

## Transfiguration of Our Lord

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 34:1-12

### *The Death of Moses*

Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, <sup>2</sup> all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, <sup>3</sup> the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.” <sup>5</sup> And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. <sup>6</sup> He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. <sup>7</sup> Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. <sup>8</sup> The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over. <sup>9</sup> Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>10</sup> Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, <sup>11</sup> who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. <sup>12</sup> For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

**34:1-4** The Lord may have granted Moses a onetime, unlimited view of the land as well as a onetime view into the future of Israel’s occupation. (TLSB)

**34:1** *Moses climbed Mount Nebo.* In obedience to the Lord’s command in 32:48–52. (CSB)

The mountain traditionally identified as Mount Nebo is located about twelve miles east of where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea, and rises more than 2600 feet above sea level. The Dead Sea is the lowest spot in the world, 1300 feet below sea level. What a dramatic view of this land that Moses long to see all his life! (PBC)

TO DAN – To see as far north as Dan or far west as the Mediterranean would have required a supernatural gift from the Lord. (PBC)

**34:4** *land I promised.* See 1:8; Ge 12:1; 15:18 and note; Ex 33:1. (CSB)

I WILL LET YOU SEE IT – By inviting Moses to view the extent of the land, the Lord showed one last act of kindness to this special leader of His people. But maybe it was more than that. Biblical precept, as well as later Roman law, let a man “view” land

he was about to possess. Perhaps this was the Lord's way of giving Moses a legal guarantee that the men and women he led for so long would really inherit the land, though he would die before it happened. (PBC)

The Lord had a far better promised land in mind for Moses. The writer to the Hebrews included Moses on his last list of believers throughout the OT era – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others. “All these people were still living by faith when they died,” the author wrote. (PBC)

They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth... they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13,16). (PBC)

**YOU WILL NOT CROSS INTO IT** – While Moses had done many great things for God and by God's help in leading the Israelites, but there was an incompleteness about his work. Moses had struck the rock twice instead of once like God had told him when water was needed in the desert. There are consequences for sin and this was the price that Moses paid.

Moses was allowed to stand in the Promised Land at Christ's transfiguration, however (Mt 17:1–8). (TLSB)

**34:5** *servant of the LORD*. A special title used to refer to those whom the Lord, as the Great King, has taken into his service; they serve as members of God's royal administration. For example, it was used especially of Abraham (Ge 26:24), Moses (Ex 14:31), Joshua (Jos 24:29), David (2Sa 7:5), the prophets (2Ki 9:7), Israel collectively (Isa 41:8), and even a foreign king the Lord used to carry out his purposes (Jer 25:9). See notes on Ex 14:31; Isa 42:1–4. (CSB)

The final measure of Moses' long life was that he was the Lord's servant. Moses was in good company. Abraham (Gen 26:24), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), David (2 Sam 7:5), the prophets (2 Kings 9:7), and Paul (Romans 1:1) were also called the Lord's servants. (PBC)

**34:6** *Beth Peor*. See note on 3:29. (CSB)

**NO ONE KNOWS WHERE HIS GRAVE IS** – Its exact location was not revealed. From the letter of Jude, v.9, we know that the archangel Michael contended with the devil for the body of Moses. (Kretzmann)

LXX takes the verb impersonally (“they buried”), and some Jewish commentators, believe angels were involved in the burial. Unlike Elijah, Moses was not bodily translated into heaven. His burial by the Lord has been interpreted to mean that his lifeless body was immune to decay (cf Jude). Aphrattat says, “Two goodly benefits did his Lord accomplish for Moses in not making known his tomb to the children of Israel.

He rejoiced that his adversaries should not know it, and cast forth his bones from his tomb; and in the second place, that the children of his should not know it, and make his tomb a place of worship.” (TLSB)

**34:7** *a hundred and twenty years old.* See 31:2; perhaps a round number, indicating three generations of about 40 years each. (CSB)

Moses lived well beyond eighty years. His 120 years divides neatly into three forty-year spans: the first, in Egypt as a young man in Pharaoh’s household; the second, in Midian shepherding his father-in-law’s flocks; the third, in the wilderness leading Israel to the edge of Canaan (Exodus 7:7; Acts 7:23-30) (PBC)

EYES NOT WEAK – Moses is described as having such vigor that his eyes were not dim and the appearance of his face had not changed when he died in his one hundred and twentieth year. This is recounted as an outstanding miracle, since it is written that the rest of the fathers, as Isaac, Jacob, Eli, and others, had dimming eyes because of old age;<sup>2</sup> and to the present day those who are a little more advanced in age fail in eyesight and appearance. (Leupold)

Until his death, Moses was blessed by the Lord with the stamina and vigor to lead God’s people. (TLSB)

**34:8** *grieved ... thirty days.* See Ge 50:3 and note. (CSB)

Most commentators, Jewish and Christian, agree that Joshua wrote this chapter and added it as a sort of postscript to the five books of Moses. (PBC)

**34:9** JOSHUA SON OF NUN WAS FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT – Just as the Lord called Moses and the Holy Spirit sanctified him for the Lord’s work through the Word, now the Holy Spirit would sanctify Joshua to lead God’s people. (TLSB)

LAI D HIS HANDS ON HIM – Signified the public and final transfer of authority to Joshua. Cyril of Jerusalem: “In the days of Moses, the Spirit was given by laying on of hands.... And on you also, who are about to be baptized, shall His grace come” (NPNF 2 7:122). (TLSB)

**34:10** *no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses.* See note on 18:15. (CSB)

*face to face.* See Nu 12:8 and note. (CSB)

This Moses very great and special. But he still needed Joshua to complete the trip to the Promised Land. And he needed Jesus (the second Joshua) to come and make the trip to heaven complete. On Transfiguration Sunday we see Moses again face-to-face with God and this time can see the completion (death and resurrection) of Jesus’ ministry. That completion will allow all of us to one day see God face-to-face as made our exodus from this earth.

