

360 BIBLE STUDY

TO SEE HIS GLORY | Luke 9:28-36

One of the more fascinating passages in the New Testament is tucked away in the middle of a letter written by John. He is more than likely writing from exile in the twilight years of his life. He is writing to a group of people who have obviously captured his heart. The letter is deeply affectionate, encouraging, full of godly wisdom and more than just a little bit challenging. After years of reflection on his time with Jesus, he offers an intimate window into our future hope.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ...and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1-2).

The last line is remarkable. Even though John can not even begin to describe what we will one day be, he reassures us, “We shall be like him.” The reason we will be like him, John tells us is “we shall see him as he is.” A single glimpse of Christ will be all it takes to transform us into his likeness.

On the night before he was crucified our Lord prayed, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world (John 17:24).”

Jesus doesn’t want us to experience his glory simply so we can revel in his beauty (which we will), Jesus wants us to see and experience his glory so that we can be transformed by his beauty and share in his glory.

Glory is an interesting word. The Old Testament word for glory means to be heavy or weighty—to have substance. Glory can also be described as a brilliance that is beyond our ability to see or comprehend.

When Paul tells us, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things (Philippians 4:8),” he is, in essence, describing God’s glory. God is all that is true, all that is noble, all that is right, ...pure, ...lovely, ...admirable, ...excellent and praiseworthy, and then so much more.

In Luke 9, Peter, John and James get just a small glimpse of God’s glory in the face of Jesus.

A GLIMPSE OF GLORY (vv. 28-31)

²⁸About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

³⁰Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. ³¹They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

1. While Matthew and Mark record the same event, it is Luke that calls our attention to Jesus’ prayer life. Luke tells us, they “went up on a mountain **to pray**,” and “**As he was praying**, the appearance of his face changed.” Prayer is one of the signature themes in the gospel of Luke.
 - a. Why do you think prayer played such a pivotal role in the life of Jesus?
 - b. Why do you think Luke goes out of his way to highlight Jesus’ prayer life?
 - c. What can and should we learn from Jesus’ prayer life?

2. Luke and his readers would have been quick to recognize patterns in God's mighty deeds in the past that are repeated and amplified in the life and work of Jesus. In this passage there are some interesting parallels between the disciples experience on the Mount of Transfiguration and Israel's experience on Mount Sinai.
- Jesus ascends the Mount of Transfiguration on the seventh day after Peter confesses that Jesus is "God's Messiah." Luke is a little less precise on this count, but both Matthew and Mark emphasize the obvious parallel "After six days (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2)."
 - Moses is summoned from within the cloud on the seventh day after God has revealed his glory to Israel on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:16)."
 - In both instances a cloud envelopes the mountain (Luke 9:34; Exodus 24:15).
 - In both instances God speaks out of the cloud (Luke 9:45; Exodus 24:16).
 - Both Jesus' and Moses' faces are radiant (Luke 9:29; Exodus 34:29).
 - The disciples and the children of Israel respond in fear (Luke 9:34; Exodus 34:30). The people of Israel describe the appearance of God's presence in the cloud as a "consuming fire (Exodus 24:17)."
- a. How might these parallels highlight the magnitude of what the disciples are experiencing on the Mount of Transfiguration?
 - b. How was the disciples experience on the Mount of Transfiguration far more profound and significant than Israel's experience at Mount Sinai?
3. The moment is heightened by the appearance of Moses and Elijah. They too, are radiant. Moses, of course, was the one through whom Israel received the Law (often referred to as the Law of Moses). Elijah on the other hand was the prototypical Old Testament Prophet, known for his powerful words and works. We've already heard his name on a couple of occasions as people begin to speculate Jesus might be "Elijah." In all likelihood, Moses represents the testimony of the Law, and Elijah represents the testimony of the Prophets.

The Law and Prophets were a popular shorthand for the whole of the Hebrew Scripture, and even more importantly the Law and Prophets point us to, and are ultimately fulfilled by, Jesus.

MATTHEW 5:17–19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

LUKE 16:16-17 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it. ¹⁷ It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

LUKE 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

LUKE 24:44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

- a. What is Jesus' relationship to the Law and Prophets?

- b. How do the Law and Prophets point to Jesus?
 - c. How does Jesus fulfill or bring the Law and Prophets into their fullness?
4. According to Luke, what are Jesus, Moses and Elijah talking about?
 5. What do you think that means?
 6. Interestingly, the Greek word for "departure" is "exodus," which may further heighten the echoes of Mount Sinai. How might Jesus' death, resurrection and return to the Father (his departure) parallel God's rescue of his people from captivity in Exodus?
 7. What are some ways our salvation is even more profound and glorious than God's redemption of his people in and through the Exodus?

A NATURAL REACTION (vv. 32-33)

³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "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." (He did not know what he was saying.)

1. Of course this will not be the only time the disciples are a bit groggy while Jesus is praying and something significant is taking place in the background.

Why do you think Luke tells us, "Peter and his companions were very sleepy?"

2. This is one of those occasions when Peter blurts out the first thing that comes to mind. More often than not, as on this particular occasion, Peter's first instinct is the wrong instinct. Luke includes an editorial note, just in case we miss the clues embedded in the text. "He did not know what he was saying."

My guess is our response would have been similar. This has to be a spiritual high point for Peter, John and James. They have just received a glimpse of Christ's glory. They have seen Christ's glory reflected in Moses and Elijah. The Scripture they have studied all their lives was coming to life. If anyone ever had spiritual goose bumps I am guessing they did. It is only natural to want to enshrine a moment like that and make it last forever.

What are some of the indications from the text that Peter's first instincts might have been the wrong instincts?

3. My guess is that none of us will experience anything nearly this grand, this side of eternity, but we all have had heightened spiritual experiences we wish could last forever.
 - a. Why do you think the Lord provides heightened spiritual experiences?
 - b. What do you think the Lord is up to when things seem ordinary and routine?
 - c. What happens when we get so caught up in heightened spiritual experiences that we lose sight of how God is working in and through the ordinary and routine?

A MUCH NEEDED CORRECTION (vv. 34-36)

³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

1. The most obvious indication that Peter's first instinct is the wrong instinct is the fact that God takes the initiative to provide a much needed correction.

God appears on the Mount of Transfiguration in the same way he did on Sinai. The cloud is meant to both reveal and conceal God's glory. While the cloud is a visible expression of God's personal presence (Sinai, Tabernacle, Temple, Transfiguration), it also shields the people from the fullness of his glory—which no human can look on and live.

2. Why do you think the cloud struck fear in the heart of the disciples?

3. This event is reminiscent of Jesus' Baptism where God affirms Jesus' person and mission.

"And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased (Luke 3:21-22)."

- a. How does God describe Jesus at his baptism?
- b. How does God describe Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration?

4. There are three powerful images captured in the single phrase, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

- **The Image of Sonship.** While Israel and the Davidic King are both described as God's son (and Jesus fulfills both of those roles), Jesus' Sonship is far more intimate and unique (Luke 1:32-33, 35).
- **The Image of the Servant.** "My chosen one" is a reference to the suffering servant portrayed in Isaiah (42:1).
- **The Image of the Coming Prophet.** In Moses' final speech to the nation of Israel, he warned the people, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15)."

Peter applies this text to Jesus,

"For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. Acts 3:22)."

- a. Why was it important for Peter to listen to Jesus rather than trusting his own instincts?
- b. Why is it important for us to listen to Jesus rather than trusting our own instincts?