

# They Saw His Glory

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[ 0 : 00 ] Alright, well we're continuing on with the story of Jesus in Luke chapter 9. Last week we reflected on those challenging words of Jesus about what's required to be a true follower of His.

! Today we're going to hear about one of the most spectacular things that ever happened with Jesus. I mean, if all we've already seen and heard already isn't spectacular enough, this one will top most of them.

But before we get to that, there's just this one verse that we didn't get to last week. One thing that Jesus said as He was teaching the crowd that I just want to take a brief moment to look at together with you.

Luke 9 verse 27. Jesus said, Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

Many stumble over these words. What Jesus seems to be saying is that there are some there in the crowd who will see the kingdom of God before they die.

[ 1 : 06 ] But then as we heard a couple weeks ago, Jesus has told the twelve that the kingdom of God is going to unfold in a way that's contrary to the people's expectations.

They're looking for that political, earthly rule right now. But Jesus has been telling His disciples that He must first suffer and be rejected and be killed.

And on the third day, rise again. So there's this unexpected path to how God's Messiah will come to the throne of God's kingdom.

It's going to happen through suffering and rejection and death. Rising from the dead. Ascending to the throne of heaven. And then returning to rule and to reign on an earthly throne.

And this is where we stumble over these words of Jesus. Because based on these words, maybe like the people in Jesus' day, we're either looking for the wrong kind of kingdom, or we're looking for the fullness of God's kingdom in the lifetime of these people.

[ 2 : 15 ] As the world might read these words, they would look at this and maybe come to the conclusion that Jesus is a false prophet. He was killed.

They would say He was rumored to have risen from the dead, and rumored to have been seen by His followers, and then He was never seen again. There was no kingdom of Jesus. And then not long after that, the Jews in the land were wiped out or scattered.

That's how our world may look at these words. As a prophecy of Jesus that never came true. But it's because they were looking for the wrong kind of kingdom altogether.

If we take Jesus' words seriously and believe them to be true, as they are, He must mean that the kingdom of God comes near and begins with power during the lives of these very people that He's speaking to.

Not the full measure of the kingdom, but a good measure of the kingdom. Breaking into our world. A significant demonstration of Christ's power in the lives of people.

[ 3 : 29 ] And I think by the time we get to the end of Luke's gospel, if we haven't already said yes, that's what we're seeing, I think we'll see that yes, it is obvious. It is visible.

God's kingdom has come with power. Enough that we can look back at these words and say, yes, we saw it. It came in our life, in the lifetimes of these people.

Not the final fullness, but the breaking in, the first light, the dawn of it. And so we'll keep an eye out for that as we carry on with the story.

Let's now go on to verse 28. After eight days, sorry, about eight days after Jesus said this, He took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

[ 4 : 32 ] Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

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. So this next spectacular thing that we just read happens about eight days after Jesus said what He did, what we just heard in verse 27.

Jesus takes only three of the twelve disciples with Him, Peter, James, and John, and they hike up a mountain. The purpose of this little trip, Luke tells us, was to pray.

[ 5 : 41 ] With the crowds always following Jesus around, there were very few ways to get away from them for time to talk with God. One way was to get into a boat, as we've seen already, and another way was to start hiking up a mountain.

And Luke's the only gospel writer who tells us that the purpose of this trip is to pray. And as we read this account, there's a very subtle hint here, I think, in the way Luke tells us.

None of the other gospel writers have some of these details. We notice, in verse 29, that as Jesus was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

And we'll talk about that transformation in a moment, but notice that it's as Jesus was praying that all this happened. As He was praying.

Not as they were praying. As He was praying. And then we get this strange explanation that comes kind of right in the middle of this whole thing, in verse 32.

[ 7 : 01 ] Peter and his companions were very sleepy. But when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.

It seems as though He almost goes back and tells a little bit more fully of what was happening here. It would be unlikely that they would have fallen asleep in the midst of all this, as they saw Jesus transform before their very eyes.

I think if we read it closely, Luke says that when they became fully awake, they saw His glory. The glory of Jesus.

So, I'm thinking probably what's happened here, which only Luke records, is that they became drowsy and fell asleep while Jesus was praying. And that's actually not the first time.

Or I should say, it's not the last time. If you know the story of Jesus, this is going to happen again. They fall asleep, probably while Jesus was praying, and then they sort of awaken from this to this sight of Jesus totally changed in His appearance.

[ 8 : 11 ] And whoa, there's two other guys with Him all of a sudden. Imagine this from their perspective. It's another one of those long prayers of Jesus.

Has anyone ever drifted to sleep while someone else was praying? I can see some of you nodding. I'll be honest. I have. It happens to us.

It happened back then, it seems. But then imagine this. All of a sudden, there's this bright light shining in your eyes, and you open them wider, and you're sort of remembering where you are and what's going on after you nodded off.

And whoa, Peter, look, Jesus is shining. You can bet that the drowsiness just sort of disappeared at that moment.

This was something they had never seen before. Luke says that the appearance of Jesus' face changed. Matthew, who was one of the twelve in his gospel, goes into a little more detail.