**34:12** *no one has ever.* Until Jesus came, no one was superior to Moses. See Heb 3:1–6, where Moses the “servant” (Heb 3:5) is contrasted with Christ the “son” (Heb 3:6). (CSB)

During the entire wilderness journey. Only one prophet is greater than Moses, by his own testimony, namely, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. Through His life, suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation He earned for us the eternal redemption from the power of death and hell. (Kretzmann)

Moses’ service was unique because he enjoyed a more intimate relationship with the Lord than any OT prophet before or after him. No other prophet could claim what Moses claimed: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friends (Exodus 33:11). Moses’ service was unequalled also because he performed more miraculous signs by the Lord’s power than an OT prophet before or after him. (PBC)

#### EPISTLE – Hebrews 3:1-6

##### *Jesus Greater Than Moses*

**Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.<sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.<sup>3</sup> Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.<sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.<sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future.<sup>6</sup> But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.**

**3:1–4:13** An exposition of Ps 95:7–11, stressing Christ’s superiority over Moses and warning against disobedience and unbelief. (CSB)

Steadily the author has been advancing the argument that Jesus is superior to anyone and anything. Now he turns to the OT figure most significant in Jewish history and thought. It is very difficult for a Jew to think of anyone greater than Moses. Even the NT refers to Moses’ greatness, mentioned him some 80 times, more often than any other OT figure. But great as Moses was Jesus was far greater. As a result, to forsake Jesus would bring results far more terrible than to forsake Moses. What a warning for those Jewish readers being tempted by persecution to do just that. (PBC)

**3:1** HOLY BROTHERS – All people God the Father has adopted through faith in His Word (Jn 1:12–13). No one can, by his own power, make himself holy. But God calls people to share in His gift of holiness (cf 1Pt 1:15). (TLSB)

*share.* See note on v. 14. (CSB)

*heavenly calling.* The invitation that comes from heaven and leads to heaven. (CSB)

SOFTLY and gently the apostle draws them to Christ by calling them “holy” and, as it were, flattering them. Here he teaches us that we should not preach Christ with fury or with a tempest of words. Indeed, Christ can be preached in no other way than peacefully and calmly. For roaring talk pertains to the Law, as has been pictured in Ex. 20:18, where the hearers were terrified by the sound of the trumpet, the darkness of the mountain, and the fire of the lightning. Likewise in 1 Kings 19:11 ff., where, after the wind, after the earthquake, and after the fire, there came “a still small voice,” and there the Lord was. Therefore the Law should be revealed with thunderbolts to those who are foolish and stiff-necked, but the Gospel should be presented gently to those who are terrified and humbled. Therefore Is. 42:1, 3 says about Christ: “Behold, My Servant. . . . A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not quench”; that is, He will prefer to console the timid and the afflicted. (Luther)

**FIX YOUR THOUGHTS ON JESUS** – Serious attention was necessary; careful, constant study of Jesus. The use of the personal name immediately focuses attention on His work on earth, the mission God became man in order to fulfill. (PBC)

*apostle.* Means “one who is sent” (see notes on Mk 6:30; 1Co 1:1). Jesus repeatedly spoke of himself as having been sent into the world by the Father (e.g., Mt 10:40; 15:24; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48; Jn 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36–38; 6:38). He is the supreme apostle, the one from whom all other apostleship flows. (CSB)

**HIGH PRIEST WHOM WE CONFESS** – A new way of speaking, but one that comes from a Hebrew idiom and expresses the matter with remarkable fitness, since our whole work is a confession, as Ps. 96:6 says: “Confession and beauty are before Him” (that is, in His church), “holiness and magnificence are in His sanctification.” And Ps. 111:3: “Confession and magnificence are His work.” The meaning of these verses is expressed in Ps. 145:5: “They will speak of the magnificence of the glory of Thy holiness, and will tell Thy wondrous works,” which states that everything they say and do is praise, confession, magnificence, and sanctification, with which they praise, confess, glorify, and sanctify Thee. Yet all this is Thy work in them, as Ps. 8:2 says: “Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings Thou hast fashioned praise.” Likewise Is. 43:21: “This people I have formed for Myself; they will declare My praise.” Therefore Christ has on the cross the title King of the Jews, that is, of the confessors. This confession is understood as a confession not only of sins but also of praise. Indeed, the confession of sins and of praise is one and the same confession, unless it is the confession of those Jews who are named for Judas Iscariot, that is, the confession of those who are despaired of [שְׂכָרָה, that is, wages]. For that is the true confession with which a man gives the glory to God with regard to righteousness, wisdom, virtue, and all works but gives nothing to himself except sin, foolishness, and weakness, and that with a true mouth, heart, and work. And in this statement the apostle distinguishes confessions, yes, even possessions. For with respect to the world it would be appropriate to say that God is Lord or King of lands, rivers, cities, beasts, etc. For such possessions do not consist in confessions or words but in things. Furthermore, the synagogue also had its own confession, namely, that of Moses, because it dealt with the physical wonders by which it was redeemed from the weakness, poverty, and toil of Egypt. Therefore the apostle

