

LUKE

“The Glory and Majesty of God”

Luke 9:27-43a

Sunday, June 10, 2018

By David A. Ritchie

²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² 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. ³³ 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. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And 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 told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

³⁷ On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸ And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹ And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. ⁴⁰ And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹ Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” ⁴² While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And all were astonished at the majesty of God. ¹

Heavenly Father, your word says that your Spirit unveils our eyes so that we may see your glory in the face of Christ. So I pray this morning: may your Spirit give us eyes to behold your Son Jesus. May his glory transform and change us. Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things from your word! AMEN.

Introduction

For several months now, we have been taking a journey through the Gospel According to Luke. To catch you up on the story, the whole first half of this gospel centers on one question: who is Jesus? Last week, we witnessed how at long last, one of Jesus’s disciples named Peter answered that question. Jesus is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He is God’s promised liberator king, who has come to deliver God’s people.

This is the turning point of the book of Luke. Now, the story shifts. Whereas the first half of the book was answering the question “Who is Jesus?,” the second half of the book is answering the question, “What type of a Christ will Jesus be?” The answer is shocking. He will not be a Christ who conquers by a conquest, but rather a Christ who conquers by a cross. He is a Christ – a messiah – who will suffer.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 9:27–43.

Thus, Jesus begins to make his final journey southward to the holy city of Jerusalem, where he will suffer and die upon a cross. And as he makes this journey, he begins to tell his disciples some hard news. He is saying, *“Yes, I am the true King. But I am a King who is going to the cross. And if you want to be a part of my kingdom, you are going to have to pick up your cross and follow me too.”*

Then he says something very strange: *“But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:27, ESV).

This is one of those very mysterious verses. What is Jesus saying here? Is he saying that some of his disciples will live until the day they see the apocalypse and the final coming of the kingdom of God? If so, it would seem like Jesus was wrong. The Twelve Disciples all died, and most of them lost their lives because of their faith in Jesus.

No. I think Jesus means something else. In fact, I think Jesus will fulfill this promise right here in the passage of Scripture that we will be looking at today.

And in one sense what happens in the two episodes that follow is truly an apocalypse, but not in the way we mean it. When we use the term “apocalypse,” we mean the end of the world. But the meaning of Greek word “apokalupsis” (ἀποκάλυψις) means a revealing or an unveiling; it means to disclose or make something fully known.² Imagine a theatre curtain being suddenly raised to reveal a vibrant scene that was previously unseen – that is an apocalypse.

The two episodes that follow, in this sense, are apocalyptic. Three of Jesus’s disciples will see an unveiling of reality as it truly is. And they will be astonished at “The Glory and Majesty of God.”

So for the rest of our time, we will organize our discussion under three headings: *1.) The Glory of God on the Mountain, 2.) The Majesty of God in the Valley, and 3.) What it All Means.*

Exposition

1.) The Glory of God on the Mountain.

- Most of the time when Jesus prays he goes somewhere alone.
- This time Jesus will take his inner circle up a mountain to pray with him (Lk. 9:28).
- It is likely nighttime. Perhaps the sun is setting, as Jesus climbs with his three closest disciples.
- This begins PJ&J’s well-established track record of falling asleep when Jesus takes them away to pray.
- But as they slumber, the prayers of Jesus unwrap and unveil reality itself.³
- Jesus has come into the presence of God with his prayers; it is now on earth as it is in heaven.

- As Jesus prays, the appearance of his face is “altered”; he is “transfigured” (Mt. 17:2; Mk 9:2).
- His clothes become “dazzling white,” as the NIV says, “bright as a flash of lightning” (Lk. 9:29).
- PJ&J awaken to something unlike anything in the realm of human experience or possibility.
- It is one thing to know Jesus; it is another thing to experience the glory of Jesus. Their response is awestruck wonder. The kingdom of God has come through Jesus, and PJ&J now see its glory with their own eyes.

² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 112.

³ I. Howard Marshall, [*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 383.

