



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark
Part 22
Mark 9:5-7

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Mark 9:5-7 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

We pick up again immediately after Jesus' inner circle of disciples has seen him transfigured (metamorphosed).

Elijah and Moses have now joined Jesus, and they engage in conversation.

We need to keep in mind that in the ancient world, seeing an angel or a heavenly being was considered dangerous, or even life-threatening!

Think about Luke's story of the birth of Jesus, and the angels' immediate words to the shepherds in the field who see them – "Do not be afraid!"

Mark will let us know in this section that the inner core of disciples has responded to the Transfiguration with similar emotions.

Mark 9:5 (NIV)

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.”

“Let us put up three shelters”

Apparently, this is Peter’s gut reaction to the events.

The word “shelters” is variously translated as “tents”, or “shrines”, or “booths”, or “tabernacles”.

Peter’s intention is probably to show honor.

But possible, his intention is to encourage the discussion to continue indefinitely.

Or he could also have in mind the tents/booths that the Israelites lived in during the wilderness wanderings, that was commemorated annually in the Feast of Tabernacles.

Probably, though, Peter wants to honor all three equally with “shrines” dedicated to each of them.

Mark 9:6 (NIV)

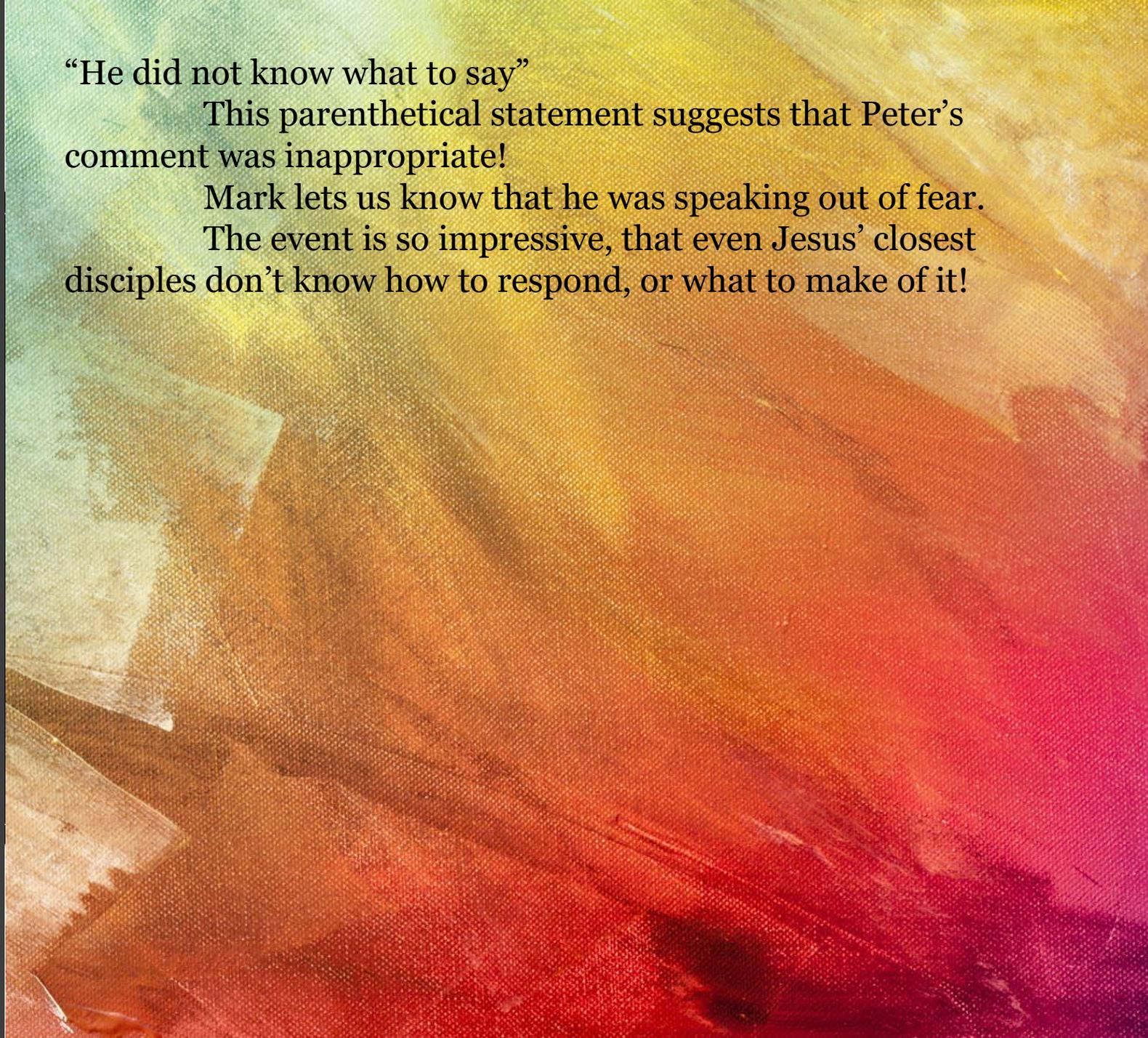
(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

