

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Peter 1:13-21

Luke 9:28-36



THEY SAW HIS GLORY

Luke 9:28-36. Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. ³⁰And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" -- not knowing what he said. ³⁴As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.¹

- *About eight days after these sayings* (v.28). Eight days prior to the Transfiguration, according to both Matthew and Mark, Jesus and his disciples were in the region of Caesarea Philippi. According to Mark 8:27-38, the *sayings* of Jesus were about (1) his identity – Jesus asked his disciples, “*Who do men say that I am?*” (2) his approaching arrest, death, and resurrection; (3) his rebuke of Peter, and (4) his call for all to follow him on the journey to the cross and beyond, “*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*” Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record these sayings. They also add one final saying which some say point toward the Transfiguration, “*I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.*” (Luke 9:27).

- *He took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray* (v.28). These three – Peter, John, and James – were among the first disciples to follow Jesus. They alone (along with Jairus and his wife) were allowed to witness the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:51). According to Mark, it was to these three (along with Andrew, Peter’s brother) that Jesus spoke the words of the Olivet discourse – the prophecy of times to come (Mark 13:3). And at Gethsemane, Jesus commanded the disciples to wait and took with him only Peter, James, and John to watch with him (Mark 14:33-34).

Using John 21:18-23 and Acts 12:1-3, discuss what later became of Peter, James, and John.

Why do some grow especially close to Jesus? From God’s viewpoint, because they are especially chosen. From the human viewpoint, those closest to Jesus are those who (1) have the clearest view of the nature of man – especially their own nature, and (2) are willing to trust Jesus unconditionally. The Bible says, *Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.* (James 4:8).

- *The appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white* (v.29). As Jesus was praying, two things happened: (1) his *countenance* – the appearance of his face – changed, and (2) his clothing became *dazzling white*. The effect was as if a bright light suddenly flashed in front of eyes conditioned for night vision. The NIV translation is, *The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.* Thus the three disciples were given a vivid picture they could later describe to others – a vision of Jesus as the King of kings.

Years later, the memory of the Transfiguration would give confidence to Peter concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ: *We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the*

¹ Bible quotations are from the RSV unless otherwise noted.

Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. (2 Pet 1:16-18).

Like the affirmations in Luke 4:21-22 and John 12:27-28, the Transfiguration was another instance where God spoke clearly in his own words the identity of Jesus: "*This is my Son*" People sometimes say Jesus never claimed divinity for himself. One answer to this is, "He didn't have to."

- *Two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory (v.30).* Moses and Elijah represented the law and the prophets, both of which the Bible says bear witness that Jesus is the Son of God. After Philip became a disciple he found Nathaniel and said to him, "*We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*" (John 1:45). Nathaniel was sure no Messiah could come from Nazareth, but Philip said, "*Come and see!*" Nathaniel did so and became a disciple. This is what we must do as well – *come and see* whether Jesus of Nazareth is really *him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote*. If you come with an open mind and heart, you will see the truth.

Later, Paul wrote to the Romans, *The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* (Rom 3:21-22). In other words, the law and the prophets bear witness to Jesus in that the righteousness of God was manifested, not in overlooking our disobedience to the law, but in giving his only Son, who gave his life on the cross to redeem us.

- *... and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem (v.31).* The *departure* of the Son of God consisted of his suffering and death on the cross. We do not know what they said, but we know the subject. Their conversation centered on the cross – the single event that would be the turning point in the history of men – the event that would open the way to God for every person who ever lived.

- *"Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths (v.33)"* From Peter's words we see that he recognized Moses and Elijah. Seeing they were getting ready to leave, he came up with the idea that they might approve of the disciples if they did something to make them comfortable. Luke added *... not knowing what he said (v.33)*, and Mark wrote, *... he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid* (Mark 9:6). They knew something tremendous was taking place. They were in the presence of the greatest leaders of Israel's life and faith. What were they doing there, and what could they do? The answers would come later, but at that time, they were terrified.

- *"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (v.35).* Later the disciples would remember the Transfiguration as a manifestation of the true nature of Jesus. For a few moments they had a glimpse of his glory and majesty – the fulness of his divine nature – both man and God. And the final stamp of authority on all this was the voice of God himself from heaven saying, "*This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!*" To whom were these words addressed? Not to Moses and Elijah, certainly, but to the disciples, and through them, to you and me.

- *Jesus was found alone (v.36).* As soon as God spoke, the event was over, and Jesus was alone again with the disciples. A couple of final points to discuss: First, the Transfiguration does not imply Jesus, Moses, and Elijah are equal. When Moses came from the presence of God, his face reflected the glory of God, and Moses had to wear a veil. (Ex 34:29-35). But his glory faded with time, and Jesus is forever *the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it* (John 1:4-5).

People at times see Jesus, Moses, Buddha, and Mohammed as founders of the world's great religions. Actually, Jesus never founded any religion. See Col 1:15-20, for example, *He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, ...* Jesus came not to start a religion, but to die for the sins of men. And when God raised him from the dead, he became *the first-born among many brethren* (Rom 8:29). Jesus is your Savior, not the founder of your religion. You must receive him and know him first as your Savior, and then as your Lord.

Second, the Transfiguration gave the disciples a picture not only of the glory of Christ, but also of the destiny of his followers. 1 John 3:2 says, *We know that when he appears we shall be like him ...*, and Paul wrote to the Romans, *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* (Rom 8:18). Through faith, not in yourself but in almighty God, you can look forward to a better life in a better place – to being like Christ and sharing the glory of his kingdom.