- To their astonishment, Moses and Elijah are present with Jesus, and they are talking with him! Moses is the great leader who God used to lead Israel out of slavery to Egypt. Elijah was the first great prophet in the age of the Kingdom of Israel.
 - These are some of the biggest heroes in the OT.
 - In the movie *That Thing You Do*, there is a moment when the main character, who is a drummer, meets the very jazz drummer that inspired him to pursue countless hours of practice and become a professional musician. Even though this main character is now a celebrity himself, he is dumbfounded and giddy at the sight of his hero. He doesn't know what to say, but he wants to say *something* before this once in a lifetime moment passes him by. So he walks up to his idol and says, "You are my biggest fan!"
 - I think something similar might be happening here with Peter.
 - If it were today, he'd be scrambling to get Moses to sign his Torah and Elijah to take a selfie with him!
-
- But as you might suspect, there is a deeper meaning than just a celebrity sighting. But what is that meaning?
 - Here the Bible itself helps us interpret the Bible. Back in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, God had promised to raise up another prophet who was like Moses: "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—**" (Deuteronomy 18:15, ESV). At the point of history when Jesus lived there had already been many great prophets, but none like Moses. By Moses's presence, the Bible is showing us how utterly unique and important Jesus is.
 - In the same way, Elijah was not just a prophet, but also a harbinger that the kingdom of God was near: "**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes**" (Malachi 4:5, ESV). Elijah's presence is a signal that God himself is visiting his people!
 - Peter has already announced that he and the disciples believe Jesus is the "Christ of God" (Lk. 9:20). But this is an embodied experience of that truth!
-
- But there is more. *Moses and Elijah are also personifications of the Old Testament.* Together, they represent the Law and Prophets. And here they are in unveiled glory pointing toward Jesus!
 - It is a living illustration of the truth that the Bible really is all about Jesus. As Jesus will say later on in Luke to two of his disciples who are walking on the road to Emmaus, "all of the Law and all of the Prophets are really about me" (24:26-27).
 - This is made all the more clear by a very specific word Luke uses in verse 31. If you have your Bible open, you will likely notice that there is a footnote for the word "departure." And when you look at the bottom of the page, you will see that the word translated as "departure" in English is the word "exodus" (ἐξοδος).
 - The exodus, of course, refers to the saving act of God to deliver his chosen people of Israel out of bondage and slavery to Egypt and lead them into freedom. It is the most pivotal and defining moment in the history of Israel. It is the story from which they derive their sense of identity and purpose.
 - By describing what Jesus is about to do in Jerusalem as "his departure," Scripture is showing us Jesus himself is getting ready to do something that will shift history. He is getting ready to deliver God's people from a bondage that is more powerful than Pharaoh, and he is getting ready to lead God's people into a true and greater freedom! Jesus will deliver God's people from powers of sin and death, and he will lead them into eternal life!

- When it seems like the moment is going to end, Peter literally wants to put up some tents and camp out. He, understandably, want to prolong this experience as long as possible.
- But just then a cloud envelopes the mountaintop, the same cloud that shook the earth at Sinai. The same cloud that filled the OT temple so that the priests could not stand. The same cloud that all through the Old Testament represented the presence of God. And God speak directly to Peter: *“This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” (Lk. 9:35).*
- Professor Darrel Bock comments, *“These remarks work like a political endorsement—only this time the endorsement is from God himself.”*⁴
- When the cloud departs, Jesus is left alone. And the disciples have to offer is awestruck silence.
- What has happened shows not only the greatness of Christ and the glory of Christ but the absolute supremacy of Christ.
- As great as Moses and Elijah are, Jesus is better.
- In the Old Testament When Moses came off of the mountain of Sinai to meet with God, his face shone with the glory of God. But it was a reflective glory, like that of the moon reflects the sun.
- Jesus is not reflecting glory. He is *emanating* glory.
- Moses and Elijah pointed toward the glory of God; Jesus is the glory of God.
- *Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the one through whom all things were created (Col. 1:15-16). He the one in whom the fullness of the eternal, immortal, and almighty God is pleased to dwell (Col. 1:19) He is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3)!*
- This is who Jesus truly is, but are we awake enough to see it?
- Or has this world sedated to you to his grandeur?
- The time has come to wake from sleep. Salvation is nearer than we first believed. The night is far gone and the day is at hand (cf. Rom. 13:11-12).
- There is no substitute. Only Jesus will satisfy the deepest hunger of your heart!
- As the old hymn invites us:
 - *“O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There’s light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.”*⁵

2.) The Majesty of God in the Valley.

