

Jesus' Transfiguration **(Luke 9:28-36)**

The glory of God refers to the manifestation of His greatness and splendor that flows from His goodness and holiness. It's the expression of His divine nature. Because Jesus is God, He possesses divine glory. In John 17:5 Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him with the glory He shared with the Father before the creation of the world. Jesus inherently possesses divine glory. However, during His earthly ministry Jesus veiled His divine glory. But on one occasion, the Transfiguration, Jesus revealed His glory to three of His disciples. A few days before this event, Jesus said that some of His disciples would witness the kingdom of God prior to their death (Luke 9:27). The Transfiguration was the fulfillment of this promise. Peter, James, and John were privileged to see the foreshadowing of God's kingdom on earth. They beheld the glory of Jesus. Even though the actual arrival of God's kingdom has been delayed, this incident reveals to us that Jesus is the rightful king of God's earthly kingdom and the rightful ruler of our lives.

Jesus is God—He possesses the full glory of absolute deity (9:28-29).

The deity of Jesus Christ is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. Jesus is God who became a man. He possesses the full glory of absolute deity.

Jesus took Peter, John, and James up onto a mountain to pray (9:28).

Luke states that “about eight days” transpired from the time of His promise of seeing God's kingdom (Luke 9:18-27) to the Transfiguration event. Matthew's and Mark's statements that this event took place after six days (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2) is consistent with Luke in that none of the three gospel writers pinpoints an precise timeframe. All three link the promise of seeing the kingdom with the Transfiguration. Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him up a mountain, the location of which is not stated. The purpose, however, is stated. Jesus took these men with Him to pray. Prayer was a vital discipline in the life of Jesus, as it should be for His followers today. Seeking secluded, extended time for prayer will strengthen every true believer's faith.

While Jesus was praying, His facial appearance changed and His clothing radiated like white lightning (9:29).

What took place next was truly astounding. While Jesus was praying, a transformation in His appearance took place. Matthew (17:2) and Mark (9:2) describe this as a “transfiguration” or “metamorphosis.” Luke simply states that the appearance of Jesus' face changed and His clothes began to radiate like lightning, white in color. The veil hiding Jesus' divine glory was momentarily removed and Jesus revealed His divine splendor. It must have been a stunning sight. Jesus is truly God. He possesses the full glory of absolute deity.

**Jesus is Savior—His death fulfilled the
prophetic plan of redemption (9:30-31).**

As if the revelation of Jesus' divine glory weren't enough, there appeared with Jesus on the mount of the Transfiguration two other men, Moses and Elijah. Together they discussed Jesus' impending death, the fulfillment of God's redemption plan.

Moses and Elijah appeared with glory and spoke with Jesus (9:30-31a).

Two outstanding prophets from the Old Testament now appeared with Jesus—Moses and Elijah. Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the border of the Promised Land. It was through Moses that God revealed His Law. Elijah challenged the spiritually unfaithful Israelites to abandon idol worship and return to the true and living God. The appearance of Moses and Elijah may have represented the ancient division of the scriptures into the Law and the Prophets, or may have simply underscored God's redemptive purpose. Their conversation with Jesus may also have served as an encouragement to Jesus in His humanity as He faced the cross. Luke states that Moses and Elijah appeared "in glory," referring to the glory of their afterlife existence in contrast to their earthly existence (and not to be compared with the inherent, divine glory of Jesus).

Moses and Elijah discussed with Jesus His impending death in Jerusalem (9:31b).

The topic of the conversation between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah was Jesus' "exodus" or departure, meaning His impending death. Peter later uses this same term to describe the Christian's death (2 Peter 1:15). Jesus' death would take place in Jerusalem, the site of the Jewish Temple and the ancient place of sacrifice. Jesus would die as the sacrifice for our sins. His death would fulfill God's redemptive plan, a plan prophesied in the Old Testament and represented by the presence of Moses and Elijah. God would fulfill His redemption plan through Jesus' sacrificial death.