speaks of “our,” that is, a new confession, because we believe, declare, and confess other wonders, namely, redemption from spiritual weakness, toil, and poverty. Therefore Moses is the apostle of their confession, but Christ is the Apostle of our confession. Therefore Chrysostom interprets “of our confession” to mean “of our faith.” Yet in his interpretation there seems to be a metonymy, that is, the use of one thing for that of another associated with it, namely, of “faith” for its own work, which is confession, just as the grammarians take “Mars” as a term for war, “Minerva” as a term for the arts. (Luther)

Priests in the OT offered sacrifices, but they also revealed God’s will through their teaching. In the NT, God sent apostles to speak on His behalf. Jesus is the High Priest and Apostle who fully reveals God’s will and fulfills both testaments. (TLSB)

The joint title “the apostle and high priest” also focuses on that work of the God-man Christ. Apostle used only here of Jesus in the NT, involves the thought of mission, referring to one who is commissioned for something. God had sent His Son as the authorized envoy to speak for Him and carry out His will. High priest refers to the sacrificial nature of His mission as we have already seen in 2:17 and will see again later in greater detail. (PBC)

**3:2** A comparison of Christ and Moses, both of whom were sent by the Father to lead his people—the one to lead them from bondage under Pharaoh to the promised land, the other to lead them from bondage under the devil (2:14–15) to the Sabbath-rest promised to those who believe (4:3, 9). The Sabbath-rest may be heaven, though many hold that it refers primarily to the salvation-rest of Christ’s redemption. The analogy focuses on faithful stewardship. (CSB)

Jesus’ superiority to Moses was not a matter of faithfulness. Both were faithful in carrying out their assigned tasks. In Numbers 12:7 God Himself said of Moses, “He is faithful in all my house,” Moses poured out his life in service to the house of Israel, God’s chosen OT people. He even offered to have his name blotted out of God’s book in exchange for them. Nor can anyone doubt Jesus’ faithfulness to the one who had commissioned Him apostle and high priest. In John 17:4 on Maundy Thursday evening He could say to His Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave Me to do.” (PBC)

APPOINTED HIM – The Father’s will is that His Son should reveal the fullness of His grace (cf Ac 3:20). (TLSB)

JUST AS MOSES – Greatest OT example of a faithful leader. But Jesus surpasses Moses as the faithful leader in worship and in life. (TLSB)

GOD’S HOUSE – People of Israel, the household of faith in Moses’ time. (TLSB)

**3:3** *the builder ... has greater honor than the house.* Jesus is the actual builder of the house (or household), whereas Moses was simply a part of it. (CSB)

The creator has more honor than what is created, because what is created depends on the creator for existence. Jesus is the creator of Moses and Israel and is worthy of more honor. Luth: “Whatever Moses ordered at God’s command he did only in view of the Christ who was to

come. Thus the people were to be prepared for the personal rule of Christ, who was to dwell among them as in His own house... Moses and the priesthood count for nothing, compared with Christ. They are under obligation; and since He is the true Lord, they must hand over the keys to Him and serve Him” (AE 13:305). (TLSB)

The point of comparison was not faithfulness, but position. No one would give to any house, no matter how grandiosely built and furnished, more honor than that given to the builder. Moses was only part of the house of Israel. Jesus as God was the builder of that house, just as He is the builder of everything. (PBC)

**3:4** *God is the builder of everything.* Jesus is here equated with God, making it beyond question that Christ is greater than Moses. (CSB)

All creation owes its being and daily life to God. (TLSB)

**3:5–6** *a servant in all God’s house ... a son over God’s house.* The superiority of Christ over Moses is shown in two comparisons: (1) Moses was a servant, whereas Christ is a son, and (2) Moses was in God’s house, i.e., a part of it, whereas Christ is over God’s house. (CSB)

This phrase refers not to some slave who serves because he has to, but to a free servant who serves because he wants to. He was a faithful servant as shown by the refrain running through Exodus, “According to all the Lord commanded, , so did he” His greatest service was testifying to what would be said in the future. In John 5:46 Jesus explained what this meant when He told the Jew of His day, “If you believed in Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about me.” (PBC)

The house spoken of is described in Ephesians 2:20-21 as the “household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.” All believers of OT and NT are part of this glorious house, built on and ruled by the Son. (PBC)

