

Sermons
He'll Be Back!
Mark 8:38-9:1
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Turn with me, tonight, back to the gospel of Mark and to Mark 8 - actually the last verse of Mark 8 and the first verse of chapter 9.

You know, I think we all love amazing, miraculous comebacks. I'm a football fan. There really aren't other sports I follow that much. But being a football fan, I still remember, as maybe some of you do, the greatest comeback in NFL history. It happened on January 3rd, 1993. It was a playoff game between the Buffalo Bills and the Houston Oilers. And a minute:41 into the second half, the Bills were down by 32 points. The score was 35-3. They were without their star running back and they had a backup quarterback named Frank Reich. And with that stage set, in the next 30 minutes of football, they scored 38 points in overtime to win. They scored 38 points and they won in overtime - the way I should say it.

But such comebacks are not merely the stuff of pro-football or even in sports. In fact, that sort of comeback from the brink of destruction - that forms the basis of much of the world's great literature. Just when it appears the hero has lost, he somehow wrestles victory from the jaws of defeat. He finds himself almost defeated. He's exhausted all of his resources. He's used up all of his own strength. And he's lying on the ground, sometimes in a pool of his own blood. And somehow, he musters his last dying ounce of strength and with extraordinary effort, even superhuman effort, he pulls off a most unlikely victory.

From a merely human perspective, that's the story of Jesus Christ. It looked like He was done. His enemies had put Him to death as a criminal, and His followers had lost all hope. You remember the 11 fled and locked themselves away in hiding? I think the two followers on the Emmaus Road best sort of captured the spirit of the moment among the followers of Christ. You remember when Christ comes up to them and they don't recognize him. And He asked them what's going - what's happened? What's going on? And they say this in Luke 24: "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we

were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” *We were hoping.* That’s how it looked to all of those who followed Jesus. *We were hoping, but alas, it obviously was not to be.*

In Mark 8, as we’ve studied our way through it, Jesus has just told His disciples that He is going to suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders. He is going to be put to death. And they might have to die as well. He calls, in the very next conversation, for them to pick up their cross and follow Him, as it were, to the place of execution.

Now, if you were there and you hadn’t heard the rest of the story, you could conclude that maybe Jesus eventually loses. Or, since He does, at least mention His resurrection. Maybe it could sound like He just sort of escapes with His life. Somehow God raises Him from the dead, like an Old Testament prophet, and He just gets out of here before He’s crushed a second time by all of His enemies.

So, immediately, Jesus turns the corner from telling His disciples about His death, and He tells them that He will be victorious, and that His enemies, in fact, will stand before Him in judgment. Jesus tells His disciples in simple language, *“I win! I will win!”*

Of course, in the mind and plan of God, Jesus’ ultimate victory had never been in doubt. In God’s mind, it was as if it already happened. Go all the way back to Genesis 3 - the protoevangelium, the first mention of the gospel. And what did Jesus Himself tell the serpent? *The seed of the woman will crush your head.* It was done.

And just as Jesus wants the disciples to know that He will suffer and die, He wants them to know that He will win, that He will be victorious, that He will have His kingdom, and that He will reign forever and ever. And that’s where the next two verses come in.

Look at Mark 8:38: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And Jesus was saying to them, ‘Truly I say to you, there are some

of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

Now, verse 38 is kind of a hinge verse. We connected it to the previous passage which, of course, it does. It begins with the word “for” as the other - the last four verses of that chapter do. So, it’s all tied together. But it also ties to the next verse, the one I just read it with. Jesus wants us to know that after His suffering, after His death, after His resurrection, He is going to come again. And when He comes, the whole earth is going to be confronted with His divine glory.

In fact, in these two verses that I just read for you, Jesus explains to us about His second coming. It’s the first clear mention that He will return. And in these verses, Jesus explains to us four facts about His second coming that I want us to look at together.

The first fact is the certainty of His coming. It’s going to happen. Look at verse 38: “when He comes” not “if He comes”. *“I don’t lose”,* Jesus said. *“I’ve just told you about My suffering and death, but I will be back.”* When He comes... Matthew puts it this way, Matthew 16:27: “For the Son of Man is going to come...” There’s no doubt about it. There’s no question.

