

Luke 9:28-36 pm

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Date: 28 October 2012

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 9, 28 to 36. About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up into a mountain to pray.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 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. While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them. And they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud saying, This is my son whom I have chosen.

[1 : 17] Listen to him. 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.

A taste of heaven. That's what you feel when you read carefully the passage that we read. Luke 9, 28, 36.

Even earthly Peter, you know how he was, bold, enthusiastic, sometimes foolish, as here. But he's so taken up with the experience, he wants to stay around. And you can't blame him for that, can you?

He wants to prolong it. Because the presence of heaven came down to earth. Now, some people think a fortnight on a sunny beach is a taste of heaven.

I don't know whether that's you. You know, let's go for the sun. Oh, wonderful. A taste of heaven. Others might think roaming around a second-hand Christian bookshop is a taste of heaven.

[2 : 24] You fancy doing that? Ah, a taste of heaven. Read the Puritans, read the great writers of the past and learn from it. I hope at some time each Christian has enjoyed their personal quiet time.

I wonder if you stayed long enough in a quiet time really to meditate, really to think about what you've read and what you're praying, so that you come from your room saying, this is a taste of heaven.

But here, heaven as a reality seems to come onto this mountain. Now, sometimes we call it, of course, the transfiguration of Jesus.

The original word? Metamorphosis. What a great word. Metamorphosis, or change of form. That's what it is. At the simplest level, a caterpillar changes in two stages and becomes a beautiful butterfly.

It doesn't matter. Metamorphosis. Basic biology tells us that. But something else. It's part of God's glorious design and the change is always to something better.

[3 : 30] Butterfly is nicer than a caterpillar, I would think, or the in-between as well. Always something better. So the normal human form of our Lord was enhanced before their very eyes.

As though the Lord Jesus was in the place that he deserved to be, namely in heaven. But he came as a man as well as being God. So on this particular occasion, he himself was transformed.

He was metamorphosed, if you like, as they saw him. That's the word that's used. That's what transfiguration means. And the same word is used for a change when somebody becomes a Christian.

It's very interesting. You're the same, but you've changed. And you've changed for the better. By definition of being a Christian. You may not have gone far in the Christian life, but that's another matter.

You're set apart for God already. Sanctification takes a lifetime, doesn't it? But nevertheless, we've metamorphosed. Here's another one. So, God instructs us to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[4 : 32] What's the word transformed in the Greek? Metamorphosis. So not only have we changed by nature, we have a new nature. We're commanded to be transformed.

Now that's a command. That's something we must assist in. God does the work in us through Christ. But nevertheless, this is where we have to obey. So that we do not quench the spirit.

To be transformed in the renewing of our mind. In other words, be disciplined with your mind. What you watch, what you say, what you do. And the Lord will, obviously, he does the transformation.

But we're meant to help. That's where we are partners with God. It's not just left to him. We need some self-discipline, clearly. Otherwise, your mind cannot be renewed if you're saying and thinking and doing things that are not in his will.

But it's encouraging. It's an inner change. And it goes on changing. Better. But as far as this event is concerned, the metamorphosis of Jesus.

[5 : 38] Peter later writes, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Isn't that great? Wouldn't it be lovely to capture something of that? After all, it's in the word that we're reading. So a taste of heaven.

Firstly, then, a sight from heaven. A sight from heaven. And here we read verses 28 to 30. About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter and John and James with him and went up on a mountain to pray.

As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor. Talking with Jesus.

Now, they went up to pray. It's not a coincidence that their experience of such a vision came when they were praying. To be honest, as they prayed, they got sleepy as well.

We read about Peter, James and John. But nevertheless, you expect the best experience when you're actually talking to God and when you're reading the word. And so if you expect some special experience or a vision or something in some other context, that's questionable.

[6 : 43] Because here, it comes out of a prayer life. Spiritual experiences come out of a prayer life. And so we must remember that. They went up to pray.

The noblest possible activity. When our Lord and his clothing altered. And notice it is him. Yes, Peter, James and John did also get involved in looking in that brightness.

But the focus is on Christ. The word transfiguration or metamorphosis refers to him, not the disciples. That becomes clearer in one or two different versions of the Bible.

And his clothing altered became whiter than any launderers. Yes, whiter than Fuller soap. There was the name of a soap manufacturer called Fuller, you know.