**3:5** TESTIFYING TO WHAT WOULD BE SAID – Again one sees a Hebraic way of speaking. For in this way God calls His Word and His preachers witnesses. Ps. 81:8 says: “Hear, O My people, and I will call you to witness.” The Latin language cannot express this verb adequately with one word. But the meaning is this, that in the future I will speak a Word in your [singular] midst or among you [plural]. (For the Hebrew has “I will call to witness in you.”) This Word will not be a manifestation of things at hand, but it will be a testimony of things not seen. Therefore it is necessary for you to hear what you will not be able to see or grasp. For thus Christ says in John 3:11: “Truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony.” For in this passage (Ps. 81:8) both verbs, namely, “hear” and “I will call to witness,” are used independently. This means that you shall be the hearer, and I will be the Preacher. For what Christ has said about heaven and the life to come is grasped only by hearing, since it transcends not only all understanding, be it ever so deep, but also all capability of desiring, be it ever so extensive. Therefore the testimony of the Lord is the Word of faith, hidden wisdom; it is understood by children. Is. 53:1 also calls it something that is

heard. There we read: “Lord, who has believed what we have heard?” This means the Word we cause to be heard by preaching the Gospel. (Luther)

And surely the Word of God is most appropriately called a testimony. For just as in legal disputes whatever judgment is passed on the basis of the reports of witnesses is arrived at by hearing alone and believed because of faith, since it cannot be known in any other way, neither by perception nor by reason, so the Gospel is received in no other way than by hearing. And for this reason the apostles are called witnesses of Christ, as Is. 43:10 states: “Truly you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He.” Thus Ps. 122:4 also says: “To that place did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, Israel a testimony.” In my opinion this ought to have been translated as follows: “To that place did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord as a testimony to Israel.” For since the Hebrew has “to Israel,” or “for Israel,” in the dative, and “testimony,” in the ablative case, it should, according to our texts, be taken as “for a testimony,” as Christ says in Matt. 10:18: “You will be brought before kings and governors for My sake, as a testimony before them and the Gentiles.” The same thing is now true when the apostle says that Moses was “a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later,” that is, to be a witness of God in the things that were spoken through the angels. (Luther)

A servant does the will of the master without necessarily knowing what the master has in mind. But God the Father makes the fullness of His will known through Jesus the Son (cf Jn 15:15). (TLSB)

**3:6** CHRIST...OVER GOD’S HOUSE – Jesus knows the will of the Father and speaks with His full authority. (TLSB)

*we are his house.* The house is made up of God’s people, his household (see Eph 2:19; 1Pe 2:5). (CSB)

We share in all the blessings that God wills to give us. With Jesus the Son, we are heirs of the Father (cf Rm 8:17). (TLSB)

Chrysostom says: “He who sorrows in tribulations, he who falls, does not glory; he who is ashamed, he who hides himself, has no confidence.” From this it is clear that “glory” is used here for glorying or boasting, which the Greek text also has, namely, καύχημα. For in Greek “glory” is called δόξα, which means opinion, renown, glory among us. Therefore κενοδοξία means “empty glory.” Thus the Hebrew word כְּבוֹד means “glory,” and פָּאָר means “glorying.” Thus Ps. 24:8 says: “Who is this King of glory,” that is, כְּבוֹד. And in Ps. 89:17 we read: “For Thou art the glory (that is, פָּאָר, or “glorying”) of their strength,” which means “Thou art their strength, of which they glory.” But these words are confused in a strange manner, even though there is no small difference in the matter itself. For “glorying” is taken more in an active sense, but “glory” is taken in a passive sense. For “glory” is the opinion of us, that is, the opinion of others about us; but “glorying” is our opinion about ourselves. If it is in ourselves, it is empty; but if it is about us in Christ, it is genuine, as the apostle says in 2 Cor. 10:17: “Let him who glories, glory in the Lord.” Therefore we accept Chrysostom’s distinction between “confidence”

and “glory” in our hope. According to him, “confidence” is characteristic of one who has the courage to take up the cross of Christ, just as diffidence is characteristic of one who flees from the cross of Christ and is ashamed of it. “Glory,” on the other hand, is characteristic of one who makes progress and triumphs; but complaining or sadness is characteristic of one who fails and falls down. Thus Rom. 5:3 says: “We glory in tribulations.” But the apostle says this here because he had called us the house that Christ “builds” (Heb. 3:4, 6). The construction, however, is nothing else than tension, pressure, and in every way the cross and the sufferings that are in Christ. Therefore he wants us to know that if we are to be built and constructed, we need firm confidence and the glory of hope in Him, lest we fail and suffer worse destruction while the building takes place. (Luther)

*if we hold on to our courage and the hope.*† If we persevere in the faith and cling confidently to our hope of salvation. (CSB)

Watch out! Some have lost their place in this glorious house as the author will show directly. “Courage” is that feeling of confidence which allows words to flow freely. Such subjective courage is nothing without the objective “hope of which we boast.” The word for “boast” refers to the cause for boasting, not the act. “Hope points out the cause and content of our boasting, lifting our eyes of faith to what we have and ever will have in that superior Christ Jesus. (PBC)

**3:1–6** Though Moses was a faithful servant in God’s household, Jesus is the faithful Son. Since Jesus calls you to your heavenly home, you can be confident that you will share in God’s glory. However, beware not to boast of your own faithfulness. Only God is holy and righteous. In Christ, you freely share in God’s holiness. He is calling you to glory. • Lord Jesus, Son of the Father, fill me with Your Spirit of faithfulness. Amen. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Luke 9:28-36