Now, when He was on the earth with His disciples and He said these words, He promises to come again, what does that imply? It implies, of course, that at some point He will go away. It would have been natural for the disciples to assume that He was talking about that period of time after His death, that He would go away, perhaps thinking that it was for the three days that He had just mentioned that He would be dead. Of course, after His resurrection and in conjunction with His ascension, they discovered that He would leave them not for three days, but for a long time. And then, He says, *“I will return.”*

You know, both the Old Testament and the New Testament are filled with references to this future event. And we’ll look at several before we’re done tonight. But Jesus certainly affirms it here - *“I’m going to go away, and I’m going to come again.”* There’s no question. The Scripture promises it. The angels, in conjunction with His ascension, promised it. You remember in Acts

1, as Jesus is ascending into the sky, this is what we read: “And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him [Jesus] out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’” There’s no question about it. The Scripture promises it. Jesus promised it. It is a certainty.

But can we just be honest with ourselves here tonight? It’s hard for us to come to grips with that event as certain as the things of this life, because this is what we know. God, in our lifetime, has never interrupted the world with a divine act like the flood, or His Son coming. And so, it’s hard to grasp the reality and certainty of it. Let me ask you, what do you really believe in your heart, apart from the Bible, apart from the truths we learn there about Christ? What do you really believe is going to happen? You know the standard answer is, “Death and taxes”. Maybe you’d say, “You know, what? I’m really confident that the sun is going to rise tomorrow. There are things I really believe are going to happen.”

I don’t know what it is for you, but whatever it is, I can promise you this. The truth of the return of Christ is more certain than whatever it is you are certain about, because those things that you believe will happen, can be changed by 1000 contingencies. But nothing will vary the divine plan. Jesus will return. He will be back.

We need to ask our Lord to give us a greater degree of confidence and certainty that the day will come when He will, as CS Lewis said, “Stop the play”, and the director will come walking onto the set. And it will be time for him to evaluate the performance of the actors. This is not reality. The world we live in - certainly there is reality to it, but it’s not the ultimate reality. The ultimate reality is what we’re talking about here, when Jesus Christ stops life as we know it and returns. It’s certain. It could happen soon.

Of course, here, Jesus doesn’t take apart end times. And we know that there is a rapture of the church and we’ve talked about that before. This is describing the second coming at the end of

the tribulation period. But it could happen. Soon. There could be an order of events set in place in which our Lord will begin the process that will end in His second coming. It's certain. When He comes - the Son of Man is going to come. This same Jesus will come. May God let that truth sink into our souls.

There's a second fact about His coming in this passage, and it's the reason for His coming. Look at verse 38: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Now, they're a number of interesting details implied in that statement, and we'll look at them in a moment. But don't miss the big point Jesus is making. When He comes back, He will be God's appointed judge of all humanity. That's implied in this statement. But it's made explicit in other places.

Turn over with me to Matthew 25. Matthew 25, in the Olivet Discourse, verse 30. I'm sorry, verse 31: "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" And verse 41: "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...'" Jesus will be the judge.

John 5 makes it even more explicit. Look over at John 5:26: "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself..." Now, what He says in verse 27. Jesus says, "and He [the Father] gave Him [that is, the Son] authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. *"I'm going to be the judge and Me alone."*

That theme continues throughout the Scripture. In the preaching of the apostle Peter in Acts 10: “... this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead”, he says of Christ. In Acts 17, Paul, there on Mars Hill says, “*This one I’ve been talking about will judge the world. The true God will judge the world in righteousness, and He will judge the world through a Man whom He has appointed. And let me tell you who it is. He proved who it would be by raising Him from the dead.*” In other words, Jesus will be the One through whom God judges the world.

Romans 2:16, Paul says, “... God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

In 1 Peter 4:5: “but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (speaking of Christ). That judgment, by the way, the judgment of unbelievers, is described in Revelation 20: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it [this is Christ. He’s the One we’ve already been told is the judge], from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them [the earth and the heavens ceased to exist and there’s only God and His throne and His judge, and all of those who’ve been created.] And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. So, Jesus alone will judge.

