

Mark 9:2-9:13, Unwinding the Chiasm
September 14, 1996
H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

1. 8:27-9:13 is chiastic, moving from past inward to the future, focusing on the cost of discipleship (Lafontaine and Beernaert).

a) Questions about Prophecies (Past)	8:27-28	9:11-13
b) ID of Jesus (Present, Secret)	8:29-30	9:7-10
	Peter	Father
c) Prediction (Future, Peter)	8:31-33	9:2-6
	Passion	Res'n
d) Cost of Discipleship	8:34-9:1	

 2. Today: work out the back side, confirming that the savior first bears the burden that he asks his followers to carry in 8:34-9:1, but also looking ahead to the glory that lies beyond the cross.
- A. **9:2-6, Future, Peter: Anticipation of the Kingdom (Transfiguration)**
Link with the first panel: a prediction of the future in which Peter exhibits his characteristic blundering enthusiasm. This time the emphasis has moved from the death to the glory.
1. 2a, Setting
Takes Peter, James, and John up into a mount.
 - a) Significance of going into a mountain
 - 1) Mountain stories in the OT--the place to meet God, in one of two ways:
 - a> Direct encounter; God speaks with people
 - 1> Abraham's offering of Isaac, Gen 22. Divine voice; others waiting at the bottom, father and son
 - 2> Giving of the law on Mt Sinai, Ex 19. Divine voice; others waiting; shining face (Exod 34:29).
 - 3> Elijah's journey to Horeb (1 Kings 19): divine voice
 - b> In death
 - 1> Burial of Aaron, Num 20:22-29. Witnesses, death
 - 2> Death of Moses, Dt 32:48-50; 34:1-5. Death.
 - 2) The Lord in the Mountain in Mark: to seek solitude either with the Father, or with the disciples, or both.
 - a> 3:13, calls the Twelve (Lk 6:12, prayed there first)
 - b> 6:46, to pray
 - c> 9:2 (here) (Lk 9:28, went to pray)
 - d> 13:3, delivers Olivet discourse to the Disciples
 - e> 14:26, after Last Supper (prayer)
 - 3) After the teachings of the last few paragraphs, they need this added confirmation: that he is the Christ, that his coming sufferings are not accidental, that their own trials

are not beyond God's control. None of the gospels gives us any indication of what happened during the "six days." No doubt there has been much discussion of these things. Now he takes the most prominent of the twelve back to the Source.

b) Significance of taking the Three:

- 1) 5:37, healing Jairus' daughter
- 2) 9:2, here
- 3) 13:3, these three (with Andrew) ask the question that leads to the Olivet discourse
- 4) 14:33, for prayer in Olivet.
- 5) *Lesson:* not everyone is nurtured in the same way, or to the same extent, or for the same work. Perhaps it is unfair for him to deal thus with the Three and leave the Twelve out? But this is how he works.

2. 2a-3, The Transfiguration

- a) In contrast with the last prophecy, which dealt with his coming death, this one focuses on his glorification. Acc. to 9:1, it is a vision of "the kingdom of God ... with power." He was "transfigured," "transformed." A compound of the word in Phil 2:6, "being in the form of God," and here that original form shines through.
 - 1) Peter's summary later: "we ... were eyewitnesses of his majesty," 2 Pet 1:16,17.
 - 2) John's (John 1:14): "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."
- b) Here we have the light; in 9:7, the cloud. These two together commonly attest the Lord's presence--the light of the Shekinah glory, graciously shielded from mortal eyes by a cloud:
 - 1) Gen 15:17, the "burning furnace and smoking lamp" that passed between the elements of Abraham's sacrifice
 - 2) Ex 13:21,22, the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness
 - 3) Ex 40:34,35, the cloud covers the tabernacle as the glory fills it
 - 4) 1 Kings 8:10,11, ditto for Solomon's temple
 - 5) Ezek 1:4, the Lord upon his throne-chariot, appearing to Ezekiel
 - 6) Ezek 10:3,4, the presence of the Lord abandons the temple in Jerusalem (the event probably chronologically prior to the vision in 1:4).
- c) But one hardly expects the order here. One might be tempted to see the incarnate Son as the cloud, presenting in manageable form the glory of the Father--but here the Father speaks from the cloud, while the Son shines forth the divine glory!
- d) The bottom line: balances the prophecy in 8:31. He must pass

through suffering as the Son of Man, but will be enthroned in divine glory as Son of God.

3. 4, A Visit from Elijah with Moses

Why these two?

