**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 24** Luke 9:28-45 The Transfiguration!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 124-127.
3. What caused the disciples to be confused about the coming kingdom of God? In what way was the transfiguration of Jesus a comfort them?
4. Read Luke 9:28-36.

Luke's account of the transfiguration of Christ, deeply rooted in the Old Testament, invites us to enjoy a Biblical feast. We will first partake of Old Testament glory, then taste the choice morsels of its New Testament counterparts. Only then can we properly dine upon the centerpiece of the feast, **the Lamb of God**. This meal becomes increasingly delicious the longer we feed upon it.

**The Old Testament**

The Old Testament **first course** serves up the Shekinah glory, the visible presence of God in a luminous cloud.

**Pillar of Glory**

Israel first saw this when they left Egypt and headed for the Red Sea. “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night   
in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night”   
(Exodus 13:21). God palpably demonstrated his presence by a pillar-shaped cloud that radiated a fiery luminosity upon the setting of the sun. It was spectacular, to say the least!

**Moses and God's Glory**

The most intimate encounter with this glorious cloud in the Old Testament was experienced by Moses when he received the Law on stone tablets for the second time (Exodus 33, 34). Originally Moses had dashed the stone tablets to pieces when he found Israel worshiping a golden calf (cf. Exodus 32:19). Afterward Moses, profoundly discouraged, would regularly go into "the tent of meeting “to seek God, and the pillar of cloud would come down and stand at the entrance of the tent (cf. Exodus 33:7-11). On one occasion Moses prayed, “Please show me your glory—and God did (Exodus 33:18). As Exodus 33,34 recounts the story, Moses again chiseled out two stone tablets and ascended high on Sinai, where the Lord came down in the cloud.

God then closeted Moses in a cleft in the rock, covered with the divine hand, and the dazzling glory of God passed by while the voice of God proclaimed his own goodness (cf. Exodus 33:19-23;34:5-7). When God's luminous presence had passed by, the divine hand was lifted, and Moses saw the Lord's back (cf. 33:23). Moses saw the afterglow of God's presence.

Smitten, Moses remained there forty days without eating or drinking as he inscribed the Law as God dictated it (cf. Exodus 34:28). When Moses descended Sinai holding the two tablets, he was unaware that his face was radiant with God's glory (cf. Exodus 34:29-35).

**Tabernacle Glory**

Of course, Moses' radiance soon began to fade, and in time God created **two successive physical repositories** for his glory. The first was the **tabernacle**, a tent so minutely prescribed in Exodus that every fiber, texture, color, and shape was made according to a divine blueprint that God told to Moses. The glories of the tabernacle conclude the book of Exodus, with the Shekinah glory, in the heart of the pillar, hovering over the tent: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34,35). The glory lodged in the heart of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, where Aaron entered only once a year with the blood of the Passover lamb.

**Temple Glory**

As the centuries passed, the tabernacle was lovingly assembled and reassembled by the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites and transported from place to place in the wilderness and during the wars for Canaan and then the settlement. The time finally   
came for Solomon's great temple to be built. Second Chronicles tells us:

As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces   
to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD,   
saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” (2 Chronicles 7:1-3; cf.1 Kings 8:10,11)

As Solomon lifted his arms to Heaven, he prayed, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less   
this house that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27). Solomon knew that God could not be contained by the universe, but he also knew his glory was there—luminous and good   
in its moral beauty.[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. What was the purpose of God revealing His magnificent glory to both Moses   
   and to the Israelites?
2. What is meant by the glory of God?
3. What does God desire to see in each one of us? In answering this question, consider the following:
4. Warren Wiersbe writes, “As far as the gospel record is concerned, the transfiguration was the only occasion during Christ’s earthly ministry when He revealed the glory of His person. Luke did not use the word *transfigure*, but he described the same scene (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). The word means “a change in appearance that comes from within,” and it gives us the English word *metamorphosis*.” What does God desire greatly to see in each one of us?
5. Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. What does God desire greatly to see in each one of us?
6. Explain what each of these theological terms mean and what phase/stage   
   in the Christian life they each refer to.

* Justification: (Rom. 3:21-24; 8:29-30) (Hint: This word is a   
  legal term.)
* Sanctification: (Heb. 10:10; 13:12; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18)
* Glorification: (1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:29-30; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4)

1. (Personal Reflection) How are you doing? Where are you among the three stages above?

* Read Philippians 1:6 and 2:12-13. How does personal holiness develop? Who is ultimately responsible for our personal growth in holiness? God? You? Both?
* Read Colossians 3:1-17. How are we to ‘work out our salvation with fear and trembling? What do you need to work on?

1. Read the following article.

**Ichabod—No Glory**

But Israel's history sadly reveals that men came to use the temple to glorify themselves rather than God. The tragic irony is that this began with Solomon himself, as we see in   
the reaction of the queen of Sheba to the magnificence of the temple:

And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, and their clothing, his cupbearers, and their clothing, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the Lord, there was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came, and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, half the greatness of your wisdom was not told me; you surpass the report that I heard.” (2 Chronicles 9:3-6)

The temple, created to be a house where God's glory was manifested, had degenerated into a prop for human glory.

Over the years, despite some bright spots, the slide continued until some four hundred years later seventy elders of the house of Israel assembled in the temple—each in front of his own painted idol and each offering incense to it (cf. Ezekiel 8:7-16). The very walls of the temple had been painted with “every form of creeping things and loathsome beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 8:10). The glory was about to leave the temple!

