

Seeing Jesus Clearly

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[0 : 00] So tonight we're reading from Luke chapter 9, that's verses 21 to 36 on page 1039 in the Church Bibles.

So Luke 9, starting at verse 21. Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, And yet lose or forfeit their very self.

Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory, and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

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.

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.

[1 : 40] 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 covered 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. Listen to him. When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

This is the word of the Lord. Cool, great. Thanks, honey.

But what about you? He said. Who do you say I am? Peter answered, God's Messiah.

[2 : 54] So, Father, we pray that we would hear that tonight. Father, we pray that we would understand who Jesus is. That he is your chosen son, the Messiah.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you've just joined us this evening, we're looking at the opening chapters of Luke's account on the life of Jesus.

And throughout the opening chapters of Luke, we find the question being asked, Who is Jesus? And last week, we ended on this cliffhanger where Jesus asks his disciples, Who do you say I am?

And Peter declares that Jesus is God's Messiah. And the title Messiah, as we looked at last week, is shorthand for the person who would reign over God's kingdom forever.

Who would be God's king forever. But having declared who Jesus is, Luke is then going to start looking at what it means that Jesus is this king forever.

[4 : 04] What it means that Jesus is the Messiah. So, before we start, let me ask you, what would your expectation be of God's king forever?

Who would you have him be? What do you want Jesus to do for you? Well, no sooner has Peter declared that Jesus is God's Messiah, than everything starts to go downhill in this account.

What do I mean? Well, how not to make a religion? So, Peter declares that Jesus is God's king forever. But look at how Jesus describes his coronation in verse 22.

He said, The Son of Man, that is Jesus speaking of himself, must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of law, and must be killed and on the third day raised to life.

Suffer, rejected, killed. It sounds pathetic. It doesn't sound very kingly. That's not the kind of king I might choose.

[5 : 16] If anything, it sounds exactly how not to be a king. But then look at how Jesus goes on to describe his followers in verse 23. Then he said to them, Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow daily. Follow Jesus. It sounds like no fun at all.

Who wants to be a devotee of a religion like that? Like walking around with an electric chair. Who wants to be doing that? And then lastly, look at how he describes how his kingdom is going to be run in verse 24.

So whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

And it seems completely bonkers. You see, I thought the whole point of religion is that you'd save yourself. But what does he say? No, if you want to save yourself, you're going to lose yourself.

[6 : 31] And I thought the point of me going to university was to get a good job and make something of myself. Become something in the world. To gain the world.

To be ambitious. And what he says? I don't know. If you want to gain the world, you're going to lose everything. It seems like absolute madness.

Exactly the opposite of everything my world and what Glasgow tells me I should be. So what is going on? What does it mean that Jesus is God's King forever, the Messiah?

And why should I bother with Jesus this evening in Glasgow? Well, to find the answer to these questions, the answer is that we will only know what it means that Jesus is Messiah if we are prepared to look to him.

And if we are prepared to listen to him. That is, to see Jesus clearly, we must look to Jesus and we must listen to him.

[7 : 40] And the verse that I'd like to focus on this evening as we consider this is verse 26. I'll just read it for us. It should come up. Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.

So what does it mean that Jesus is Messiah? Well, it means firstly that we are to look to him. So look at verses 26 to 23 there.

And I'm taking this point of looking to Jesus from the second half of that verse. And then again, where we read about this account of how Jesus is miraculously trained or transfigured.

And this account starts in verse 27 of our passage of Jesus making an amazing statement. So maybe keep your Bibles open.

Just look down there. Truly I tell you that some who are standing here today will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

[8 : 50] Imagine that. Seeing God as king over his kingdom. You might joke about it. You might say, well, Scotland is God's own country.

You better be learning Gaelic because they'll be speaking Gaelic in heaven. That's the kind of joke you might make over that. But imagine seeing a kingdom ruled by God where there's no fighting, no poverty, no crime, no hatred.

Only kindness and love and perfect order. See, Jesus is describing heaven. That's what God's kingdom is going to be like.