**<sup>28</sup> About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. <sup>30</sup> Two men, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. <sup>33</sup> 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.) <sup>34</sup> While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” <sup>36</sup> 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.**

The great theophany of Jesus’ transfiguration also gives a glimpse of what the Christian’s future is. As Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land, so now Jesus will lead his people to eternal glory. The second epistle of Peter reflects this application

(2 Pet 1:12–15; cf. the reference to the transfiguration in 1:16–18). It speaks of the temporary nature of the body (“tent,” σκηνώμα [1:14]) and of the impending death of Peter as his “exodus/departure” (ἐξοδος [1:15]). Also in this exodus, disciples follow their Lord. Pilgrims on that path are privileged to lift up their hearts and enter into that heavenly conversation with Moses and Elijah and all the saints about the Lamb who was slain and raised again. This they do, when “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven,” they sing, “Holy, holy, holy. ... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. ...” and “O Christ, the Lamb of God. ...” (CC p. 404)

**9:28** AND IT CAME TO PASS – egeneto – It happened that. This is a new step forward in the ministry of Jesus. He was about to start out for Jerusalem to suffer and die. – This shows a continuity in the narrative from the OT. He will finish what had been promised. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1) (CC p. 399)

ἐγένετο δέ/καὶ ἐγένετο—This is a typical Lukan expression, a Septuagintism, seldom used in Mark but frequently in Luke. It is monotonous, but with it, Luke shows continuity in the narrative from the OT. Matthew uses it following the conclusions of five discourses. It is one of the ways Luke demonstrates the biblical-historical character of the narrative: “It came to pass.” (CC p. 399)

It is fruitful to consider the transfiguration event as “an anticipatory vision of the glory of Jesus at his resurrection or his parousia.” Luke opens the scene of the transfiguration in 9:28 by saying: “And it came to pass after these words, about eight days, ...” “These words” refers not only to Peter’s confession, but also “to the prediction of the passion, death, and resurrection (v. 22) and to the attendant saying about the nature of true discipleship (vs. 23–27).” This preserves the Lukan theme that suffering must always precede glory (cf. 24:26). But even more arresting in Luke’s approach is the “eight days,” which is first introduced in the transfiguration narrative. This may well refer to the eighth day as the day of the new creation, the first day of a new week. Many early Christian communities understood Sunday as the eschatological eighth day, the day of resurrection, the day of the new creation. It is attractive to conclude that the unique Lukan parallel between the transfiguration and the resurrection suggests that Luke is subtly tying these two passages together. In 24:1, he simply says “the first of the Sabbath,” which is Sunday. Sunday is both the first and the eighth day. (CC p. 404)

*About eight days.* Frequently used to indicate a week (e.g., Jn 20:26 in the Greek; see note on Mt 17:1). (CSB)

Matthew and Mark have six days. Luke, however, may be using the phrase for its theological significance, for if the transfiguration is proleptic (in anticipation) of the resurrection, then this may be a reference to the new creation, to the eschatological eighth day. (CC p. 399)

ὡσεὶ ἡμέραι ὀκτώ—This is the only place where “eight days” occurs in Luke. (The only other occurrence in the NT is Jn 20:26, where Jesus appears to Thomas eight days after the resurrection.) Matthew and Mark have six days and seem to mean a

*chronological* distance from the events of the previous pericopes. Luke, however, may be using the phrase for its theological significance, for if the transfiguration is proleptic of the resurrection, then this may be a reference to the new creation, to the eschatological eighth day (cf. the comments on the number “eight” in the section “Baptism as a Rite of Passage” in the introduction and on Lk 24:1). The use of ὡσεὶ and the loose grammatical connection of the phrase (a “hanging nominative”) are consistent with this suggestion. (CC p. 399)

JESUS SAID THIS – μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους—The antecedent is all that Jesus said from 9:18 to 9:27, thus connecting the transfiguration with Peter’s confession, the passion prediction, and the disciples’ cross-bearing. (CC p. 399)

*Peter, John and James.* These three were also with Jesus at the healing of Jairus’s daughter (8:51) and in his last visit to Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). (CSB)

Among the first appointed as apostles (6:14), they were present also when Jairus’s daughter was raised (see note, Mk 1:19). They were recognized as leaders among the Twelve. (TLSB)

*onto a mountain.* Although Mount Tabor is the traditional site of the Mount of Transfiguration, its distance from Caesarea Philippi (the vicinity of the last scene), its height (about 1,800 feet) and its occupation by a fortress make it unlikely. Mount Hermon fits the context much better by being both closer and higher (over 9,000 feet; see Mk 9:2). (CSB)

The setting on the mountain is significant (see comments on 6:12). The OT theme of Mt. Sinai as the place of divine revelation is brought to mind by Luke’s specific term “exodus” in 9:31. Later, Peter will refer to the mount of transfiguration as “the holy mountain” (2 Pet 1:18), again echoing Sinai language. (CC p. 402)

*pray.* Again Luke points out the place of prayer in an important event. (CSB)

Jesus frequently took time out to pray. This was especially true of the time preceding major events in his life. Luke makes more note of Jesus’ prayer time than do the other Gospel writers.