- As Jesus and his three disciples descend, they immediately encounter chaos.
- At the base of the mountain, a confused crowd surrounds a desperate father and his only son who has suffered since he was child (Mk. 9:21-22).
- The man cries out in begging desperation for Jesus to save his son because no one else can.
- Apparently, the remaining nine disciples have attempted to help the man with his son, but they can’t.
- It is a picture of human need, human inability, and the tragic brokenness of creation.

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 272.

⁵ Helen Howarth Lemmel. “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.” (1922).

- We know from Mark's gospel account that reason for the disciples' inability in this instance is a lack of prayer (Mk. 9:28-29).
 - They have been trying to minister to the child, but they have been doing so fruitlessly in their own strength.
 - Remember, at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus had given them authority over all demons and the power to cure diseases (Lk. 9:1). But perhaps they forgot where their authority came from, and unintentionally, they have cut themselves off from the source of their power.
 - Pastor Timothy Keller comments: "How arrogant, how clueless they are about their inadequacy to deal with the evil and suffering in the world....They underestimated the power of evil in the world and in themselves."⁶
- But the disciples are not alone in this tendency.
 - Too often we are able to look to prayer only as a last result when our futile attempts at controlling reality inevitably fail us.
 - The disciples want to help, but they can't. And in the rush of the moment, they have lost their sense of dependency upon God. In essence, they are trying to be God, by assuming they are in control of all things and that it is all up to them.
 - Don't get me wrong we can be control freaks and do it in the nicest way possible.
 - It is the mercy of God in such moments to humble us, and make us aware of our need.
- Maybe it is just the fact that Jesus has just finished experiencing the glory of heaven, but when Jesus witnesses this tragic scene and the prayerlessness and forgetfulness of his disciples, he mourns with sorrow and anger.
 - He cries out they are part of a "faithless and twisted generation" (9:41). Essentially is saying, *"You've lost your sense of God. Your life is un-calibrated and unfocused because of this. This is lamentable."*
 - And I do think that Jesus's frustration is best understood not as outrage, but lament.
 - And in our day of constant outrage, this is an important distinction.
 - My friend Chris once said: *"Outrage comes from a place of self-righteousness. Lament comes from a place of humble recognition that the world is a broken place because we have all too much followed the devices and desire of our hearts. Lament acknowledges the fundamental connection between sin and injustice in the world."*
 - It think we need less outrage and more lament. Outrage makes us feel better about ourselves. Lament makes us aware that we need Jesus.
- The answer to this predicament is utter dependence upon Jesus.
 - In Mark, the father pleads in one of my favorite prayers in Scripture, "Lord I believe. Help my unbelief" (Mk. 9:23-24).
 - This is still a very acceptable prayer and one the Lord wants to answer.
 - The demon is rebuked. The son is healed. The father receives his child. And all marvel at the majesty of God.
 - As Marshall say: *"What was visible only to the chosen three on the mountain is here visible to a greater number."*⁷
 - The marvel of the crowd is because something superior has been revealed.
 - Jesus has done something man is unable to do.

⁶ Timothy Keller. *Kings Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus*. (New York: Dutton, 2011), 120-121.

⁷ Marshall, 392.

3.) What it All Means.

