

# REFLECTING GOD'S GLORY

LUKE 9:28-36

## **MI. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR DEBATE ABOUT WHO JESUS IS. HE IS GOD IN THE FLESH.**

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# Reflecting God's Glory

Luke 9:28-36

While the disciples were going out on their final wrap up of the Galilean ministry, King Herod started to inquire Who Jesus was. Jesus asked the disciples Who the crowds were saying He was. The answers to Herod and to Jesus were basically the same. The crowds were saying that Jesus was John the Baptist back from the dead, or the Old Testament Elijah, or some other Old Testament prophet from long ago brought back to life.

Jesus asked the disciples Who they thought He was and their response through the mouth of Peter was that He was Jesus, the Christ. In other words, they believed Jesus to be the Promised Jewish Messiah. Jesus affirmed their answer and then went on to describe the role He was about to fulfill as Messiah and the role they would have to fulfill if they wanted to be counted as His faithful followers.

Messiah and His followers would have two conflicting roles. First of all, Messiah had to suffer and die for the forgiveness of our sins and for our salvation. His death would be the atonement that would make us right with God. As His followers, there will be a great deal of suffering as we bring this message of redemption to a lost and sinful world. Jesus would be publicly humiliated, tortured, and nailed to a cross. The disciples would be jailed, beaten, and ultimately martyred. Even today, we are to share in the sufferings of Jesus if we want to be counted as His followers. We must be the ones to lay down our egos and forgive others. We must be the ones who lay down our pride and lead the way to reconciled and repaired relationships. We are the ones to forgive and care for even our enemies.

On the other side of the coin, Messiah will have to conquer all enemies of God and subdue the earth. Evil is to be conquered and vanquished. Messiah will come as the conquering, warrior King.

On that day, all of His faithful followers will be raptured or resurrected from the dead, given new glorified bodies and follow Messiah this time as a holy army. When evil is conquered, we will rule together with Jesus.

So you can see, there will always be this conflict in us between Jesus' role as the Suffering Messiah and the Conquering Messiah. There is also conflict that goes on in our spirits as well. We know that we will someday be glorified with Christ but for now we must accept our destinies to share in the sufferings of Christ.

The crowds have given their assessment of Jesus and the disciples have given their assessment of Jesus. In this morning's text, God Himself will weigh in on the question of Who Jesus is.

The people of Jesus' time that rejected Him thought they were clever and could make good clever Bible arguments as to why Jesus could not be the Messiah. But Christianity is not about who can be clever. Christianity is not about who can be clever about twisting Scripture and making clever arguments. Christianity is all about following Christ humbly.

Look being clever can backfire and being clever only works until you run into someone more clever than you. A man and his wife were checking out of a hotel. They discovered the manager had charged them for a fresh fruit basket every day and added it to their room bill.

The man asked the manager, "How can you charge us for fresh fruit when we never ate any fruit from any basket on any day?"

The manager said, "It's not my fault you didn't eat it. It was there." The manager thought he was pretty clever.

Immediately the man took the bill and subtracted \$150 from the bill. The manager said, "What in the world are you doing?"

The man said, "I am charging you \$50 a day for kissing my wife."

The manager said, "I didn't kiss your wife," to which the husband said, "That's not my fault. She was there."

When I hear people try and make Biblical arguments, they usually are very clever by defining the parameters of their view and then go ahead and find nice sounding Biblical arguments to back them up. However, they almost never seem to capture the heart of God. The Pharisees made clever arguments as to why Jesus could not be the Messiah. But in this morning's text God will make it crystal clear as to Who Jesus is. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **THERE IS NO ROOM FOR DEBATE ABOUT WHO JESUS IS. HE IS GOD IN THE FLESH.** In other words, Jesus is Who He claimed to be. He is the Promised Jewish Messiah. He is the Savior of the world. In Jesus' own words:

*"6 ... I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME" (JOHN 14:6 / NIV).*

### **JESUS' REVELATION OF WHO HE IS (VS 28-31)**

In verses 28-31 Jesus reveals Who He is. Jesus has demonstrated that He was the Promised Messiah by healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out

demons, and performing all sorts of other miracles. This time He will reveal to His disciples what is at His very core. AT THE TRANSFIGURATION JESUS ALLOWS HIS GLORY TO MANIFEST ITSELF.

