

Long on Glory, Short on Faith

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[0 : 0 0] Now as we turn then to this ninth chapter of Mark's account of the gospel from verse two onwards, we have this comparatively familiar incident of the Mount of Transfiguration.

Now exactly where this takes place is not exactly known. The tour guides nowadays in the Holy Land tend to identify Mount Tabor as the most likely location.

Traditionally some commentators took it as being Mount Hermon in the far north, but that is probably a throwback to the fact that the earlier passage in chapter eight makes reference to Jesus being in Caesarea Philippi.

And they have probably assumed that even though six days have elapsed, he's still in that area in the far north of the country. So the only high mountain in that area, they reckon, is Mount Hermon. It doesn't really matter which. The point is that up this mountain where Jesus takes only Peter, James and John with them, he is transfigured before that.

[1 : 0 0] Now there are a number of things that we learn from this particular passage. Before we go on to deal with the demon-possessed boy, we'll deal with this Mount of Transfiguration first.

The first thing is that Jesus being God the Son, he knew all things. He knew what was about to happen as they toiled their way up this mountain.

He knew what would take place on the Mount of Transfiguration, which means that what followed was deliberate. I'll say that again. What followed was deliberate.

It was an intentional revealing of his glory to these three disciples. And it is not a coincidence. It didn't just happen that while they were up the mountain and Jesus was praying, as Luke's account tells us, while he was praying, oh, suddenly the heavens were opening. Look what they saw. Wasn't it amazing? No, this is deliberate.

[1 : 5 6] This is an intentional revealing of his glory to these three disciples. And it was not a coincidence. Jesus intends Peter, James, and John to see all this.

And in due course, to bear witness to the fact. Now they bear witness to the fact insofar as Matthew's account, Mark here, which is thought to be Peter's recollections.

And Luke also, the three out of the four gospel accounts make mention of this Mount of Transfiguration and the experience there. Peter makes reference to it particularly in chapter 1 of 2 Peter, verse 16.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto thee the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount.

[3 : 0 0] Peter bears testimony to what they have seen and witnessed. And Jesus intends this to be the case. So that is the first point he has delivered. Going on to the actual incident itself, I would suggest to you, and it's not going to say it's of a overpowering with numbers here, eight points, comparatively small points, we would take out of this.

Now, don't worry if you can't remember them all. I wouldn't remember them all if they weren't written down here in front of me. But if you are taking notes, then it may help to enumerate here. These next eight points I would suggest to you that this Mount of Transfiguration teaches us.

First of all, number one, this is a glimpse of glory. The curtain of heaven is, as it were, drawn back. It is a brief sight of Christ as he really is.

Now, that is not to diminish or to in any way reduce the importance or the value or the power of his incarnation, of his presence on earth, of his earthly ministry. That's part of the sum and substance of what Jesus is about, why he became flesh.

But as he really is, is God the Son enthroned in power. And they get a glimpse of this on the Mount of Transfiguration.

[4 : 14] This is God the Son as he really is. Now, how do we explain that? Well, thinking in terms of an example, I remember when I was a younger boy growing up, not a wee wee boy, but a younger boy growing up, there was an office bearer in the church that was growing up, a lovely gentleman, very kind and very self-effacing and gentlemanly, comparatively small man, so good and gracious and, you know, in so many ways a very humble, humble Christian.

And that was the only way that I knew him, as this very gentle, kindly, humble, self-effacing man. It was quite a shock to me when I discovered that in his work, which of course is where, you know, he would spend most of his life, in his working life, he was actually in an extremely large and powerful department, whether in government or whether it was some private company, I can't remember which, but he had hundreds of people under his authority.

He wielded considerable power, massive influence, had huge professional respect. He was a big man in his professional field.

People would have, you know, not bowed down to him, but they would have deferred to him in decision after decision. He was top of his job. He was a mighty power in his working life.

