



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark

Part 21

Mark 9:2-4

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Mark 9:2-4 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

Mark now proceeds to tell the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

As we saw last time, this story is probably intimately connected with Jesus' statement that "some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power," referring to those disciples who accompany Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

At first, the Transfiguration might seem like "just another miracle story" – Jesus can glow supernaturally, just like he can walk on water!

But much more is going on here – and we will take several sessions to walk through it slowly.

Mark 9:2 (NIV)

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.

“after six days”

Perhaps this is a simple time marker ...

But look at Exodus 24:15-16:

Exodus 24:15-16 – “When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.”

There are touchpoints with the story of Moses at Mount Sinai throughout this story.

“Peter, James and John”

These three are alone with Jesus here.

As they were at the raising of Jairus’ daughter, and will be again in 13:3 and 14:33.

These verses give the distinct impression that these three form the inner core of Jesus’ followers.

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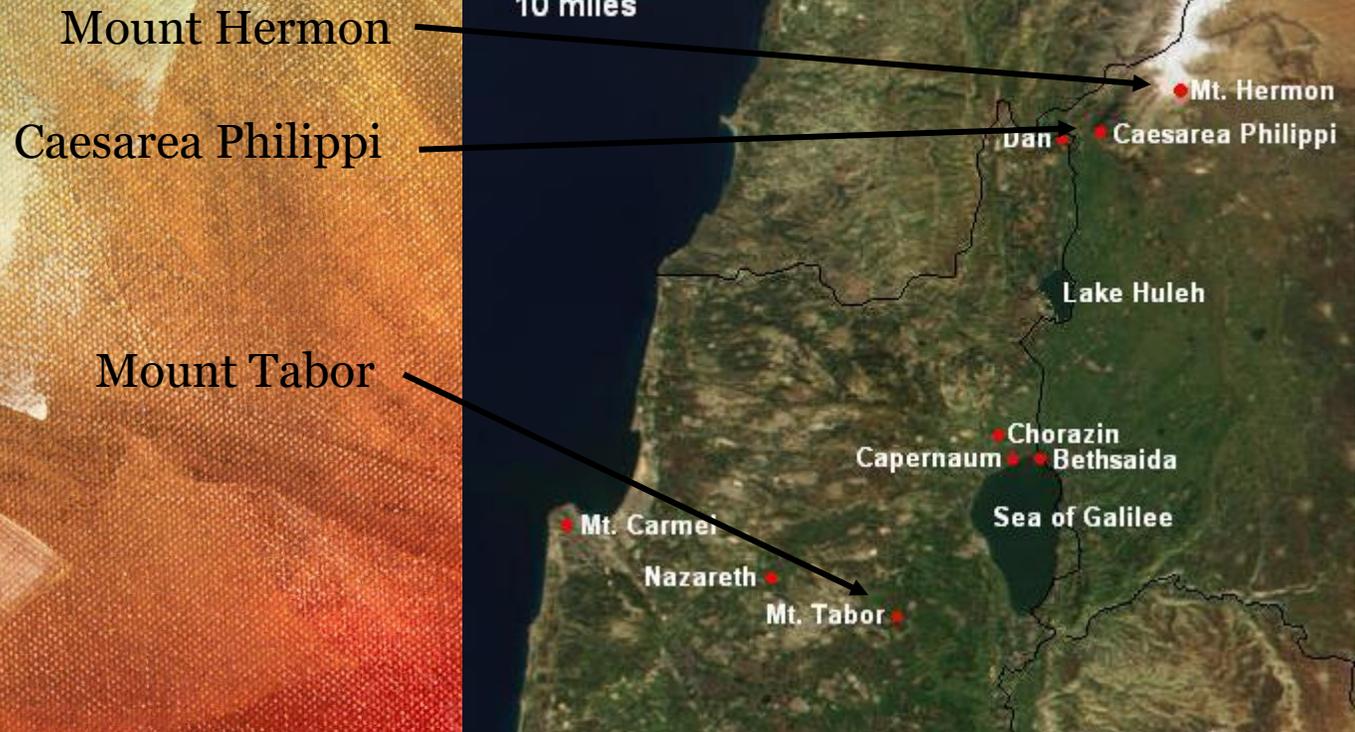
“up a high mountain”

Again, as at Mount Sinai.

The height suggests nearness to heaven.

The exact location is only speculation – they are still near Caesarea Philippi.

Mount Tabor is the traditional location, but most scholars insist upon Mount Hermon because of its closer proximity to Caesarea Philippi.



Mark 9:2 (NIV)

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“they were all alone”

There is an emphasis here on privacy.

Often, in Mark, this implies a teaching of particular importance.

“he was transfigured”

Notice the language used here – someone else has acted UPON Jesus to bring about this change: God the Father.

The Greek here is “metamorphosed”.

The transfiguration is to be understood as a glimpse of Jesus “in his Father’s glory” – recent language from 8:38:

Mark 8:38 – “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Mark 9:3 (NIV)

His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

“dazzling white”

The whiteness of the cloth transcends the best laundering possible!

White often signifies purity in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

But here, it probably signifies that Jesus has come directly from the divine presence.

Exodus 34:30, after Moses' encounter with God:

Exodus 34:30 – “When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.”

But several other passages as well:

Daniel 7:9 – “As I looked, ‘thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.’”

Daniel 12:3 – “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

Matthew 28:3 – “His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow” (an angel of the LORD)

Acts 1:10 – “They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.”

Revelation 4:4 – “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”

This dazzling appearance serves as visual verification that Jesus is the Son of Man of Daniel 7.

Mark 9:4 (NIV)

And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

“Elijah and Moses”

These are two pillars of the Old Testament – but we might ask, “Why these two?”

Why not David, Jesus’ ancestor?

Or Adam, or Solomon, or Isaiah, or Abraham?

Moses and Elijah represent “the Law and the Prophets”.

That is, the full authority of God – ALL of the Old Testament teaching and instruction.

ALL of God’s revealed truth, to date, is visually represented in these two.

“who were talking with Jesus”

But note that the CONTENT of the conversation is not important to Mark.

Luke’s Gospel, on the other hand, says “they spoke of his departure:

Luke 9:30-31 – “Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”

The conversation itself, regardless of content, suggests that the three are perfectly compatible – there is camaraderie and continuity between Jesus and the other two.

And, it demonstrates that Jesus is not hostile to what God has revealed in the Old Testament.

Mark 9:2-4 (NIV)

SUMMARY

In all three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Peter's confession of Christ and Jesus' first passion prediction are immediately followed by the story of Jesus' Transfiguration.

The purpose of this scene is clearly to confirm the truth of Peter's proclamation, especially in the wake of Jesus' startling prediction of his suffering, death, and resurrection – which could easily have caused the disciples to question the accuracy of Peter's pronouncement.

The inner circle of disciples is given a glimpse into the true glory of Jesus, as the veil that has covered Jesus' true identity is momentarily lifted.

It is, essentially, GOD'S response to Peter's confession and Jesus' prediction.



Bibliography

The following materials have been used as sources for this Bible study:

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