Lord's purpose was to pray, to enter into intimate communion with His heavenly Father, for the purpose of getting wisdom and strength for His coming difficult work, for the Galilean ministry was drawing to a close, and the days of the Judean ministry would be short. And God revealed Himself in a remarkable manner to His Son. (Kretzmann)

**9:29 AS HE WAS PRAYING** – ἐν τῷ προσεύχῃσθαι αὐτόν—Luke is fond of the dative of the articular infinitive with ἐν (both present and aorist infinitive). The time is contemporaneous with the main verb. The articular infinitive is often used with the καὶ ἐγένετο construction and with αὐτόν as the subject of the infinitive. (CC p. 400)

BRIGHT AS A FLASH OF LIGHTNING – λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων—A similar expression is used of the two men who appear at the tomb (24:4; ἐσθῆτι ἀστραπούση). Here Luke adds the prefix (ἐξ) for Jesus' appearance to distinguish his brilliance from that of the two angels in 24:4. Jesus was *extra*-gleaming white. (CC p. 400)

This linkage between the transfiguration and the resurrection is reinforced by other details. Two men appear in glory at 9:30, and there are two men at the tomb at 24:4. Luke uses the word ἐξαστράπτω, “flash like lightning” (9:29) to describe the dazzling nature of Jesus' clothing and ἀστράπτω, “flash” (24:4), a cognate, to describe the dazzling apparel of these angels. Luke uses ἔξοδος (“exodus”) in the transfiguration narrative to predict the passion (9:31), which Jesus fulfills in Jerusalem (chapters 22–24). The account of the empty tomb with its passion statement (24:7) looks back to Galilee and specifically to the passion and resurrection prediction in this context. As Peter, John, and James entered the cloud, they were afraid (9:34). As the women entered the tomb, they were perplexed and afraid (24:2–5). (CC p. 405)

Jesus' appearance was transformed; a divine brilliance radiated from Him. (TLSB)

**9:30** TWO MEN – ἄνδρες δύο—Again, the same expression, along with καὶ ἰδοῦ, is used of the two men who appear at the tomb (24:4) and at the ascension (Acts 1:10). Fulfilling the OT requirement of two or three witnesses, two witnesses testify to Jesus' appearance in glory at the transfiguration, the resurrection, and at his ascension into glory. (CC p. 400)

*Moses.* The premier OT prophet who served as a model for the coming Messiah. *Elijah.* Similarly connected to the advent of God's Chosen One. (TLSB)

TALKING WITH JESUS – ESV has this in verse 30 while the NIV has it in verse 31. συνελάλουν αὐτῷ—A durative imperfect, implying that the ongoing conversation is about Jesus' “exodus,” which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem, i.e., his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. (CC p. 400)

*Moses and Elijah.*† Moses, the great OT deliverer and lawgiver, and Elijah, the representative of the prophets. Moses' work had been finished by Joshua, Elijah's by Elisha (another form of the name Joshua). They now spoke with Jesus (whose Hebrew name was Joshua) about the “exodus” he was about to accomplish, by which he would deliver his people from the bondage of sin and bring to fulfillment the work of both Moses and Elijah (see note on 1Ki 19:16 and on Mt 17:3). (CSB)

Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας—Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets, embracing the entire OT in its testimony to the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The topic of their conversation, indeed, the ongoing topic of conversation among the whole host of heaven, is about the Lamb who would be slain and would rise again (ἔξοδος). (CC p. 400)

There are some interesting connections between these two men, their successors and Jesus. Moses and Elijah were both associated with the “Law.” Their successors (Joshua and Elisha – both whose names take the translation of “Jesus”) were more connected to Gospel. They finished the tasks of Moses and Elijah. They were imperfect humans. The perfect Christ puts the finishing touches on everything by his life, death and resurrection. He is the perfect finisher. (CC p. 400)

**9:31** APPEARED IN GLORIOUS SPLendor – οἱ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ—The referents are Moses and Elijah, who appear in glory with Jesus. Elijah was taken directly into heaven (2 Kings 2), and God himself had seen to the burial of Moses (Deut 34:6). (CC p. 400)

Moses and Elijah enjoy close fellowship with God in heaven and so reflect that divine brilliance. (TLSB)

*departure.* Greek *exodos*, a euphemism for Jesus’ approaching death. It may also link Jesus’ saving death and resurrection with God’s saving of his people out of Egypt. (CSB)

Lit, “exodus.” Because Jesus was soon to offer His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (vv 21–22), thereby freeing His people from slavery to sin and leading them to the promised land of eternal life, this comparison to the OT exodus from Egypt is fitting. (TLSB)

ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ—The imperfect ἔλεγον continues the idea of the heavenly conversation first introduced by συνελάλουν. The clause ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ clarifies τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ and shows that it is a reference to the events to take place in Jerusalem and its environs. In the LXX ἔξοδος is used to translate a variety of Hebrew words and constructions that refer to Israel’s departure from Egypt, as well as to other travels. It is the title of the second book of the Torah, and since the Torah was the first part of the OT to be rendered into Greek (ca. 250 B.C.), by the time of the NT era the word would certainly bring to mind the exodus event as well as that book of the Torah. The word occurs in the LXX of Ex 19:1; 23:16; Num 33:38; 35:26; and many later OT passages. In the NT it occurs in Lk 9:31; Heb 11:22; 2 Pet 1:15. (CC p. 400)

