

The Glory of God on the Mount of Transfiguration *Luke 9:28–36¹*

Introduction

Pastor Dickson has been bringing us through passage after passage that reminds us of the glory of God. God is transforming us “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18 ESV). We call this sanctification. We are being changed to be more like Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). Our working definition of God’s glory is “God’s unique excellence” (*unique* meaning that there is no other God, and *excellence* being the sum of His character as holy, righteous, good, perfect, etc.).

There are many times in Scripture where we read that God displayed His glory for people to see (though never to the fullest degree). As I think of God’s glory and how He transforms us to be more like Christ, I thought of Christ’s glory and most specifically at the mount of transfiguration. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all record this spectacular event. Today we will be looking at Doctor Luke’s account in Luke 9:28–36.

The first question that we must ask ourselves when we come to a text of Scripture is “What does the Bible say?” The next question we must ask is “What does the Bible mean by what it says?” The third question we must then ask is “In what way can I apply these truths to my life today?” Today, my desire is that we accomplish that goal. **In Luke 9:28–36 I want each of us to see that the transfiguration of Jesus Christ should move everyone to recognize Jesus as the Son of God.**

I hope that today you come away from this passage of Scripture thinking more than just “Well that sure is an amazing story!” I hope that you come away from this passage of Scripture saying “Wow! Because Jesus is the Son of God who was displayed in glory, I should (1) be moved with reverent fear toward God and (2) be motivated to joyfully obey His Word.”

Outline:

1. The Transfiguration Prioritizes the Importance of Prayer
2. The Transfiguration Proves the Deity of Jesus
3. The Transfiguration Prepares the Way of Redemption

Sermonic Outline

There are three truths that the Transfiguration of Christ demonstrate for us today. First, let us look at how—

1. The Transfiguration Prioritizes the Importance of Prayer (9:28b–29a)

I do not believe that it is by “happenstance” that Luke and the others Gospel writers describe how Christ came to the mountain to pray. Luke provides this detail with confident clarity. While I do not think that Doctor Luke meant this to be the primary emphasis, you cannot help but notice its implications for Christians today.

Notice who Jesus took with him.

a. People

- i. The disciples went with Christ virtually everywhere He went. It would not be uncommon for that to be seen because that is how the disciple would learn to become more and more like the teacher.
- ii. In this particular instance Scripture records for us that Christ took with Him Peter, James, and John (v. 28).
 1. Peter, James, and John are often described as the “inner circle.” Why Christ chose these three in particular to be witnesses of His glory is not explicitly stated in Scripture. What we do know is that Christ did on separate occasions bring these three to be exclusive witnesses to some of His most intimate moments.
 - a. **Mark 14:32–33** ³² Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. ³⁴ Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch.”

¹ Unless otherwise noted all Scripture passages quoted from the New King James Version.

- b. **Luke 8:51** ⁵¹ When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl.
- 2. Peter, James, and John each had a close relationship with Jesus. Several times in Scripture (besides when Christ gathers them together) they are mentioned in relation to one another (see also Luke 22:8 and Acts 3:1).
 - a. Many times in the Gospels Christ interacts with Peter (and more often than not Peter is putting his foot in his mouth!).
 - b. John, the author of the fourth Gospel, does not mention his name in the book but refers to himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 10).
- iii. These are the three that Jesus chooses to be with Him when he is Transfigured. What an amazing reality!
- iv. **TRUTH:** Though we were not there to see it at that moment, one day we will see His glory on display! We will talk about that more in a moment.

Notice now (briefly) the place that Jesus brought them.

- b. **Place**
 - i. Doctor Luke does not give to us the specific mount (or hill) that Jesus took these three on.
 - ii. Many people believe that it was Mount Hermon.
 - iii. Put simply, we do not know what mountain it was. And it really does not matter.

However, what we do know (and what is important), is that it was not unusual for Christ to go into a mountain to pray

- c. **Prayer**
 - i. This specific purpose should not be taken lightly. It is no surprise that the glorification of Christ at His Transfiguration happened while He went into the mountain to pray to His Father.
 - ii. The fact that Christ’s transformation before His disciples happened in conjunction with prayer should remind us that prayer is not simply an additional “Christian tradition” that is good to do. Prayer is the praise, confession, entreaty, and thanksgiving that we bring to a Holy, sovereign King who demands and deserves it (c.f. 1 Timothy 2:1).
 - iii. **APPLICATION:** In what way do you view prayer? Is it that biblical discipline that you keep saying “needs to be better?” Is your prayer with God a mere “sing-song” routine that you do as you pray for a meal? It is through this time of prayer that Christ’s appearance changes (as we will see in a moment). Do you recognize that you enter the throne of grace when you pray (Heb. 4:16)? The people who saw God’s throne room lay prostrate, terrified (see Isaiah 6 and Rev. 4–5). Why then do we treat it so casually?

