

Message #41**Luke 9:27-36**

Jesus had just informed His disciples that He was going to suffer and be killed and be raised up on the third day (Luke 9:22). He had also informed them that there would be a cost to follow Him (9:23-26). So the news to this point did not appear to be good.

What these disciples needed was some kind of encouragement that Jesus Christ is in fact the God/Savior/Messiah/King. They were about to get that encouragement here. They were about to see a majestic display of the heavenly glory of Jesus Christ.

In **verse 27**, Jesus made the statement that there were some of His disciples who would not taste death until they actually saw the Kingdom of God. Notice Jesus said “some,” not “all.”

Now the real question is what did Jesus actually mean that some would not see death until they see the Kingdom of God. There have been differing views on this:

- 1) Some will not die until they have actually seen a full glimpse of the eschatological kingdom. This was certainly true for the Apostle John. He wrote the entire book of Revelation. He saw everything, Rapture, Tribulation, Kingdom.
- 2) Some will not die until they have actually seen a full glimpse of the Glorious King of the Kingdom. Peter, James and John were about to actually see that.
- 3) Some will not die until they see the resurrected and exalted and ascended Jesus Christ. He is the King who will bring in the Kingdom. All of the disciples actually saw this.
- 4) Some will not die until they have actually seen the start of the Kingdom that will be inaugurated by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. All disciples saw this.

What we do see here is this:

JESUS CHRIST SELECTED THREE DISCIPLES TO TAKE UP A MOUNTAIN TO LET THEM SEE A GLIMPSE OF HIS MAJESTIC FUTURE KINGDOM GLORY.

These three disciples got to see something and experience something the others did not. These were not perfect disciples. They had their doubts and quirks and their sin natures and they were in many ways still immature, but these three were Christ’s best and they would become the backbone of the early N.T. church (Gal 2:9; Acts 12:2-3).

Verse 28 says that about eight days after this teaching and Peter’s confession, Jesus took Peter and John and James up the mountain to pray. David Garland, who has written a good commentary on the Greek text of Luke, says the words “these sayings” or “these words” “definitely connects this incident to Peter’s confession” (*Luke*, p. 392).

Matthew and Mark say it was six days later that Jesus took them to a high mountain (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2). The solution to the problem is that Jesus began taking them up the mountain six days later, but eight days later they came to the spot where this actually happened.

Now the mountain is not named. Tradition says that it was Mt. Tabor, which was located in southern Galilee. This was a mountain range located about six miles from Nazareth. It is a “hunchback mountain.” There are cut out steps that can take you to the summit—4,300 steps according to Jewish tour guides. Most people take a Taxi that takes you to the summit in a series of hairpin turns.

Let me suggest that there are seven reasons why this transfiguration was important for these disciples to see:

Reason #1 - To show that Jesus Christ is worth following and defending (9:26).

Reason #2 - To literally fulfill Christ’s words- some will see His kingdom glory before they die.

Reason #3 - To show Christ’s future glory (9:29)—He is the glorious God/King and He displays it.

Reason #4 - To show Christ’s authority. 9:30—Moses and Elijah were subject to Christ.

Reason #5 - To show Christ’s upcoming death is a key part of God’s program. 9:31

Reason #6 - To show that Christ’s words are literally worth following. 9:35

Reason #7 - To show the significance of prayer in seeing God do powerful things. 9:29a

According to **verses 28-29**, this happened while He was praying. So this happens in the midst of praying.

Now while Jesus was praying, the following nine transfigured realities occurred:

Transfiguration Reality #1 - Christ’s face became different. 9:29a

The word “different” means another of a different kind. This was not His normal facial look for a normal human. Matthew says that “His face shone like the sun” (Matt. 17:2).

Transfiguration Reality #2 - Christ’s clothing was changed. 9:29b

The words “white and gleaming” describe a glistening white, to which nothing can ever compare. Mark brings out the fact that Christ’s clothing was so white and shining that no cleaner could even get a garment to look like that. Daniel and Matthew describe this as a glorious shining of Kingdom righteousness (Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43).

When Paul, Luke’s mentor, described what happened to him when he met Jesus Christ, he said the shining light was so bright it blinded him (Acts 22:6, 9, 11). He said the shining light was “brighter than the sun” (Acts 26:13).

Transfiguration Reality #3 - Christ was visited by two men—Moses and Elijah. 9:30-31

Now one of the big issues this raises is why these two? Why are Moses and Elijah the two who show up to speak with Jesus Christ? We know they were speaking with Christ about His departure that would occur at Jerusalem.

It is interesting that the Greek word used in **verse 31** translated departure, is the word “exodus.” They were discussing His future exodus from Jerusalem to go back to heaven.

These two are obviously intimately connected to the Kingdom of God and to Jesus Christ. We may make some observations about the two:

(Observation #1) - Moses certainly represents the Law and Elijah the prophets.

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of both the O.T. law and all of the O.T. prophets.

(Observation #2) - Moses died and was buried (Deut. 34:5-6); Elijah did not die but was raptured. II Kings 2:11

Both Moses and Elijah were no longer living on earth, but they were both very much alive, living in eternity. Both were recognizable. Death is not the end of existence. The Rapture is certainly not the end of existence. It is the beginning of eternity.

