

## Transfiguration

### Text: Luke 9:28-36

<sup>28</sup>About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. <sup>30</sup>Two men, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they



became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. <sup>33</sup>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.) <sup>34</sup>While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” <sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

### Theme: You Should Really Listen to Him

Did you ever wonder why Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Why wasn't it Adam, Abraham, Jeremiah or Ezekiel? Of all of the characters in the Old Testament why did God choose Moses and Elijah? Theologians have tried to answer that question for centuries. Today, I would like to look at some interesting similarities in these two men and how Jesus was greater than each of them. If God wanted His people to listen to the prophets in the Old Testament, we should really take notice of what Jesus says because He is greater than any of the prophets.

#### I. Both Moses and Elijah needed someone to complete their work.

Moses brought Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. After the Passover Pharaoh finally allowed God's people to leave. Moses led them through the Red Sea. He brought them to Mount Sinai where God made His covenant with them. They spent about a year at Mount Sinai. It took them about 11 more days to get to Kadesh, which was near the promised land. (Dt 10:11-12:6) From the Desert of Paran, they sent 12 spies into Canaan. They all said that the land was good, but 10 of them said the Canaanites would destroy them. At first the people decided to elect a new leader and return to Egypt. Because of their disobedience, they wandered for 40 years in the desert until everyone who was 20 years old or older died there. In place of Moses, a man named Joshua would be the one to bring Israel into the promised land.

Elijah lived several hundred years later, during a period in which Israel was divided. He was sent to the northern kingdom, during the time of some of the most wicked kings. He called on the people to give up the worship of Baal and to worship the Lord alone. His greatest achievement was when he challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. Whichever god lit the sacrifice

himself from heaven, he is God. Nothing happened when the prophets of Baal called on their god, but God heard Elijah's prayer and consumed the entire sacrifice with fire from heaven. The people slaughter the prophets of Baal in the Kishon Valley. But things didn't go well for Elijah either. Queen Jezebel vowed to kill Elijah. He fled to Mount Sinai where he prayed that God would take his life. God sent Elijah back to Israel, and he had Elijah anoint a new prophet to take his place. That prophet's name was Elisha.

There is a striking similarity in these two stories. Both Joshua and Elisha are variations of Hebrew names that means "Yahweh (the LORD) saves." Neither Moses nor Elisha were able to complete their work, but someone with the name "Yahweh Saves" completed their work. Guess what the name Jesus means? It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. It also means "Yahweh Saves." Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that the prophets said and did. Their work was never complete until Jesus came. He fulfilled all of their prophecies. He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. He bore our sins and carried our sorrows. By His wounds on the cross, we are healed. Jesus fulfilled the work of all of the prophets in the Old Testament. When He died on the cross, He could exclaim, "It is finished."

II. The second similarity is that both Moses and Elijah had interesting departures from their world.

Moses was told that he would see the promised land, but he would not enter it. He climbed Mount Nebo in Moab and God showed him the whole land that Israel would inherit. After Moses saw the land, he died at the age of 120. God buried him in Moab, and no one ever knew where Moses grave was. Elijah really left this world in a blaze of glory. Elisha followed Elijah to the other side of the Jordan River. Suddenly a chariot of fire appeared and separated the two of them and took Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind. (2 Ki 2:11) Jesus departure was greater than either of theirs. He had been brutally crucified. Then He rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples for a period of 40 days. His departure was different from that of either of these men. He was on the Mount of Olives with His disciples when suddenly He was taken upon into heaven, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. An angel appeared and said, *"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11) Christ ascended into heaven as the one who completed our salvation. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He rules all things for the good of His people and is preparing a place for the day when we shall go to be where He is. As great as the departures for Moses and Elijah were, they would not even compare to Jesus' departure from this world. He ascended as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

III. That is why the Father's voice tells us to listen to Him.

A few weeks ago we heard the story of Jesus' baptism when He began His ministry. At that time the Father's voice said, *"You are My Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* Today Jesus is about to begin His final journey to Jerusalem. The Father now tells the disciples, *"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him."* Because men like Moses and Elijah were called by God, the people should have listened to Him. But now God's own Son has spoken to us. We should really pay attention.

What does Jesus tell us? He speaks of His cross. Just before this story Jesus told the disciples, *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the*

*law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*” It’s interesting that Luke doesn’t include this, but Matthew and Mark tell us that Peter took the Lord aside and rebuked Him. He said, *“This shall never happen to you.”* But listen to Jesus when He speaks of His cross. Our message as Christians is Christ crucified. It was on that cross that He bore all of our sins. In the cross we see just how horrific our sins are and how much God hates sin. But we especially see the love of God for us, that His own Son was willing to bear the punishment for our sins, that we might receive His forgiveness. When we listen to Jesus, we hear Him calling us to repent of our sins, to trust in His forgiveness, and to follow Him as our Savior.

He also speaks of our crosses. Jesus went on to say, *“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up His cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save His life will lose it, but whoever loses His life for Me will save it.”* A lot of people have the misperception that when we trust in Jesus, our lives will go great. We will be healthy, wealthy, and popular. God does bless our lives. He defends us from all evil, but we also have our crosses to bear. The devil himself attacks us, just as he attacked Jesus. He brings misery into our lives. He turns people against us. He brings one temptation after the next. We will never have heaven on this earth. The very hosts of hell are at war against us. If we are looking for heaven now, we will lose it for eternity. If we give up following Jesus now because the cost seems too high, we will come to realize following Jesus was worth everything that we have. There is nothing as valuable as knowing Jesus as our Savior. The glory that we will receive is greater than any cross that we bear in this life.

Why do we want to listen to Jesus? The answer is simple. He is greater than Moses, Elijah, and all of the prophets combined. They all pointed to Him and His great salvation for us. As impressive as their departures were, they never left this world as the Lord and Savior of this world. Listen to Him, and you will hear the voice of your Savior calling you to leave your sins and cares behind, so that you will receive His forgiveness and help in this life and also receive a blessed departure to His eternal glory.

Amen.

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