

Mark 9:2-9

²Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Have you ever thought about what it will be like to reunite with loved ones once you get to heaven? What will they look like? Will they be the same age as when they died? Or will they look young? Only the soul goes to heaven, not the physical body, so what happens? Do they get a new body? How will you recognize them? There are so many questions! And, although we all believe in the idea of heaven and being reunited with loved ones, we all probably have lots of questions!

So, I decided to search for stories of people who died and came back to life. The internet is filled with their stories. Many of the people had similar experiences, saying that they could see themselves outside of their bodies. Many recount that there was a bright light - so bright that you could hardly look at it. They all said that they saw people they knew as well as people they didn't know. They also all said that they never wanted to leave the place they

were at, but someone explained to them that they still had work to do.

The big question here is, do you believe these people? It is pretty easy to make up stories to get attention. Or maybe they believe that what they are saying is actually true. But think about this question: Why is it important that Elijah and Moses were with Jesus on the day of His transfiguration?

Because Elijah and Moses had both died, yet here they were in plain sight of Peter, James and John. Right in front of them, the disciples saw evidence of life beyond this life. When they saw Moses and Elijah, they knew that Moses had passed from this world 1,400 years before and Elijah had passed some 900 years before. Yet there they were, alive in glory before them.

This mere fact gave them confidence in Jesus' claim to resurrection. Jesus had been telling them for some time now that he would be killed and that He would come back to life. This was a nearly impossible thing for any of the disciples to comprehend. So, He needed to prove His glory to them by taking them up to this mountain to experience life after death. In addition, this transformation revealed the divine nature of Jesus and connected Him with figures from Israel's history, such as Moses and Elijah, symbolizing the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets in Him.

So, when Jesus tells them again at the end of this passage, they begin to actually understand what He is talking about. "As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." He says it again in Matthew 17: "When they came together in Galilee, he

said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.’ And the disciples were filled with grief.” Only Peter, James and John truly understood what He meant because of what they had witnessed at the transfiguration. And they had been ordered not to tell anyone. Why?

Because people just wouldn’t understand. Part of the reason Jesus kept the disciples from spreading the word that He was the Messiah is that they didn’t understand what it meant to be the Messiah. They believed that the Messiah would rescue Israel. But they believed this would mean a King or ruler. The idea of a Divine King who would save them all from themselves was not something they expected, understood or even knew they needed.

So now we know why Moses and Elijah were on that mountain so long ago. We also know why Jesus ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen. But this begs one last question: When we go to heaven, will we recognize people? Well, Peter, James and John recognized Elijah and Moses, despite the fact that they had never met them before. Of course, there were not even pictures of them to be able to say they knew what they looked like. If you ask me, this shows us that we will know each other when we get to heaven.

When Karen's dad passed away, I had the privilege of being with him until the end. I will never forget what happened. He was sound asleep and he reached his arms up high as if to hug or greet someone. Then he put his arms down. Keep in mind that he was so weak that prior to this, he couldn't lift his arms to even get a drink from a straw. Then suddenly, he lifted his arms up again. This

happened a total of four times and after the last time, he got a big smile on his face and then he died. To this day, we firmly believe that the first three times he raised his arms, he was greeting his mom, his dad and his brother. The fourth time, he was greeting Jesus, who took him into Heaven. Of course, we have no way of knowing this is what happened, but my faith believes it to be true.

God the Father and his Son and even the angels have a glory about them. An inexplicable kind of splendor and majesty and power and light. It is absolutely overwhelming to us mere mortals on earth. This future glory of Christ when he comes again to earth soon is displayed for a short time on this mountaintop experience.

Thirty years later, Peter wrote with words of awe about this day on the mountain.

2 Peter 1:16–18 says, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.”

All that Peter taught and wrote about for more than 3 decades was founded upon eyewitness experiences he and the other apostles had.

He was not making up stories about Christ. He was an eyewitness to the majesty and glory of Christ on that mountain. He saw and heard ancient leaders of Israel—Moses and Elijah. He heard with his own ears the voice from heaven, “This is my Son, my Chosen One.”

Peter never forgot this moment when he had a brief glimpse of the coming glory of Jesus Christ.

Just a week earlier, Jesus spoke hard words about his own suffering on the Cross, and the disciples' suffering for his sake. Luke 9:22–23 states: “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’ ”

After hearing such hard, perhaps even shocking, words a week earlier, now on the mountain the three disciples would have found great strength by seeing a glimpse of the coming glory in the resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ.

Next week we begin the season of Lent. Yes, Jesus is going to suffer and die. But He will rise. Yes, the disciples themselves will suffer as they follow Jesus and proclaim Him to the world. But there is something glorious, something heavenly that awaits them.

We can go home today and live for Jesus and work for Him because it's all true. It's real. And it matters. Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, We can only imagine what glory it will be when we see you and your Son, Jesus Christ. We believe the words of James, John and Peter, who experienced a glimpse of your glory. Help us to live out our lives in your honor, to work as the hands and feet of Jesus. All glory, laud and honor goes to you. Amen