And yet, all that I knew of him, and all that people in the church would have known, was of this comparatively small, self-effacing, terribly humble, terribly gracious man.

[5 : 48] And there was never a hint of this kind of power and authority that he wielded in his ordinary working life. Now, it's not a very good example, but it's an illustration of how, what the disciples would have known upon the earth would be Jesus in his humility, Jesus in his self-effacing, humble graciousness, fulfilling God's word perfectly, but never ramming it down anyone's throat, never setting himself up as greater than others, always humble, always gracious.

And yet, you pull back, as it were, the curtain of heaven, and you see him as he really is. This is a glimpse of glory, a brief sight of Jesus as he really is.

Now, a little sort of aside here, this is still part of the first point, is that Luke suggests this transfiguration might have happened at night.

And the reason I say that is, if we look at the parallel passages in Matthew 17, and in Luke chapter 9, and it's always helpful to compare scripture with scripture, when it's the same incident that's being discussed here.

If we look at chapter 9, verse 37, it says, came to pass on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. So in Luke's account, what happens in the transfiguration, what happens in the mountain, it takes all night.

[7 : 09] They're up there all night. The next day, they go down, and they meet the crowds there in the demon-possessed spot. That means that the transfiguration might have happened at night, or it might have happened just in the late afternoon, but they were there all night until the next day.

If it was at night, you might think, well, the contrast with it, the brightness of glory would be even greater. Personally, if you want a personal opinion, maybe you don't, but this is just my take on it, I would say that if it's at night, yes, the dramatic contrast would be even greater, and even more powerful, and even more fear-inspiring, but also, in a sense, it would diminish something of the greatness and the clarity of the power of this transfiguration.

I mean, you know, in pitch black of night, in the days before streetlights and light pollution and all these other things, you know, even a little candle burning looks pretty bright in the pitch black. So, I think part of the glory of this transfiguration is, you know, it says, his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fooler on earth, no salt maker on earth, could ever whiten them. Matthew says, chapter 17, verse 2, he was transfigured before them, his face did shine as the sun, his raiment was white as the light. The suggestion here to me is that even if it is broad daylight, the brightness of heaven's glory makes ordinary nature look dull by comparison.

This is the difference between a sort of dim little bulb burning fairly faint yellowy orange or a white blazing light or heaven's glory filling the whole experience here.

[8 : 54] The point I would suggest to you is that, yes, if it's nighttime, contrast is greater, but the thing about nighttime is anything looks bright. If it's daylight, which by contrast still seems dull by the glory of heaven that is revealed, then the contrast and the glorifying of God's presence and name is, if anything, all the greater.

But it gives us a glimpse of glory, of Jesus as he really is. Second point, as we see with Moses and Elijah speaking with them there, this indicates to us, as I've mentioned on previous occasions, glorified souls have an appearance.

They have a visual appearance. Moses and Elijah, this is not their bodies that are being seen. Moses was buried on the Mount, Mount Hor, or whatever it was, Mount Nebo, when he went up the mountain and God buried him and nobody knows where his sepulcher is even until this day. Elijah went up to heaven in the fiery chariot and of course, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God so it won't be his body that's there in heaven, it won't be Moses' body that's there in heaven, it won't be their glorified souls that the disciples are seeing.

As Hebrews puts it, chapter 12, verse 23, it is to the general assembly and church of the firstborn we have brought to the spirits of just men made perfect, not to their bodies yet.

[10:20] Yes, the resurrection of the body will come and all the bodies will be raised from the depths of the sea and from the ashes that have been burned and from the graves in which they have been placed and they will be renewed, they'll be restored, they'll be reunited with their departed souls whether in glory or in damnation.

but the resurrection of the body is not yet. So what the disciples are seeing is the glorified souls of Moses and Elijah and this tells us right away glorified souls have a visual appearance, have a physical appearance.

Third point, which is connected in with number two there, glorified souls, those in heaven are instantly recognisable. That's what that tells us.

