

Sunday, October 1, 2023 | Everyday Disciple

Week 23 | Luke 9:28-36 | "The Human Tabernacle"<sup>1</sup>

Last week, we answered the *most significant* question anyone can ask: "Who is Jesus?" The crowds were confused about his identity. They thought he was John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other prophet. But what did the Apostles believe about the Lord? Divinely inspired, Peter proclaimed him "the Christ of God." This was the *correct* answer. But, as Jesus' comments afterward demonstrated, the disciples didn't fully *comprehend* what being the Messiah *meant*.

Unlike what most people assumed, Jesus was destined for affliction, rejection, glorification, and resurrection. Likewise, any who follow the Messiah will follow the same path. **Jesus is the Messiah, and, as such, his followers will be like him in his afflictions, rejections, glorification, and resurrection.** Or, as Jesus put it, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

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Today, God will lend his *voice* to the conversation swirling around Jesus' identity. As we know, the crowds have their theories (cf. Lu. 9:7-9), and the lead apostle, Peter, has conveyed his confession (cf. Lu. 9:20), but what of Yahweh? This is not the first time he's weighed in on such matters (cf. Lu. 3:22). Given the topic, it seems appropriate that the Father should brag about his Son, right?

What's more, there's been considerable confusion about who Jesus is. Thus, the disciples are fortunate that the Father speaks up. If not, they might've been even *more* perplexed than they already were (cf. Mat. 16:23). Though many good and godly people, like Moses and Elijah, there has *never* been a man like Jesus. The Lord is *unique*, and it is to him that all must listen and obey.

I want you to notice *three* things:

**i. Jesus' Transfiguration (vs. 28-31 ).**

**READ:** Luke 9:28-31 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> Now, about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And as he was praying, the appearance of his

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<sup>11</sup> Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 279.

face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.<sup>30</sup> And behold, two men were talking with him, **Moses** and **Elijah**,<sup>31</sup> who appeared in glory and spoke of his **departure**, which he was about to **accomplish** at Jerusalem.

Jesus changed while he spoke with Moses and Elijah. **Though imperfect, the closest parallel to this account is when Moses saw the back of God on Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex. 33:17-23).** Afterward, the Israelites had to cover Moses' face with a veil because he somehow radiated light (cf. Ex. 34:29-35). Being in the *literal* presence of God altered Moses' physical features.

**But unlike Moses, Jesus transformation came from *within* not without.** Luke tells us his "face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white." Jesus' face was the face of an average man until, suddenly, it wasn't. His clothes were once nondescript, and then, in a moment, they changed. This alteration came about not because Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah. Many have conversed with heavenly beings and not been changed (cf. Gen. 18:2-15; 19:1-22; Josh. 5:13-15; Lu. 1:1-80; etc.). Therefore, it seems that, for a moment, Jesus' divinity shone through the fleshly veil. What the incarnation usually dulled was brought into startlingly brilliance.

**Why did Jesus specifically converse with Moses and Elijah? There are two plausible explanations:**

**First, Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets.** That all three of them meet together to discuss Jesus' "departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," demonstrates how Jesus is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets in the O.T. The problem with this explanation is that while it is possible to associate Moses with the Law (he did write the Pentateuch after all), Elijah, while an important figure, is never implied to be the symbolic figurehead for all the prophets.<sup>2</sup> Daniel, Samuel, or Ezekiel would've been better candidates for such a role as they impact the O.T. far more than Elijah.

**OR**

**Second, and most plausibly, Moses and Elijah represent the prophetic office and the impending end.** The Messiah was supposed to be a Moses-like figure who would bring a new era similar to Moses, leading Israel's children out of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Elijah is the prophet most associated with the end times. In **Mal. 4:4-6**, we're told, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." **Thus, Elijah emphasizes the**

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 281-282.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 282.

**eschatological aspect of Jesus' Transfiguration.**<sup>4</sup> This also pairs well within the immediate context since both his "departure"—i.e., **ἔξοδος** (exodus), and what he will soon "accomplish"—i.e., **πληρώω** (plēroō), is talked about at the same time. **Jesus is where prophecy and eschatology meet.** This is to say like Israel exiting Egypt in the Book of Exodus, the Lord looks to *lead* his people out of bondage and to usher in the "last days" wherein all the promises of the Messiah will be *fulfilled*.