Between these two καὶ ἐγένετο (“and it came to pass”) statements, Luke places his unique material, which gives the hearer the theological significance of the transfiguration. He introduces it with a favorite phrase, καὶ ἰδοὺ (“and behold”). Only Luke uses ἔξοδος (“exodus”) in the transfiguration narrative (9:31) to refer to the passion that Jesus fulfills in Jerusalem (Luke 22–24). This calls to mind the exodus of the Israelites, the greatest redemptive event in OT history. That saving deed of God was a forward-pointing prophecy of the perfect and complete salvation to be wrought in this “exodus” of Jesus. Thus Luke juxtaposes Jesus’ suffering with his glory and shows that the order of the kingdom is that suffering must precede glory. Indeed, the “exodus” of Jesus embraces not only his suffering and death, but also the ensuing resurrection and ascension: (CC p. 403)

It is in this total glorification context that the “exodus” comment of Luke must be seen. For Jesus’ departure points not just to his death, nor even his resurrection or ascension; but it is a departure, an exodus, that ultimately will lead to the demonstration of glorious authority ([Acts 10.34–43](#)). Thus, *the exodus refers to his departure into the whole eschatological programme that is tied to Jesus.*” (CC p. 403)

This “exodus” is the topic of conversation between Moses and Elijah, i.e., it is the conversation of heaven that now continues on the mount of transfiguration. While much of the OT looks back to the exodus from Egypt as the great salvation event for Israel, many other passages look forward to a new and greater exodus that God promised to bring to pass. This new/second exodus theme is especially prominent in Isaiah (e.g., Is 11:11–16; 43:16–20; 51:9–11). Strikingly, even the pagan Gentile nations who were Israel’s mortal enemies will be reconciled to her and to God and will participate in this new redemptive event (Is 11:11–16). Just as the first exodus was laden with baptismal overtones, as St. Paul expounds in 1 Cor 10:1–5, so also is the new exodus. In the first exodus the water was the means of death; in it the Egyptian foes drowned. The new exodus also involves death—the death of Christ—and those baptized into Christ die to sin as they die with Christ (Rom 6:1–5; Col 2:11–13). But in the new exodus God will pour out water to sustain his people in the arid desert of this world (Is 43:16–20), and this outpouring of water is accompanied by his outpouring of his Spirit on his people (Is 44:3; cf. Pentecost). The Father’s words at Jesus’ Baptism (Lk 3:22) are now echoed at his transfiguration (9:35). By means of the new exodus God will vanquish the primordial serpent, Satan, and redeem his people (Is 51:9–11). The fulfillment of all these themes can be seen in the depiction of Jesus’ “exodus” in Luke-Acts. (CC pp 403-404)

**9:32** PETER AND HIS COMPANIONS – ὁ δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ—Only Peter is mentioned by name to highlight his role in the narrative. Peter is set apart by Luke in a number of different episodes (cf. Lk 22:31–34; 24:12, 34). (CC p. 400)

*sleepy.* Perhaps the event was at night. (CSB)

Apparently, Jesus prayed for a long time. (TLSB)

*saw his glory.* See note on Ex 33:18. (CSB)

Because they were sleeping when Jesus’ appearance was transfigured, the disciples saw His radiance and brilliant clothing only after awakening. (TLSB)

**9:33** MASTER – ἐπιστάτα—This title is only found in Luke’s gospel. See comments at 5:5. (CC p. 400)

GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE – καλόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι—εἶναι is placed at the end of the sentence to emphasize Peter’s interpretation of this moment: to be present on the mountain with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in glory is good. (CC p. 400)

*three shelters.* Temporary structures to prolong the visit of the three important persons: lawgiver, prophet and Messiah. The idea was not appropriate, however, because Jesus had a work to finish in his few remaining days on earth (see note on Mk 9:5). (CSB)

Temporary shelters. Peter wanted to prolong the mountaintop experience. (TLSB)

These were temporary structures used in the OT celebrations. Peter uses them to stay in this “zone” of great feeling. He forgot that live goes in the plain and not in some cloistered place.

ποιήσωμεν σκηνὰς τρεῖς, μίαν σοὶ καὶ μίαν Μωϋσεῖ καὶ μίαν Ἠλίᾳ—It is not clear whether σκηνή here means something like the OT tabernacle or the kind of shelters made of branches in which the Jews stayed for seven days during Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated Israel’s life under God in the wilderness. In any case, Peter wants to preserve the glory by building tabernacles for each of the three main participants. He is a true theologian of glory at this moment. He focuses on the heavenly glory but does not want to face the suffering that will and must precede it: the cross comes before the resurrection. But Peter does not want to move to what lies beyond this extraordinary revelation. (CC pp. 400-401)

DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS SAYING – μὴ εἰδὼς ὃ λέγει—Luke rightly reports that Peter does not know what he is saying. He does not understand the order of the kingdom—suffering must precede glory. (CC p. 401)