It's going to be perfect and heavenly. And the statement is absolutely emphatic that these people will not die. So what does he mean if they're there?

And while we pick up the account in verse 28. So about eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, James, and John, John and James, with him, and went onto a mountain to pray.

[9 : 54] 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.

And they spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy. But when they became fully awake, they saw his glory in the two men standing with him.

And so what happens is that just for a moment, Jesus is changed. It's no longer poor old Jesus, Joseph the carpenter's son. But he's changed into Jesus, the divine Jesus, king of God's kingdom.

And he is unimaginably glorious. You see, as Luke's writing this, he struggles to get words to explain just how glorious and amazing Jesus appears in this passage.

And so you can imagine the power of the ocean. And you take off, you're surfing a massive wave, and it's huge. And it's going to swallow you up and destroy you, powerful. And that center, it's dead calm.

[11 : 13] And that's pretty impressive. Or you imagine, you go skiing, you go up into the Alps, and you're zooming down the hills. And maybe you're one of those skiers who just tucks at the bottom and turns out at the bottom. Maybe slightly more dainty.

But it's glorious, it's spectacular. It's serene. Average. Two out of ten, maybe. Or maybe it's like a beautiful sunset.

You can think of an amazing sunset that absolutely renders you speechless and breathless at the wonder of how beautiful it is. Or maybe you go and you see the northern lights.

You go up, you camp with the Inuits, with the Eskimos. You see these amazing, glorious lights that people long to see. The light, the whole sky gleaming. But you see, seeing Jesus at this moment that he has transfigured makes all of these seem pathetic.

All those great things that we long for and strive for in life just look absolutely pathetic. You see, at this moment that Jesus is transformed, he is the most glorious person in existence, in creation.

[12 : 26] He is the light at the center of the universe. So what's heaven going to be like? Well, you see, at the center of heaven is going to be a person.

Jesus. And he will be glorious and radiant. You see, in heaven there will be no moon, no stars, not even a sun in heaven. But heaven, Jesus, will light up heaven.

And we'll be there absolutely gobsmacked at how awesome and glorious Jesus is. You see, here's how John describes what heaven is like a little later.

He writes this a little later, some years towards the end of his life. And he writes in Revelation 21 verse 23, So if you ask Peter, James, and John what it means that Jesus is the Messiah, they would answer you, well, look at him.

How can I describe to you the indescribable? If you saw him, you would know what the Messiah is like. He is the thing that the whole universe revolves around.

[13 : 47] He is the person that the universe revolves around. Well, if we are to understand that Jesus is the Messiah, it's not simply enough that we look at him, but we must also listen to him.

I'm taking this from the first half of that verse 26, and then when the voice appears out of the cloud. So the first half of 26, Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man, that's Jesus, will be ashamed of them.

And then the command in verse 35 where Luke writes, A voice came from the cloud saying, This is my Son whom I have chosen. Listen, listen to him.

Well, Peter, James, and John have no sooner got the fright of waking up only to find Jesus beside them, absolutely transfigured and changed, speaking to Moses and Elijah, than we read in verse 34.

While he, that's Peter, was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid. And they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud saying, This is my Son whom I have chosen.

[15 : 02] Listen to him. So here we have God the Father speaking in this cloud about Jesus. And what's he saying?

He's saying that we should listen to Jesus. And why is God saying this? Well, because try as you want, as best as we can. Remember, Ellie said there, no matter how hard she tries, she still does stuff wrong.

No matter how hard we try, the temptation is going to be for us not to listen to Jesus, but to ignore his words, as if Jesus is something to be embarrassed about, to be ashamed of Jesus' words.

Well, what do I mean? What kind of Messiah did Peter want? He wanted one who would restore Israel, lead them in battle, kicking out the Romans.

What kind of Messiah did the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes want? Well, they wanted one who kept everything nice and tidy, kept the status quo. Life for them was good.

[16 : 10] They had a nice car, a nice chariot, a nice villa, a nice house, a bank account in the Caymans. What kind of Messiah would our world want? Well, I wonder if you've ever listened to the radio or read the news.

