

They Saw His Glory

Luke 9:27-36 (08-18-19)

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God does special things on mountain tops. He provided a ram for Abraham in the place of Isaac on Mt. Moriah. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. Elijah prayed on Mt. Carmel and fire fell from heaven and licked up the sacrifice, stones, and water. God likes to prove His reality on mountains. And that's exactly what is happening this morning as we go with Jesus and three of His disciples up onto Mount Hermon.

Luke 9:27-28 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." 28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

Just before Jesus took the three men up this mountain, He had shocked them with the news that major suffering and death lay before Him in the coming days. The Jewish leaders would have Him killed. He also said he would rise from the dead, but the disciples didn't hear that part. To add to the tension, in Luke 9:23 He informed them if they wanted to follow Him, they would have to deny themselves, take up their cross every day by dealing with sin daily, and follow Him to become like Him, putting off sinful habits and putting on Christ-like habits.

Then in verse 26 He talks about His second coming in His glory and the glory of the Father and all the angels. So we've got suffering and death, but also future glory. This could be pretty confusing – suffering and death, yet coming in glory. Now look at verse 27. Jesus assures them some won't taste death, which is dying, until they see the kingdom of God. Whoa, whoa, whoa. What does He mean? One commentator gives seven possibilities. Some think He's talking about the resurrection, some about Pentecost, or the beginning of the church age. Some even think He's talking about AD 70 when the Romans came and conquered Jerusalem.

But we don't believe any of that. He said "some" who are standing right there wouldn't taste death until they see the kingdom of God. Matthew 16:28 puts it like this: "until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," and Mark 9:1 adds "until the kingdom of God has come with power." And then He takes Peter, James, and John up on the mountain, probably Mt. Hermon, the highest mountain in Israel. And that's where some, namely these three, are going to see a preview of the glory of the future kingdom of God, and especially the glory of Jesus Christ, as will be seen when He comes from heaven in blazing glory at His second coming and sets up the glorious future kingdom where He will personally rule the entire world.

You say, "How do you know this?" Because Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:16-17.

2 Peter 1:16-18 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

The big practical lesson from the transfiguration of Christ is that no matter how dark and difficult your life becomes, no matter how discouraging your days may be, or things aren't turning out the way you hoped they would, you need to remember the coming glory of Christ. Be refueled by the hope that God has

everything under control. Things may look bleak, but we've been on the mountain, we've seen the glory of Jesus, we've heard the Voice of God telling us to listen, love, learn, and follow His Chosen Son. The days will get gloomy, but glory is coming.

So I'm going to make some observations from this mountain-top experience with Jesus to encourage all of us. We live in a wicked, ugly, sinful world and the reality is that things will get worse and worse before the glory comes. The gospel will go out throughout the world and people in all nations will come to Jesus, the Lamb slain for sinners. But we will go through sufferings and trials before we hit Beulah Land.

Jesus literally goes through an immediate metamorphosis before our very eyes.

Luke 9:28-29 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

This really happened. This isn't an ancient Greek or Roman myth. Matthew and Mark use the Greek verb of the noun metamorphosis. As Jesus was communing with His Father in prayer, His face began to shine like the sun and his clothes radiated with the glistening white of lightening, whiter than any launderer can whiten clothes. Just picture this. This blazing, dazzling glory is shining not on Him, but from Him. We are obsessed with super-heroes like Superman, or Spiderman, or Captain America who can do super-human feats. And we love it. We're in this jungle of evil and bad guys and we feel helpless to bring them to justice. So we thrill when they finally get the bad guys and make them pay. They're bigger than life. We're also fascinated with aliens. Some want to storm Area 51 in Nevada, convinced the United States Army is hiding captive aliens and who knows what else there. Surely there's more to life than eating, working, and sleeping.

All those super heroes and aliens are fake. But here you have the real, true Super Hero, Jesus Christ, radiating out His glory in brilliance with overwhelming power and majesty, as Peter put it. He is the Son of God. We've seen Jesus do amazing things so far in Luke. He heals people, raises people from the dead, and calms storms at sea. But now we see His glory shining through. Hebrews 1:3 says His is the radiance of God's glory.

We have an amazing Savior. While He walked on earth in His humiliation, we see His flesh and blood humanity. He humbled Himself to become just like us, truly man. But that's not all He was or is. He is Almighty God, and the glory of God is shining through His body right here on the mountain. No one has ever seen this in any other earthly ruler or human hero. Some things in history would have been wonderful to have witnessed. I would love to have been there when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to that chapel door in Wittenberg and later declared, "Here I stand" at the Diet of Worms. Or stood with Neil Armstrong when he put the first human foot print on the moon. But nothing would compare with being on this mountain with Jesus and seeing His dazzling display of glory!

Jesus has a conversation with two dead men about His coming exodus.

Luke 9:30-31 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Two men were talking to Jesus, one died 1400 years earlier (Deuteronomy 34:5-6, the other went to heaven in a whirlwind 900 years earlier (2 Kings 2:11). But there they were, Moses and Elijah in living, breathing color. What does this tell you about death and heaven? What happens when you die? Will we know one another in heaven? Can we talk in heaven? Well, here are Moses and Elijah, visibly and

audibly talking with Christ. Somehow the three disciples, once they wake up, will recognize them. How? Maybe one said, "Hi, I'm Moses." And the other replied, "And I'm Elijah."