**Jesus is Master—He is worthy
of our lingering devotion (9:32-33).**

Peter, John, and James were, understandably, stunned by what they saw. Peter couldn't help but offer a suggestion, one that expressed his desire for this scene to continue indefinitely. He didn't want this mountain top experience to end.

Peter and his fellow disciples woke from a deep sleep and saw Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus (9:32).

The three disciples had fallen into a deep sleep (literally, they "were burdened with sleep") while Jesus was praying. Later, Jesus would ask these same three disciples to pray for Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and again they would fall asleep as Jesus prayed (Matthew 26:36-41). Peter, John, and James struggled with sleep on the mountain

of the Transfiguration, but with Jesus' transformed appearance and the appearance of Moses and Elijah they became wide awake. Luke states that the three disciples saw Jesus' glory. This was His inherent, divine glory. The three disciples were awestruck.

Peter spoke to Jesus, asking permission to build three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah (9:33).

The speechless disciples realized that Moses and Elijah were now leaving this scene of glory. This prompted Peter to speak up with an admittedly misplaced request. Luke states that Peter "did not know what he was saying." This doesn't mean that Peter didn't understand his own request or that he didn't accurately express his heart. It does mean that Peter wasn't speaking in harmony with the event he'd witnessed and the redemptive plan of God. Peter simply wanted this mountain top experience to continue indefinitely. He wanted this glimpse into the kingdom of God to last forever. Therefore, Peter suggested that they build three shelters, three tents—one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. This request may have reflected Peter's understanding of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43) that celebrated the completion of harvest and symbolized the joy of God's earthly blessing. In short, Peter wanted to linger in this experience of devotion to Jesus. He referred to Jesus as his "Master" (Matthew 17:4 uses the word "Lord," and Mark 9:5 uses the word "Rabbi"). Peter acknowledged that Jesus was the ruler of his life and wanted that realization to continue unabated. But this scene could not last, not yet. Jesus had to die on the cross. He had to provide for our redemption. Later, Jesus will establish His kingdom on earth. While we should desire to linger in devotion to Jesus, we must also move out to serve Him as we await His kingdom (compare Acts 1:6-8).

**Jesus is the unique Son of God—He
deserves our attentive obedience (9:34-36).**

Peter's request was interrupted by a voice from heaven, affirming Jesus and instructing the disciples to pay attention to Him.

A cloud overshadowed the disciples and fear came over them (9:34).

While Peter was speaking, a cloud overshadowed those on the mountain of the Transfiguration. This cloud, like the cloud that led the Israelites through the wilderness, was a visible revelation of the presence of God. For this reason, the disciples sensed awestruck fear as the cloud came over them. They were in the very presence of God the Father.

A voice from the cloud declared that Jesus was God's chosen Son (9:35).

A voice spoke from the cloud, just as a voice spoke at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22). The voice declared, "This is my son, whom I have chosen" (compare Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1). Many ancient manuscripts say "loved" instead of "chosen." Jesus was the

beloved, chosen, unique Son of God. The voice of God the Father went on to say to the three disciples, "Listen to him." Those who follow Jesus must constantly listen to the Lord and, beyond simply listening with their ears, respond in obedience to His will. Jesus deserves our attentive obedience.

After the voice had spoken, Jesus was alone with His disciples who remained silent about the event (9:36).

As quickly as this scene began, it ended. The voice from heaven stopped speaking. Moses and Elijah were gone. The glory of Jesus was again veiled. Jesus was again alone with His three disciples. Luke says that Peter, John, and James remained silent. What could anyone say in such circumstances? Their awestruck silence spoke volumes. In fact, these three disciples didn't say anything about this event at the time. However, Peter and John would later write about this experience. John says that they had "seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father" (John 1:14). Peter wrote, "We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain" (2 Peter 1:18). This event transformed the lives of these men. Jesus is still transforming lives. Paul, in Romans 12:2, says that Christians should be transformed by the renewing of their minds. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 he writes, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." The Transfiguration of Jesus revealed His divine glory, and His deity coupled with His sacrificial death is the basis of our salvation. Once saved by His grace, we begin to understand that Jesus is the rightful king of God's earthly kingdom and the rightful ruler of our lives.