Not only does the Transfiguration help see the priority of prayer—

2. The Transfiguration Proves the Deity of Jesus (9:29b–30, 34–35)

Quite frankly this is the very reason Doctor Luke included this account in book. The entirety of the book of Luke is answering the question that was in Theophilus’s mind: “Who is this Jesus?” (see Luke 1:1–4)

Notice that the text first of all describes Christ’s—

- a. **Visage (appearance)**
 - i. The description of Christ’s appearance had to be difficult for the three disciples to relate to people who were not there to see it.
 - 1. **ILLUSTRATION:** Can you imagine being in the shoes of Peter, James, and John as they tried to describe the indescribable? I imagine that seeing Christ’s transformation would have brought to mind passages like Exodus 34:29–35. Moses was on Mount Sinai where God gave to Him (for the second time) the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 34:29–35 ²⁹ Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. ³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. ³² Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him

on Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. ³⁴ But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. ³⁵ And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

2. **ILLUSTRATION:** I also think of John in the book of Revelation. He tried to describe things that he had seen in the throne room of heaven (Rev. 1:2; 41–5:14).
- ii. Doctor Luke describes Jesus's features in terms of light and color. He describes Christ's clothing as "white and glistering" (KJV). Literally, Jesus changed as He prayed to His Father.
 1. The word here translated as "white" (λευκός) is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe both Christ and other angelic beings.
 - a. *Of Angelic Beings: Matthew 28:1–3* Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.
 - b. *Of Christ in Heaven: Revelation 1:12–15* ¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;
 2. This is an unmistakable glimpse into the indescribable glory of Christ!
- iii. **APPLICATION:** Can you imagine what the saints who have gone before are seeing right this moment? Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8). Those saints get to see Christ in His indescribable glory! One day you, too, will see Christ in all of His glory. One day you, too, will be in awe of Christ and His glory.

The text of Scripture also describes special—

b. Visitors

- i. We will not spend a lot of time on this, but it is at least interesting for us to note that Doctor Luke describes for us special visitors who came down to speak with Christ.
 1. *Moses* — The first one he mentions is Moses. Why is this significant? Remember that Moses was perhaps one of the most respected and loved of all the prophets and most certainly was a revered leader to the Jews. If anyone would have been respected by the Jews it most certainly would have been Moses.
 2. *Elijah* — His name is mentioned next (notice that they are mentioned in chronological order). He was considered one of the greatest prophets, and no wonder! Elijah called fire down from heaven (2 Kings 1:9–15), had a show down with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:17–40), and did not see death because God took him away supernaturally in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:1–12). In fact, the "sons of thunder" had Elijah in mind when they asked Jesus if He wanted them to call fire down from heaven to consume the Samaritans (Luke 9:54).
- ii. The question you might be asking is this: "Why were Moses and Elijah there at the Transfiguration?" The simple answer is: I don't know. Scripture does not explicitly explain their presence.
- iii. *We can speculate:* It is possible that Moses represented the Law (first five books of the Old Testament), while Elijah represented the prophets. If that is the case then Peter, James, and John were witnesses to the fact that Jesus is greater than the most revered people and writings in Jewish history. The Law and the Prophets are beneath Christ.

This explains the—

c. Voice

- i. Doctor Luke next describes for us how when these three sleepy disciples awaken "they saw his glory" (KJV) in v. 32. Peter then opens his mouth suggesting that they should build tents for these three glorious individuals ("not knowing what he said" KJV). Mark says that Peter spoke this out of fear (Mark 9:5–6). I think the foolishness of this statement is not because Jesus was opposed to

living in a tent. The foolishness of this statement lies in the fact that Peter misunderstood the whole point of Christ's transfiguration. He sees Moses and Elijah and possibly assumes that Jesus is another great prophet (in spite of his confession earlier in Luke 9:20). If that is the case, he would not be mistaken for long.

- ii. As Elijah and Moses leave, a divine cloud comes down "overshadowing them" (v. 34), causing the three disciples to fear (and rightly so!).
 1. Whenever there is a cloud mentioned in relation to God, it is always in connection with God's glory. I will direct your attention to two passages:
 - a. **Exodus 40:34–38** ³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.
 - b. **2 Chronicles 7:1–4** When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. ³ When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: "For *He is good*, For His mercy *endures forever*." ⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.
 2. Other passages to see: Ex. 13:21–22; 14:23–25; Num. 9:15–23; 14:11–14; 2 Chron. 5:11–14; Ez. 43:1–5.
- iii. Through this cloud a voice proclaims loudly "This is my beloved son: hear him" (v. 35). What greater witness could you ask for to the deity of Jesus Christ? The voice is obviously God the Father who attests to the fact that Jesus is the promised Messiah and is greater than anyone who had come prior to Him. God the Father said similar words at Jesus's baptism (Matt. 3:17).
 1. In the first *Servant Song* the Lord says something similar about His servant:

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.
 2. Perhaps God repeats this portion of Scripture to further solidify Christ's deity to the disciples.
- iv. This witness substantiates the many claims that Jesus made: that his Father had sent Him (John 8:42), that He and the Father are one (John 10:30), that no one could come to God except through Him (John 14:6), etc.
- v. APPLICATION— Since Jesus is God, then everyone must understand four things: **(1)** you must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God if you desire eternal life (John 3:16; 20:31); **(2)** if you choose to reject Jesus then you are rejecting God's Son and thus His offer of life (John 3:18); **(3)** you cannot come to God through any other means whether it be another religion or good works (John 14:6); **(4)** since Jesus is God and God cannot lie, all of Jesus's claims and teachings must be true (John 17:17).

The third truth that we see from our text today is that—

3. The Transfiguration Prepares the Way of Redemption (9:31)

- a. Both of these men came to speak to Jesus about his "decease" (KJV) in Jerusalem. Literally, the word used here for decease is the same word used to speak of the "exodus" from Egypt (Gr. ἔξοδος).
- b. **TRUTH: Just as Moses led the people of Israel in an exodus out of Egypt, so Christ would provide an exodus through His death for all of us to experience salvation.**

There are several applications that we can draw from Doctor Luke's account.

Conclusion

- 1) Obey Christ; do not blaspheme or disobey our Lord of glory (2 Cor. 2:8).
- 2) Marvel in reverent awe at the glory of Christ that we will one day see and bow to in person (Phil. 2:9–11).
- 3) Do not cling to this world, nor be ashamed of Jesus who will one day come in glory (Luke 9:23–26).