

# A Snapshot of the Glory (Part 1)

## *On the Mountain*

Luke 9:28–36; Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:1–8.

Before we talk about the transfiguration, let us recap: last week we saw the cost of discipleship, Jesus' invitation to His disciples to bear the shame of the cross. Why? Because first and foremost, the cross is the way of life of the Master Himself.

The concept of the cross was a hard teaching. It is very important, then, that Jesus empirically shows them Heaven's perspective about the cross. That is the whole purpose of His transfiguration. Jesus revealed His glory to three of His disciples, and that glory would comfort them when the world crucifies their Lord.

Let's see the passage verse by verse, and at the end we will see the full picture.

**Luke 9:28 “About eight days after Jesus said this, He took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray.”**

I draw your attention to the expression “about eight days,” because it is unusual. Rarely do the Gospels use a full week as a transition; rather, they transition themes using “now,” “then,” “after...” Clearly there is a link to the prior verse, where Jesus promised that “some of His disciples would not taste death until they see the Kingdom coming with power.” They are about to see His Glory and Kingdom with their own eyes.

**Luke 9:29 “As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”**

I draw your attention to the side note Mark adds to this: he says that Jesus' clothes became so white that “no one on earth could bleach them.” When he says “no one on earth,” he is clearly making a distinction between two kinds of clothes: human vs. divine. Jesus' radiance is divine.

Lastly, and obviously, Jesus' radiance comes from the inside out. You know that Moses' face once became radiant when he descended Mount Sinai — his face became radiant because he talked to God for 40 days; God's glory was radiant on his face.

That is not the case with Jesus, because Jesus' radiance comes from within. Just as the moon does not have light in itself but receives light from the sun, so Moses became radiant because of God. Just as the sun has light in itself, so Jesus has light in Himself. He radiates from the inside out.

**Luke 9:30 “Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.”**

The vision has meaning: Moses = the Lawgiver. Elijah = the Prophets. That is a straightforward statement that says, “The whole Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, points to Jesus.” Jesus is the fulfillment of the whole Bible.

As the last prophet of Israel, Malachi, once prophesied: “Remember my servant Moses and the Law... the Lord will send the prophet Elijah before He visits His people” (Malachi 4). Clearly the vision echoes this text.

Also, as the author of Hebrews says at the beginning of his letter, “God has spoken in the past in various ways, through various people, but now He has spoken through His Son! The Son is the radiance of His glory, the exact image of God's essence.” And he goes on to say that the Son is greater than Moses, greater than the prophets, greater than the angels, greater than Aaron, greater than Joshua, greater than the feasts, greater than the temple! He is God's final word!

**Luke 9:31 “They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”**

This verse is key, because here these three words meet: kingdom, cross, Jerusalem.

Jesus promised that He would display His Kingdom with power. They are talking in glorious splendor about His departure (*exodus*) that is going to be fulfilled in

Jerusalem. The word *exodus* makes things clear: just as the blood of the lamb brought liberty to God's people in Egypt, so will the blood of the Lamb bring liberty to God's people in Jerusalem. His Kingdom has come indeed.

The old exodus was about geography, labor, and time-bound deliverance; now this exodus is heavenly and eternal — the forgiveness and freedom from sin.

**Luke 9:32 “Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.”**

Sleepy?! Why are they sleepy when such an awesome experience is happening around them? A theologian I like says, “What excites Jesus doesn't excite the disciples.” It is worth noting that Jesus was praying, and they were asleep.

In their defense, it is most likely that this whole experience happened during the night. Jesus was used to spending nights awake in prayer; the disciples were not.

But here I leave a pastor's note: prayer should not be seen as a boring activity, but a delightful experience!

**Luke 9:33 “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.)”**

You can tell Peter is trying to freeze the moment. As soon as he sees that the amazing experience is fading away — he was asleep most of the time — he wants it to last longer. Peter makes a statement containing one truth and one mistake: first, he said it right — “It is good for us to be here.” Secondly, he said it wrong — “Let's make three tents, one for Moses, one for Elijah, one for Jesus.” By saying this, he leveled Jesus with Moses and Elijah, and as you have already seen above, Jesus is greater than them all! Jesus is incomparable.

As a matter of fact, Luke notes that “he didn’t know what he was saying.”

**Luke 9:34 “While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.”**

God the Father has perfect timing. Just as Peter made the wrong statement, the Father intervenes to course-correct the disciples. Just as God’s glory came with the clouds in the Old Testament, it does so now on the mountain.

**Luke 9:35 “A voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is My Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.’”**

Mark and Matthew add, “This is My Son, whom I love.” The very words Heaven spoke at the beginning of His ministry are the very words Heaven is speaking once again.

I draw your attention to the word *chosen*, “elect” in Greek. The same word used to refer to God’s people is the one used for Jesus. Jesus is the head of God’s people. Jesus is the representative of God’s people. Jesus is the leader of God’s people. Jesus is the Redeemer of God’s people. God saves the elect through the Elect One!

And the voice commands: “Listen to Him!” Some people read Moses but fail to find Jesus. Some people hear the prophets Sunday after Sunday when the Bible is preached but fail to find Jesus. Here the Father establishes the pattern for any Bible reading — whether the Law or the Prophets, whether Old or New Testament — the Son is always speaking. Listen to Him. He is God’s Word.

**Luke 9:36 “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.”**

As visually remarkable as the experience had been before, so remarkable is the vision they see last: Jesus.

Moses is gone. Elijah is gone. The lights and clouds are gone. And I draw your attention to the loving words the Father lavished on His Son. Jesus had just heard temptation from Satan through Peter's mouth. Now the Father silences the devil's voice with His tender and loving voice: "I love You, My eternal Son!"