In verse 28 Jesus makes an interesting choice of witnesses. Luke wants us to understand that the incident we studied last week is directly connected to this morning's text. The disciples confessed Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus then told them that His fate and theirs would be to suffer a great deal for God. However, there was glory waiting on the other side of that suffering. Jesus promised to return in power and left them with this cryptic statement:

***"27 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27 / NIV).***

Luke starts out this morning's passage with "About eight days after Jesus said this," which seems to indicate that this event is tied to that incident in general but perhaps to the statement in particular. Jesus took His inner circle with Him up to a mountain to pray. He is having a private prayer meeting with Peter, James, and John on the top of a mountain. Many scholars try and locate which particular mountain they are on. And they make very elaborate arguments. I think if Luke or the Holy Spirit thought the name of the particular mountain was important, they would have let us know.

There are two things that are important here. First of all, Jesus has gathered His inner circle to pray. In Luke, things happen when Jesus is praying. Secondly, mountain tops are where strange and significant things take place. The mountain top is often where revelation takes place.

On the top of this mountain top an interesting demonstration takes place in verse 29. Again let me emphasize this. In Luke's writings, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, miraculous things take place when the disciples and the church are praying. Let me just make this quick aside comment. If we want to grow both in numbers and spiritually, if we want to see great miracles accomplished here, we must be a praying community because that is the way God chooses to work.

By the way the rest of the passage plays out, I'm guessing it was nighttime. As Jesus was praying, something strange starts to happen. Jesus' appearance starts to change. Matthew and Mark use the word metamorphosis. The NIV translates that as transfiguration. That's why this passage is usually titled "The Transfiguration." However Luke is a doctor and he simply says that the appearance of Jesus' face changed. The word he uses is heteros which simply means altered. Then Luke says that Jesus' clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Think about what is happening so far. Jesus, Peter, James and John are sitting down and praying. All of a sudden, Jesus' face starts to change and His clothes start to

light up. Here is what I think is going on here. Jesus is showing them His true nature. Who Jesus really is has been covered by flesh and clothing. Yes, Jesus was fully human. But He was also fully God. He now allows that part of Him show through. His inside deity is now being revealed and shining through skin and clothes. I am going to talk more about the word glory later but for now, let me just say that Jesus is allowing His glory to shine through His skin and clothes.

As Jesus starts to shine, an interesting supporting cast shows up in verse 30. Now the disciples look up and see two men talking with Jesus. Luke identifies them as Moses and Elijah. There are many theories as to why God selected Moses and Elijah to come and chat with Jesus. Some say that Moses represented the Law and Elijah the Prophets. Some say that Moses represented the past. In other words, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Law and Prophets. Elijah is the prophet that is supposed to appear as a forerunner to the end times. In other words, Moses is representing the first role of Jesus as the Suffering Messiah and Elijah is representing the Second Coming of Jesus as the Conquering King. I like all these connections. I kind of lean towards the two roles and appearances of Jesus the Messiah.

Let me just give us a little history review of these two Hebrew heroes. Both had some strange and powerful mountain top experiences. Moses received the Ten Commandments on top of the mountain. The cloud covered the mountain and supernatural thunder and lightning accompanied the experience. Elijah had another strange experience on a mountain top. Elijah has scored an unbelievable victory over the wicked king and queen of Israel and all their false prophets. And then he got a little depressed. Here is how God dealt with Elijah:

***“9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.***

***And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”***

***10 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”***

***11 The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”***

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

*Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (I Kings 19:9-13 / NIV).*

Further, no one knows where Moses was buried. God Himself had Moses buried on top of a mountain. Elijah was simply taken up to heaven on a fiery chariot provided by God Himself.

Here they make an appearance together with God in glory. Let me make one more aside comment about God's grace. God punished Moses for an act of disobedience. God told Moses that he would lead Israel to the Promised Land, but he would not be allowed to enter the land. However, because of God's incredible mercy, Moses finds himself standing in the Promised Land with Israel's Promised Messiah. After 1500 years, Moses finally made it to the Promised Land. That is a demonstration of God's extravagant love and His unlimited grace.