Now, put that in the context of what Jesus has just said about discipleship: “*You need to renounce and deny yourself, and you need to follow Me.*” To fail to do that, to deny Jesus, is to insult and treat with contempt your final judge. People, when they reject Christ, make a value judgment. And it’ll become very clear when they stand before Him. They have determined that the people around them and the world is more important than Christ, their judge.

Whom Will Jesus judge when He comes? Well, in this text, it’s clear He’ll judge those who are a part of what He calls, “this adulterous and sinful generation”. He’ll judge those who profess Him but are ashamed of Him and His words (and we’ll talk about who they are in a moment), and those who profess Him but are not ashamed of Him and His words. In other words, everybody without exception. Now, again, we know from our study of the rest of Scripture that

there are different times in which the judgment of believers and the judgment of unbelievers takes place. But don't miss the large point Jesus is making here. Everyone, without exception, will stand before Him.

But the focus of this passage is on Jesus' judging between true disciples, who have denied themselves, taken up their cross and follow Him, and those who have not. So, the real point, the reason for His coming, is to judge the true disciple from the false.

By the way, this theme comes up in the kingdom parables in Matthew 13. You remember, He talks about the devil plants false believers (tares), those that look like true Christians, among the wheat. And the disciples say, or the servants in that case, say, "Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up [tear out the tares]?" But he said, "No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot [rip] the wheat with them. "[Instead] Allow both to grow together until the harvest [the end of the age]; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers [My angels], "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up [they'll separate the tares and the wheat] ...'" This is part of the reason for Jesus' coming.

One standard by which the real and the false will be distinguished is there in verse 38: "those who are ashamed of Me and My words". Notice, Jesus calls the people living in that generation "adulterous and sinful"? They were spiritually idolatrous. That's what He means by adulteress. He's not talking about their morals, their sexual behavior. He's talking about spiritual idolatry because they wouldn't accept Yahweh's Messiah. They wouldn't accept the true Messiah. So, they were spiritual adulterers. And they were sinful. They were morally sinful. But most importantly, they were ashamed of the person of Christ, and they rejected His words. Do you see that: "ashamed of Me and My words"?

The reason they were ashamed of Jesus was back to the previous passage. It was their desire to save their necks, to save their life. And they were unwilling to become an object of the world's scorn. They didn't want to take up their cross. They didn't want to be identified with a criminal. They didn't want to be identified with someone who is going to be executed. If you seek the world's approval rather than that of Jesus, you are showing yourself to be ashamed of Him. It

comes down to this. You can either deny yourself or you can deny Jesus. That's the choice. But if you choose to deny Christ, that is, to be so ashamed of Him that you refuse to own Him as Lord and Savior, that you refuse to accept His demands for discipleship, then at the final judgment, Jesus will be ashamed of you. That is, He will show contempt for you. He will deny you.

It's the words of Matthew 7, you remember (verse 23), when Jesus says to those who profess to know Him, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" Jesus says, "*If you're so ashamed of Me that you won't accept My demands for discipleship, you won't acknowledge Me as Lord, you won't follow Me as disciple, then when you stand before Me, I will not claim you as My own because, in fact, you never were.*"

We're not talking about true believers here losing their salvation, standing before Christ at the judgment. We're talking about those who never were true believers because they were never willing to accept His demands for discipleship. He will be ashamed of you.

By the way, this idea of being ashamed of Christ, He's not talking here about a denial like Peter's, under the weight of and threat of death. You remember Peter, on the night before our Lord's death, denied Him three times before the cock crowed, but maybe as many as four times in total, that night. But later, you remember, Peter was willing to publicly confess Christ, whatever the cost. So, that night, under the pressure of the moment, he denied Christ. But later, that wasn't true. You remember in Acts 5, he was part of those who "went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name." And eventually, of course, Peter was crucified for Christ; tradition says upside down. So, Jesus isn't talking about that kind of denial. Peter was still a true follower of Christ in spite of the fact that, on that night, in fear for his life, he denied Christ.