The disciples had never met Moses or Elijah in their lifetimes. They had met hundreds of years before them yet they knew them instantly. They knew it was Moses, they knew it was Elijah, nobody had to tell them.

Jesus didn't say, guys I want to introduce you to Moses and Elijah, you, this is Peter, James and John, everybody say how you do. No, there's none of that. They are talking with Jesus. There's this glory and Peter instantly says, Lord, let us make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.

[11:36] He doesn't have to be told. He knows who they are. There is instant recognition even of those whom he has never met in this world, which tells us that those in heaven are instantly recognisable.

Not only will we be if we are in heaven, not only will we be reunited with those who have gone before us in Christ, but we'll be reunited also with those who have lived in previous centuries and generations who have died in the faith and we will know that instantly.

There is instantly recognisable soul in heaven that they are recognisable even to those who have never met the Lord. Fourth point, Moses and Elijah are clearly major figures in heaven.

Jesus is not talking with Gabriel, the angel. He's not talking with Michael, the archangel. He's not talking with, say, you know, Samuel or with Jephthah or with Samson or any other of the prophets or judges or with Isaiah or any of the others.

He's talking with Moses and Elijah. The personification of the law and the personification of the prophets. The first one through whom the law is given, one of the first prophets to be called to witness to the God of Israel.

[13:01] Also, there's a small point. Both of these men in their earthly ministries in time had had, we might call, little glimpses of glory. Remember that when Moses was up the mountain pleading for the children of Israel, he said, Lord, I may seek to show me thy glory.

And the Lord says, well, you won't see my face, you know, you can see my face and live, but if you hide in the cleft of the rock here, I'll pass by you, you can see the back parts of my glory, but you can't see me face to face.

And likewise, we know when Moses had been up the mountain, his face shone with the presence of the Lord that he had been among. So likewise, Elijah also, when he comes to the mountain, same mountain, Elijah, the Lord appears to him and says, what doest thou, he Elijah?

And he says, he's been very jealous for the Lord God. Of course, the Lord appears to him, the Lord passes by, there's the earthquake, the wind and the fire and all the display of God's power, but God is not in the earthquake. He's not in the wind, he's not in the fire, and then there's the still small bodies.

But there is something of this revealing of God's power on the mountain. Both of these men had experienced that. But clearly, of all those who might have appeared with Jesus on the Mount of

Transfiguration, it means that Moses and Elijah are major figures in heaven, the personification of the law of the prophets.

[14 : 20] Fifthly, and connected in with that fact, Jesus is greater than them all. This may seem like the obvious thing to state, and obviously you'd expect us to say that, but it is nonetheless a fact borne out by this evidence here.

Jesus is greater than them all. We know this because the three of them are not discussing Moses and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Jesus and Elijah are not saying, wasn't it great when you got those tablets on the Lord and how he rolled on them with the finger of God?

Fantastic. I can see why you smashed them at the bottom of the mountain because the Israelites were so bad. What a great experience you had. And they're not talking to Elijah saying, see that on the prophets of Baal there on Mount Carmel?

Oh, you did really well there. The fire came down from them. Fantastic. And then, you know, when you fled from Jezebel, the Lord fed you with the angel giving you water and bread and stuff. Wasn't that brilliant?

They're not talking about Moses. They're not talking about Elijah. They're talking about Jesus and his forthcoming death at Jerusalem. We know this because Luke tells us in the parallel passage, Luke 9, verse 31, they appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

[15 : 33] What they are talking about is the death of Christ and what he accomplishes thereby. They're not talking about Moses. They're not talking about Elijah. The three of them together are discussing Jesus and his forthcoming death at Jerusalem which tells us that Jesus is more important than any of them.

Jesus outranks them all. He is greater than them all. Connected in with that fifth point is the sixth point. Heaven is not a place of empty or holy silence alone. nor is it merely of endless praise and singing. There is conversation in heaven. And this is evidence of it. There is conversation in heaven.

