”*

If the disciples had remembered these inspired words of King David they would have adjusted their thoughts and words to respond to the attitude that their Master, Jesus Christ, who had always put the needs of the people before His own.

It is **not** wrong for Christians to be industrious or ambitious, but it is wrong when ambition pushes aside obedience to God and service toward our fellow humans who are in need.

**Mark 9:36-37** [New King James] *“Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.’”*

**Jesus Christ taught His disciples to welcome children.**

**This was new in a society where children were treated as “second class” citizens.**

**Children have little to give to society, they need to have things done for them.**

There is a warning here. It is easy to cultivate the friendship of a person who can do things for us, or those whose influence can be useful to us.

It is equally easy to avoid the society of a person who inconveniently needs our help, [**Matthew 25:34-40**].

**Mark 9:38-40** [New King James] *“Now John answered Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.’ But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.’”*

Correct theology is important but it should never be an excuse to avoid helping others who are **not** affiliated to our group.

The name of Jesus Christ has immense power.

Remember He is God and the Creator and Sustainer of all things, [**John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17**].

**Here and in Matthew 12:30 Jesus Christ is saying that there can be no neutrality towards Him, we are either working with Him or we are working against Him.**

We must always remember that the truth is bigger than any human’s grasp of it.

**John 16:13** [New King James] *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

**Note it tells us that the Holy Spirit will “guide us into all truth,” it did not say He will give us all truth!**

**John 17:3** [New King James] *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

To “know” Jesus Christ, who personifies “the truth” [**John 14:6**], as we understand the meaning of the word “know” is impossible, because He is God, even eternity will **not** be long enough.

The Greek word translated “know” is “ginōskō” meaning to have an intimate relationship with Him and the Father.

**We must also in the end remember that any doctrine or belief must finally be judged by the kind of person it produces, how near their characteristics are to those of Jesus Christ.**

**Mark 9:41-42** [New King James] *“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. ‘But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.’”*

The teaching of these words of our Saviour and Lord is simple, unmistakable, direct and salutary.

Any kindness shown, any help given by Christians to other human beings, will **not** go unnoticed by God.

The converse is also true, it also will have an eternal reward from the Creator God.

If though a bad example as a Christian we cause a person to reject Jesus Christ as their Saviour, our reward will be eternal death.

God will **not** be hard on a sinner who repents, but He will deal very sternly on any person who makes it easier for another to sin.

**Mark 9:43-48** [New King James] *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched, where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire, where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’”*

**These words of Jesus Christ are not to be taken literally, but are symbolic of how drastic our response to sin should be.**

[Please download and study our article ‘Should We Take The Christian Bible Literally?’ listed under the sub-heading ‘Bible Study’.]

**Verse 48** is referring directly to the valley of Hinnom, Gehenna, an unclean place, where one of Israel’s most terrible lapses into heathen practices took place, [**2 Kings 23:10**], where young children were sacrificed to Molech as burnt offerings.

Being so desecrated it was set apart as the place where the refuse of Jerusalem was thrown to be burned. The consequence was that it was a foul place where worms bred on the refuse and where it was smouldering at all times like some vast incinerator.

The valley seems to have been used for the burning of corpses of crucified or stoned criminals or the bodies of dead unclean animals, hence the maggots.