

## MARK 9:1-8

## “DEAD” MEN WALKING

<sup>1</sup> *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.”*

<sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.* <sup>4</sup> *And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.* <sup>5</sup> *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.”* <sup>6</sup> *(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)* <sup>7</sup> *Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”* <sup>8</sup> *Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

<sup>9</sup> *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.*

The beginning of the ninth chapter of Mark’s Gospel is one of those weird editorial moments in Scripture. Most modern translators have included the first verse with the last verses of chapter eight, while the ancient editors have given it its ninth chapter location. From a literary point of view, the *After six days* of verse 2 provide an obvious break in the action, but the early editors were more interested in the theology than the history of the story. When the first verse is separated from the second, the reader is left with the question of how can this be? Did Jesus have it wrong? Part of the problem is that most modern readers understand this to be referring to the second coming of Jesus, and clearly all his listeners died long before that event.

I believe that the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus was combined with that statement as an explanation of Jesus’ promise. Three of those listening were exposed to a prophetic revelation of the resurrected Christ. All the elements of a theophany (manifestation of God) were present; high mountain, Shekinah glory, cloud and the voice. In addition, Moses and Elijah were present. Traditionally their presence has been interpreted as representing the Law and the Prophets, but more obviously they were two great men of God whose bodies were never found. Moses died alone without a trace on Mount Nebo and Elijah was taken bodily into heaven, according to Elisha. The indication here is that the coming of the kingdom of God with power is the resurrection of the Christ, the symbol of the defeat of the powers and principalities of the world, including death itself. On the mount of Transfiguration it was a prophetic vision given to the 3 disciples. On that first Easter morning and for forty days there after, it was the experience of not just the disciples but even some of the crowd to whom he was speaking in chapter eight. Verse 9 is the exclamation point that points us specifically to the resurrection.

The practical lesson is that when you read Scripture don’t read it by the subtitles, they are only indexes to help us locate an event or teaching. Rather read it as a continuous story because the ultimate meaning is to be found in the narrative context of the passage. Remember that when it was written, even the chapter and verse notations were not there.

**Jesus, as your disciples were transformed by witnessing your transfiguration, transform me through the knowledge of your resurrection. Amen.**