But they were taken over by somebody else. Good idea to call your soap name Fuller. Because here it is, launderers. Whiter than any Fuller, any launderer could possibly be. Really white.

[7 : 39] Transformed in such a way. White as that. White as the light, Matthew tells us. It's indicating the purity of heaven and of Jesus himself.

Now and then I'll refer to Matthew's version. You don't need to look at it yourself unless you want to. Now, what about this? Moses and Elijah were there. Isn't it amazing?

Think about that. Moses was dead. So what's he doing? Appearing in glorious splendor. Moses was 120 years when he died.

We know God buried him, but don't let that put us off. He died and was buried. That's still the point. God told Joshua, Moses, my servant, is dead. So he, Joshua, must now lead the children of Israel.

This is victory over death. The encouragement to me here is that Moses appears, and it could have been any believer of old that appeared. There's not something about Moses that allowed him to be here.

[8 : 39] God chose Moses to appear. What does that tell us? Life after death, immediately. Because Moses died. Here he was, even before the cross. Well, that should make us wonder, shouldn't it?

You'd see the implication of Moses appearing here. It could have been any believer. What does it mean? Well, it means for us, certainly, that there is heaven after death immediately. Because that's where Moses came from.

There's no some sort of abyss, or somewhere in between, or some sort of Hades for us now. Die, go to heaven, to be with Christ, which is far better. And Moses, clearly his soul is alive here.

His body's in the ground, but so what? He's unable to appear here. What form he was in, I don't know whether God gave him a body or not. I would guess so, because he was speaking with his mouth.

But Moses will be part of the resurrection. He's not resurrected before us. No way. The Lord Jesus is the first to be resurrected, and we'll follow him on the day of resurrection.

[9 : 44] So there's going to be no favoritism there. This is victory over death. Now, Moses was there, representing, we believe, the Lord. That's the way it's always said, and it's probably right, because you've got Moses and you've got Elijah.

And Elijah represents the prophets. I'll go along with that. Moses represents the law. Although they weren't holding books under their arms, I'm sure, that would indicate which was which. I'm not quite sure how they recognised him.

If you've got ideas, let me know. But it's not plain here. The law points to Jesus because people realise they can't keep the law. That's the value of the law, isn't it?

Yes, we want to keep God's law, but the real reason it's there is it's a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. We know we can't keep the law, and therefore it throws us onto the mercy of God.

That's what the purpose of the law was meant to be. This is what people need to know, that sin is where we break the law. Ask for God's mercy, otherwise you'd pay for your own sin, but Christ has died for us, so therefore we can trust in him to take the punishment.

[10 : 50] He's taken it already for us. So the law points us to Jesus because people realise they can't be saved by keeping the law, and we are instead just bowed down, asking for God's mercy, and that's how a person is ideally saved.

But as a human being, Moses had failed. It's not as though he deserved to have this appearance himself, because he failed. He disobeyed God in the matter of obtaining water from a rock when the people needed it.

It was the second occasion it occurred for thirsty people during the wilderness. He never entered the promised land because he got greedy, and he disobeyed God. Oh, sorry, he got angry, not greedy.

He got angry with the people about getting water out the rock. And it's straight after that that God says, you're not going to reach the promised land. Joshua, somebody else is going to take you in.

So whereas normally, the children of Israel are a great illustration of the church, because they went from Egypt to the promised land. We go from the depths of sin to the promised land, heaven.

[11 : 56] That illustration breaks down here. Why? Because Moses never reached the promised land. He never entered it. But he did enter heaven. Interesting. He went into heaven, and he appears here, even though his body is still in the ground.

Lots of interesting things here. We're encouraged then that God could have sent any deceased believer, that is, somebody who died, onto that mountain, because any believer goes to heaven on death.

Then look at Elijah, the other person here, representing, we believe, all the prophets of the Old Testament. They all foretell the coming of Jesus. The focus of both of them is Christ himself, not themselves.

The whole thing is Christ-centered. On the resurrection day, our Lord was speaking to two followers on the way to Emmaus, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scripture the things concerning himself, that the Lord knew was going to come, prophesied by the prophets, and Elijah and Moses, representing the law.

