

A Chariot of Fire
Mark 9:1-9; 2 Kings 2:1-12
Transfiguration Sunday
February 11, 2024

- Introduction: *Something rare*

Certain things are rare in Scripture and that makes it hard to see how it relates to following Christ today. For example, the experience of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is an experience that applies only to her. We can learn from her experience, but there will never be another Mary, the mother of Jesus. I read this about rare things in on the internet. "Rare things can come in many different forms. For example, rare gemstones like blue diamonds or red beryl are highly sought after for their scarcity. In the natural world, rare animals such as the Javan rhinoceros or the Amur leopard are critically endangered species. Collectible items like limited edition art pieces, vintage cars, or rare coins are also considered rare. Additionally, unique historical artifacts or documents, such as the Gutenberg Bible or the Declaration of Independence, are rare due to their limited numbers and historical significance.* Today, we read of events that are rare, but very important.

- Set the Stage
Elijah and the rapture

The first is in 2 Kings 2:1-12, in which the great prophet Elijah is taken bodily and alive into heaven. This is not a typical event in the life of a person of God, though there is an event in Scripture that describes a whole generation of Christians entering the presence of Christ at once and all together. That is a subject that can take a whole series of sermons. Today, let's look at how the way these events play out tell us about the Lord. In the passage in 2 Kings, the whirlwind is what took Elijah to heaven, the chariots and horses make the statement that the power of God is greater than any military might or any authority attained by any human or human agency. God is in charge.**

- *Jesus and the traditional site of the Transfiguration, Caesarea Philippi, was one of the most pagan sites in ancient Israel.*

In the second passage, Jesus meets with his disciples at Caesarea Philippi (the traditional site of the Transfiguration). It was there that Jesus was transfigured and conversed with Moses and Elijah before Peter, James and John in the nearby hills. The site makes a statement. Caesarea Philippi was the most pagan site in ancient Israel. There are still ruined monuments to Pan and other idols of the time there today. But Jesus is above them all. He claims all authority, and regardless of the scene below, God is still in charge.

- Main Point
Despite appearances, God is in charge
- And here's the main point, that God is in charge. That's the point to the chariots of fire in the Old Testament and that's the point to the location of the Transfiguration in the New. Regardless, God is in charge. It doesn't mean that people don't have free will, nor does it mean that God is pleased with all that happens. Note what I found in a website discussing the authority of God. The author wrote "If God is all-powerful and in control, why does God allow so many bad things to happen in the world? People have struggled with that question for thousands of years. There's a whole Old Testament book (Job) about it. No

responsible person of faith can avoid wrestling with this question because Biblical teachings about God sometimes contradict what we see in real life.

I find saying “God is in *charge*” more compelling than saying “God is in control.”*** I think he has a point. God gives the world freedom to make all sorts of decisions with which He is not pleased, but he reserves the right to judge, and His judgment is final. God is in charge.

- Application

Here's the application: *Trust when it is hard to trust*. Note the episode of Moses and the serpent raised up on a pole when serpents were attacking the people. It's easy to focus on the challenge when we must focus on the Lord. (Numbers 21:4-9) One practical way to keep your focus on the Lord in the midst of challenges is to pray *prayers of praise*, prayers that ask for nothing but rehearse and acknowledge the attributes of God. Talking to God about who God is takes your mind from your limitations and the power of the challenges before you. It is notable that Jesus used this same story regarding Himself. (John 3:14-15)

- Conclusion

Certain things are rare. Documents that are historic, for example. Certain events in Scripture are rare as well. The experience of Mary, the mother of Jesus will only happen once. While symbolic of greater things, the experience of Elijah and the chariots of fire is not a common event. The transfiguration of Jesus was seen only by Peter, James and John, but they show one common, powerful message, that God is in charge, even when it seems that He is not. He has always been in charge, and always will.

*https://poe.com/continue_chat?context_content_oid=1477743717028191&context_content_type=answer&reply=What+are+some+examples+of+rare+events%3F&scroll_to=bottom&bot_name=Assistant&redirect_url=%2FAssistant

** Bible Knowledge Commentary

***<https://medium.com/koinonia/please-stop-saying-god-is-in-control-365048a3bfaf>