Peter did not understand the situation or the reason for the appearance of Moses and Elijah. (TLSB)

**9:34** A CLOUD APPEARED – ἐγένετο νεφέλη καὶ ἐπεσκίαζεν αὐτούς— In the OT, clouds often were evidence of the presence of God. Examples include theophanies such as the pillar of cloud during the exodus (Ex 13:21-22; 14:19-31; 33:9-10; 40:36-37), the cloud on Mt Sinai (Ex 19:16), and clouds over and in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38) and the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). A similar expression is used at the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:35) to signal the presence of God. The overshadowing presence of God testifies both to the incarnation and exaltation. (CC p. 401)

ENTERED THE CLOUD – ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν τῷ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν νεφέλην—Who entered into the cloud? Only Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, or also the three disciples along with them? Some manuscripts (ϕ<sup>45</sup> A D W Θ Ψ M<sup>1.13</sup> 33 M sy<sup>h</sup> sa) read ἐκείνους (“those”) instead αὐτούς (“they”); this clarifies the ambiguity by saying only Jesus, Moses, and Elijah entered the cloud. The oldest manuscript, ϕ<sup>75</sup>, has neither word! The more difficult reading is αὐτούς, including the disciples in the cloud. Thus their fear comes from entering into the holy presence of God. (CC p. 401)

**9:35** *whom I have chosen.* Or “the Chosen One,” related to a Palestinian Jewish title found in Dead Sea Scrolls literature, and possibly echoing Isa 42:1. See 23:35. (CSB)

The Father affirms that Jesus is His Son, appointed before the creation of the world to bear the world's sins on the cross. (TLSB)

ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος—The perfect passive participle ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, used as a title for Jesus, shows that he is the Son who from all eternity has been chosen to accomplish the plan of salvation. The beloved Son (cf. Jesus' baptism) is also the Chosen One. The words here are a clear repetition of Ps 2:7 and the Father's words at Jesus' baptism; they also refer to Jesus as Israel reduced to one, the Suffering Servant of Is 42:1. It is the eternal plan of God that Jesus suffer rejection and crucifixion and be exalted to glory, seen momentarily here and consummated at the resurrection. Clearly, Luke sees Jesus here as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the Chosen One, the true Israel, whose "exodus" is about to be accomplished in Jerusalem. (CC p. 401)

*have chosen.* Parallel to "love" (Mt 17:5; see 2Pe 1:17). (CSB)

LISTEN TO HIM – αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε—ἀκούετε is a present imperative. The phrase could be translated "continue *always* to listen to him!" Cf. Deut 18:15–20. On ἀκούω as a technical term for catechumens, see comments at Lk 5:1; the Sermon on the Plain (6:27, 47, 49); the parable of the sower (8:8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18); and Jesus' discussion of the new kinship (8:21). Deuteronomy stresses the necessity of listening to God, and in particular Deut 18:15–20 mandates listening to the new Prophet God will raise up. (CC p. 401)

Echoes Dt 18:19 and confirms that Jesus is the long-expected prophet like Moses. (TLSB)

A voice from the cloud commands the disciples, "This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him!" The words of the angels to the women (24:5) presuppose the command of 9:35: my Son, the Chosen One, he is the living one; listen to him; remember his words! The identification of Jesus as the new Moses and the new Elisha was made in the feeding of the five thousand (9:10–17); it is now confirmed here with these words from Deut 18:15: "Listen to him!" Now that the eschatological prophet promised by Moses has arrived, the disciples are to heed his words. This is both a statement of Christology and a command to Jesus' followers to hear his teaching as the final revelation from God. (CC p. 405)

**9:36 KEPT THIS TO THEMSELVES** – Jesus was not the military conqueror that the people expected. Therefore, revealing the transfiguration at this time could only lead to misunderstanding. Only in the light of Easter and Pentecost did the meaning of this mountaintop experience come clear (cf 2 Peter 1:16-212) (TLSB)

The confession by Peter that Jesus is the Christ was a great moment. From that moment of clarity, things will become more and more clouded as the disciples will follow Jesus with increasing incomprehension. The passion prediction and call to cross-bearing was enough to create some confusion. The transfiguration sealed it. Their

silence confirms their misunderstanding. So from 9:1 to 9:36, there is a progression from openness to complete silence: “And they were silent and reported to no one in those days anything of what they had seen” (9:36). This is the messianic passion secret (see comments on 9:18–22). As Jesus teaches concerning this messianic passion, death, and resurrection, he also gives the command to keep silent (9:21). The disciples obey (9:36). Some things are not yet fully in the open. His hour will come, as will the new day when the disciples shall once again preach. (CC p. 405)

**9:28–36** Through the transfiguration, Jesus allows His disciples to catch a glimpse of the glory that will again be His after His resurrection. Like Peter, we, too, like to prolong “mountaintop experiences,” leaving the toil and trouble of the world behind. However, Jesus has not called us out of the world, but rather to overcome it. Accordingly, He lifts us up and strengthens us when we are challenged, reminding us that He has already overcome the world for us. • “ ’Tis good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain; But since Thou bidst us leave the mount, Come with us to the plain.” Amen. (*LSB* 414:5) (TLSB)