Now in verse 31 we learn the interesting subject of their conversation. The language is important here. Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus about His upcoming departure at Jerusalem. The word that is translated as departure is literally exodus. They are talking about Jesus' exodus from this world. Moses knows something about an exodus. He led Israel out of their slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. Jesus will make His exodus in Jerusalem through suffering, death, and resurrection. It's now time. I think that supports the view that Moses is discussing Jesus' exodus from this world as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promise to redeem Israel from their sins. Jesus will lead us to freedom through His suffering, death, and resurrection. Elijah is there to remind Jesus that even though He is leaving this world as the Suffering Servant, He will one day return as the Conquering King. The point of this is not only for Jesus. **AT THE TRANSFIGURATION JESUS ALLOWS HIS GLORY TO MANIFEST ITSELF.**

Jesus just reaffirmed the disciples' confession that He was the Promised Messiah. Jesus promised them that He would return in glory and this was a down payment, a demonstration that He could indeed accomplish it. When Jesus is later arrested, Peter will pull out a sword and cut off a guy's ear. Jesus will tell him to put his sword away because God could send 12 legions of angels to deliver Him if He wanted. Certainly Peter will know that Jesus is not exaggerating.

### **MOSES AND ELIJAH'S REVELATION OF WHO JESUS IS (VS 32-33)**

And now Moses and Elijah will reveal Who they know Jesus to be in verses 32-33. By their actions, **MOSES AND ELIJAH ARE PROVED TO BE SERVANTS OF GOD.** What John the Baptists demonstrated, what Moses and Elijah demonstrate here, what the disciples demonstrated in their ministries after Christ rose from the dead, and what we must demonstrate is the principle

that if we indeed believe Jesus is God, then we must decrease as He increases.

In verse 32 the disciples demonstrate the effects of the weight of glory. The glory of God is all over this mountain. As demonstrated by that great scholar and theologian, Indiana Jones, the Shekinah Glory of God is overwhelming and powerful. When the Nazis opened the Ark of the Covenant, the Shekinah Glory made its appearance and released all these powerful and beautiful beings into the air. They ended up ferociously devouring the Nazis who dared look at His glory. Back to our incident this morning, The Shekinah Glory is bursting out of Jesus. It permeates the atmosphere around Moses and Elijah, and later the cloud will descend on the mountain. The Shekinah Glory is all over the place.

Luke says that Peter, James, and John were very sleepy. This is not meant to describe people who have simply had a very long day. The word in Hebrew that translates glory is kabod. The word means heavy. God's glory is heavy. It is weighty. It is overwhelming. For them, this whole event is crushing. If you've ever driven at night and become tired, you know there is that moment that even though you are fully conscious, you just cannot seem to keep your eyes open. They are in a state between sleep and awake. It's almost like a dream to them. God's glory is weighing heavily on them. But then at one point, they become fully awake.

They awaken in time to see Moses and Elijah leaving. In the first half of verse 33 they awaken to see the exaltation of glory. Moses and Elijah knew this was not about them. By leaving and walking off into the night, they are saying that this event is about Jesus and Jesus alone. They were sent by the Father to encourage the Son. They were sent by the Father to identify Jesus as the Son. But their work was done, and they needed to let Jesus have center stage. John the Baptist phrased it like this, "I must decrease. He must increase."

I have to say that is one of the things that I have had to struggle with for a lot of years in the ministry. I wanted to present an appealing image of what a Christian should be so people would want to become a Christian. Add to that the sentiment that I enjoy being liked by people, and the line often becomes blurred as to who is in the forefront, me or Jesus.

It gets more and more difficult the more one becomes liked and popular. I've consciously tried to fight this off sometimes successfully and sometimes not. It's easy to fall into this trap especially if you believe what people tell you about yourself. But the problem becomes if people are more attached to me than they are to Jesus, then they are Johnians not Christians. If they are Johnians, they are still lost and going to hell. If they are Christians, they are saved and belong to Christ. It has taken me a great deal of work along with

a lot of bumps to come to the conclusion the Apostle Paul comes to when he says this to the Corinthian church:

“1So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. 2Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 ... It is the Lord who judges me” (I Corinthians 4:1-4 / NIV).

So Moses and Elijah knew their place. They knew that they were not to be exalted, Christ was to be exalted. In the second half of verse 33 we can see the crushing weight of glory. At this point the apostles are wide awake. They saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus and now they were headed away. Luke informs us that Peter was talking out of his mind. All this glory was too much for him. Like all of us, he wanted to hold on to these mountain top experiences. Peter blurts out, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” In other words, let’s keep this prayer meeting going. Peter didn’t want the experience to end. Peter had to let it go. Later he would have to let Jesus go twice: once to the grave and then to heaven.