Why Moses? We know about Moses from the Old Testament. He represents the Law of course, and Jesus perfectly kept the Law of Moses for us. Plus the law shows us our sin and points us to Christ. Why Elijah? Again, the Old Testament tells about his days as a prophet to Israel, so he represents the prophets. Jesus will fulfill all the prophecies of His first coming right up to the resurrection and ascension, and He'll fulfill all the prophecies of the second coming.

What are they talking about? How awful the Roman rulers are? How corrupt society is becoming? What are they talking about? Jesus' departure (vs. 31); that's the word "exodus." Moses led the first exodus out of Egypt, freeing Israel from slavery and the Pharaoh. The Israelites slew Passover lambs before they left. The exodus cost the blood of lambs. And now Jesus is going to lead this greater exodus out of slavery to sin by shedding His blood, paying the price for sin, and enduring the wrath of God in the place of sinners. That's what they were talking about. No uncertainty about it. It will happen. This is the buzz of heaven. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The heart and core and center of all the Bible is what they are talking about. Jesus' suffering and departure in death is about to be accomplished and fulfilled at Jerusalem.

Let's pause right here. What is the core message of the church? In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul tells us what his message was. Not human psychology or philosophy, not political awareness, not social issues. He says "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." That's the heart of the message which God has given us, and that's the message Jesus and Moses and Elijah are talking about. If we get side-tracked from this message, we lose the most important message we can ever declare because no one gets to be with God forever who doesn't believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is front burner stuff. What about you? What does Jesus' death on the cross mean to you?

The sleepy three wake up to a lesson of a lifetime.

Luke 9:32-36 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

Peter, James, and John finally wake up. They almost missed the whole thing. An elderly gentleman fell asleep one day while George Whitefield was preaching and George would have none of it and spoke loudly to the man. "If I had come to speak to you in my name I could understand. But I have come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts!" Then he brought his hand and foot down so loudly that the building rang. The man woke immediately. George looked at him and said, "Ay! Ay! I have waked you up, have I? I meant to do it." The hearers were stripped of their apathy at once. And so we see Jesus' three sleepy disciples suddenly wide awake.

Now remember, Peter is going to write about this in 2 Peter, letting us know they'd seen it all: the glory emanating from Jesus while chatting with the two men. In fact, Peter immediately gets involved and offers to build tabernacles for Jesus and the two men. He even names Moses and Elijah. Apparently it was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles when Jewish people built small temporary shelters out of branches and

leaves. Zechariah 14:16 says Israel will keep the “Feast of Booths” in the coming Messianic Kingdom. Peter may have thought the kingdom has come. The fact is, while he means well, he didn’t know what he was saying (vs 33). How often has that happened to you? Sometimes when you don’t know what to say, the best policy is to say nothing.

Now the scene gets even more amazing. As Peter made his suggestion, a cloud towered over them and cast a shadow on them. They were scared as they entered it. (BTW, this is not a biblical basis for fog machines in the worship service). And then, can you believe this? God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, the King of the universe, eternal, invisible, the only true God speaks out of the cloud to these men. How near to us is our God? Close. Very close. He could speak to you today, but He won’t. And He tells us why right here.

God basically says to Peter, “Listen Peter, zip it. You don’t know what you’re talking about. Here’s what you need to know. This is My Son.” Matthew adds “in whom I am pleased.” God the Father loves His Son and has a plan for Him. “He is my Chosen One.” From eternity past this whole plan of redemption was determined. The Son willingly submitted to the Father to come to earth as a man to redeem all those whom God had chosen to be His eternity family. So now, “listen to Him.” He will give you all the truth, all the knowledge, all the counsel, all the wisdom you will ever need. The world and religions and all kinds of human opinions will fly around the world about God and the meaning of life. But, “Listen to Him.” And we could add, listen to the man who listens to Him through the Holy Scriptures alone. That’s why we believe in expositional preaching. You don’t need to hear the opinions of humans. You need to hear the Word of Christ as given in the Bible. Romans 10:17 says “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of Christ.”

What a sermon from a cloud, aye? “This is My Son. My Chosen One. Listen to Him.” Simple and powerful truth. With that the cloud and Moses and Elijah disappear, Jesus transforms back to His regular state, and we’re back to just Jesus and the three disciples. They must have been blown away and wondering, “What just happened here?”

What do we learn? This is a preview of the coming kingdom. This is designed to give us hope. Jesus is going to suffer and die, but will resurrect and come back to earth in blazing glory and great power. He is going to set up that glorious kingdom the prophets promised throughout their writings. While it may look grim in the short view, you need the glory view. As Zechariah 14 tells us, Jesus Christ is going to return to earth on the Mount of Olives, save Israel as a nation, and set up a worldwide kingdom where righteousness and justice will prevail.

Zechariah 14:9 says, “And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.” Wow! He is our true Super-Hero. He will rescue all of His people, Gentiles and Jews. And He will bring crushing judgment on all evildoers who refuse to repent. As we lose the fear of God in our land, murder increases, abuse is rampant, immorality and sexual deviancy are celebrated, and culture deepens in lies and deception. But when Jesus comes to this earth in His power and glory, righteousness and justice will rule.

Listen to Him

Do you believe all this? Are you listening to Him? Is your life centered on the cross of Christ, the one and only place your sin can be forgiven? Have you denied your own self and taking up your cross every day confessing and repenting of sin? Are you following Him by simple faith, no matter where He leads you?