But they want one who is strong on social good works, who accepts and saves everyone. It doesn't matter what you believe or how you live, just so long as you're, well, a nice person who's respectable and don't believe anything too strongly.

Be a nice person. But what kind of Messiah does Jesus promise to be? One who would turn everything upside down. Rather than endorse the religious elite, he would be rejected and killed by them.

Rather than make life good for his followers, Jesus only promises hardship. Deny yourself. Take up your cross. And follow me. Rather than condoning the world, he judges the world.

If you want to save your life, you must lose it. Give it away. Don't look for your life and meaning here. And because Jesus is so different to all our expectations of what God's king should be like, we need to listen to him carefully so we can be sure that we don't misunderstand what he is saying.

[17 : 41] Why do we need to listen to Jesus? Well, because of who he is. You see, Jesus is and speaks with the authority of God. He is the fulfillment of God's kingdom, the brilliant radiance of God's glory.

To see Jesus is to see God and to see God's kingdom. Why do we need to listen to Jesus? Because his words and him alone offer salvation.

See, whoever is ashamed of me in my words, the Son of Man, that's Jesus, God's chosen king, will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory.

See, what a terrible thing it will be when Jesus returns at the end of time. And we're standing there and just for a moment we see his absolute brilliance and glorious authority and we think, oh, I've blown it.

I've messed it up. I've got it all wrong. So how are we to listen? Well, for some of us it means that we'll need to take God's word more seriously.

[18 : 50] But for other of us it will mean that we don't trust in our ability to listen carefully. We all get it wrong in many ways.

No one's perfect at listening but we do trust in Jesus' promises that those who believe he died in our place as a sacrifice for our sins to put us right with God will be saved and never be put to shame.

So if we are to know what it means that Jesus is the Messiah it means that we must look to him and we must listen to him. Look to him in his glorious, dazzling splendor as God of the universe glorious and listen to him as God's chosen son who alone offers the words of life.

So, friends, what about you? Can I encourage you not to be like Peter? It might be controversial to say.

Look at verse 32 there. Peter and his companions were very sleepy. You see, Peter, James, and John almost missed the whole thing.

[20 : 02] They almost missed seeing the kingdom of God because they were asleep. See, if you want to see Jesus clearly look to him and listen to him.

Don't be asleep. Start reading your Bible. Start coming to church. Come to Life Explored later. Chat to Martin or myself afterwards. Join a small group. Chat to your Christian friends.

Chat to someone you know about the gospel. Don't be asleep. Don't miss the boat. And then again, look at verse 30 and 31 as we close.

So verse 30 there. 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.

And here we have Moses who rescued God's people out of Egypt, who gave them God's law. And we have Elijah, perhaps the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, who never died but was simply taken up to heaven.

[21 : 03] And what are they doing? They're talking to Jesus. And what are they talking about? They're talking about Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

His departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. See, the whole of human history is about Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

That is the key point in history. If you miss that, you've missed everything. You see, you can only understand what it is that Jesus is the Messiah if you understand the cross, Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

You see, at the cross, Jesus died for you. At the cross, Jesus paid the price that our sins deserved for wanting to be our own Messiahs, of rejecting God's chosen Son as Messiah, of wanting political liberation rather than spiritual liberation from sin and death, of wanting to turn the other way when we see bad things happen so as to, well, not rock the boat and be nice people, of wanting to keep the status quo, trying to get that bank account in the Caymans, of wanting social reform, transform the world, but not spiritual reform.

Not accepting Jesus. And when the Romans hammered those nails into Jesus' feet and his hands, Jesus was bringing it to fulfillment for you.

[22 : 46] That you might look to him and listen to him and that you might see his indescribable glory and live with him forever in heaven.

Father, we thank you for these words. We thank you for that enormous picture of what your kingdom will be like in Jesus' transfiguration.

Help us to look to Jesus. Help us to listen to him. And please forgive us when we get that wrong. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I willol  , amen.