- a) From Lk 9:31 (not here) we know they were talking about his coming death, and they were certainly two experts on the theme, Moses having passed through death (Dt 34:5,6), and Elijah being one of only two OT saints who did not (the other Enoch) (2 Kings 2:11,12). Would have been a great comfort to the Lord. But Mark wants to emphasize the coming glory, not the suffering; we're on our way out of the chiasm, dealing with the Son of God, not the Son of Man (8:31), so he suppresses the subject of the conversation.
- b) Cf. John 1:19-21; the Jews associated the coming of Messiah with Elijah and the prophet like Moses. Probably based on Mal 4:4,5, which names them together in the context of the coming day of the Lord. This verse makes them the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, both pointing to the coming kingdom, and the Lord has now come to fulfill their promises.
- c) *(Not in message) Gundry suggests that they are the only OT figures to have seen a theophany on a mountain (Moses at the giving of the law, Elijah after the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, both on Sinai). But what did Elijah see? and if it's just the voice, how about Abraham in Gen 22?*

4. 5-6 Peter

- a) **Speaks:** These three godly characters must be honored; construct booths, tabernacles, for them, so that they do not need to spend the night in the open. (See Edersheim for evidence that they passed the night on the mountain.)
- b) **6, Reason:** He spoke out of fear. His personality could not be content to sit silently by; he must act, particularly in the awful presence of the transfigured Lord. Yet "he did not know"; this is a response of ignorance. When nothing has been commanded, it is of the flesh to act as though it had.
- c) **Application:** Beware of doing more than God asks; cf. Nadab and Abihu in Lev. 10, offering what God had not commanded. We must not give less than he commands; neither must we give in to the impulse of the flesh to "bribe" him with more than he has instructed.

B. 7-10, Present, Secrecy: Father's Attestation

Link with the first panel: Peter confesses him as the Christ (8:29), which emphasizes his human side; the Father acknowledges him as Son. (Note how Mark thus distributes between the two sides of the chiasm the unified testimony that, acc. to Matt. 16:16, Peter actually bore.)

1. 7a, The Attestation: "this is my beloved son." Cf. 1:11, at the baptism. Answers the riddle of Prov. 30:4, though in itself the relation is a deep mystery that we cannot hope to fathom in this life. Note the different adjuncts to the announcement in the two places, pointing out two different responsibilities that are incumbent upon us:
 - a) 1:11, at the baptism, "...with whom I am well pleased."
 - 1) The context here is on the Son's obedience to the Father as a man. John's baptism was one of "repentance for the remission of sins" (1:4), and in undergoing it the Lord was taking his place as our representative for sin; cf. the Baptist's testimony in John 1:29, "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
 - 2) The adjunct invites us to Worship. We can do nothing to add to the Lord's finished work as our substitute, and recognizing the perfection of his work for us as man should lead us to repose in him. But if the Father is pleased at his Son's work, so should we be, as the beneficiaries of it, and we should express that to him in worship.
 - b) Here, at the transfiguration, "hear him."
 - 1) Now the context is the Son's glorification with the insignia of deity; a chance for us to peak past the incarnation to "the glory that I had with thee before the world was," John 17:5.
 - 2) Here, the adjunct invites us to Service. The issue is not the ground of our salvation; that is wholly in the finished work of Christ. The issue IS, the outcome of our salvation; its fruit, not its roots. If we realize the Lord's glory as deity, we will understand why we must have "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12:14.
 - 3) Specifically, the exhortation is to Peter to cease from his own wisdom and obey the Lord.
2. 8, The Attendants: now Elijah and Moses are gone. Before the coming of Christ, the law and the prophets, whom they represent, were the guide for the people of God; now our attention is turned directly to the Messiah. Heb. 1:1,2, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son."
3. 9, The Secrecy. As discussed under 8:30, publication of his divine status would at best have short-circuited the redemptive work of the cross, and at worst have led to an uprising of Jews seeking to overthrow the Romans, in the tradition of a long line of false Messiahs but completely contrary to the true one, who

will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax. The danger of misunderstanding is emphasized by the confusion of the disciples themselves. Even these three of the inner circle cannot understand the simple statement of his resurrection, implying as it does his death.

C. 11-13, Questions about Prophecy: Past

Link with the first panel: returns to the question of Elijah's role in the Messiah's advent.

1. 11,12, The scribal teaching on Elijah's future coming.
 - a) 11, The disciples cite scribal teaching that Elijah must come before Messiah (derived from Mal 4:5,6).
 - b) 12, The Lord's answer:
 - 1) It is true that Elijah comes first and restores, not only the heart of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers, but indeed "all things."
 - 2) Yet this coming of Elijah is not in fact the next stop on the prophetic horizon. Read 12b as a question, "Yet how is it written against the Son of Man that he must suffer ...?" If the restoring coming of Elijah is the next step, there would be no place for the fulfillment of Ps 22, Isa 53, Psa 69, etc.
2. 13, The Lord's teaching about Elijah's past coming.
 - a) "Elias is indeed [also] come" (in addition to the son of man)
 - b) Like the Son of Man, his first coming is one of suffering: "they have done whatsoever they listed."
 - c) Not to be surprised, for it was prophesied. Where? reference must be to the persecution of the original Elijah by Jezebel, 1 Kings 19:2, 10. So strong is the correspondence between the original Elijah and JB that the fact of one's persecution implies that of the other. So we can take comfort from the sufferings of God's people in times past as prophetic of our own.

D. Summary

As the Lord turns his face toward Jerusalem, this introductory chiasm

1. verifies his identification as the promised Messiah,
2. introduces the shocking news that his glory must wait for his humiliation,
3. alerts his disciples to the requirement that they, like him, must come to glory through the cross. Thus the balance of the book provides not only the historical facts of our redemption, but the divine pattern for our service to the Lord.