

## Peter's Confession of Faith; The Mount of Transfiguration

### Luke 9:18-36

*Luke 9:18-36: And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" 19 So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again." 20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." 21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." 23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. 27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God." 28 Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. 33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" 36 When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.*

### Background Notes

The previous section of Luke 9 gives the account of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Sometime after this miracle, Peter made his great confession of faith. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark mention a number of events that took place before Peter's confession, including the miracles of the Lord walking on water, and the feeding of 4,000.

Before Peter gave his great confession of faith on behalf of the disciples, the Lord asked the disciples who the people thought He was. *"And it happened as Jesus was praying alone, that His disciples joined Him and He asked them saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" And they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and*

*others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.*" Notice that the people didn't say, "He's the promised Messiah." Some thought John the Baptist had risen from the dead (v7). Others said that Elijah had come, based on the Malachi 4 prophecy. And some said He was one of the other Old Testament prophets had risen from the dead.

Then came the question that the Lord still asks people today: *"Who do you say that I am?"* The only correct answer is the confession of Peter, *"The Christ of God"* - the promised Messiah of the Old Testament prophecies, who is God Himself. Upon this great truth the Church would be built (Matthew 16).

The Lord now began to tell His disciples that He will be rejected by the nation of Israel and be killed, but that He would rise again on the third day. And for His disciples, the way to glory would be the way of the cross. *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."* Taking up the cross daily means death to self - the continual denial of self for the sake of Christ and obedience to His Word. There will be reward later when the Lord returns in glory, but there will also be loss of reward for being ashamed of being a disciple of Christ now. *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."* These are serious and awesome words.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Peter's confession marked a turning point in our Lord's past earthly ministry.

Verse 21: *"And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one."* The reason for this statement is that nothing was to interrupt our Lord's path to the cross. He began to unfold this path to His disciples in verse 22: *"The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."* This new revelation so shocked the disciples that Matthew and Mark's accounts tell us that Peter began to reprove the Lord for saying such a thing! The Lord sternly rebuked Peter: *"Get behind Me Satan. You are an offense to Me for you are not mindful of the things of God but the things of man"* (Matthew 16:23).

Up to this point, the Lord had been proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was at hand. This is the message that John the Baptist preached. This is the message that the twelve disciples were to preach when the Lord sent them out in the first part of this chapter. But now, for the first time, the Lord began to speak about His coming death and resurrection. Why the change in emphasis? The **key** is in verse 22: **the leaders of the nation would reject the Lord**. The King and the Kingdom that He offered would be rejected by Israel. Now a new entity would come into being. The Church would be built, based on the rock solid truth that Peter had stated, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Matthew 16:18: *"On this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*

The first time the Church is mentioned in the Bible is in Matthew 16:18, immediately after Peter's great confession of faith. So we see that the confession of Peter marked a turning point in our Lord's past earthly ministry.

## **2. The Mount of Transfiguration mirrored the blessed conditions of our Lord's future earthly kingdom.**

In verse 27 the Lord said to His disciples, *"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."* Most likely our Lord was not referring to Pentecost and the beginning of the Church, but to the Mount of Transfiguration event that Peter, James and John would soon experience.

The Mount of Transfiguration event was a microcosm of the coming Millennial Kingdom that our Lord will set up when He returns to this earth. The Kingdom that was rejected by Israel will then be realized, and the blessed conditions of that coming earthly Kingdom are foreshadowed here in the Mount of Transfiguration event. The Lord will be here on earth in His glorified body, as seen in this transfiguration.

The grand theme of the coming Kingdom will be the Person and Work of Christ (v31). Moses may represent all the saints who have died, who will be part of Christ's earthly Kingdom. (Remember, Moses died.) Elijah may represent all the living saints who will be translated at the time of the Rapture, who will also be part of Christ's earthly Kingdom. (Remember, Elijah never died but was caught up bodily into Heaven.) And as Peter, James and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration in their normal, physical bodies, so living saints who survive the Tribulation period will enter our Lord's earthly Kingdom in their normal physical bodies. So the Mount of Transfiguration mirrored the blessed conditions of our Lord's coming earthly Kingdom.

### **Practical Application**

#### **1. Let's not make the same mistake that Peter made.**

Peter meant well when he said, *"Let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."* He meant well, but his zeal was misguided! He was making the same mistake as those people in verse 19 who thought that Jesus might be John the Baptist risen from the dead, or one of the great Old Testament prophets. In other words, Peter was lowering Jesus to just one great man among many.

And that is exactly what many people do today! Jesus is acknowledged today as one of the greatest men the world has ever seen - but just a mere man, and just one great man among many. These people need to learn the lesson that Peter learned when the glory cloud overshadowed them and the voice of God said, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* Then our Lord **alone** was seen. Let's not make the same mistake that Peter made!

**2. Let's not save our life only to lose it.**

In verses 24-25 the Lord said, *“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost.”* What did the Lord mean when He said you'll lose your life if you try to save it? He meant that if you live your life selfishly, only for yourself and for your possessions, and you don't give of yourself and share what you have, you will never experience what life is all about, or the joy of living. Even if you were to gain the whole world, you would lose out on life, and you would lose out on making your life count forever. Don't save your life only to lose it!