

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ, Part 2

Luke 9:28-31

In Luke 9:28-36. "Now about eight days after these sayings he," Jesus, "took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

" And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,' not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!' And when the voice had

spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.”

As a church located here in Colorado, with the Rocky Mountains in our backyard, we understand what it means in verse 28 that Jesus took these men up on the mountain to pray, don't we? We understand that. Matthew and Mark tell us that he led them up on a high mountain. All that is familiar territory for us. They went on a hike, as it were. Jesus took them to climb a mountain.

I like how Alfred Edersheim paints the picture, and for us Coloradans, we can fill in the gaps with pretty well-experienced and informed imaginations, can't we? He writes this, “There's only one road that leads from Caesarea Philippi to Hermon. We cannot be mistaken in following it. First, walking among vine-clad hills stocked with mulberry, apricot, and fig trees.” He's talking about lower elevations. “And then through cornfields, where the pear tree supplants the fig. And next, there are the oak up rocky ravines to where the soil is dotted with dwarf shrubs. If we pursue the ascent, it's, it becomes still steeper

till the first ridge of snow is crossed, after which turfy banks, gravely slopes, and broad snow patches alternate.

“The top of Hermon in summer, it can only be ascended in the summer or autumn, the top of Hermon is free from snow, but broad patches run down the sides, expanding as they descend. And as they ascend in the cool, the keen mountain air must have breathed strength into the climbers, and the scent of snow, for which the parched tongue would long in summer’s heat, must have refreshed them.”

We don’t know, that’s the end of the quote, but we don’t, we don’t know if they ascended to the very top, to the summit, found a perch atop one of those three peaks, or whether they settled for a spot a little lower down. But whatever the case, once they stopped at a suitable location and caught their breath, Jesus stopped and called a prayer meeting. He went there for the purpose of prayer.

It seems reasonable that, at first anyway, he included them and perhaps they prayed with him for a while until they fell

asleep. Pretty clear, verse 32, they've been overcome with fatigue, and whether that's from the climb or maybe from the thinner air up at altitudes they're not used to, or simply from the spiritual energy exerted for them in prayer, the disciples are at this point having a nap.

Now when something remarkable happens, they're about to miss it. They're about to miss it sleeping the time away. The most important thing that they'd ever seen in this, up to this point in their lives, they're about to miss it because they're sleeping. "As he was praying," verse 29, "the appearance of his face was altered. His clothes became dazzling white."

Luke is very brief, but he's clear. Gospel writers seemed to run out of adjectives at this point as they describe it. Matthew says, "He was transfigured," *metamorphao*, "Transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." Mark says, "He was transfigured before them. His clothes became radiant, intensely white as no one on earth could bleach them." Mama couldn't even do this.

Luke, here, he doesn't use the word, as I, as I mentioned, he doesn't use, use the word *metamorphao*, transfigured, transformed, and that's possibly because of his predominantly Gentile audience, that they might read that verb *metamorphao* in the context of the metamorphosis that they know of, of pagan deities. So he avoids that confusion for his readers, and instead Luke writes this, this is the literal translation, here, "The appearance of his face was, other."

That's accurate, and it leaves a lot of room for imagination and mystery and wonder. It was just, it was other. It's the word *heteros*, something completely, something radically different. He, he still had a face. It's just that it was other. It was different. It was a face of another kind. His face shined brilliantly, like the sun. His clothing became, as it says here, "dazzling white." Mark says, "radiant, intensely white." No one could bleach anything this white.

Now this, you need to understand, is not just about a change in his clothing. This means it wasn't just his face that was radiating with the intensity of brilliant light. His entire body, head to toe, radiated light, and the clothing itself could

not hide it. That is the idea, here. This is the glory that Jesus possessed along with his Father, John 17:24, "since before the foundation of the world." This is the glory of Christ we saw in Revelation 1 and all through. This is the glory that he possesses throughout eternity future. In fact, Jesus says of himself, Revelation 22:16, "I am the root and the descendant of David," what does it say next, "the bright morning star." That's why Matthew said, "His face shown like the sun." His glory is like the shining of a star, and it's radiating the bright light of, like, a nuclear blast.

You just want to stop for a moment, don't you, and just reflect, ponder, let the awe settle in of the one it is that we worship? Who he is who died on the cross to purchase our redemption, to purchase us as a gift for his father. You just want to stop and ponder the magnificence of this, that the, this holy one, this shining one, this bright, radiant one would care for you and me.

This is an amazing moment. It's a display of the true nature of Christ's deity. Up to this point in Luke's Gospel, nothing like this has been seen. We know already, because we

read through the birth narratives, Jesus possesses a divine nature. Gabriel told Mary, Luke 1:32, "He'll be great and he will be called Son of the Most High." We understand that. Verse 35, Gabriel told her how it would happen, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you." That word overshadow, by the way, is used here in our text as well. "And therefore the child to be born will be called Holy," comma, "the Son of God."