And the great subject of celestial speech and conversation is the death of Jesus Christ for sinners. That which heaven cannot stop going on about is the death of Jesus Christ and what he has purchased for sinners.

That's the only reason there's going to be glorified saints in heaven at all. That's the only reason that the Lord of glory is able to gather his children around them and which he is able to delight in the relationship that he has with all his redeemed sinful children who are sinful no longer because they are washed in the blood of the Lamb because of the death of Christ at Jerusalem because of the slaying of the Lamb of God from the foundation of the world.

[17 : 07] That is what brings them there. That is what purchases their presence. It is the great subject of discussion in heaven. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Seventhly, glimpses of glory are precisely that. You cannot make it last longer than God besides or spin it out or pin it down and try to keep it in a jar.

The offer of building three tabernacles one for Jesus one for Moses one for Elijah would be almost an insult were it not for the fact it was so reverently well intentioned.

How can you possibly say to somebody who is in glory in the very streets of heaven itself beholding the face of the Lord and the brightness of his power and perfection and glory say oh stay down here on this manor we'll build a wee booth we'll get some branches and some leaves and we'll chop them down and me and James and John will make a nice wee booth for you here Moses and Elijah here make a wee bivouac and you can slot into this little sort of branch tent that will make you can stay in the morning what could be better than that when they're coming from glory itself he's offering them a little tent made of branches he's offering them a tabernacle that the hands of men will throw together from the raw materials around it would almost be an insult were it not well intentioned and he didn't know what he was saying Stephen sums it up in his one speech to the

Sanhedrin before his death when he says that Solomon built him a house howbeit the most high dwelleth not in temples made with hands as saith the prophet heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool what house will you build me saith the Lord of what is the place of my rest hath not my hand made all these things you can't spin it out you can't say oh this is great wow let's make it last get them to stay build them little booths so they can stay on the mountain here build them little tabernacles then they won't go back into heaven yes they will you can't pin it down you can't keep it in a jar you can't spin it out you can't make it last longer than the Lord intends to give it is a glimpse

of glory it is not the permanent deal not yet and not here eighthly and finally as far as these points are concerned before we move on we read that the cloud passes over them there was a cloud that overshadowed them a voice came out of the cloud and Matthew and Luke both tell us [20 : 05] Matthew 17 at verse 6 and Luke 9 at verse 34 tell us that they were afraid as they went into that cloud Matthew 17 verse 6 when the disciples heard the voice they fell on their face and were sore afraid and likewise in Luke 9 we read there verse 34 where it says whilst he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed and they feared as they entered into the cloud from the cloud from the fear there emerges Jesus and Jesus alone whatever you are entering into of which you are afraid whatever experience of encountering the Lord makes you afraid or anxious or concerned as you enter into it know that in the midst of it and as you come out there will be Jesus and only Jesus who speaks to them and meets with them just as they are helpless face down confused frightened weak nothing and no one compares to Jesus he meets them where they are he doesn't repeat oh for goodness sake get up off your knees what are you doing there on the ground come on you've seen me before no he knows they're afraid he knows they've experienced something that they've never experienced before he knows they're terrified he knows they're confused he knows there are days looking about them sort of thing nobody there now just Jesus from out of the fear from out of the clouds there emerges

Jesus and Jesus alone nothing and no one compares to Jesus so as they come down the mountain these are the eight points I won't recap them and take up more time just now if you didn't get them all don't worry just take some of them home with you remember and bear in mind as they go down the mountain the disciples say why do the scribes say Elijah must come first so we read verse 11 why say the scribes Elijah must first come they know that what they have seen is a glimpse of glory but they're thinking well before this happens Lord Elijah should have come back first we should have had Elijah that's what the scriptures say they know that they should have had been a holy messenger first of all you know you look at Malachi and it says in chapter 3 verse 1 behold I will send my messenger he shall prepare the way before me and the Lord whom he seeks shall suddenly come to his temple even the messenger of the covenant whom he delighted behold he shall come saith the

