

The Cast | People Engaged In the Story of Jesus Christ

Moses and Elijah

Luke 9.28-37; 2nd Peter 1.16-19

March 5, 2017

Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. ³³ And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"-- not realizing what he was saying. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" ³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen. ³⁷ On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him.

^{2 Peter} For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"-- ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

We've been looking at the minor characters in the story of Jesus Christ... we're getting to know HIM by watching His exchanges with these people who are a kind of cross-section of humanity.

Today, we meet two cast members who are ... dead.

Moses and Elijah are somehow sent back from the "other side" and back into the physical world to confer with Jesus Christ. Three of His disciples are eyewitnesses to the meeting.

The event is known as The Transfiguration and is normally celebrated at the end of the season of Epiphany (on the church calendar)...And this meeting with the Moses and Elijah is "the witness of the Law and the Prophets"... Moses is the Law and Elijah the "Prince of the Prophets" and

they come back into time and space...ON A MOUNTAIN... to bear witness to Jesus Christ in front of Peter, James and John AND for them not only to attest/verify who this Jesus IS but for the witness of all the Law and Prophets to be confirmed by the only Voice that really matters.

This is an episode PACKED with significance and it brings together a lot of symbols and threads from the Hebrew Bible. If you get what's going on here, it's immensely comforting and assuring ...it's an EPIPHANY...it's an APOCALYPSE...a REVELATION that can supply us with courage and reason to trust this UNIQUE PERSON at the center of the Story.

- Let's look at 1) The First Lesson Learned
2) The Second Exodus Accomplished and
3) The Third Man Found Alone (and what that teaches US)

The First Lesson learned is that this Rabbi IS the long awaited Messiah... the One we learn about in the Law and the Prophets... And the disciples have just now reached that conclusion. It's the goal toward which Jesus was working and when it's clear to Him that His disciples have learned it, He puts that famous test: "Who do people say that I am? And who do YOU say that I am?"

Peter, as you might guess, Peter speaks for the whole group...from Luke CH 9 (immediately before today's text): "And He said to them, 'But who do YOU say that I am?' And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." (9.20)

And then IMMEDIATELY...Jesus Christ moves on to the next lesson – "OK...you know that I am the Christ but DO you know what a Christ IS...and DOES?"

And they all say, "Oh...definitely...absolutely...yep... we're crystal clear on that one!"

But knowing that they have NO IDEA... the Rabbi tells them, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day." And... they act like they know what He's saying but they really ONLY have the FIRST LESSON...and have no idea what He means about dying and about resurrection...and He'll have to tell them again and again... e.g. (just a few verses after today's text) "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." (44)

But they have NO PLACE in their thinking for a Messiah who will be betrayed and who will DIE. AND they have NO IDEA that THEY will go that way TOO!

And then He says (after the identity question is settled and they KNOW He's the Christ) He says He WILL be rejected and HE WILL DIE and THIS WILL BE THE PATH TO GLORY/TRIUMPH/KINGSHIP...and HE ADDS, "And some of YOU will see MY KINGDOM even before YOU DIE..."

AND then He takes the ones He has in mind...Peter (the spokesman), John (the beloved) and James (the first martyr), He takes them UP TO THE MOUNTAIN to SEE the Kingdom of God. HE PRAYS AND HE IS CHANGED...His face changes...His clothing is white and luminous...blinding light and brightness!

“Some eight days after these sayings” – first lesson is taught (“WHO am I?” – “YOU ARE THE CHRIST”) and NOW the next lesson is about WHAT A CHRIST IS and what He will DO... it’s about a “Second Exodus.”

Moses and Elijah have come back from the other side... Luke is the only one (Matt, Mark AND Luke all include the episode) but only Luke tells us WHAT they discussed: “appearing in glory, they were speaking of His ‘EXODUS’, which He was about to accomplish.” He uses that Greek word intentionally because Moses knew a thing or two ABOUT Exodus... Moses led the FIRST EXODUS when he liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt...

And “the Christ” will accomplish a second liberation – He will DO something...He will DO what He’s been telling the disciples but what THEY can’t understand and THAT IS HOW GOD WILL LIBERATE HIS PEOPLE... the Christ will suffer and die, be killed and be raised up on the third day... like the Passover Lamb in the First Exodus (a substitute)... The disciples have NO idea what this means... BUT Moses and Elijah DO.

It’s like Jesus Christ had to tell someone what was coming but NO ONE on earth had any concept of the Christ dying for His people...SO GOD HAD TO GIVE HIS SON SOME CONVERSATION PARTNERS FROM OUTSIDE THIS WORLD...Moses and Elijah...the Law and the Prophets from THE OTHER SIDE!

And all this Exodus imagery ...like the cloud of God’s presence...the disciples are overwhelmed by the weight of it all...and they sort of pass out...and then they wake up (“fully awake” 32) and Peter says, “Lord, it’s good to be here! How many people get to meet the Law and the Prophets...Moses and Elijah... WOW! If YOU are in their league...YOU MUST BE WAY MORE IMPORTANT THAN WE THOUGHT!!... Let’s set up some tabernacles and stay with these heroes – don’t let ‘em leave!” (“Peter...not realizing what he was saying...” – like so many of us...we don’t know what to say so we just keep speaking!)

Then the cloud envelops them...and the disciples know that in the FIRST Exodus, when the cloud came on the tabernacle (the worship tent) that meant God was there...and even Moses couldn’t go in (Ex 40.35) and they think they’re going to die as they go INTO the cloud... but then OUT OF the cloud comes a Voice, “This is My Son, My Chosen, listen to Him.”

