

“THE SON OF MAN, REVEALED”
LUKE 9:28-36

In Luke 14, Jesus offers two parables to explain the importance of considering the cost of believing in Him and following Him: a builder who makes sure he has enough money to construct his tower and a king in battle who first determines if he has enough forces to defeat his foe. And Jesus concludes: “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all His own possessions” (Luke 14:33). Jesus is compelling His listeners to consider the cost of following Him and whether they are willing to pay the cost.

In Luke 9, Jesus has also been enticing His hearers to follow Him — and to be aware of and weigh the costs of following Him (and the danger of rejecting Him). But He also entices them to follow Him by weighing the *benefits* of following Him. There is benefit and value in every hardship endured for the sake of Christ —

- ✓ You will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (19:17)
- ✓ Your reward in Heaven will be great (Mt. 5:12)
- ✓ The Father will honor you (Jn. 12:26)
- ✓ You will experience incomparable glory (Rom. 8:18)
- ✓ Your perishable and mortal body will put on that which is imperishable and immortal (1 Cor. 15:54)
- ✓ You will know an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:17)
- ✓ You will have an eternal inheritance (Col. 3:24)
- ✓ You will receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8)
- ✓ You will see the face of the (currently) unseeable God (1 Jn. 3:2)
- ✓ And you will experience the fullness of being in Christ’s kingdom (Lk. 9:28-36)

That last benefit is the focus of the transfiguration of Christ. Jesus wants to give the disciples a taste of what life with Him in glory will be like. This passage contains many themes and sub-themes: the priority of prayer, the anticipation of Christ’s suffering, the superiority of Christ to Moses and the prophets, the witness to and of Christ, the fear of God, and more. But the main theme and focus of this section is on the *glory of Christ*. And because it follows the call of Christ to the crowd to lose their lives to follow Him (vv. 24-25), it affirms the *benefit of following*:

FOLLOW CHRIST (BELIEVE IN HIM) BECAUSE HE IS GLORIOUS AND SUPREME.
YOU WILL GAIN EVERYTHING THROUGH HIM.

Jesus gives the three disciples a taste of what His Kingdom will be like for those who follow Him and give up their lives to follow Him. When you follow Christ, you get Christ in all His glory. This passage provides **four glimpses** of Christ’s glory...

1. Christ’s Glory **REVEALED** (vv. 28-29)
2. Christ’s Glory **EXPLAINED** (vv. 30-31)
3. Christ’s Glory **CLARIFIED** (vv. 32-33)
4. Christ’s Glory **AFFIRMED** (vv. 34-36)

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1. Christ's Glory REVEALED (vv. 28-29)

- Jesus ministry was focused on teaching/preaching to reveal Himself as the Messiah who would establish His Kingdom (4:18, 43; 8:1; 9:2); the miracles He did affirmed His messianic authority.
 - ✓ That also meant that many (including the Twelve) thought Jesus would overthrow Rome *now*.
 - ✓ They did not understand that He would suffer and die as the Savior for sin (9:18-20, 22).
 - ✓ While the suffering Servant was revealed in Isaiah, Israel anticipated a ruling Messiah/King.
 - ✓ And Jesus also said that His servants must anticipate sacrifice and suffering to follow Him (v. 23).
 - ✓ Yet, the suffering of Jesus (and us) does not mean defeat. There is victory; the way to the Kingdom of Christ is through the cross of Christ. And He promised that some who heard Him preach would experience the reality of the Kingdom (v. 27).
 - ✓ What is it like to see the Kingdom of God? If only we could see what the Kingdom is like — and eight days later, three men did. They didn't see the fulness of the Kingdom, but they saw His glory (v. 26).
- What was it like? What did they see? Notice Luke's explanation (Mt/Mk also have accounts; Lk is more complete in its details than the others):
 - ✓ **Some eight days after...** = Mt/Mk say "six days" — no contradiction; Luke says "some" — it's an approximation and he might be counting the days of teaching and the transfiguration (or if it was night, counting the next day). What is important is that the fulfillment happened soon after teaching.
 - ✓ Jesus took **Peter and John and James** — the "inner circle of disciples" (cf. 8:51); they also could serve as an official testimony to the transfiguration (Dt. 19:15 // Mt. 18:16).
 - ✓ They went **up on the mountain to pray** —
 - Historically, two mountains are suggested: Mt. Hermon and Mt. Tabor, but since Tabor is inland (SE of Nazareth) and **Hermon** is near Caesarea Philippi, it was more likely Hermon.
 - More importantly, mountains were considered places of revelation: Abraham (Gen. 22); Moses (Ex. 3; 19-20); Elijah (1 Kings 19); Isaiah (Is. 25:6-7); Jesus (Lk. 4); Sermon on Mt. (Lk. 6)...
 - And the purpose of the trip was **to pray** —
 - ... Jesus was regularly in prayer and communion — He was dependent on His communion with the Father (5:16; 6:12; 9:18); prayer also often connected to significant events (3:21).
 - ... The disciples were also expected to pray with Him, a reminder of the necessity for us (11:1).
 - ✓ The disciples should have been prepared for something significant to happen...
- **While He was praying, the appearance of His face became different...**
 - ✓ While Luke has more details than the other gospels, here he is less specific — Matthew says that His face "shone like the sun" (Mt. 17:2). The glory of God is on display.