He expounded to them that all things in scripture from beginning to end, referring to himself before he ever came from heaven's glory to earth by human birth, that again we're going to celebrate in a few weeks' time.

[13 : 28] Now, did Elijah deserve this, to be in such centrality of glory with Christ? Now, there was a time when Elijah was scared, very scared.

He was scared of Jezebel. Should he have been? No. Even though she was an ungodly queen of Israel and had plenty of power, Elijah sadly was very scared.

She threatened him with death. He ran for his life to escape death. He walked for a full day into desert land and then he got depressed.

And when he got depressed, he asked God, could he die? He's just run away from death and now he's seeking death and the irony is he never died. Strange, isn't it?

To escape death, then look for death and then be translated into heaven. Well, he couldn't have been the most perfect man on earth. He couldn't have deserved it. God just chose that. He was going to be carried across into heaven.

[14 : 30] That's the way it is. Not because he was already sanctified or pure. That's a comfort in itself. 2 Kings 2.11 tells us, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses, a fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

One Saturday, I was listening to the radio. The sport, I'm quite interested in sport. There was a rugby union match. It was a World Cup match between England and somebody. I forget who it was.

So it was Radio 5 Live. And the presenter wanted to know the origin of England's signature song. You probably don't know it, so I'll give you the first line. Swing low, sweet chariot, coming forward to take me home.

Ah, rings a bell, doesn't it? I emailed them at the BBC to give them the Elijah story because the chariot came and took Elijah home. Within no more than half an hour, they broadcast it.

Radio 5 Live, this chap from Leeds, has got the origin of this song. Hey, it's about Elijah, he says. They got this panel on and they were flummoxed when they heard it.

[15 : 38] God has his way of getting the scripture out. So that's Elijah. So here is a man who had died, Moses. Here is a man who'd been carried across into heaven, Elijah.

Here is a man, Jesus, who had not yet died at all. Three different basic forms, situations of themselves. Interesting.

They appear together, all in glory on the mountain. But it's the Lord Jesus who was metamorphosed in front of them. That was a sight from heaven.

Secondly then, a voice from heaven. All of this representing a taste of heaven up there on the mountain. Well, first of all, let's talk about the voices from heaven.

Not just the voice from heaven who is from God the Father. But actually, Moses, Elijah and Jesus, well, their voices in a sense were from heaven because they'd all been there.

[16 : 41] And we're going to return there in due course. The glorified Moses and Elijah with our Lord who came from heaven's glory in the first place. What did they talk about?

Well, you'd have thought they might say they'd be talking about heaven. They'd be talking about heaven. Elijah, Moses, the Lord Jesus would be good when we go back to heaven, when we see the glory there instead of on this mountain.

They could have been talking about that. Looking forward to going back perhaps, not at all. It was about our Lord's coming departure. Verse 31.

That's why I've chosen this particular gospel because it brings this in. Appeared in glory splendour, talking with Jesus, they spoke about his departure, his decease, his death.

Imagine that. There you are, transfigured, on the mountain. Peter, James and John, wonderful spiritual experience, and they're talking about his death. What do we learn from that? What we learn is the glory of the cross is greater than any spiritual experience that we might temporally enjoy on this earth.

[17 : 50] Isn't that true? Everything points to the cross, even here. They talked about his decease. That's the word that comes in another version. Isn't that amazing?

We may not understand fully the glory of the cross because it didn't take place in great bright splendour. In fact, the glory of the cross took place in darkness for three hours.

Glory isn't always as we think it is. The glory of heaven, of course, is real. But here, there's enormous glory in the cross itself. So, Moses and Elijah were privy to the coming cross and the Lord was talking about that.

It could have been a temptation for the Lord to say, I like this transfiguration, let's stay here and go back to heaven. No, he didn't because he was going to sacrifice himself for us and go to the cross all the way.

The Lord Jesus determined to die for us even though it came through wicked hands. Here we see time and time again the sovereignty of God over even the wicked things that happen.

[18 : 57] He even uses the wicked things for his glory. And that happens in your life and mine. Without a doubt, don't be upset when wicked things happen and evil people prosper. Because if it happened on the cross, the best thing happened on the cross and people sinfully put him on the cross, the cruel Romans, the Jews who twisted words, Judas himself betrayed, none of those things were right and good.

And yet, God used it. If that's the case, then you can see how all things work together for good to those who love God.