Lord of hosts so where where was Elijah and then we read verses 12 and 13 he answered and told them Elias where he cometh first and restoreth all things and how it is written of the son of man that he must suffer many things and be said it not but I say unto you Elias is indeed come and they have done him whatsoever they listed as it is written with them now that's a wee bit cryptic in Matthew's account Mark's account Matthew is clearer Matthew says quite explicitly chapter 17 verses 12 and 13 it says I say unto Elias has come already and they knew him not but have done unto him whatsoever they listed likewise shall also the son of man suffer of him then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist and also if we were to turn back a couple of pages in chapter 11 of Matthew is account we would see at verse 14 where Jesus is talking to the crowds he said the law and the prophets prophesied until John and if he will receive it this i.e.

John the Baptist is Elias which was for to come so that's a bit of a cheat isn't it we were expecting Elijah now it's somebody else it's John the Baptist it's not Elijah but if you remember when John the Baptist was going to be conceived the angel Gabriel said to his father at the lights Luke chapter 1 verse 15 he shall be great in the sight of the Lord shall drink neither wine nor strong drink he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb and many of the children shall he turn to the Lord their God and she shall 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 a people prepared for the Lord he will go in the spirit and power of Elijah he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children the disobedient to the wisdom of the just what does it say about Elijah at the end of Malachi chapter 4 the very last book of the

Old Testament in the very last verses behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord and he shall turn the heart of the children and the heart of the children to their fathers God doesn't do reincarnation but he does do another prophet coming in the spirit and the power of a previous prophet when he says he's going to send Elijah he's going to send one very like Elijah in the spirit and power of Elijah Jesus says if you will receive it if you've got faith to receive it this is Elijah which was for to come the disciples understood in Matthew's account he spoke to them of Elijah who was for to come this is John the Baptist and they understood in Matthew's account that is spelled out so in other words they realize that the consummation of all

things the coming of God's kingdom is an awful lot nearer than they realized because there's always this safety bar so far

[25 : 56] Elijah has not come so it's okay sometimes in the morning you know the children are going off to school last year there's only the one for us of course by watching the hill to see if the bus comes down the hill and as long as the bus hasn't come down the hill yet you know it's still got time to get teeth done or go up the toilet or get everything ready for school or whatever until the bus appears on the hill and then when the bus goes past and you've only got a few minutes before it comes back but disciples have been thinking I've got time enough yet Lord you know the scribes say John the Baptist has got to come first John the Baptist hasn't been yet so we've still got time we're still watching the hill hasn't come yet when Jesus said Elijah has already been John the Baptist was coming in the spirit and power of Elijah he's already been now is the time nearer than you realise the fulfilment of everything is on your very doorstep you didn't know how far on things have gone and that is no doubt the case for us we don't realise just how far on things have gone because we think we've still got loads of time we're still watching the hill we don't realise the thing we're watching for has probably already been and the

Lord is nearer than we ever recognised one subject the demon possessed boy it's about one subject and that is the great matter and urgent subject in this section is faith and the absolute necessity of both having it and having it sufficient strength and quality strength quality and quantity as well you know why couldn't the disciples cast out the demon possessed boy they asked Jesus afterwards Matthew tells us why could not we cast him out Jesus said because of your unbelief here he just says all this kind only goes out because of prayer and fasting and so on but we'll come to that in a wee minute but it's necessity of faith and Jesus says to the father boy how long have you been like this and he tells him he says Lord if you can do anything help us if I can do anything if you can believe all things are possible then you've got this wonderful cry from the boy's father Lord I believe help thy mind unbelief which is a cry all of us could utter all that to different times there is the necessity for faith if we have faith in Christ anything is possible if we truly believe in what he can do any demon can be cast out any obstacle can be removed any mountain can be cast into the sea any tree can be uprooted and cast hence if we have faith in the power of Christ and this is what the disciples struggle with Jesus says oh faithless generation how long shall I be with you how long shall I suffer you this is the problem lack of faith now we made mention in Matthew's account of how the disciples asked him they came to him why could not be cast about Jesus said because of your unbelief I say unto you if your faith is a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain remove hence the place it shall remove nothing shall be impossible for you this is his response but still we have to recognize that as he says this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting so there are two things in