So, what is Jesus talking about? He's talking about a lifelong pattern of refusing to own Him publicly. This happened even during Jesus' lifetime. In John 12:42 we read, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him [they believed He was who He said He was], but

because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” This is what Jesus is talking about. He’s talking about people who love men’s approval more than God’s approval and who live their life without really owning Christ as Lord and Savior. They’re ashamed of Him as a pattern of life.

Contrast that with what Paul says in Romans 10. If you want to be saved, he says, “...confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses [what? He confesses Jesus as Lord], resulting in salvation.”

In a similar passage in Matthew 10, Jesus says, “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.” Again, He’s not talking about a Peter sort of moment of weakness. He’s talking about a lifelong pattern of an unwillingness to own Jesus as Lord and Savior, to confess Him publicly. So, Jesus will judge, and part of that judgment will be distinguishing genuine disciples from false disciples.

A second part of His judging will be sentencing the guilty on the basis of their works. Now we’re talking about those whom He finds to be either false believers or just unbelievers, those who don’t know Him. In the parallel passage in Matthew, this is what Matthew says, “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and **WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.**” Kind of a frightening statement when you think about it.

Notice that Jesus’ judgment will be individual: “every man”. It will involve punishment. He will “repay”. And it will be just: “according to his deeds”. Jesus will sentence the guilty on the basis of their works. Those were those books in Revelation 20 that were described. God has a record. Doesn’t mean that there’s a written record, necessarily, but inscribed on the omniscience of Jesus Christ, who will be the judge, is every sin of every person who has ever lived. And they will be judged on the basis of those deeds.

If you have not come to faith in Jesus Christ, if He is not your Lord and Savior, then there is a perfect record and God is a God of perfect justice. Not a single sin you have ever committed will go unpunished. Not one. And when you stand before Jesus Christ, you will give an answer for them all. It comes down to this: either you will experience God's justice and every sin you have ever committed will be judged in you or you will experience God's grace by bowing to His Son now. And you will experience the reality of every sin you have ever committed being judged on Christ. But every sin will be judged.

So, if you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, what will be His verdict for you? Well, it's pretty clear. Look at John 3. We love John 3:16 and quote it often. But look at verse 18: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already..." In other words, the judgment will be to exact the sentence. The decision has already been made "because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Look down in verse 36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life..." Right now! If you believe in Christ, you have eternal life. It's yours. A different quality of life, an assurance of life in God's presence. "...but he who does not obey the Son will not see life [and watch this], but the wrath of God abides [is abiding, literally is what it's saying] on him."

It's a terrifying picture. It's a picture of the sort of sword of Damocles, you remember, from mythology. It's like an unbeliever walks around with the sword of Damocles, hanging above his head. It's certain. It's done. The wrath of God follows him through life, and at some point, it will be unleashed in its fury. Sobering.

Romans 3 makes exactly the same point. In Romans 3:19, Paul says, (in 20) says, that every mouth will be stopped. Think about that. When unbelievers stand before God, there won't be a single word of self-defense - nothing that can be said. Every mouth will be stopped. That's the verdict.

What will Jesus' verdict be of you if you are truly His disciple? And remember, a true disciple, in the context of Mark 8, is defined by those who deny themselves, as we studied last week, who

were willing to take up their cross, and follow Jesus. That's a true disciple. If you're a true disciple, then what is Christ's verdict for you? Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation..." Right now, there is no guilty verdict resting on your head. Romans 5:1: there is now a verdict of righteous - "Therefore, having been justified [having been declared right before God] ..." And Romans 5 goes on to say there will be no wrath then. We will escape the wrath of God. That's the verdict for those who are in Christ. So, Jesus will come for judgment.

What are the facts about the second coming? The certainty of His coming, the reason for His coming, which is judgment. The third fact is the circumstance of His coming. Look again at verse 38: "...when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." This is a reference, as I said before, not to the rapture of the church, not to that time described in 1 Thessalonians 4 when Jesus returns to catch away His own, His bride, and then begin to pour out on the earth all of those terrible judgments that are described in the Book of Revelation. Instead, this is describing the return of Christ at the end of that Great Tribulation, at the end of the outpouring of God's judgment.