[ 9 : 21 ] In Matthew 17, verse 2, he says that Jesus' face shone like the sun. Think back to one of those moments where you've tried to look right at the sun.

It's so bright, you just can't look at it directly for very long. That's what Jesus' face was like in this moment. Shining so bright, it was like the sun.

And Luke says Jesus' clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Matthew says his clothes became as white as the light.

Mark, in his gospel, says his clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. It's hard to even imagine this, a sort of radiant and even blinding whiteness to his clothes.

Like, what's going on here? Luke says after this in verse 32, and this is probably the best summary of it, when they became fully awake, they saw his glory.

[10:50] All this light, this radiance, this transformation of Jesus is them seeing the glory of Jesus. It's them seeing that Jesus is more than just a man.

It's like a glimpse of his divine nature. Now, they probably weren't thinking about all these questions that I have in this moment, but I imagine them wondering about these things soon after.

Like, Jesus, can you explain what just happened to you? What is this? What was that all about? Did you know that you were shining like a blinding light?

Or is that just something that we were seeing? Did you do that to yourself? Or did that just happen to you?

Can you control it? Is this something that often happens when you're alone with the Father? I mean, it must have just utterly flabbergasted them in those moments.

[12:06] They believed that he was the Son of God before this. We just heard Peter's confession, you are the Christ, you are God's Messiah, the Son of the Living God. But that was a statement of faith based on the things that they had seen Jesus do and the things they had heard him say.

Outwardly, he was otherwise, he looked and acted like a normal man. he gets tired, he sleeps, he gets hungry, he eats.

There was that time that he walked on the water, but, you know, here it's like they get a glimpse beneath the surface of what the Son of God really looks like.

they see something of his divine nature, his glory, a glimpse of his radiance, a glimpse of who he really is, even before he became a man.

It reminds me of what John, one of the three who witnessed this, wrote in his gospel at the beginning. In John chapter 1 verse 14, John wrote this, he said, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

[13:31] We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

I wonder if John had this moment in his mind as he wrote those words. How do you think you would have reacted in this moment if you had been there?

You open your eyes and all of a sudden you see Jesus shining like the sun. What would your response have been? This isn't even half of it yet.

We're just getting started here. Not only did they see this glorious transformation of Jesus, suddenly there's two others with Jesus. Guys who didn't hike up the mountain with them are there.

Bam! And they too, Luke tells us, had this glorious appearance. They appeared in glorious splendor. Luke says they were talking with Jesus.

[14:40] And they are Moses and Elijah. I don't know how they figured that out. It doesn't say. Did they overhear Jesus saying their names?

Whatever the case, they figured out at some point that this is Moses and Elijah. Like Moses, the prophet that God used to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt almost 1500 years earlier. That's him right there. The guy who went up Mount Sinai and brought the Ten Commandments down is there talking with Jesus.

And Elijah, one of the greatest prophets in Israel's history. The one who lived in the days of the wicked king Ahab and queen Jezebel.

The one who called on God and there was drought in the land. And then who had that showdown with the prophets of Baal and called on God and God answered with fire.

[15:49] The same Elijah who did all kinds of wonderful miracles and then was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire 900 years-ish prior to this moment. There he was with Jesus.

Luke tells us that Jesus is discussing with them about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

this was absolutely wild and amazing. I mean there's all kinds of things that we could talk about here. For starters we see that Moses a man who lived over a millennium prior to Jesus coming is alive.

we read in the Old Testament about how he died before the Israelites entered the promised land but here he is he is alive and he exists in some sort of glorious state where he can simply appear and talk to Jesus and then disappear.

this is a glimpse for Peter, James and John of someone actually having life after death. It's another confirmation that Jesus isn't making things up when he says to the Sadducees later on that God is still the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob because he's not the God of the dead he's the God of the living.

[ 17 : 21 ] there really is a life with God after this one for those who have faith in him. Even before Jesus came God kept those who had faith in him.

And then of course there's the questions that we have about this. You know why? Why does Moses and Elijah just show up and talk to him? Why do they talk to Jesus now? Is this a sign mainly for Peter and James and John?

for their benefit? Or is this some kind of special gift of grace given to Moses and Elijah to talk with Jesus one last time before his departure?

And what is this departure that's about to be fulfilled at Jerusalem? Is it his departure from his body by his spirit when he dies?

Or is it his ascension to heaven afterwards? After he rises from the dead? Or is it all of that just kind of combined in one big moment? Moses and Elijah talk with Jesus and then they leave.

[ 18 : 30 ] But as they're about to leave, Peter interrupts. Verse 33, As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, Master, it's good for us to be here.

Let's put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. He did not know what he was saying. There's a sort of mixture of confusion and fright in this moment, and of course, we just don't know what Peter was thinking here.

Like, was he not wanting this moment to end? Was he not wanting them to leave? You know, maybe you can stay a little longer. Let's put up some tents and let's continue the conference tomorrow.

One for each of you. We'll get a tent for each of you. But wait a second, I mean, do Moses and Elijah even need tents? Or could they just reappear tomorrow morning if this is going to go on? Are they even present in bodily form? We don't know what Peter was thinking. Luke says even Peter didn't know himself what he was saying.