Jesus reaction that are clear one of them rebukes the disciples Jesus obviously thinks they should have had faith enough to do this oh faithless and perverse generation how long shall I suffer you how long shall I be with you they should have been able to deal with this can't he leave them for a day can't he go up the mountain with the three for a night and leave them in charge can they not handle anything faithless generation they should have been able to do it this is part of Jesus exasperation they should have been able to do it they are rebuked by their comparative unbelief he expected that they should have been able to do it especially in the light of the fact you know if we look at Luke's account of the gospel where this account comes in chapter 9 chapter 9 begins with him sending out the 12 all devils even one as strong as this they should have been able to deal with it that's the first answer but the second part of

Jesus reaction acknowledges that this particular kind of demon was especially violent and whilst they wouldn't have had power to cast it out to do so would have required a level of spiritual preparation and discipline of which the disciples were not yet in the habit now if we go back to chapter 2 in Mark's account of the gospel you remember how when people asked him a question about fasting and Jesus said in chapter 2 verse 19 can the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them as long as they have a bridegroom with them they cannot fast but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them and then shall they fast in those days the disciples had a measure of power and faith in chapter 7 of Mark's account of the gospel we read of how he sent them out with power he sent them out to cast out demons he sent them to give them the power over those that needed to be cast out those who needed to be healed he did all these things but still they didn't have the strength here at this time they didn't have that

kind of discipline or they didn't have it yet they had a measure of faith but even such faith when faced with a determined and resistant foe may falter they were used to pronouncing after they were sent out to preach and cast out demons they were used to saying the words and the demon would flee but here's a resistant one and you can see how people's faith falters a little bit when the usual thing that you do and it doesn't happen you say the usual words and it's not working why isn't it working this time and you begin to have doubts you know we can think about that example in [32 : 37] Matthew 14 where Jesus is walking on the water and Peter says to Lord if it's you bid me come out of the sea bid me come out of the boat and come and walk on the water with you and you would think of the the poor course he's not going to walk on the water but Jesus says come and when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water to go to Peter had the faith to get out of the boat and walk on the sea and he did it he walked and then suddenly looked around the little church still awful windy and wild and I can't possibly do this and as soon as he began to doubt and took his eyes off Jesus he began to sink and the disciples had a measure of faith they had a measure of strength but when they are faced with this kind of resistance this kind that go not out of my train and fast they falter and they begin to die and they look around and think why can't we do it what's wrong something's gone wrong and you can never show the devil weakness he's like a dog that sense fear in one that is facing him he can see the feet in your eyes he can smell the feet in your soul now

I remember again when I was little and going to school it was always I probably told you this account before on the road I normally to school there was a house where there was always Alsations sitting in the open driveway and initially I wasn't too bothered but then I got it into my head that the Alsatian might go for me and so I became afraid of it and I would look at me and it would start to growl and I would start to run of course if you run it chases you it started chasing me and barking and so on and this happened a couple of times and after I would never go back it would take the long way round never go past this I take two or three four different streets so I didn't and when I began to chase me and it sent me the fear that went after it I hadn't done anything to the dog it hadn't done anything to me before that but it sent to fear the devil is the same you show him fear and he will go for you you run from him and he will come after you he will chase you off the field of don't show him