And He's described as coming "in the glory of His Father". What does that mean to come in the glory? Well, later in Mark, Jesus fills out this description a little bit for us. Look over in Mark, in Mark 13. Mark 13 - He gives us a little more explanation of exactly what He means. Verse 24: "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven [probably a description of massive meteors hitting the earth], and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory." Jesus says, "*There're going to be horrific signs, that after the tribulation there's going to be these outpouring of signs that I'm coming. And then, they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.*"

Clouds, here, may be a reference to literal clouds, or it may be a reference to that description of God, the shekinah glory of God, the glory cloud as theologians call it, that brilliant, blazing white light from which we have to draw away our eyes. Great power and glory.

Look over in chapter 14:61. Here, Jesus is before the Sanhedrin being tried. He kept silent, though, and didn't answer the accusations that were made against Him (verse 61): "Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' And Jesus said, 'I am; [moreover, let Me tell you this] and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER [that is, of God], and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN [coming with the shekinah glory surrounding Me].' Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? [He's blaspheming. He's describing Himself to be God.]'" He was half right. He was describing Himself to be God, but it wasn't blasphemy because it was true.

In Matthew 25, the passage I read for you earlier, it said that He would come "in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne." And that judgment, that's described in Revelation 20, will eventually occur after the millennial period. Notice what's described here. Jesus will come "in His own glory". Luke, the parallel passage, says that the Son of Man will be ashamed of the one who's ashamed of Me "when He comes in His glory."

What does Jesus mean "His glory"? Well, there are a number of places I could take you. I like this one. Remember, Jesus was, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 10, "the rock" that accompanied the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Jesus was the member of the Trinity who interacted with them in the wilderness. And this is how he's described in Deuteronomy 33:2: "...The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at His right hand there was flashing lightning for them." It's dramatic. Dramatic entrance. This is Jesus' glory.

But it also says, "in His Father's glory". That's what we read here in Mark. What is "His Father's glory"? Well, I won't take long with this, but I have to show you this description of His Father's glory. Look back in Ezekiel 1. Ezekiel 1. There's this amazing description in Ezekiel 1 of God's chariot throne. When you read it and you see all the wheels in wheels and the turning, and the creatures understand the big picture. It is God's great chariot throne. But then at the end of this, we see God Himself described. Verse 26 of Ezekiel 1: "Now above the

expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face...”

He comes in His own glory, He comes in the Father’s glory, and He comes accompanied by the holy angels. In all the texts, the angels are mentioned. Scripture often asserts that angels have a role in the future and, particularly, in the future judgment. Certainly, now, they announce God’s judgements, and they will in the future according to the Book of Revelation. They separate the righteous from the unrighteous and we’ll talk more about that in just a moment. They carry out God’s judgments. You see it even in time in Acts 12. You remember when Herod didn’t give God glory, immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him. He was eaten by worms and died. Fast forward to the Book of Revelation and you see the same thing. The angels pouring out those bowls of the wrath of God.

But especially, angels have a role at the end of the age in reference to people. They will gather believers. Mark 13:27 says, “And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds [that’s from all over the earth], from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.” They will also gather unbelievers. You can see that in Matthew 13, you remember, when the angels gather the tares.

Here is this huge accompanying train of angels accompanying the shekinah glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Points to His Majesty, His dignity. Understand this: one day, Jesus will be back and when He comes, it will be as the unmistakable Ruler of the universe. No one will doubt.

Now, that brings us to the preview of His glorious coming in chapter 9:1. The preview of His glorious coming - that’s going to happen in the future. But there was something that happened

during His life that was intended to be a sort of preview of coming attractions. Verse 1 says, “And Jesus was saying to them, ‘Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.’”

Now let’s, first of all, admit that that’s a very difficult verse and there been various explanations for what it refers to. Some have said it refers to Jesus’ resurrection, others His ascension, some the events at Pentecost in Acts 2, others to the spread of the Christian faith across the first century world under the ministry of the Apostles, some to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and still others say it refers to the second coming. So, is it one of those? Or is Jesus referring to something else? Let me unpack it for you because, as you unpack this verse, I think it becomes fairly clear.