“He did not know what to say”

This parenthetical statement suggests that Peter’s comment was inappropriate!

Mark lets us know that he was speaking out of fear.

The event is so impressive, that even Jesus’ closest disciples don’t know how to respond, or what to make of it!



Mark 9:7 (NIV)

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

“a cloud appeared and enveloped them”

“Overshadowed” is a better translation of the Greek word than “enveloped”.

The picture we should have of this is that the cloud created a darkness that allowed the radiant Jesus to be even more visually distinct.

The cloud “overshadows” even Moses and Elijah.

See scenes in Exodus for God’s presence in a cloud:

Exodus 24:15-16 – “When Moses went up 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.”

Exodus 40:34-35 – “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”

Mark 9:7 (NIV)

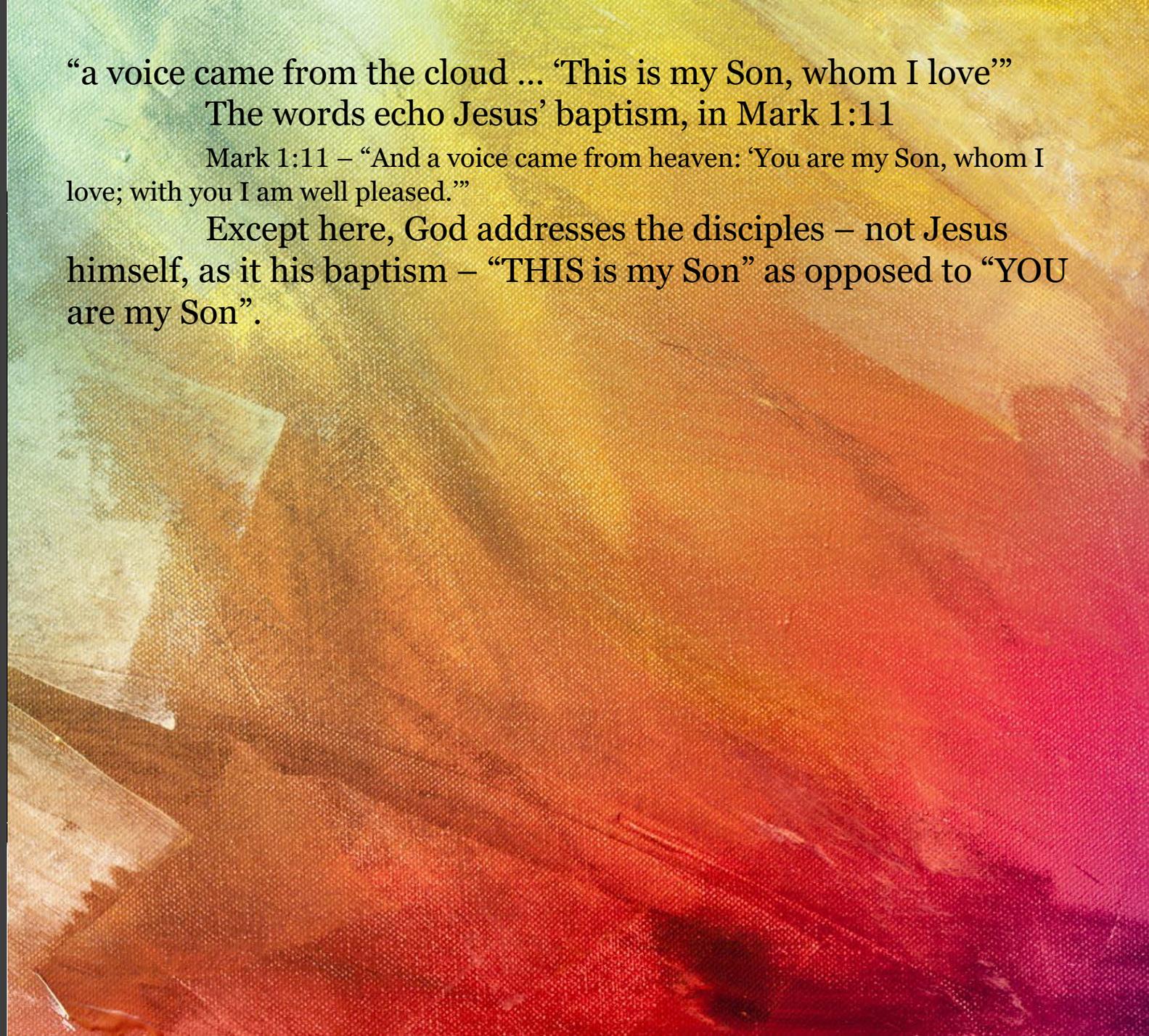
Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