Ezekiel's vision in chapter 10 records that unforgettable departure. Four awesome cherubim (angels of God's presence) assembled on the south side of the temple. Each had four faces and four wings, so they could move in any direction without turning. Beneath each angel there was a turning wheel completely filled with eyes (Ezekiel 10:12). These were called “the whirling wheels” (Ezekiel 10:13). In the expanse above the angels was something that looked like a throne of sapphire (Ezekiel 10:1)

As the cherubim took their places on the temple's south side, the Shekinah glory filled the inner court, then rose above the cherubim engulfing the sapphire throne (Ezekiel 10:3). Then the glory moved to the door of the temple's threshold, filling everything with "the brightness of the glory of the LORD"(Ezekiel 10:4). The roar of the cherubim's wings was "like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks" (Ezekiel 10:5).

“Then, “as Ezekiel tells it,

The glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the Lord, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. (Ezekiel 10:18,19)

As Ezekiel's eyes moved upward, he saw the four spinning wheels rotating ominously, and over them the four-winged cherubim suspended, their wings drumming the air like colossal hummingbirds, and above them floated the dazzling glory of God. The glory was moving slowly away to the east and upward from the city where it had lingered above the Mount of Olives— and then it was gone (cf. Ezekiel 11:23)! Ichabod! —the glory had departed   
(cf. 1 Samuel 4:19-22). For the next six hundred years, though the temple was destroyed and rebuilt and rebuilt again, and though godly men and women came and went, the glory was not seen once![[2]](#endnote-2)

1. When the Son of Man was transfigured, He revealed the glory of God, the glory that He once possessed before humiliating Himself and descending to earth in the body of a man—the man Jesus. Verse 30-31 state, “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.”
2. Offer several purposes for the Transfiguration.
3. For what purpose did the following appear with Jesus?   
   (Hint: What did they represent?)
   * Moses
   * Elijah
4. Read Matthew 5:17-18. What was one of Jesus’ key reasons for coming to earth in the form of a man?
5. What is the most important truth you have learned from this account of the Transfiguration and how will you apply this truth to your life?
6. Read Luke 9:37-45. The Healing of a Boy with an Evil Spirit!

On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John had seen the greatest revelation of God's majestic glory ever granted to humankind. On the heights of Palestine, under the light of the Milky Way, they had witnessed Jesus' divine essence gloriously shining through his body. They saw Moses and Elijah, Israel's preeminent lawgiver and foremost prophet, both dead for many centuries, speaking with Jesus. They had seen the luminous cloud of the Shekinah glory envelop Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. And they heard the voice of God the Father speak from the cloud: “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” (9:35).   
This stunning experience marked the three for life and eternity.

Years later Peter gave this eloquent retrospect regarding the experience:

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18)

The vision never faded but remained an anchor for his soul. The same thing will happen to us if we let the wild, explosive Scriptural teaching regarding God's glory enter our souls.

**A Desperate Dilemma** (vv.37-41)

Itis significant that though Peter and his friends would like to have stayed on the mountain, they dutifully followed Christ down the slopes the next day, back into the turmoil of regular life. The contrast was divinely intentional and most dramatic.

**Luke the Editor**

Dr. Luke, theologian, and historian wanted us to see a contrast here—they had seen Christ's glory above but would now also see his glory below in the dark world. So, Luke edited Mark's extended account to emphasize this contrast, cutting it down to less than half its original size. **He trimmed off Mark's recording of Jesus' words about the coming of Elijah and the suffering of the Son of Man (cf. Mark 9:11-13) in order to tighten the connection between what happened on the mountain and what happened below.**

Luke also chopped off Mark's account of the stimulating discussion as to why the disciples could not cast out demons (cf. Mark 9:28,29; Matthew 17:19, 20). He also omitted what Jesus says about the necessity of faith to do such works (cf. Mark 9:23; Matthew 17:20).

Finally, having edited the story, Luke added a summary line about the crowd's response that the other Gospels do not include: “And all were astonished at the majesty of God” (v. 43). The significance of this is readily apparent when we understand that the Greek word translated “majesty” is the same word Peter used in his retrospect on the transfiguration, describing it as “his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16; cf. v.17, “the Majestic Glory”). Peter saw Jesus' transfiguration and called it “his majesty”; the crowds saw Jesus exorcise a boy and were struck with “the majesty of God” (v. 43).

Luke wants us to consider the majesty above and the majesty below together, for both belonged to Christ. As I. H. Marshall writes: “What was visible only to the chosen three on the mountain is here visible to a greater number.”[[3]](#endnote-3)/[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. Is there anything more evil than demonic possession?
2. Explain who Satan has so influenced the world from the following texts:
3. 1 John 5:19
4. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4
5. 2 Corinthians 11:13-14
6. When you look out at the dark world, what should you see forming within you as you are being transformed day by day?
7. Jesus is the light of the world. He came to shine his light into our hearts. In other words, God wants to see His glory forming within you. Now, read Matthew 5:14

Personal reflections:

1. Who should now be the light of the world?
2. Are you letting your light shine before those around you, your family, friends, and co-workers? If not, why not?
3. Knowing that you, as God’s ambassador, are supposed to let your light shine before the world, what are you going to make more of an effort to do from this day forward? How will you implement this goal?

1. Kent Hughes *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 353-355. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Hughes, 355-356. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. H.I. Marshall quoted in Hughes, 364. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Hughes, 364-365. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)