In this whole section, we can see that Moses and Elijah came to give glory to Jesus. Like John the Baptist, their motto was, “We must decrease while Christ increases.” MOSES AND ELIJAH ARE PROVED TO BE SERVANTS OF GOD. In reality that’s all we should ever aspire to in this life, to be faithful servants of God. And now we reach the climax of this incident. In verses 34-36 we are informed of God’s revelation of Who Jesus is. GOD THE FATHER MAKES SURE THAT EVERYONE KNOWS EXACTLY WHO JESUS IS.

### GOD’S REVELATION OF WHO JESUS IS (Vs 34-36)

In verse 34 we encounter more glory. Peter is rambling on when God interrupts him by enveloping them in a supernatural cloud. If they weren’t freaked out yet, they certainly are now. They became afraid. They became silent like everyone does when God weighs down on us with His glorious presence. Since Moses was involved with this incident, let’s go back to when God’s glory descended on Mt. Sinai during Moses’ time:

***“16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. 20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up” (Exodus 19:16-20 / NIV).***

When people casually say that God spoke to them, I'm always a little skeptical because it seems to me that when God speaks, we come away frightened and repentant. It seems to me that people who are proud in any way, it's clear they have not been spending time in the presence of the holy God described in the Bible. I can't remember a time when I placed myself in the presence of God and did not come away with a sense of sinfulness and repentance. It always amazes me how some people have a word from God about others. As I read the Bible, people who come in contact with the God of the Bible become acutely aware of their own sins.

In verse 35 and the first half of verse 36 Jesus receives more affirmation. Out of this cloud of Shekinah Glory comes the very voice of God the Father. The crowds said that Jesus was John the Baptist back from the dead. Some said He was Elijah and some said He was a great prophet from the past. The disciples said He was the Christ, the Promised Messiah. And here, God the Father says, "This is My Son, Whom I have chosen; listen to Him."

God the Father acknowledges Jesus as God and God's authoritative Word and Presence in the flesh. People come up with all sorts of crazy ideas of Who Jesus is. But God speaks authoritatively here as does the whole Bible. Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity. He is God incarnate. He is One with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Promised Hebrew Messiah. In His first coming, He dealt with the sin problem as Israel's Suffering Servant. At His Second Coming He will assume His role as King and Conqueror of the Universe. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him as Lord. There will be no other option. After God weighs in on the question, the cloud lifts and all that is left standing is Jesus alone. Jesus is the One God the Father was speaking about; not Moses, not Elijah, not the disciples, not you and not me. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no other Name by which people can be saved.

In the second half of verse 36 the disciples get more instructions. It says the disciples kept this to themselves and didn't share this with anyone. Jesus had warned the disciples not to reveal His Kingship to the people lest they misunderstand and try to rebel against Rome. However, God made His point. **GOD THE FATHER MAKES SURE THAT EVERYONE KNOWS EXACTLY WHO JESUS IS.**

This incident is known as the transfiguration. Jesus revealed His glory to the disciples and God put His authoritative stamp on it by sending Moses and Elijah. He also ended the debate by personally stating Who Jesus is. **THERE IS NO ROOM FOR DEBATE ABOUT WHO JESUS IS. HE IS GOD IN THE FLESH.**

The more the Apostles were exposed to the true nature of Jesus, the more they became like Jesus. We call this transformation. Each day we are to be made more and more like Jesus as the Holy Spirit works on us. Here is a

nice story about the way transformation works. I don't know where this story comes from:

***“A beautiful statue stood in the market place of an Italian city, a statue of a Greek slave girl, tidy and well-dressed. A ragged little child with hair all disheveled, passing the statue one day, stopped and gazed at it in admiration. Captivated by its beauty, she stood transfixed, gazing at it long and lovingly. Moved by a sudden impulse she went home, washed her face and combed her hair. Another day she stopped again and viewed the statue admiringly. Then a new idea came into her little mind. Next day she washed and mended her dirty, tattered clothes. Each time she looked at that slave girl's statue she found something more beautiful to admire and copy until a complete metamorphosis had taken place in her.”***

That's the transformation that is supposed to take place in us. Remember, at the Transfiguration, Jesus allowed His inner glory to shine through. Listen to what the Apostle Paul tells us:

***“18 And all of us ... can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more” (II Corinthians 3:18 / NLT).***