But let’s start with a word that Jesus uses often from this point on in Mark’s gospel. It’s translated “truly”. The Greek word is the word from which we get the word “Amen”. The Greek word is Amen. You can see that we basically transliterated it into English, *Amen*. What does it mean? It’s usually accompanied by the expression, “I say to you” or “I am saying to you” - “Amen (or Amen), I’m saying to you”. Often, Jesus will double it up. He’ll say, “Truly, truly”. In the King James, most of us, some of us grew up with, “Verily, verily”. “Amen, Amen, I am saying to you”.

This is completely without parallel in all of Jewish literature. No one else in all of Jewish literature says this. So, what’s its significance? More than 3800 times, the Old Testament writers introduced their messages with statements like this: “The word of the Lord came to so and so”, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken”, “The Lord says”, “the Lord spoke”, “Hear the word of the Lord”. It was their appeal to an authority that was much greater than they were. Jesus appeals to His own authority. He doesn’t say, “Hear the word of the Lord”. He doesn’t say, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken”, “The Lord says”, “The Lord spoke”, “Hear the word of the Lord”. He says, “Amen, I say to you”. It was Jesus appealing to His own authority.

Now, look at what He says. Verse 1: “...there are some of those who are standing here...” So, He’s talking about people who were alive during His lifetime, who were there with Him in

Caesarea Philippi where all this unfolds. So, it could be some of those people who were in the crowd at that moment, or it could be some of the 12. He continues: "...there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until..." So, whomever Jesus is referring to, will eventually die natural deaths. So, He's talking about this is going to happen during their first century lifetimes. "...there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power [there will be a visible display of my kingdom and my power to some of you standing here, before you die]."

Now, what is Jesus referring to? Well, as always, the context of this statement is absolutely crucial. It is the key to unlock Jesus' meaning. In all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), this statement follows after His announcement of His death and resurrection. And in all three cases, this statement of Christ's immediately followed, or is immediately followed by I should say, the transfiguration. That's what is the next event in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In Mark 9: "Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them..." Matthew 17:1: "Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves." Luke 9:28: "Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray."

Let me just comment, by the way, on the "eight days". I'll spend a little more time on that next week. But the bottom line is, clearly the word "some" is intended to be an estimate. But beyond that, the day of the prophecy was day one, plus six days, plus the day of the Transfiguration makes it eight days. So, Jesus here is clearly talking about the transfiguration.

When He says, "*some of you who are standing here, before you die, are going to see the kingdom coming in its power*", and when the next event is the Transfiguration, that is the most reasonable interpretation of what He's describing. Based on the context, it also was the majority view of the early church fathers.

So, what's the point? The point that the gospel writers are making here is that within an eight-day period, the disciples confess Jesus is Messiah, Jesus makes His first prophecy about the

church, Jesus makes His first clear prophecy about the crucifixion, Jesus makes His first clear prophecy about the resurrection, and Jesus provides three of His disciples with a confirming revelation of the reality that He is king and will one day rule as king. The phrase, “some of those standing here” refers to Peter, James and John, who within a few days, would witness the glorious king. And we’ll look at that as it unfolds next week.

But let’s look at the implications. Obviously, then, the Transfiguration is intended to be a preview of the coming kingdom, the glory of Christ. But what are the implications in these two verses we’ve studied tonight for us? The first and clearest one is that Jesus will be back. May God help us to truly embrace that with our whole hearts. He will be back. He promised. Every other promise He’s made is true. He’ll keep that one as well.

Secondly, Jesus will be your judge. For His followers, we’ll stand before Him - after the rapture, during the Great Tribulation period, we’ll stand before Him and given account for our service. We’ll receive rewards or see everything we worked for burned up. But we ourselves will be saved.

For those who don’t follow Christ, the judgment will be about their sins. At the end of the great, excuse me, at the end of the millennial period, the Great White Throne of judgment, if you don’t know Jesus Christ, you will stand at that judgment. You alone with all humanity watching before the Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have rejected. Are you ready for that? Or do you know Him? Are you willing to bow your knee to Him and acknowledge your sin, acknowledge Him as your rightful king? Listen, don’t you for a moment believe those contemporary ideas about Jesus being weak and effeminate, and you can talk Him into it because He really wants to do a good thing for you. He can let you off the hook.