“a voice came from the cloud ... ‘This is my Son, whom I love’”

The words echo Jesus’ baptism, in Mark 1:11

Mark 1:11 – “And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’”

Except here, God addresses the disciples – not Jesus himself, as at his baptism – “THIS is my Son” as opposed to “YOU are my Son”.



Mark 9:7 (NIV)

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

“Listen to him!”

We need to recognize that emphasis on specific words is difficult to communicate in written text.

Often, we italicize, or write in capital letters, to provide emphasis on the correct word.

It is very likely that the emphasis in these two pronouncements of God should be:

THIS is my Son (i.e., not Moses or Elijah)

Listen to **HIM** (i.e., Jesus, not Moses or Elijah, is now the supreme authority)

The time of Moses and Elijah is over – although both of them **DO** support Jesus!

Moses and Elijah are not “thrown out”, or rejected, but their teaching is incorporated within Jesus’.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s will for humanity.

Mark 9:7 (NIV)

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

“Listen to him!” (continued)

It is also very important to notice that all of this is true, NOW – AFTER, and in spite of, Jesus’ passion prediction!

God proclaims, now, in this moment, that Jesus is **STILL** God’s beloved Son, even though he will suffer and die!

What’s more, this affirmation comes at a critical time – when the disciples would be most likely to abandon Jesus (because Jesus has just told them to take up their crosses to follow him.)

One final note: look at Deuteronomy 18:15, words of Moses as the Israelites prepare to enter the Promised Land:

Deuteronomy 18:15 – “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”

God’s pronouncement affirms for the disciples that Jesus **IS** Moses’ prophesied “prophet like me from among your own brothers”.

If any question remains with the disciples, even Moses has said they should “listen to HIM”!

Mark 9:5-7 (NIV)

SUMMARY

The cloud that surrounds the disciples in verse 7 is evocative of the cloud that symbolizes the presence of God that fell upon the Tent of Meeting in Exodus 40.

From this cloud, the disciples hear the voice of God.

The command to “listen to him” would remind the disciples of the words of Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses speaks of a “prophet like me” who God would raise up, and who the people should listen to.

It also affirms the absolute authority of all of Jesus’ teaching.

God’s words are a direct response to Peter’s desire to put up shelters.

Peter’s error is in equating Jesus with Moses and Elijah – God replies, “THIS is my Son, Listen to HIM!” Jesus is categorically different from the other two, as the unique Son of God.



Bibliography

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

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