

Intro: Who is Jesus?

1. Jesus is the Heavenly Man – the Glory of God Expressed in Human Form
 - a. The image here is a restatement of God's presence during the Exodus: Lightning, Cloud, Mountain, Shining, GLORY
 - i. Recapitulation of Exodus – Shekinah glory in cloud
 1. The "Shekinah" cloud was where the expression of the presence of God dwelt and lived with the people of Israel during the Exodus
 - a. Pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night
 - b. When it settled on the mountain, there was lightning and fire and cloud
 2. It was the visible expression of the glory of God's presence with and for His people
 - a. It was the Shekinah that kept Pharaoh from getting the Hebrews
 - b. It was the Shekinah that sent before and behind them to lead them out of slavery
 - c. It was the Shekinah that settled on the mountain to give Moses the Law and settled on the Tabernacle to receive the sacrifices
 - d. The cloud that hides the glory from destroying the people, the fire that expresses the majesty and power and transcendence of God's presence
 - b. Jesus is "transfigured" on the Mountain
 - i. appearance of his face was "different"
 1. There was a noticeable change in the appearance of his face, his presence
 2. When Moses came down off of Mt. Sinai, after being in the Shekinah glory cloud, his face glowed with the reflected glory of God
 3. In a similar (but greater, we shall see) way, Jesus' face here is related to the glory of God
 - ii. his clothing dazzling white (lightning)
 1. This is the emanation of the Shekinah – a glory that emanates from the very person of Jesus
 - iii. The presence of God in the cloud of brightness (like lightning) from Exodus 19.
 1. Also, Luke says that the cloud "overshadowed" them, the exact word from Exodus 40:35 where Moses couldn't enter the tabernacle because the *Shekinah* cloud had "overshadowed" it and the glory of the LORD filled it.
 2. Luke says that they were afraid when the cloud overshadowed them. Why?
 - a. When somebody got near the Shekinah cloud in the OT, somebody died!
 - b. The glory of the Lord is severe and powerful, belittling to man and exalting to God
 3. And this glory *emanates* from Jesus! HE IS THE LIGHT IN THE CLOUD OF EXODUS!!
 - iv. The "seeing" of the three disciples like the elders of Israel "saw" the glory of the Lord ("from afar", Exodus 24) and dined before Him, but in a greater way in Christ Jesus.
 1. This is was the Father's way of expressing the truth that His glory is in Jesus and that God was moving towards Man in mercy, for they were not killed within the cloud and the glory of God in Jesus was dwelling with them
 2. John 1 – "the Word tabernacle among us"
 - c. Jesus is Far Greater Than Moses – He is the Son of God
 - i. The story recalls the ascent of Moses to Mt. Sinai to meet with the Lord and receive the Law, where he returned with a face that "shone" so that he had to put a veil over it *because it was fading* (Exodus 34:29ff; 2 Cor 3:13)
 - ii. Unlike Moses, whose face shone *as a reflection* of God's glory, Jesus' face and clothes shine *from within, before the cloud descends!*
 1. Moses is like the moon, reflected light, but Jesus is the Sun, the source of light
 2. Jesus emanates God's glory, He does not merely reflect it.
 3. Mark tells us that "no launderer on earth could ever produce this whiteness" - it is DIVINE!

4. Matthew describes it “his face shone as the sun” and his clothes were as “light”
- iii. This moment shows that Jesus is the heavenly man who supersedes all others whom God has sent to His people
 1. His origins are from heaven and His glory is glimpsed for a moment that is His own, not owing to reflected glory but possessed glory
 2. Paul expounds this as “the fullness of deity in bodily form”
 - a. Fullness of Deity – Fully God
 - b. In Body – Fully Human
- d. What does all of this mean?
 - i. The Shekinah was a provisional and helpful, but partial representation of the glory of God, **BUT JESUS IS THE GLORY OF GOD!**
 1. **Hebrews 1:3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
 2. Jesus is the “exact representation” of God, the shining forth of His very glory
 - a. He is the glory of God, the perfect, unsurpassable, ultimate, and final representation of who God is
 - b. He tells us who God is like nobody or nothing else does
 - i. Psalm 19 – all Creation tells of the glory of God
 - ii. Jesus is greater than all that because He IS the glory of God
 - ii. Jesus is far superior to any prophet, teacher, sage, mystic, king, ruler, president, general, etc.
 1. Luke 10:18 – “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven...”
 - a. Jesus was there when Satan fell! He saw it!
 2. If this is true, then He is far beyond any prophet who has ever lived and His presence among demands great fear, submission, and allegiance
 3. If what He said is not true, than He is the most evil man who has ever lived and should be utterly rejected
 - a. There is not a third option of Him being a great teacher but not the absolute glory of God and the eternal Son of God who existed before time began!
 - b. You cannot say that He is one among many of the same kind – a founder of a great religion who had great insight into reality or truth and a great moral teacher or wise sage who taught us a better way.
 - c. C.S. Lewis’ *Lord, Liar, or Lunatic*

“How can you cope with the end of a world and the beginning of another one? How can you put an earthquake into a test tube, or the sea into a bottle? How can you live with the terrifying thought that the hurricane has become human, that fire has become flesh, that life itself came to life and walked in our midst? Christianity either means that, or it means nothing. It is either the most devastating disclosure of the deepest reality in the world, or it’s a sham, a nonsense, a bit of deceitful play-acting. Most of us, unable to cope with saying either of these things, condemn ourselves to live in the shallow world in between. We may not be content there, but we don’t know how to escape.” (N.T. Wright, *For All God’s Worth*)