- ✓ He is so brilliant that even His clothes **become white and gleaming**. “Gleaming” is often used of flashes of lightning (cf. Mt. 17:2). His clothing was brilliant.
 - For a brief moment, the veil of humanity was lifted and His divine essence was on display.
 - “This was both a glance back into his pre-human glory and a look forward into his future glory!” [RKH]
- ✓ Brilliant light (majesty, glory) is associated with the presence of God in Scripture —

- **Ex. 3:2-5** — *Moses and the burning bush...*
- **Ex. 13:21** *The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*
- **Ex. 34:29** *It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. (cf. vv. 30-35)*
- **Ex. 40:34-35** *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*
- **1 Kings 8:10-11** *It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*
- **Luke 2:8** *In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.*
- **Rev. 1:12-17** *The vision of the glorious Christ to John — “I fell at His feet like a dead man...”*
- **Rev. 22:5** *And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.*

- ✓ Some 600 years earlier, Ezekiel records this — **Ezk. 10:4-5, 18-19**. For 600 years, the glory of God was not present in Israel; with the coming of Christ, glory has returned and Christ now reveals it.
- ✓ This revelation is to be understood in conjunction with v. 22 — His death will not diminish His glory — and vv. 23-25 — whatever is given up for Him will be replaced with far more!
- ✓ And this glimpse of glory was also the very greatest thing that Satan hates people to see (**2 Cor. 4:4**).
- If you will follow Christ, it will cost you. But don't let that short-term cost overshadow the brilliance of what you will receive both now and in eternity in fellowship with Him. You will get more...
 - ✓ And don't overlook this: God said no man can see His face and live (Ex. 33:20).
 - ✓ Yet the disciples saw the face and glory of Christ — and while terrified (Mt. 17:6) — lived.
 - ✓ People will often say when seeing something unique, “I'll never be the same.” E.g., the birth of a child, a majestic view (the earth from space or Mt. Everest), or an important person.
 - ✓ These brief moments for the Three picture what eternity will be for all who follow Him. And we are to be provoked to believe and delight in Him. Don't look at this account and remain unchanged.