**So, what does all this mean?** As we talked last week, the Lord is about to "suffer many things" and then be "rejected," "killed," and "resurrection." The Transfiguration (as well as God's affirmation in verse 35) is the sign that those future happenings are per God's instructions. "Moses and Elijah reinforce the preeminent Lukan theme that Jesus is not a "walk-on" in the divine economy, but the fulfillment of God's historical purpose for Israel and, through Israel, for the world."<sup>5</sup> **Jesus is the Messiah. He is Moses-esque and the one to usher in the last days alongside Elijah.** Contrary to what everyone else thought at the time, Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension have been the moment that all of human history has been moving towards. **The Transfiguration proved that such a plan was according to the scriptures.**

Coincidentally, this is why N.T. authors will, on the one hand, speak of the age since Jesus' ascension as a present reality—i.e., "we live in the last days" (1 Jn. 2:18). But, on the other hand, those same authors will also talk of the end times as a future event—i.e., "the end is coming" (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-13). **We're in the *inauguration period* wherein the Messiah has come, ushering in the final age; however, Jesus has yet to set up his earthly throne, so he will, eventually, come again to finish the work he started.** We might say we are in the "now-not-yet" phase of God's plan (cf. Jn. 4:23). The Messiah came, and, yes, the end draws nigh, but there is still time left before the Last Day. How much time? Not even Jesus knows (cf. Mar. 13:32-37).

ii. **Peter's Transgression (vs. 32-33)**

**READ:** Luke 9:32-33 (ESV)

<sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here.

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<sup>4</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), p. 869, "Such a witness function for Elijah caused the Jew Trypho to challenge the Christian Justin's claims about Jesus, since for Trypho Elijah had not appeared but was still expected. [In the footnotes] The Transfiguration is a counterargument to Trypho's objections."

<sup>5</sup> Edwards (2015), p. 282.

Let us make **three** tents, one for **you** and one for **Moses** and one for **Elijah**—not **knowing** what he said.

Jesus is **twice-visited** by heavenly beings in Luke: here and on the Mount of Olives (22:39-46). **Both times, the disciples were found sleeping.** But, unlike in 22:46, the apostles' drowsiness is not explicitly condemned here. It seems the Lord was given to praying for long periods, and even those closest to him found it difficult to stay awake.

Quite unknowingly, Peter transgressed a line. But what line? It wasn't the fact that he wanted to build some shelters. At worst, that indicates a heart given to hospitality, not evidence that Peter was little better than a ham-fisted fisherman. At best, it shows how, even just being roused from sleep, the lead apostle knew this moment was exceptional, holy even, and thus, deserving of commemoration. After all, the Greek word used here is the same used to describe the Tabernacle in the O.T.<sup>6</sup>

So the problem wasn't the tents; it was the fact that he wanted to erect **three** of them. Three tabernacles implied that Jesus was on the **same level of importance** as Moses and Elijah. Considering that Jesus is God incarnate, the transgression is apparent to all who read Luke's account. This is why he even inserts his own editorial comment: "not knowing what he said." **It is like the scene in a movie where the main character says the wrong thing at the wrong time (i.e., Pride & Prejudice).**

### iii. **God's Translation (vs. 34-36)**

**READ:** Luke 9:34-36 (ESV)

<sup>34</sup> As he was saying these things, **a cloud** came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> And a **voice** came out of the cloud, saying, "This is **my Son**, my Chosen One; **listen** to him!" <sup>36</sup> 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.

The scene before the disciples was as foreign as it could get. **They were like foreigners trying to understand other foreigners.** Except, rather than the two parties—i.e., Peter, James, and John vs. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah—being from different countries, the two groups were from different *realms*, one earthly and the other heavenly. **But the confusion resided squarely on the shoulders of the disciples.** Though Moses and Elijah were important figures, they were

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<sup>6</sup> Edwards (2015), p. 283.

secondary to Jesus. Moses knew this. Elijah knew this. And, yes, Jesus knew this. Peter, James, and John desperately needed someone to translate the scene before them.

**And so, in steps God Himself.** Since Peter didn't know what he actually said, God took it upon himself to correct this well-meaning but misled apostle. Like someone needing a translation, because they're utterly confused, God gave Peter a *translation* that he could understand.

**Interestingly, God used *two things* to help correct the disciples' misunderstanding: a cloud and a voice.** Apparently, the disciples were audio/visual learners.