Peter's ability to walk on the water or the disciples ability to throw out this demon or that demon their faith is meant to be in Christ it is stronger than anything the devil has got don't show him fear face him down and let him see that you are not afraid because of the power of Christ or the power of yourself this is what perhaps they failed to do but we need to also remember what Jesus himself said John 14 verse 12 he said verily verily I say unto you he that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my father now what does that imply it implies the disciples would have this great power they would be able to cast out any kind of demon they would be able to heal any kind of disease they would have the power of Christ to overcome the kingdom of darkness but not yet not quite yet because he has not yet gone to his father the holy ghost is not yet poured out on them they still have the spirit of fear even after the resurrection they are still hiding behind locked doors they haven't yet got this power anointing that the holy ghost gives them they will do greater works if we can say it reverently

Jesus said it so we have to go along with it greater works than Jesus in greater number of race perhaps but not until the holy ghost is poured out not until he has ascended into heaven not until he has gone to his father they will but not yet and one of the things we read constantly about the church and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament is that they are constantly in prayer and fasting they're going to meet new elders they fast and they pray they're going to appoint somebody to go out on mission they fast and they pray they're going to undertake some new great work for the Lord they fast and they pray they're going to choose deacons they fast and they pray fasting and prayer became their everyday discipline they became part and parcel of what the New Testament church was about and because of that they had power such as they never had before in the days of Jesus flesh now prayer and fasting is not some magic button you push it's not a magic spell you just do it and say it's as if somebody were saying you right if you go to the gym and if you work out and if you eat fresh vegetables and fruit instead of all the junk food you eat now things will get fitter you'll get stronger so you go to the gym you sit beside you watch people playing squash and doing their workouts and their circuits and you sit there drinking your coke and your packet of crisps and say well here

I am at the gym so the magic isn't happening I eat a piece a carrot I eat a piece of fruit I don't seem to be Mr. Universe yet what's happening why hasn't it happened yet it's not simply a fact of going to the gym it's not simply a fact of eat a vegetable it's a discipline of a changed way of life it is a discipline of entering into this kind of practice and habit prayer is more focused when we set ourselves apart disruptions but things that break up our day and demarcate our time in every day is meal times food so much of our life revolves around food you set that aside it's amazing how much time it frees up it's amazing how much you can focus on the Lord now it doesn't mean you won't feel hungry because you will it doesn't mean that you'll be able to just concentrate on spiritual thoughts because food will be in there too you're fasting but at the same time it does mean you'll be able to remember and realize that the reason you feel this is because you're putting this to your side you're focusing on the

[39 : 16] Lord you're seeking to make time for the Lord you're seeking to pray to the Lord you're seeking this kind of power and discipline over your body over flesh so the spirit can have access the closer we draw to the Lord and the more single mindedly we focus upon him such as in prayer and fasting the more we experience of his great ability his greatness his goodness and the greater ability we develop to wield this divine power released to us for his glory you see when we're in prayer much and spending time with the Lord it's not we become puffed up it's become diminished in our own eyes and see how great God is the more time we spend with the Lord the more we see how unworthy we are to wield his great gifts it's not a case of how great I must be look how much time I spend in prayer if it's real prayer and God becomes glorified and we become diminished and we become a little bit more mature and capable of wielding his sword of the spirit his spiritual gifts his graces which perhaps the disciples were still too immature to be able to wield it's like physical training results will never be all at once it is a discipline it is a learning curve a gradual steady increase in spiritual power and spiritual ability spiritual discipline and ever greater access to this knowledge of the

Lord then gradually we come to see it's not about us it's not about me being able to cast out a demon or me being able to do great spiritual work it's not about us it's not about me it's never been about us against the devil it was never about us it was never about the demon it was always about Christ to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given that's what he says at the end of Matthew 28 for it is the most important thing that we must learn from this entire passage from the glimpse of heaven to the gut-wrenching failures of the disciples upon earth from the heights of glory to the humiliations of getting it so wrong it is not about the demon possessed boy it is not about the disciples it's not about the demon himself it's not about Elijah it's not about Moses it most certainly is about us nothing and no one is greater than Jesus nothing and no one compares to Christ res
you