2. Christ's Glory EXPLAINED (vv. 30-31)

- What is the glory of Christ? Yes, there is the physical manifestation of His power and authority. But what else is His glory? Is it only physical appearance? No, it is far more; a conversation explains it...
 - ✓ **Two men were talking with Him**... There was intensity and length to the conversation, they were actively engaged in a protracted discussion.
 - ✓ The men were **Moses and Elijah**. What is their significance?
 - **Moses** was the author of the Pentateuch and represented the Law.
 - **Elijah** represented the prophets, and more importantly was the “forerunner” of Christ. That ministry was fulfilled by John the Baptist, but here Elijah himself also testifies and also serves as an anticipation of future kingdom of Christ (**Mal. 4:5-6**); Moses looks back to the exodus and Elijah looks forward to the promise; together they capture the full promise and work of Christ.
 - Both Moses and Elijah had unique “departures” from earth since neither of their bodies were ever found: God buried Moses’ body (Dt. 34:5-6), and Elijah “raptured” to heaven (2 K. 2:11ff).
 - They also **appeared in glory** (v. 31); not with the glory of Christ, but reflecting His glory, even as Moses had experienced on the mountain with God (Ex. 34:33-35; 2 Cor. 3:13ff). The glory Moses demonstrated on that day was unfading (contra 2 Cor. 3:13) as will be our glory when we are in Heaven (2 Cor. 3:11, 18; 1 Pt. 1:4).
 - Together they summarized the heart of the OT — Moses revealed the Law that Christ perfectly fulfilled, and Elijah represented Christ’s fulfillment of every Messianic prophecy.
- Luke uniquely also tells us the content of their discussion (Mt/Mk do not have this detail).
 - ✓ They were **speaking of His departure** (lit., “exodus” — His “going out”).
 - ✓ Since **He was about to accomplish this at Jerusalem**, it must mean that they were speaking at least of His death and resurrection (**v. 22**).
 - ✓ The Three (and we) are to see His death and resurrection as His glory. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus saw those events as glorifying, while Peter rebuked Jesus for that very idea (Mt. 16:22).
 - ✓ They are likely also talking of His ascension which also happened at Jerusalem (Acts 1:9).
 - ✓ How are Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension glorifying? Because He is fulfilling the Law and the purpose of God for redemption of sinners (Lk. 1:1; **4:21**; 18:31; **24:26-27, 44**; **Acts 3:18**; **17:3**).
 - ✓ From this point, Jesus is particularly resolute to go to Jerusalem: 9:51, 53; 13:33; 17:11; 18:31.
 - ✓ Moses led the exodus of Israel from Egypt; Christ will lead the exodus of His people through the cross. If you want to see the greatest evidence of the glory of Christ, look at the cross and tomb.
- **ASIDE:** While this is not the point of the story, we learn several things about Heaven in this encounter:
 - ✓ There will be *relationship* (and awareness of persons without “introduction”), there will be *communion* with Christ (!!!), there will be *conversation, awareness* of theology and biblical truths and fulfillments, and *confidence* in eternal life (Moses had died 1500 years earlier and Elijah was

taken up 900 years earlier and both were seen alive again — in fulness of life as well).

- ✓ Be comforted that while there are many things we don't know about Heaven (its location, its construction, the experience of transfer...), we know that all who are there are cared for by Christ.
- ✓ Those who are in Heaven are safe; we are wise when we exchange this world for our Savior.

3. Christ's Glory CLARIFIED (vv. 32-33)

- Can you try to imagine the scene? It's overwhelming to consider.
- Yet the Three missed some of it — they **had been overcome with sleep**. They were “weighed down” by sleep. It's not that they were uninterested or apathetic. Their sleep was “involuntary.”
 - ✓ There is no criticism here (as in 22:45). “Overcome” suggests that they attempted to stay awake, but physical exhaustion precluded them from persisting in prayer. Verse 37 notes that they came down the mountain with Jesus “the next day,” so they were on the mountain overnight and it seems likely that the transfiguration would have happened at night and would explain why they naturally were tired; notice they are not reprimanded here for sleeping.
 - ✓ (But since it was night, Christ would have appeared even more brilliant!)
 - ✓ **When they were fully awake** — and don't you know that falling asleep in the dark and awakening in heavenly brilliance they were quickly awake!
 - ✓ As they were awakened, Moses and Elijah **were leaving** — and Peter recognizes the uniqueness and goodness of the situation — “This is good! Let's make it longer...”
 - ✓ Now Peter does recognize the authority of Christ, calling Him **Master** — a unique title only used by the Twelve and only in Luke (e.g., 5:5; 8:24). It indicates submission to His lordship.
- Recognizing the goodness, Peter comes up with an idea: **let us make three tabernacles...**
 - ✓ This is a reference to the Feast of Booths — which commemorated leaving Egypt (Le. 23:33ff), but also anticipated the time when all the nations will come to celebrate it in the MK (Zech. 14:16ff).
 - ✓ Peter is saying, “We have seen the glory of the Lord in the Kingdom — let's prolong the worship and celebrate the beginning of the MK!” He wants to stay in the “heavenly company.”
- Yet, for all his right desire, Luke tells us that Peter did **not realize what he was saying** (two errors):
 - ✓ He forgot (did not understand) that Christ had to suffer (v. 22)
 - ✓ He was elevating Moses and Elijah to the same level of recognition and worship as Christ; his statement was a denial of the supremacy of Christ.
 - ✓ Christ is glorious as the Son of Man; He is greater than Moses and the Law (Heb. 3) and greatest of the prophets. He is the One to whom all things point and in whom all things find their glory.
 - ✓ And again, His glory is revealed and demonstrated through the cross; it would not be avoided.