Because reading between the lines, there are so many bad things that happen and yet God works everything for good. So, God was in charge of all that even though there were so many criminally responsible for the death of our Lord.

God's So, the value of Christ's suffering is greater than the value of any of our spiritual experiences, however deep and real they are. Certainly for Peter, it does say he didn't know what he was doing.

Not surprising because he was in this experience and it was deep and real. Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah, which indicates he wanted them to stay a while.

[20 : 21] That's what a tabernacle was for. It's a glorious experience. But Moses and Elijah could not even have appeared alive like this without the cross.

How come Moses and Elijah are appearing there though Moses had already died because no one can get to heaven without the cross and that was still to come? My, that's clever, isn't it?

The God of time who made all things is able to make the cross, make the effect of the cross work backwards to this situation. That's what's happening here because if the cross wasn't 100% sure, Moses could never have appeared.

The Bible says so. There's no life, there's no life without Jesus' cross and resurrection. It's impossible. Yet this happened before the cross that made it all happen, that made it all possible.

My, your mind blows with this. what's going on here? Couldn't even have appeared without the cross which was 100% sure there's no other way of eternal life except the free gift of faith in our Lord's sacrifice which hadn't yet happened.

[21 : 34] So the fact that our Lord's suffering was yet to come was no problem to God. The success of the cross was already assured before they got there and the fruit of it was there for all to see.

Namely, Moses and Elijah, particularly Moses. Amazing. But then there was the, another voice from heaven.

There were three voices there from heaven but there was one lone voice that is of God the Father. Powerful. Verse 35. We get this lone voice which is God himself, God the Father.

A voice came from the clouds saying, this is my son whom I have chosen. Listen to him. When the voice had spoken they found that Jesus was alone. Well one reason is actually that a cloud came and Elijah and Moses disappeared and Jesus came back to his normal form form if I can put it that way.

Listen to Jesus. What does that mean? Well he's always talking the truth. Listen to him. This son of God of mine. God the Son.

[22 : 53] Listen to him because he's always truthful and always gracious. The truth about his deceased to come. The truth about life. The truth about death. The truth about morality.

Right and wrong. The truth about the need to be forgiven and saved. And of course we're reminded of the baptism of our Lord by John the Baptist in Matthew 3.17 where the lone voice from heaven said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

The words are very similar. A cloud had now enveloped them. And Peter goes from spiritual excitement to fear as the cloud envelops the disciples too.

It was misty. It was cloudy over the tops this morning. I'm glad to say I wasn't afraid of it. But it was from the cloud that the voice of God the Father was heard.

Why? Because it's to encourage the disciples that Jesus is indeed Son of God Messiah to testify to Christ's authority listen to him. Even though before long our Lord would be treated as a common criminal.

[24 : 13] In Matthew's version chapter 17 verse 6 and when the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. A voice from heaven. They're weak like we are.

Sometimes we're afraid. Sometimes we don't realise that God is in control. and we need a touch from heaven and that's the next point isn't it? A touch from heaven. Sight from heaven a voice from heaven now a touch from heaven.

Some people feel almost a touch a physical touch from heaven. I'm not being super spiritual at all I'm not being over the top on this spiritual experiences we shouldn't be over the top on spiritual experiences but it's better than having none at all.

A touch from heaven. We remain in Matthew's report for this in chapter 17 verse 7 but Jesus came and touched them and said arise and do not be afraid. A touch from heaven because our Lord was from heaven in Matthew's gospel it tells us therefore he touched them each one.

I guess he appeared he remained there after Elijah and Moses had gone and he touched them you've just got to believe that he went one by one and touched them because that itself will be a comfort and assurance to them and often in our prayer life in our devotions we want to feel and do almost feel a touch from heaven as though it's almost physical.

[25 : 41] Arise and do not be afraid. It's one thing to see and then hear the things of heaven but now they were physically and individually touched. It says but Jesus came.

They were afraid but Jesus came and touched them because he was afraid and it was a touch of reassurance comfort strength peace and the Lord Jesus meets us when we're in such need even if not with a physical touch I'm not saying that.

There was a similar situation that's why we read from Daniel if you notice that connection. Daniel had seen a vision of our Lord. He was left without strength like Peter, James and John were here.