Here’s the biblical perspective. Revelation 6 says, “and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb...’” We don’t want to even see Him - terrifies us. Revelation 19:15: Jesus is described as coming back to Earth with: “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine

press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.” It’s a powerful picture. We’ve all seen pictures of people treading out grapes in a winepress, stomping them with their feet. Here, Jesus is described as treading out the winepress of God’s wrath down to the bitter dregs, down to the last drop of juice. Listen, Jesus is not one to be trifled with. He was meek and lowly while on earth. But if you don’t receive Him here, one day you will stand before Him, and this is the Jesus you will meet. I plead with you. Don’t let that happen. Bow your knee to Him now. Don’t wait till then.

For believers, this passage has an implication and that is the certainty of Jesus’ coming motivates us to holiness. 1 John 3:2: “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” Verse 3 says, “And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him [what?] purifies himself, just as He is pure.” It’s a motive for personal holiness and purity. He’s coming back and we’re going to be like Him but that means during this life, while we wait for Him, we pursue likeness to Him. 1 John 3:2-3.

For believers, it also serves as a motive to warn unbelievers. Paul felt this. I quoted earlier that passage from his sermon - Mars Hill in Acts 17. He urges those people to respond to the reality that “because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” There is in that statement a plea, “*Respond to Christ now! It’s the one God has appointed. Be reconciled to Him now!*” That should be our message to the people around us. Listen, your family and friends that don’t know Christ, your coworkers that don’t know Christ, this is the reality of what will happen to them. And it should drive us to warn them, to tell them of the grace of God in Christ, to plead with them, as Paul does in 2 Corinthians 5: “...we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Finally, this passage - Jesus’ coming reminds us that Jesus will not only return, but He’s returning, ultimately, to establish His kingdom. The rest of the Scriptures spells out the details we will live on this renewed earth for 1000 years under the rule of Jesus as our king, according to Revelation 20. And then we will forever live in a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness is at home, in which Jesus is king. There’s a new earth coming. Jesus is going to

destroy this one and make a new one. And we'll live with Him on that planet forever and He will be the king. Keep this in perspective as you live this life.

I don't know what age you are. I don't know how long you have to live. But however long it is, it will fly past. This life is a shadow. It's like the burst of steam from a kettle. It's a vapor that's here today and gone tomorrow. Don't live as if this life is all there is. Jesus is coming back. He will establish His kingdom. Don't live for now. Live for then. Jesus' vindication and His ultimate triumph gives us assurance that we too will share His glory. So, hold on. He'll be back. The words of the song that we so often sing - I love those words: "And He will have the prize for which He died, an inheritance of nations". Jesus will not be thwarted. His purpose will be fulfilled, His kingdom will be established, and He will reign forever and ever. He's coming back.

Christians let's live like it! Let's live like we believe that, that we're not living for now. We're living for then. Think about your own life and ask yourself this simple question: if I really believed that Jesus is returning and that He's the one that matters, what changes would I make this week to the priorities of my life?

He'll be back. May God help us to live in the light of that reality.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this wonderful passage. Thank You for these two rich verses that tell us so much about Christ. Father, I pray for the person here tonight who has never accepted the demands of Christ for discipleship, to be His follower. They've never been willing to deny themselves, to renounce the person that they are, to take up a cross and follow Him. They've never been willing to repent of their sins and believe in Him as Lord and Savior, to confess Him publicly before others in the act of baptism as well as throughout life. Father, I pray that You would help them to see what lies in their future if they don't. Lord, may they see from the Scriptures we've read tonight, a frightening picture of the real Jesus, before whom they will

stand, with nothing to say except, “Other people, my life, my world were more important than you.” Lord, may they come to true faith.

I pray for us who are in Christ. Lord, we confess to You that, too often, we don't really get it. It doesn't really sink into our souls. It doesn't grip our hearts that our Lord is coming back. Lord, use these passages to anchor our thoughts and minds and our confidence in that reality. And help us this week to live in the light of the reality that we're living for then, and not for now. I pray it for the glory of Christ, for the advance of His kingdom. And we pray with John, “Even so, come quickly.” Amen!