4. Christ's Glory **AFFIRMED** (vv. 34-36)

- In response to Peter's misspoken words, something terrifying happened: **a cloud formed...**
 - ✓ The **cloud**, like light, was a manifestation of God's presence in the OT (Num. 9:15ff).
 - ✓ But the presence of the cloud could also be ominous — e.g., when Aaron and Miriam complained about Moses and a cloud came down and summoned them to enter (Num. 12:5ff).
 - ✓ Here the cloud forms around the six on the mountain — and three in particular **were afraid**.
 - ✓ "Peter's inane words are followed by a manifestation of God's wondrous and fearsome glory." [TS]
- Then God speaks. As if the presence of the cloud was not terrifying enough, God audibly speaks and corrects Peter. This is the third pronouncement from Heaven about Christ (cf. 2:14; 3:22). The baptism message was given to the Son and declared the Father's love for the Son; this declaration is to the disciples and states the Father's purpose of the Son.
- The Father makes two declarations:
 - ✓ **This is My Son, My chosen One.** There are several aspects to those simple words:
 - It affirms the Trinitarian relationship and Christ's heavenly origin and His deity (His nature) — Christ is in eternal fellowship to the Father as a Son (Ps. 2:7; cf. Lk. 3:22).
 - It denotes His title and work — **My chosen One** alludes to the suffering servant of Is. 42:1; 53:11. It is the Father's declaration that the cross would not be avoided.
 - ✓ **Listen to Him.** That is a reference to Dt. 18:15 — a prophet is coming who is greater than all and He must be obeyed. In this context, the Father seems to be emphasizing two aspects of obedience:
 - Listen to Him and obey Him as He goes to suffering and the cross (v. 22).
 - Listen to Him and obey Him by denying yourself and following Him (vv. 23-25).
 - ✓ While Luke doesn't use the title, it again affirms the uniqueness of Christ as Son of Man (Dan. 7).
 - ✓ The Three could not have missed the point — there aren't three tabernacles; there is One. Their focus should be on Jesus, and Him alone.
- And as quickly as they were awakened, saw Christ's glory, identified Moses and Elijah, and heard God, it all vanished in an instant — and **Jesus was found alone**. The One who is singular, is now alone. It was and is and always will be Jesus alone who is glorified and worthy of glorifying and giving our lives.
- And the Three **kept silent**. Mt./Mk. say that Jesus told them to keep silent; the absence of the command in Luke suggests that they had been humbled and would be silent on their own. Yet they also would be willing to speak when the time came (2 Pt. 1:17-19).
- Christ is the suffering Servant. And He is the King of Glory. He gave a glimpse of it that night to the Three. It is coming in fulness for us, if we also believe and follow.
 - ✓ There will be denial of self and loss of self-will and maybe even life (v. 23). There will be costs.
 - ✓ And there will be glory unimaginable when He comes in His Kingdom.
 - ✓ Do you believe Him? Do you believe v. 22? Believe, and know His eternal provision for you.

CONCLUSION: It has been said that “The Christian faith is about Christ...What it means to be a Christian is” to love Christ and be captivated by Christ and be focused on Him above all, because....

- ✓ All of God’s promises ‘find their Yes in him’ (2 Cor. 1:20).
- ✓ He is our indescribable gift (2 Cor. 9:15)
- ✓ He is our Head, our Groom, our Friend, our Brother...
- ✓ He is greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than the priesthood, Hebrews
- ✓ ‘All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ are ‘hidden’ in him (Col. 2:3).
- ✓ We are ‘filled in him’ (Col. 2:10).
- ✓ Christ is our life (Col. 3:4)
- ✓ ‘To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain’ (Phil. 1:21)

“The transfiguration communicates the same truth: the Law and the Prophets point to Christ. Jesus...is God’s very own Son, the true revelation of God. We need, therefore, to listen to him, to meditate on him, to rejoice in him, and to love him.” [Schreiner]

It will cost you to follow Jesus. As we said at the beginning, be sure to count the cost and make certain you are willing to make that payment.

But don’t forget the benefits, gifts, and privilege of following Christ. Don’t forget to count the benefits of Christ and don’t forget to view His glory.

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