As we've followed his career, we've seen the working out of divine power, all with divine authority, with the prerogative of God, most notably in exercising the right to forgive sins. We've heard him teaching. We've, we've read this mind of divine omniscience and wisdom. This is the first time, though, that we've seen his glory, that we've seen it unveiled.

It's what John said, reflected on at the beginning of his little epistle, 1 John chapter 1. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, touched with our hands concerning the Word of Life." When it says there, "We've seen with our eyes," it's talking about the perception of sight. When

it says, "We've looked upon him," it means, observed carefully. "The life was made manifest. We have seen it and testified it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was," manifest, "made manifest to us.

"That which we have heard we proclaim also to you, so that you, too, may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. Writing these things that our joy may be complete. This is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light. In him is no darkness at all." They saw that for themselves. Jesus Christ "is light, and in him is no darkness at all." No sin, no error, no impurity, nothing but brilliant holiness and light.

So Jesus is transfigured, transformed, shining brightly. He looks over at his disciples since this display of glory is for their encouragement and for their sake, not for his, his sake; he knows what he is. It's for their sake, and how terribly disappointing to find them fast asleep. I don't want to condemn the disciples because let's admit it, would we have been any different? We fall asleep after ten minutes of prayer, or in sermons. This isn't about scolding, but we don't want to let the

point pass by without lamenting, just a bit, about how much spiritual blessing that we miss due to our physical weakness, how much spiritual blessing and privilege, that we miss out on because of temporal distractions, how much we miss out on because of silly, vain commitments, commitments to a world that's passing away, foolish pursuits, totally vain investments.

Like, why do we care about the world that's passing away? Why don't we be, all in, on the things that last? Let us also, just understanding these disciples, let's also pray for a steadfast, undistracted heart, that we might worship him as we ought to worship him, like David who prayed, Psalm 86:11, "Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Unite my heart to fear your name." Like the psalmist, Psalm 119, "Let us rise before dawn and cry for help. Let us hope in God's words. Let our eyes be awake before the watches of the night, that we may meditate on God's promise."

And when our strength gives out, which it will, let's pray with Asaph, Psalm 73:26, "My flesh, my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." The disciples are missing it. They're not only missing the unveiling

of Christ's glory, but they're about to miss the most important meeting, the meeting, number three in your outline, num, the meeting there, verses 30-31. Let's look at it, "Behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

Notice that even the dramatic appearance of the two most well-known prophetic figures of the Old Testament, Moses representing the Law and Elijah the prophets, the focus, here, is all on Jesus Christ. The two men are talking with him. They're speaking about his departure, which he is about to accomplish.

This is nothing less than a visual picture of the primacy of Jesus Christ. Quite literally, the Law and the Prophets are pointing to him, focusing on him. Their attention is centered on Jesus Christ and his work. That's why Jesus, after he arose from the dead and he met the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he chided them in Luke 24, "O foolish ones, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," like Moses and

Elijah, “was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and, and then enter into his glory?”

That’s what Moses and Elijah are discussing with him. So for those two foolish, slow-hearted, slow-to-believe disciples, he, Jesus stopped to teach them. He said, “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Look at the scripture. Look at the scripture. They point to me.

We’re going to talk next time more about the significance of Moses and Elijah. There are so many allusions in this account, by the way, to the Old Testament, how it all points to the fulfillment of the Old Testament, to the person and work of Christ.

But for now, let’s look at the glorious blessings that are revealed in these, in just these two verses. First, for Jesus’ three disciples, by extension to all of us believers as well, three things we need to notice. And these are things that are going to bring you encouragement. First, notice that these two

men, Moses and Elijah, what are they doing? They're talking with Jesus. Not only that, but they've appeared in glory. Wow! Such incredible encouragement comes from this verse!

When did Moses die? According to Deuteronomy 34:1-6, "Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. Lord showed him all the land. Lord said to him, 'This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, "I'll give it to your offspring." I've let you see it with your eyes, Moses, but you shall not go over there.' So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he," that is the Lord, "he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-Peor; and no one knows the place of his burial to this day." That happened in the year 1405 B.C., fourteen centuries before Christ. No one knew the place of his burial, but that now seems rather irrelevant, doesn't it?

What about Elijah? Elijah didn't die, did he? In the eighth century B.C., the 850s, according to 2 Kings 2:11-12, Elijah is there, walking with Elisha, his successor. And the text tells us is that, that "they went on, they talked, and behold, chariots

of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. Elisha saw it and he cried, 'My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' And he saw him no more." Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Gone. Vanished from sight. Taken up into heaven.

So Moses died, Elijah was translated, taken to heaven in a whirlwind. What is the significance, and why is this all so encouraging to us? Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus, here. Fourteen hundred years after the death, 850 years after the translation to heaven, they're talking to Jesus, here. That means that they're both alive! Centuries after they left the earth! Beloved, this life, you need to understand, is not all that there is. There is life after death. The saints live on.