**First, God used a cloud.** Funny enough, as Origen pointed out, if Peter thought they needed shelter, Yahweh would shelter them in "a cloud" of his *own glory*. And, most telling, God did the exact same thing on Mount Sinai (cf. Ex. 24:16), with the Tabernacle (cf. Ex. 40:35), and then again with the Temple (1 Ki. 8:10-11). **Jesus' Transfiguration and God's manifestation in the cloud are symbols of his *presence*.** **Yahweh no longer dwells on a mountaintop, a temporary tent, or a temple; he now resides with men in bodily form through Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 1:14; Rev. 21:3).**

**Second, God used a voice.** If the cloud wasn't enough to get the message across, then God's word would ensure the disciples would not miss the point of the Transfiguration. In no uncertain terms, God said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" **Moses and Elijah are great and all, but who would want to talk to them when God is standing before you?** *(That would be like meeting Paul McCartney but then asking to see Ringo Star. Or meeting Cal Ripkin Jr. and asking him about the bat boy.)* And, as if to highlight this point, after God finished speaking, the disciples were left **alone** with the Lord. The cloud was gone. Moses and Elijah were gone. And all that was left was Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the human Tabernacle of the Almighty.

**So, what's the takeaway?**

Jesus is **the best** that God has to **offer** and the **best** we could hope to **find**.

**READ:** John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is the *singular* Way.

When Jesus says he is "the way," he is saying he's the means, that the only access to God is through him. He is the door where there was no door before (cf. Jn. 10:1, 7, 9).

Christianity is not tolerant nor inclusive in this regard (cf. Ac. 4:12). Like a lone light on a dark horizon, Jesus stands in striking relief against the backdrop of our hopeless existence (cf. Jn. 1:5). Though only a few may find it, he beckons all to come to him. But, make no mistake, the call must come on his terms, by his direction, according to his way. The path to Jesus does not meander; it is "straight" (cf. Mat. 7:13). The way is not wide but "narrow" (Mat. 7:14). There are no other roads that lead to God. And, just in case that wasn't clear enough, Jesus even says, "No man comes to the Father except through me." There are not multiple ways to heaven. There is only Jesus Christ, the Way incarnate (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:20).

Jesus is the *singular* Truth.

When Jesus says he is "the truth," he is saying that he is reality, that the only real thing in all the universe is him. John noted in 1:3, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Flip a mountain on its side, and you will find "Made by Jesus" stamped with indelible ink by its roots (cf. Ps. 19:1-2). He is the one by whom the worlds were created and by whom we continue to exist (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the first mover; he sets into motion movement; he puts the planets into orbit. The Lord is the first cause; he tips the first piece in a chain reaction; he lights the match that ignites stars. Gravitational forces persist because the Lord has not given them leave to stop. Truth, be it from the spiritual or physical realm, cannot be found apart from the Son of God. Christians insist that 'all truth is God's truth' for good reason. If we should happen upon some new discovery, we (perhaps) might take some credit for finding it, but we would never take credit for making it. Old, new, and undiscovered truths all bear the marks of Jesus Christ, the Truth incarnate.

Jesus is the *singular* Life.

When Jesus says he is "the life," he is saying that he is purpose, that the only meaning that has any real meaning is to be found in him. One cannot truly exist apart from him. Whatever a person might be without Jesus, they are not their truest selves as they were meant to be (cf. Ps. 139:13-16). Like a candle without a flame, life has no light if Jesus is absent from our lives. The Lord alone animates and energizes our very essence. Without him, we become lifeless husks, ghouls who experience a dull and listless existence. But with him, we become children again, adolescents who experience a vibrant and driven life (cf. Jn. 3:3). As John said in his prelude, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men.....[and] to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..." (1:4, 12). "Life," "light," and "right" are

found at the hand of the Son of God, and he gives them freely to all those who put their faith in him. He gives us breath and keeps us breathing (cf. Gen. 2:7). He gives us thought and keeps us thinking (cf. Psa. 139:13-14). He gives us life and keeps us living (cf. Deut. 32:39). Listen to a baby's first cry, and you will also hear the Life-Giver singing. Smell the first flowers of spring, and you will breathe in his sweet fragrance. Savor a season's first fruit, and you will delight in Jesus Christ, the Life incarnate.

With all that said, do you follow "the Way" and His leading? Does "the Truth" make His home in you? Will "the Life" warmly embrace you when your life fades away? I hope so. How tragic it would be if the way you traveled led only to a ditch. How awful it would be if the truth you believed led only to deception. And, truly, truly, how horrible it would be if the life you lived led only to death's cruel embrace.

You will never be satisfied if you're looking for someone better than Jesus. **Jesus is the best that God has to offer and the best we could hope to find.**

## Video Description

### **Everyday Disciple | Week 23 | “The Human Tabernacle” (Luke 9:28-36)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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### **Grace Pointe Baptist Church**

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: [info@GracePointeLife.com](mailto:info@GracePointeLife.com)

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