(Observation #3) - Moses was trying to lead Israel to the Promised Land; Elijah will be used to actually accomplish it (Mal. 4:5).

The only thing Israel has today is a fraction of the land God has promised to her. This appearance of Moses and Elijah says one day she will have every bit of her land.

(Observation #4) - Moses and Elijah both spoke and wrote the Word of God and both were rejected by Israel.

Obviously those who are dedicated to the Word of God have a special prominence once they leave this world, but they are not often popular with this world.

(Observation #5) - Moses came into Christ’s presence, via death; Elijah via Rapture.

There are two actual ways one may get into eternity as a believer to be with Christ. One may die or one may be raptured. We look for the Rapture, but the fact is up until now we see that the way into eternity has been death.

(Observation #6) - Moses came into the Kingdom via death; Elijah via Rapture.

At the end of the Church age, the Rapture will occur and this will begin the program of God once again focused on Israel. During the Tribulation, the vast majority of Jewish people will get into that kingdom via death.

(Observation #7) - Moses represents the Jews and Elijah represents translated believers.

Moses represents the old and Elijah represents the new. This cross work of Jesus Christ would open up a new relationship with God and give a new entrance into the Kingdom.

If we could just grasp this discussion between these three. They are discussing the crucifixion at Jerusalem and its significance to the entire Kingdom of God.

Christ is about one year away from the cross and for the first time in over 30 years, standing on this mountain, He has His visible glory back. This was the glory He set aside to come to this world. Christ could have said to Moses and Elijah, let's get out of here. But He did not do that. The whole Kingdom program for Israel and the Church hinges on Him going to that cross.

Transfiguration Reality #4 - Peter and his companions were sleeping. **9:32a**

Christ had taken these disciples up on this mountain to pray (**9:28**) and instead of praying, they are sleeping. The word Dr. Luke uses for "sleep" is one that refers to a deep sleep (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 460). Had they not woke up they would have missed this entire episode. We will not see God do much of anything, if we remain asleep to the Word of God.

Transfiguration Reality #5 - When Peter, James and John were fully awake, they saw Christ's Glory and Moses and Elijah standing with Him. **9:32b**

Obviously, these are real people standing with Jesus Christ. These disciples are not seeing some vision, they are fully awake and they are literally seeing this.

Now Moses had been dead for 1,500 years and Elijah had been gone from the earth for 850 years. Don't you think for one second that death is the end. Obviously these two were very much alive and they are standing and talking with Jesus Christ. Notice they are standing with Him; He is not standing with them. They are subject to Christ.

God reveals special things to those fully alert and fully awake to His Spirit and His Word. In fact, until one is fully awake to the things of God, one will miss seeing many things. Apparently they missed most of the conversation, but they did see what was happening.

Transfiguration Reality #6 - Peter, James and John saw Moses and Elijah leaving Jesus. **9:33a**

We don't know where Moses and Elijah were going when they left Christ, but Peter, James and John apparently saw it actually happen.

Transfiguration Reality #7 - Peter verbally responds to what he saw. **9:33b**

We may assume from what Peter wants to do is that he wants to prolong the special moment. It is also clear from this that Peter doesn't know what he is talking about. He does not realize that Jesus Christ must suffer and die. He is excited about what he had just seen and he said:

1) It is good for us to be here—meaning it is of great benefit for us to see this inauguration of the Kingdom.

2) Peter wants to build three booths or tabernacles to kick off this Kingdom reign. Zechariah predicted that when the Kingdom would be established, it would be kicked off with the Feast of Booths (Zech. 14:16, 18, 19). So Peter is saying let's put up three booths and get this Kingdom party going.

It is clear at this point that Peter does not truly grasp the complete identity of Jesus Christ, even though he declared that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 9:20). Jesus Christ is not equal to Moses and Elijah, He is God. He is the One who will be worshipped in the Kingdom. To suggest that they need to build three similar tabernacles or booths seems to miss this key point.

Transfiguration Reality #8 - God's glory cloud overshadowed them. **9:34**

There is no question that when God comes to restore things, He will come in and with the clouds. The cloud was used in Israel's history and it pictured the presence of God.

This act of God's cloud says, we don't need booths here because My glory is here on My Son.

Transfiguration Reality #9 - God's voice came out of the cloud. **9:35**

The voice said, "This is My son, My Chosen One, listen to Him."

Luke is the only one to stress that this is God's elect, chosen one. In other words, Jesus Christ is God's Son and God's only chosen Messiah.

This is a nice way of insinuating that Peter needs to quiet down and quit talking and listen to My Son.

This is what we need to learn. We need to learn and listen to the Word of God and not, as Garland said, listen to the "fickle speculations of public opinion" (*Ibid.*, p. 395).

According to **verse 36**, when the voice spoke, the cloud lifted, Jesus was alone and those disciples kept silent. They reported to no one in those days the things that they had seen.

We know that neither John (John 1:14), Peter (II Peter 1:16), nor James (James 2:1) ever forgot this important moment. But they were faithful to stay quiet until it was time for them to reveal it.

Jesus Christ has the power to transform any life. He can transform any person from any background and any sin. We need to listen to Him and He said whoever believes in Me will not perish but have everlasting life.