And notice they're talking, they've got their wits about them. That's a good thing. Their talking, it indicates their personality continues, their intelligence. They know who they are. They know who it is they're talking to. They're engaged in intelligent conversations about things pertaining to spiritual truth, things about the future.

Not only that, but Moses and Elijah appear, not only talking, but in glory, which is hugely encouraging. The older I get this is hugely encouraging. Small comfort it would be to live for centuries in this body. You got to pity the ancients, right? Adam lived 930 years in the sinful flesh. Nine hundred and thirty years! You kidding me? Seth lived 912 years, Adam's son, in the sinful flesh. Poor old Methuselah, 969 years. You say, Oh, Methuselah, if you had just held on a little longer, you'd get to a thousand! He'd be, like, No way! You kidding me? This sinful flesh?

All these scientists in labs trying to create more life for us. What? This long life is not a blessing, folks, when it's lived with no escape from the curse, no freedom from the presence of sin. Moses and Elijah, here, don't appear that way. They appear in glory, which means they are no longer living in a fallen, weakened, frail, cursed condition. They have been glorified. No more weaknesses, no more sin, no more struggle with sin, only glory.

Second point of encouragement: Notice that these men, chief representatives of all the prophets, collectively they all point to Christ. Acts 10:38 says, "To him all the prophets bear witness." We see, here, that Moses and Elijah are interested in talking with Jesus about what? His departure. An interesting word. In Acts 13:24 we read about the coming of Jesus, and the word that's used there is *eisodos*, literally, into a way or an entrance, a coming. The word translated here is, departure, it's the word *exodos*. What's that? The word *exodus* in the presence of Moses calls to mind the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

Two privileges, here. We'll call it privilege A, privilege B. Privilege A, this is about the incredible privilege that's ours to live on this side of the cross. Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about his exodus, which he is about to accomplish. That is, it's not done yet. Unlike us, they don't have the advantage of revelatory hindsight, twenty-twenty. We have the entire New Testament, not only to tell us about all the events and to see them, but to unpack its meaning. It's what Peter spoke of in 1 Peter 1:10, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours." Who are those prophets? Moses. Elijah. They "searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings

of Christ and the glories to follow, things into which angels long to look.” Incredible privilege living on this side of the Cross.

Privilege B, the incredible privilege is here about a better exodus that Moses enjoyed. This isn't just his, about his exclusion from the Promised Land for his sin. Elijah got to live in the land. It was sorrow to him, though. He lived in a land of idolaters, and he was in the minority. Might as well have lived with the cursed Canaanites. Moses and Elijah, they are beneficiaries of a physical exodus from Egypt, a physical entrance into the land of Canaan.

We, beloved, we're the beneficiaries of a spiritual exodus, the deliverance from the penalty and the power of sin, one day from the presence of sin. We've got deliverance from the dominion of Satan and his demons. We've got deliverance from disease and sickness. We've got deliverance from the destructive forces of nature that oppress us in this fallen world. We've got deliverance from death itself, and even from the fear of death, all taken away. That's an exodus.

This goes back to the theme we've seen over and over in Luke's Gospel when Jesus said at the very beginning of his ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." So we're encouraged about the reality of life after death, a glorified life after death. We're encouraged about the incredible privileges that are ours in the better exodus that Jesus won for us.

And finally, number three, third encouragement: This departure, this exodus, this spiritual deliverance, Jesus, it says, was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. It's the word, *plerouo*, means fulfillment, total completion. I love the word that the ESV translators chose to use here. They could have used a number of them, but they chose the word, accomplish. I love that. It's exactly right. It shows complete fulfillment, and it shows merit. He did it. This is Christ's accomplishment. It's what he won for us in the Cross.

In fact, the exodus described, here, the one he's about to accomplish, this departure doesn't just refer only to his death. It refers to the whole of his redemptive work. It talks about his death on the Cross, his burial in the tomb, his resurrection on the third day, his ascension to heaven in glory, all of which he accomplished and he fulfilled in Jerusalem. So much has happened already. We haven't even come to the best part, yet. We need Peter and John and James to wake up. And they're going to as we come back to the text next time. Let's pray.

Our Father, with that thought in mind, we just pray that you would keep us sober-minded and awake for the purpose of prayer, you'd help us to discipline ourselves for the sake of godliness, to help us to pursue holiness in the fear of Christ. We pray that you would remove from our affections all worldly, temporary, passing things, that our hearts might be enlarged to embrace the glory of Jesus Christ, that we'd meditate on him and worship him and give thanks to him for all that he has accomplished.

We thank you for the opportunity even now to celebrate that and remember that in the celebration of the Lord's Table. We pray

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that our hearts would be drawn to a holy and reverent
consideration of what these elements mean, all to your glory in
the name of Christ. Amen.