And when they look up...the super important men from beyond...are GONE... ‘turns out, HE IS not in their league... He is infinitely ABOVE them... is unique and HE DOESN’T NEED A TABERNACLE because He IS the Tabernacle... He is the dwelling of God on earth... He is not only

shining... HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LIGHT... In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1.4-5)

And those three disciples really didn't comprehend it; in fact in Matthew and Mark ...Jesus Christ tells the three disciples NOT to tell anyone about this until after His resurrection and they say, "Sure thing, Lord...not a word till after the resurrection!" and then they turn to one another and ask, "Uh...what's a resurrection?!" (Mark 9.10)

So that's it – the first lesson learned...the second Exodus accomplished...and last, The Third Man Found Alone - and what that teaches US – SO what DOES it teach us?

Well...this is an epiphany... conclusion to the season of Epiphany...it's a moment when the curtain is pulled back and we see into the Great Beyond – it's the apocalypse/revelation of Jesus Christ.

We are seeing Him THEN...as He will be seen in the future. It's like the vision of Him in the last book of the Bible – "The Apocalypse/Revelation of Jesus Christ"... The Law and the Prophets are bearing Him witness...Moses and Elijah are there to say, "YES! This is the One we saw from many centuries ago...the train of His robe filled the Temple in the Prophet Isaiah's vision...we saw His glory from afar and now HERE HE IS" ...And the three disciples (v.32) "SAW His glory"

This is a revelation they really NEEDED because when they see Him accomplish the Second Exodus and like the ancient Passover Lamb...He will be slain and pierced and He will look, on the cross, anything but GLORIOUS.

They will all run away from Him and He will appear like a monster...and they won't be able to look (Isa. 53.3) but on the mountain they are given a vision of the End-Game... He is passing through shame...ON HIS WAY TO GLORY...He will be snuffed out and immersed in MY darkness...He will take MY blame...and become hideous in the sight of the Father...

And YOU need to see now...that His gruesome death is NOT the final word...He will humble Himself and God, the Father will exalt Him...the Father loves Him with infinite approval and joy and love... and YOU NEED TO SEE THIS...because THIS vision will get you through the horror of what YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE.

He is the One we've been waiting for...the Law and the Prophets showed up to hail Him and look into His exodus-plan – how He will liberate the world and save everyone who trusts Him.

"LISTEN TO HIM" – it's good to listen to the Law and the Prophets because they gave us God's word ...but HE IS GOD'S word...He is the Mind of God...the Heart of God revealed in the FLESH.

LISTEN TO HIM - "Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD

your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deu 6.4-5) He is the LORD of “the shema”...the Creed of the Old Testament and He is the One who fulfills the Law ...and the Prophets.

Moses and Elijah are special...but they can't save us...IN FACT they need a Savior and HE IS NOW REVEALED.

This is how the world will end... this is a glimpse of the New Adam, the Beloved of the Father full of grace and truth ... this is Man as He was meant to be... And this is how WE will be in the resurrection, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3.2)

There was a television program in the '90s called, “Early Edition” about a man who mysteriously receives each Chicago Sun-Times newspaper the day before it is actually published... And you can imagine how that would alter your investment strategy if you knew in advance what stocks were going to make gains... Well, THIS episode on the mountain OUR Early Edition...God gives us “insider trading information” and invites us (with complete impunity) to invest... “LISTEN TO HIM”...

Attach yourself to Him by faith...invest yourself completely because YOU see how the crucifixion will end...with atonement...with Exodus and liberation for everyone who believes... with Jesus all-glorious!

We don't see it now...the world looks pretty scary...our love is pretty weak...we wish we could see change in the world and in ourselves... But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. (Heb 2.9)

Listen to Him...not just His teaching but His whole Person...His Exodus accomplished for all who believe... receive it...take the Epiphany...hear the eyewitnesses and the prophetic word NOW confirmed...

YOU CAN AFFORD TO LOVE...to deny yourself...to take up your cross and follow... to invest/entrust everything to Him... because WE know how it ends.

The Communion

We hope you read the very brief statement on p. 11 in today's bulletin... We are obligated to relay the warning found in St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians (11.25ff) and we understand it to mean that NOT BEING RELATED TO GOD'S NEW SOCIETY... not discerning the specialness of the

Church is THE reason for NOT talking the bread and the wine... It's not having sin in our lives (we ALL have that) – it's staying aloof from the church – so we require that people be a part of some church that teaches the Gospel.

I have a one-page paper...if you want to see our understanding...please come and get it.

When we think of today's passage (The Transfiguration) and we see Moses and the reference to the "exodus" Jesus would accomplish, we see all this imagery...like the MOUNTAIN.

Moses went up on the Mountain and brought down the Law and Moses face was shining and now a better Moses has gone up on the mountain not to give the law but to keep it.

BUT also ... Elijah... Elijah...the Prophet went up on a mountain (a lesser known episode)...You may remember from 1st Kings CH 19 – Elijah was running from Ahab and Jezebel because Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal...and he was deeply discouraged and alone and the world looked dismal and he was the only one standing for God (or so he thought...7000)

And then he fled deep into the wilderness and came to "Mt Horeb, the mountain of God" (it could have been the same mountain we read about today) and there it says "And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; **BUT the LORD was not in the wind.** And after the wind **an earthquake**, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. **After the earthquake a fire**, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a still small voice."

And **IN** today's episode (maybe on the very same mountain) **Elijah is hearing that same Voice**...telling how He would accomplish the Great Liberation... and then the Voice speaking from the cloud, "This is My Son...My Chosen One...hear Him."

Now we go with Elijah to hear this still small voice...to EAT THE WORD MADE FLESH...the living word who tells us...you are NOT alone...you are in communion with My blood bought disciples (all around you) and though all looks broken...I will make it right. Take and Eat...the Still Small Voice has come down from the Mountain and become edible... Hear Him ...receive Him...take and EAT.