[ 19 : 41 ] And then things get even more spectacular. While Peter's still going on about putting up the shelters, a cloud appeared and covered them.

And they were afraid as they entered the cloud. This is fascinating. Let's start with that word covered. The cloud covered them.

The word used here means to darken something. Like by getting in the way of the light. To darken something. To cover. usually that's what happens when a cloud comes between the sun and you.

Casts a shadow. It darkens everything under it. But there wasn't a darkening from this cloud. Because as we read in Matthew, in his gospel, he tells us this was no typical cloud.

He says this was a bright cloud. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them. The word there means shining or radiant.

[ 20 : 53 ] And it seems to envelop Peter and James and John and Jesus on the mountain. And then all of a sudden they hear a voice come from the cloud.

A voice came from the cloud saying, this is my son whom I have chosen. Listen to him.

This is my son whom I have chosen. Listen to him. Now there were some other words there.

If we look at the other accounts, Matthew and Mark, God also in this moment says that Jesus is his beloved son and that he's pleased with him. Luke doesn't have those words.

He has something that the other two don't have. That he is God's chosen one. this is my son whom I have chosen.

[ 22 : 04 ] This is really important. It reminds us of the words of Isaiah spoken long before this. Isaiah 42 verse 1. Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.

I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. So God is making it crystal clear. Yes, this is my son. Do not take his words lightly. Listen to him.

When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. So just as suddenly as they awoke to all of this, it was over. It was just Jesus and them again.

No sign of Moses, no sign of Elijah. Matthew gives us the most detail in his gospel of how this thing ended. When they hear the voice of God speak, Matthew says, when the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified.

[ 23 : 18 ] But Jesus came and touched them. Get up, he said. Don't be afraid. When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

What an awesome moment this must have been. I mean, can you imagine this? They're afraid as this bright cloud covers them.

They hear God speak to them from the cloud. They hit the ground face down, terrified, and then the next thing they feel is Jesus' hand, and they hear his words of assurance.

They look up and they see no one except Jesus, probably returned to his normal appearance. What just happened?

imagine them. John, did you just see, did you hear what I heard? Where did Moses and Elijah go?

[ 24 : 28 ] What an awesome thing to have witnessed, right from the beginning to the end. Matthew tells us that Jesus forbids them to tell this to anyone.

that would be a hard one. Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.

Mark tells us that these three men later discuss, well what does that even mean, to rise from the dead? They didn't understand what was going to happen. And Luke concludes the whole story with this.

The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time or in those days what they had seen. Well eventually Jesus did rise from the dead.

And Peter did have opportunity to speak and to say what he saw. And he actually wrote down a little testimony of what he saw that day in one of his letters, 2 Peter 1 verses 16 to 18.

[ 25 : 43 ] This is how Peter describes that moment in his own words. He says, For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying, this is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. That's how Peter describes this moment with Jesus.

We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. How does God want us to respond to all this today?

Well, I think the first thing that comes to my mind is that Jesus is worthy of worship. He is the radiant, glorious, divine Son of God.

[ 26 : 59 ] And what Peter and James and John saw that day, when he was transformed and shone, that's what we're going to see when we next see him.

That's how he will appear. We will fall to our faces before him. Once we find the words to say, we will praise him, we will proclaim his majesty and his glory, just like Peter did.

And we'll do that like never before. But then I got thinking, we don't have to wait until that day to worship him like that.

Because right now, he has that glory. He is seated on heaven's throne in glory. We can worship him like that every day.

especially when we gather together like this. We can sing to him, we can praise him as if that's who he is because that is who he is.

[ 28 : 05 ] He is the glorious son of God. I also got thinking about Moses and Elijah.

There really is life after death. death is not the end. They were there with him. 1500 and 900 years after they walked the earth.

They were there. We can have life with Jesus too. After we die. That's his promise. If we repent and believe in him.

finally, what did God say to Peter and James and John about Jesus?

Specifically, what did he want them to do in response to all of this? I think God would have us respond in the same way. This is my son whom I have chosen.

[ 29 : 10 ] Listen to him. if there's only one thing that we do, this one thing will put us on the right path. To listen closely and carefully to Jesus, to everything he said, to take his words deep into our hearts.

This is God's will for us, for our lives, to listen to his son. So, four things.

We can worship Jesus. He is the radiant and glorious divine son of God. And we don't have to wait until heaven to do it.

We can do it now. He has that glory they saw right now. And we can rejoice in the reality that death is not the end for all of us who have faith in him.

And most of all, God's will for us is that we listen to Jesus. That we take his words in deeply, that we build our lives on his words.

[ 30 : 22 ] And one day soon, we read in the Bible that he will bust through the clouds with that same glory. And are we living in light of that day?

let's pray. Father in heaven, I pray that we would all be deeply stirred by this moment on the mountain.

Even though we weren't there, may we trust the account that we have that you've given us of what happened. May we stand in awe of your glory.

May it reorient our hearts and our minds. May it change our priorities. May we truly live in worship of you.

For you are worthy and your son, for he is worthy. Capture our hearts, we pray. Amen.