

9. The Coming of the Kingdom and the Impending Betrayal of the Lord

Mark 8 closed with the Lord emphasizing a spiritual situation that will save one's soul: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 9 carries this concept into a discussion of the kingdom of God.

The Coming Kingdom

Mark 9:1

And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

There are two truths evident in this passage: The kingdom of heaven would come in the lives of some in the audience. The kingdom of God would come with power. The apostles were told to wait for this day. In Acts 1:3-5, Jesus, speaking of the kingdom of God, said that power would come to them in Jerusalem along with the gift of the Father:

He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

All those who teach and profess that the kingdom is yet to come are false teachers who in word and deed rebuke the Lord, just as Peter did in chapter 8. In Acts 1:7-8, Jesus spoke of the power to come on the day of Pentecost:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

These scriptures plainly refute that premillennial teaching that somehow the kingdom is yet to come. Before Pentecost, the kingdom of God is spoken of as an event yet to come. After Pentecost it is always spoken of as being in existence:

Col 1:12-14:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and **brought us into the kingdom of the Son** he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Heb 12:28-29:

28 Therefore, since **we are receiving a kingdom** that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

Rev 1:5-6:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and **has made us to be a kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

"Brought us" and "made us" in these passages are past tense noting action already

accomplished. "Are receiving" is a present tense, progressive verb stating an action continuing in the present. Christ established his kingdom in the time of some living in Mark 9:1.

The Mount of Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-8

2 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. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

5 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." 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

7 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

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

Peter would refer to this transforming event in his life in 2 Peter 1:16-18:

16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

This episode is about the *power and coming* of the Lord, emphasizing that he is to be heard and not the prophets. Jesus message has transcended the traditions of the Jews up to this point in Mark's narrative; and from this point forward, it will transcend the teaching of the Old Testament prophets by fulfilling their teachings, as Jesus himself said in Matt 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

The Hebrew writer made plain that we are to hear Christ in Heb 1:1-3:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

The Coming Resurrection

Mark 9:9-13

9 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. 10 They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

11 And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

12 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? 13 But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have

done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."

The disciples were caught up by the statement that Jesus would be raised from the dead. The teachers of law used Mal 4:5-6 to look for Elijah:

5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

In Matt 11:11-15, Jesus explained fully that John the Baptist was the Elijah to come:

1 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 He who has ears, let him hear.

John had come. and Herod beheaded him. Now the Christ would suffer and be rejected. Matt 17:12-13 adds to Mark's account:

12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Some Demons Cast out by Prayer

Mark 9:14-29

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

16 *"What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.*

17 *A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18 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."*

19 *"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."*

20 *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.*

21 *Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"*

"From childhood," he answered. 22 "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."

23 *"If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."*

24 *Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

25 *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."*

26 *The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.*

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

We know that Jesus gave the apostles the power to drive out evil spirits in Mark 3:14-15: "14 He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons." Why this spirit required prayer in order to be driven out is not stated. As before, the Greek word for *evil* is *unclean*. Other passages that describe evil spirits are Mark 1:27, 3:11, 5:13, and 6:7.

The Resurrection Foretold

Mark 9:30-32

30 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

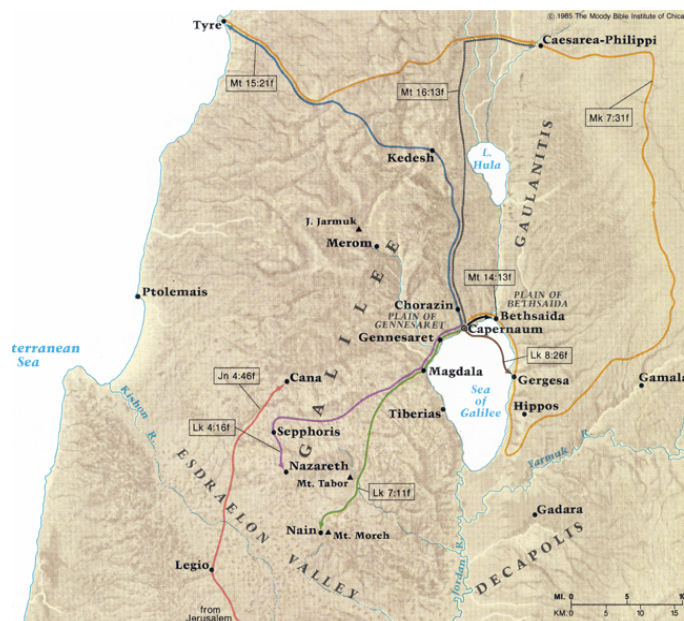
The place that they left is the regions around Caesarea Philippi. As they passed through Galilee, Jesus began to teach them about his betrayal, killing, and resurrection after three days in the grave. Once again, the disciples do not understand what he meant. This general misunderstanding continued until after his death. Luke 24:25-27 has the resurrected Lord explaining:

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Rejection and suffering were prerequisite for the Lord to enter into his glory. In Luke 24:32, the disciples understood that he had opened the scriptures: "32 They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'"

Finally, in Luke 24:45-49, the Lord places these events in perspective to the power that is to come from on high, signally the kingdom coming with power (Mark 9:1):

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."



Jesus followed a path of rejection, suffering, and death in order to be raised and exalted; so also, we must follow that path of denial in order to be justified. His teaching will now turn to how the first shall be last and the last first in this unusual spiritual kingdom.

The First Shall Be Last

Mark 9:33-35

33 *They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?"* 34 *But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

35 *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

36 *He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."*

The twelve were still looking to the greatness that comes with a material kingdom, and they argued about who was the greatest. Perhaps, they had a glimmer of the spiritual greatness demanded by the Lord, because when they were asked, they kept quiet, as if not wanting the Lord to know what they were talking about. But he knew anyway and taught them that if one wants to be first he must last—a servant of all. In the illustration the child is unto Christ as Christ is unto the father. Paul taught this lesson of humility and service in 1 Cor 12:24-26:

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Works in the Name of the Lord

Mark 9:38-41

38 *"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."*

39 *"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."*

This passage does not teach that one can be saved by doing works in the name of the Lord. In fact, Matt 7:21-23 teaches that many who do great things in the name of the Lord (including driving out demons) will be condemned:

21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*

What it does teach is that those who do good works in the name of Christ works will not say anything bad about the Lord. The principal eternal is "whoever is not against us is for us."

The second thing taught is that, while doing good works in the name of the Lord will not save one, it certainly will not cause one to lose his reward. For this very reason, Paul could rejoice when people were doing him in, because the gospel advanced. Phil 1:15-18 tells Paul's story:

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. . . . 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Entering the Kingdom of God Versus Being Thrown in Hell

Mark 9:42-49

42 "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. 43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. 47 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 than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where

*"'their worm does not die,
and the fire is not quenched.'*

49 Everyone will be salted with fire.

The spiritual triumphs over the physical every time in the kingdom of heaven: It is better to drown in the sea than to cause a little one to sin. It is better to be maimed than sin and go into hell where the fire never goes out? It is better to be crippled than sin and be thrown into hell. It is better to be blind than sin and be thrown into hell. It is in hell where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

The Lord teaches that everyone will be salted by fire which metaphorically means tested by trials and temptations. The Lord said in Luke 12:49-50, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" Peter applied the principle in 1 Peter 1:6-7, where the saints had their faith proved by the fire of trials:

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8

Paul also used this figure in 1 Cor 3:11-15:

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Mark 9:50

50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Here salt is the spiritual nature (saltiness) of the disciples. Matthew recorded a similar usage in Matt 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."