

Coming Down the Mountain

Objective: We will learn more about Elijah and John the Baptist, and that God wants us to be listening to, and reading, His Word so that we can hear the things of God.

Introduction

Who am I?

Names can be difficult to remember, but become easier if you know something about a person. Can you identify these people in the Bible from these descriptions:

1. I was the Roman governor who tried Jesus and found no basis for a charge against him.
2. I was bathing on a rooftop when seen by the king.
3. I was a Jewish tentmaker who met Paul because we shared the same trade.
4. I chose the well-watered plains of the Jordan for my flocks and herds.

Add

In our previous study we heard how Jesus had led three of the Apostles with Him “*up a high mountain by themselves*”. There they see Jesus dramatically changed, ‘transfigured’. His clothes shine, they “*became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.*”

Elijah and Moses appeared, talking with Jesus about “*his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*” (Luke 9:31)

Question

- Can you remember why we thought it was Moses and Elijah who appeared, and not another Old Testament character?

But Peter, having nothing to say, always has to say something “*Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.*”

Jesus doesn’t rebuke or even acknowledge Peter’s suggestion. Instead, we hear that the Father spoke from a cloud that had overshadowed them: “*a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son; listen to him.’*”

Our Study Text:

Read Mark 9:8-13

⁸And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

⁹And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. ¹¹And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” ¹²And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

So, just as suddenly as the Transfiguration of Jesus started so it ended:

“*they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.*”

As they’re coming down the mountain, Jesus commands them not to tell anyone what had happened until after His resurrection. (Note: Once again He refers to Himself as the Son of Man):

“*he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.*”

Question

- Why shouldn't they say anything?

Often, the more He told people to keep quiet about a miracle, the more they proclaimed it! This time the apostles did listen to Him, and didn't even tell their fellow disciples, which is astounding considering that what they had just witnessed was the most glorious sight ever seen. In Luke's account he writes:

"And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen." (Luke 9:36b)

However, they latch on to the last thing He said, about His resurrection:

"questioning what this rising from the dead might mean." (verse 10b)

They try to puzzle out what it means. For Jesus to rise He must die first, but they had just witnessed God the Father confirming He is the Son of God, so how can He die?

And they're especially confused about the appearance of Elijah:

- Was the promise of Elijah's coming fulfilled at the Transfiguration?
- Or was there going to be an Elijah appearance part two? After all, only they had seen Elijah, no one else.
- And if Elijah came to set everything right for the Messiah, why did He say that He had to be killed?

So, in verse 11, we hear that they ask Jesus about Malachi's prophecy (4:5) about Elijah:

"And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" "

The scribes had interpreted the prophecy to fit their expectation, that the Messiah would come and set things right politically, not spiritually. Elijah would prepare the triumphant arrival of the Messiah who would then drive out the Romans and restore the kingdom of David.

In Jesus' reply in verses 12-13. He tells them 3 things:

1. That they are correct, Elijah does come first.
2. In the form of a question, He tells them that when Elijah, the preparer of the way, the forerunner of the Messiah, has come then the Son of Man will suffer many things.
3. That Elijah (John the Baptist) has already come.

The prophecies concerning Elijah had been fulfilled in John the Baptist, those about the Messiah would be fulfilled in Jesus.

Apply**Learning Task 1 – It is Written****Read and Discuss (15 mins)****Read Mark 9:12b-13**

"And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

Question

- What is Jesus pointing His disciples to in His reply? Clue: focus on the word that appears in both verses (and the title of this Learning Task).

These verses from today's and last week's passages also point us to Scripture:

"This is my beloved Son; listen to him." (Mark 9:7b)

⁸*And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. (Mark 9:8)*

Question

- In what way do these verses point us to Scripture?

That's what we should always come back to - listening to the Word. Peter finally grasped that too when he testified to the importance of the transfiguration and then to the greater importance of the Word.

Read 2 Peter 1:17b-20

and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸*we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.* ¹⁹*And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,* ²⁰*knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.*

Read Mark 9:12

"And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?"

Task

Take 2 minutes to recall and find prophecies about how the Son of Man, the Messiah, would suffer. If willing, please share with the group.

Learning Task 2 – Elijah Restores All Things

Read and Discuss (10 mins)

In verse 12 Jesus tells the three apostles:

¹²*And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things."*

John the Baptist wasn't literally the earthly return of Elijah, but he was the fulfillment of prophecy about a messenger in the spirit of, a type of, Elijah. As Luke records in his Gospel when the angel of the Lord appears to Zechariah, John's father:

Read Luke 1:16-17

¹⁶*And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,* ¹⁷*and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."*

And Malachi's original prophecy:

Read Malachi 4:5-6

⁵*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*

⁶*And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers*

Also:

Read Malachi 3:1

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

John is therefore the messenger to prepare the way of the Lord. As Mark tells us at the very beginning of his Gospel:

Read Mark 1:2-3

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,
*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
 who will prepare your way,
³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
 ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
 make his paths straight,’ ”*

By human standards, John’s mission seemed to have ended in failure. He appeared to have accomplished little, and was eventually imprisoned and executed early in his ministry.

Question

- What did John the Baptist do to “*restore all things*” as Jesus tells us in verse 12?

From God’s perspective, John restored what God wanted restored. He restored the pure proclamation of the promise of the prophets, pointing to its embodiment in Christ. The restoration is as complete as He wanted it to be in the work of John.

Away

Seeing “the things of God” (Mark 8:33b) from the perspective God provides in His Word is a great comfort.

We might wish that all who hear the gospel would believe, and that our churches will be filled to overflowing. But that’s not how God’s salvation plan works out. Christ died for all, but few will accept the gift of forgiveness and salvation freely offered.

Read 1 John 2:2

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Read John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Read Luke 15:7

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

That’s restoration with eternal rejoicing, and it takes place one ransomed and redeemed sinner at a time.