

Sermon: Witnessing the Glory of Jesus

From the very beginning there has been nothing about the appearance of Jesus that would cause you to think that he was anything more than just another boy, the son of a carpenter.

To the world, Jesus was simply the son of Joseph. To the few, Jesus was the Son of God. But nothing about his appearance gave you the impression that he was something more. Consider the words of the prophet Isaiah.

“He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.”

But for a moment in time three apostles saw something more. For a moment Peter, James, and John saw something great. They saw Jesus for who he really was in his physical appearance. No longer did they see merely Jesus the human.

Notice the careful words of Luke, “They saw his glory.” Luke explains that the appearance of Jesus’ face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

Matthew adds that the face of Jesus shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. Mark records that his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

For a moment everything about the appearance of Jesus changed.

Jesus was not the only one appearing in glory. There were two men talking with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah appeared in glory as well.

I think we must pause here for a moment and consider that Moses and Elijah were alive. Moses had died around 1500 years before this event and Elijah had been caught up into heaven in a chariot of fire around 900 years earlier. Yet here they are alive and appearing in glory. We are seeing proof of the resurrection. God is the God of the living.

It is also interesting that Peter knows who Moses and Elijah are. He had never seen them before, yet he recognizes that these men are Moses and Elijah. Of even greater interest is that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah are having a discussion. We hear that Moses and Elijah are speaking about Jesus' departure.

Reference may point out that the Greek word is "exodus" which is interesting considering that Moses led the great exodus from Egypt and is now talking about Jesus' exodus. It is not merely a discussion about death, but a discussion about Jesus' departure from this world.

What would you have done at this moment? Imagine that you are either Peter, James, or John. You are witnessing the most amazing event. You are seeing the true glory of God in Jesus. You are seeing the dead alive in Moses and Elijah. You are seeing two of the great figures in Israel's history.

Moses, who was the deliverer of the nation of Israel and gave the Law of God to the people at Mount Sinai. Moses who had prophesied that God would raise up a deliverer for the people one day.

You are also looking at Elijah. He is the great prophet of God who performed many great miracles. Think about his great victory over the prophets of Baal. Think about how he withstood the most wicked king and queen in the history of Israel, Ahab and Jezebel. Think about Elijah who did not die but was carried to the Lord in the chariot of fire.

Moses and Elijah are a representation of the Law and the Prophet. They also represent the hope of Israel. This scene is picturing the fulfillment of what the Law and the Prophets pointed toward. This transfiguration scene shows that the hope of Israel is found in the glorious Jesus. What would you do? What would you say?

I love what Peter says. "Master, it is good that we are here." He asks, "Do you want us to make three tents, one for each of you?" Peter does not know what to say. But he knows what he is looking at is breathtaking and he does not want it to end. This is a glorious event.

Before anything else can happen, God the Father intervenes. As Peter is asking about building tents, a cloud came and overshadowed them. They were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice comes out of the cloud making an important declaration. "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"

The gospel of Luke has been asking and answering the question, “Who is this Jesus?”

Jesus had asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” The apostles responded that Jesus is the Christ of God, which is the correct answer. The apostles understand that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah and deliverer.

God is now answering the question, “Who is Jesus?” God’s answer is threefold. “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him.”

The Father first declares that Jesus is his Son. Remember that Peter and the apostles have confessed Jesus to be the Christ of God. The terms “Christ” and “Messiah” mean “anointed.” The anointed one was the king who would sit on David’s throne. Jesus is the anointed one. The Lord sets his king on Zion, which is his Anointed.

When God the Father calls Jesus his Son, he is granting him a royal title, establishing him as king ruling over his kingdom. Jesus is the royal and eternal Son, the anointed king.

Jesus is not just the Messiah in terms of what the Jews thought he would be as a deliverer and redeemer for the nation. Jesus is the eternal king. Jesus has been appointed and anointed by the Father to rule over the earth.

After making purifications for sins through his death, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, superior to and ruling over all created beings.

The Father calling Jesus, “The chosen one,” also fits the imagery of the eternal kingship of Jesus. Isaiah prophesies about the coming of the chosen one.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. “

The chosen one, Jesus, is the one whom the Father’s soul delights. The Father has put his Spirit on him. He has been anointed to bring justice to the nations and establish his rule throughout the earth.

The Father was not only giving Peter, James, and John a command to listen to the words of Jesus, but was also confirming that Jesus is fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy.

The Father just connected Jesus to the prophet that Moses spoke of that would come. Moses said that when this prophet comes, you must listen to him. The Father speaks from heaven, “This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him!”

Jesus is the deliverer. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the great prophet that Moses spoke would come. Jesus is the eternal Son. Jesus is the king.

Do you see why Peter, James, and John keep silent after hearing these words and seeing the glory of Jesus? They are simply blown away by what they have seen and heard. They have seen Moses and Elijah in glory. They have seen Jesus in dazzling white, bright like the sun shining. They have heard the voice of the Father confirming that Jesus is the eternal God, the messianic king sent to rule the nations. The command is given to them and to us: we must listen to Jesus.

In the second letter written by the apostle Peter (2 Peter 1:16–19), Peter reflects at this glorious moment and expounds upon the message learned from the event.

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. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Peter declares that they were eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus. Peter says that they heard this voice when they were with Jesus on the holy mountain. Consider the point Peter wants us to understand. We have something so certain and sure — the prophetic word. We have the holy word of God revealed to us from Jesus to his Holy Spirit who communicated the word to his apostles who wrote it down.

Pay attention to the word of God. Pay attention to God's word like a lamp in a dark place. When you are in a dark room and you have a flashlight, you pay careful attention to everything in the room, so that you do not trip and fall. God's word is the light in the darkness of this world. Pay attention to the words of God, not the world.

Listen to the Son and the words that he revealed through the Holy Spirit. Read the word. It is filled with glory. It will show you the way to go. It will guide you to the Lord. Jesus is the eternal Son, the king over of all. Listen to him carefully! Amen