We read it in Daniel 10 1 to 19. Three times the Lord touched Daniel firstly to bring him from a lying down position up onto his knees and then standing up.

It was a recovery touch. Secondly, so that Daniel would be able to prophesy for God and this is where I say we do need the unction of the Holy Spirit to testify to what the Lord has done for us.

[27 : 05] It's not just an intellectual thing. Whether we preach, whether we teach, whether we speak one to one as Christians with other people, we need an anointing, we need a touch to be able to do that properly.

We obey the Lord when we witness and testify. Oh, how much more powerful when the Lord has been able to, well, that he can touch us, prepare us for such an event.

Three times then the Lord touched him. Secondly, so that Daniel would be able to prophesy for God. Thirdly, to give him peace and strength. Put his mind at rest and get him doing whatever his gift was in this case.

prophecy. A touch from heaven. I certainly need a touch from heaven to speak anywhere and at any time for the Lord. I wonder if we think God can't help us nowadays to get so close to us and help us.

Yes, he can. And this event all began for Peter, James and John when they were praying on the mountain. A lesson for us. Later on, the same three disciples would be where?

[28 : 18] In the place of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. And there was no bright lights there. No transfiguration there.

On the contrary, what was the subject of the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter, James and John was there? Exactly the same subject as when it was glorious. Namely, the Lord's departure, the Lord's cross.

That was the subject. And of course, the Lord Jesus would be praying there in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter, James and John asleep before their hour was up when they should have been praying. And the Lord Jesus then was praying on his own.

Lord, if there be any other way, take this cup from me. We know what he said. But he knew inwardly he was going to go to the cross. Otherwise, Elijah and Moses couldn't even have appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

That's the logic. So the Lord is praying in that way but he knows inwardly he's going through with it. The answer was bound to be no, there isn't any other way of saving so many souls that they might go to heaven.

[29 : 28] There isn't any other way. God became man to be like man, to be like a human, to be a human being, to be perfectly righteous, to be exactly what we needed.

A perfect man who could pay our sins. He wouldn't pay for his own sin, there wasn't any. So who's he paying sin for? He's paying sin for sinners.

So that's the Garden of Gethsemane. They witnessed the agony in the Lord's own actual praying. What were they doing going to sleep?

I wonder if we would have done. But from the glory of this event, of transfiguration or metamorphosis, right down to this approach of death where the Lord has this prayer and wanted Peter, James and John to support him and failed.

We go from the high mountain up to the depth of that final prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. And his death was the subject and his death was as if it was already done.

[30 : 40] It was going to happen. So let's just summarise this. Keep it in our mind. A touch from heaven.

That's what we've been talking about. A sight from heaven. Moses like us who must pass away. Of course we must unless the Lord comes first. But so we pass away.

So what? Straight into heaven if you're a believer. If you've got faith in Christ. Straight into heaven. Not just to come before him and be judged one way or the other. Straight into heaven.

No judgement. Of course there is a judgement day where our works will be judged. Rewards given. That's another matter. But in terms of actually being converted, straight there when we die.

Because Moses was there and his body was in the ground. When we die, go to heaven. Somebody will visit our graveside. Well in the general resurrection.

[31 : 40] Yeah. Your body will come. Be having a glorious body like the Lord's glorious body. But meanwhile there is experience. Continued experience in heaven.

That's the certainty. That's the proof of it. This metamorphosis. So a sight from heaven. Victory over death assured for us.

Because it's Moses. A voice from heaven. Well are we saying we can hear new voices from heaven? No I'm not saying that.

What I'm saying is we can read the very word of God. We can read this passage and get a tremendous thrill out of it. Why not? And scripture like it but the scripture is complete.

It's his revelation. If God wanted us to know anything more of revelation he'd have told us. Don't need any more.

[32 : 37] And then a touch from heaven. The Lord meets with us in strengthening power as we wait upon him. In my daily readings I've just finished the Valley of Vision which some will without doubt know.

It's a good one to use. The one for Friday the 24th of August and I finish with this. Is this prayer. Cause me and those that hear me to behold you there in the light of special faith and hereafter in the blaze of endless glory for your blood is balm your presence bliss your smile heaven your cross the place where truth and mercy meet.

And that's true isn't it? Glory is in the cross. Now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us tonight and forevermore.

Amen.