- The question is how are these two moments linked? Should they be linked? It seems like they are two separate passages with two separate messages.
- In every gospel account that mentions these two moments, they are linked (Mt. 17:1-20; Mk. 9:2-29).
- Thus, I believe they should be understood together, and I'm not the only one (Show 1 "The Transfiguration").
- Originally commissioned as a piece to hang above the central altar in a cathedral in France, this painting is now one of the first paintings you see if you visit the Vatican Museum in Rome.
- It is called "The Transfiguration." It was painted in 1520, during the High Renaissance by the great artist Raphael Sanzio. It was last painting before he died, and it is considered by many to be his masterpiece.
- It is a painting of vivid contrast of light and darkness; of serenity and chaos; of heavenly glory and earthly struggle.
- The upper portion of the painting (Show 2 Upper Detail) is a scene of serenity and light.
- Jesus is centered as the focal point. Moses is to the left of Jesus holding the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and Elijah is on Jesus's right holding a book representing the prophetic books of Scripture. The personification of the Law. The personification of the prophets. And between them, the Jesus Christ is revealed and elevated in glory.
- Peter, James, and John are face down in the ground and overwhelmed by the experience.
- It would be easy to confuse this upper portion for daylight if it weren't for the darkness in the background. Jesus is a shining like the Sun.
- "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Revelation 21:23, ESV).
- The bottom scene (Show 3 Lower Detail), on the other hand, is dark and chaotic and confused. All eyes are fixated on the boy who is being tormented by the demon .
- The boy himself, however, looks upward to Christ who is only hope.
- This lower scene is illuminated by light, but it is the pale light of a full moon, which is reflected very subtly in the lower left-hand corner.
- Glory on the mountain and majesty in the valley; united by their contrast and the truth they tell us. As Dr. R. Kent Hughes tells us, "Luke wants us to consider the majesty above and the majesty below together, for both belonged to Christ."⁸
- When taken together, I believe these moments offer us a microcosm of the Christian life.
- There are moments in the Christian life that are mountaintop experiences.
- There are moments when we walk through dark valleys.
- Moments of awestruck wonder and worship, as well as moments, dumbfounded confusion and frustration;
- Moments of sublime ecstasy and spiritual enlightenment and experience; Moments of darkness and normal brutal grind of daily lives.
- Some Christians are ever chasing moments of experience power and glory in times of gathered worship, but neglect our mission to a broken world.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 356.

- Like Peter, they would build a tabernacle and prolong such experiences forever, but in doing so they are failing to listen to what Jesus has called his people to do; to go into a messy and broken world and offer a message of hope!
- Some Christians have plunged their hands into the dirt and are working for the mission of God, but they are tempted to do this in their own strength and power.
- Like the disciples, they can be guilty of prayerlessness and self-effort, and they need to lift their eyes to the One who is above all!
- We must not be either/or. The Christian life needs both. We must seek to experience the glory of Christ in worship, and then scatter to display his glory in prayerful dependence to a broken world.
- We need seek the mountain, and embrace our valleys. Christ glory and majesty is in both places for those who have the eyes to see.

Conclusion

- But in the same way, I believe these to contrast moments offer us a microcosm of the gospel.
- Jesus has come from the glory of heaven to brokenness of earth for a reason.
- There is a definite mission with definite destination with a definite end.
- Jesus must climb down the mount of transfiguration so that he can climb the mountain of Calvary.
- He has a great exodus he must accomplish in Jerusalem.
- It is in Jerusalem that Jesus will be betrayed, and murdered. And it is Jerusalem that he will rise again and ascend to heaven. Many believe that it will be in Jerusalem that he will one day return.
- And because of this, we can know what the Peter, James, and John saw on the mountain, one day every eye will see – Christ in glory.
- May we have eyes to see the glory and majesty of God in all of life. May we have ears to hear and listen to his voice him. May we have hearts that would trust and depend on him. *AMEN.*

Community Group Discussion Starters

- 1.) Read and summarize the narrative of Luke 9:27-43a.
- 2.) In this text, Peter, John, and James witness Jesus revealed in heavenly glory. Have you ever had a “mountaintop experience” when you encountered the glory of God in a special way? If so, what was it like? Why do you think the normal Christian life isn’t typically like these experiences?
- 3.) After descending the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus encounters a crowd, and a man tells Jesus that his disciples were unable to cast a demon out of his son. Mark 9: 28-29 shows that the reason the disciples are unable to cast out this demon is a lack of prayer. When we encounter impossible situations, why is it often tempting to look to prayer only as a last resort?
- 4.) Here is a question if you want to go deeper. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke the story of the transfiguration of Jesus is immediately followed by the account of the demon-possessed boy. Why do you think the Bible consistently presents these stories side by side?

Bibliography

- A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Ed. Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2016
- Bailey, Kenneth E. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 2008.
- Beale, G.K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Vol. 19. New Studies in Biblical Theology. England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. 2nd. Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 2007.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Luke*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.
- Craddock, Fred B. *Luke*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990.
- Edwards, James R. [*The Gospel according to Mark*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002.
- Hughes, R. Kent. *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978.
- Plummer, Alfred. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*. International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark International, 1896.
- Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. Vol. 24. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.
- Wright, Tom. *Luke for Everyone*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.