2. Jesus is Superior to and Fulfilling of the Law and the Prophets
 - a. Moses and Elijah appear “discussing” with Jesus
 - i. Moses represents God’s revelation through the Law
 1. The Law and its correlating system of tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, etc. is fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of Man (God) and the Suffering Servant
 2. He fulfills the Law by obeying it perfectly on our behalf and He fulfills the debt payment the Law revealed against sin by dying in our place - life for life.
 3. He fulfills all the tabernacle service, for He is the sacrifice, the priest, and the house of God itself.
 4. How can the holy and righteous God be gracious and merciful to sinners? How can the Messiah be both the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant? Only the cross of

Christ explains how this is so: God become Man to suffer and die in Man's place so that God can dwell with His people forever.

5. Note Peter's letter in 1 Peter 1:10-11 - "sufferings and the glories that would follow" concerning the Christ.
- ii. Elijah represents God's revelation through the Prophets
 1. He is the ultimate representation of God for He is God's Word, from before time began He is the full expression of the heart of God in action (John 1)
 2. **Hebrews 1:1-4** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (ESV)
- b. seen in glory *which departs*
 - i. So, what we have is the Law and the Prophets coming to Jesus, Jesus begins emanating God's glory, they discuss Jesus' Exodus which He is to fulfill, and then the Law and Prophets walk away!
 1. "as they were departing" Peter tries to keep them around, but God dramatically leaves Jesus *alone*
 2. The Old is passing away, being completely fulfilled by the Christ of God and *solely* by the Christ of God.
- c. speaking his "exodus" - departure
 - i. The word that Luke uses regarding the topic of their discussion is literally "discussing His *exodus* about to be *fulfilled* in Jerusalem"
 - ii. EXODUS – this comparison has been building with the feeding of the 5,000, the rejection by the fathers, and the appearance of Moses and Elijah gives us a strong declaration that a greater Moses, a greater Elijah, and a greater Exodus has come
 1. Moses was rejected by the people
 2. Moses fed the people in the "desolate place"
 3. Moses led the people out of (Exodus) slavery to the promised land
 - iii. which he was about to FULFILLED in Jerusalem
 1. Jesus was about to "fulfill" the promise that God had made beforehand to Eve, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Isaiah, etc.
 - a. Fulfillment of the promise is a major theme of Luke
 - b. But how was Jesus going to fulfill these promises, and how is it an *exodus*?
 2. How was He going to lead His people out of slavery (to death, see Heb 2:15) to the sacred place where there was abundant life and the sacred space to worship God (John 10:10; Rom 5:17)?
 - a. Red Sea - the Deep Water in the ANE was a symbol of chaos and death, thus Moses leading God's people through the Red Sea was symbolic of leading through the danger and threat of chaos and death into the Promised Land where they could worship God alone (Mosaic system came after salvation, not before) - this all previews Jesus' victory over death and subsequent salvation to lead us home to righteousness in the Real Promised Land in the presence of God where God dwells with His people (Lev 26:12; 1 Cor 3:16; Rev 21:3)
 3. It is in His rejection, trial, unjust execution, and resurrection *in Jerusalem* whereby He brings His people through death to life
 - a. Heb 2:14-15
 - b. Romans 6:4 – baptism through the fire of judgment and death that those who place their humble trust in Him would have life
- d. The mention of Jesus' "exodus" and the inclusion of Moses and Elijah as "leaving" shows Jesus's superiority and the passing away of the old system in the "*fulfillment* of Jesus' exodus"

- i. Jesus is not just another prophet who is trying to get near God and telling us of God, but He is the God of whom all prophets are trying to get near and speak of!

3. Jesus is the Final Mediator Between God and Man

- a. This allusion to the mountain on which God's glory fell, *in the face and person of Jesus Christ!*, is clearly understood by the disciples, thus they want to build tabernacles there, which is what immediately happened after the elders dined with God on the mountain in Exodus 19.
- b. However, they wanted to build three tabernacles, thus missing the point of the unique supremacy of the Son of God.
 - i. Not only did they miss the point, but Luke is careful to declare that they were in "deep sleep" again while Jesus was praying
 - ii. Yet, Jesus still reveals Himself to them and the Father still expresses Himself to them though they are weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually
- c. Therefore, God has to inform of this in a vocal and fearful expression of the glory of His Son: Jesus is better: "This is my Son, my Elect One. Listen to Him!"
 - i. Not only is He better, but a tabernacle is no longer needed, because Jesus is the Tabernacle, the way that Man can approach God - the New which was promises surpassing the Old which was temporal (and a tutor to lead us to the true Tabernacle, the Christ)
 - ii. Here the disciples (and Moses and Elijah) see the glory of God. Jesus, as it were, is the new tabernacle, through whom we experience the very presence of God that Moses was denied. Luke says here implicitly what John says explicitly when he writes (obviously recalling the Transfiguration itself) "*The word became flesh and tabernacled among us... and we beheld his glory.*" (John 1:14). John uses the word "*tabernacled*" in Greek which literally means "pitched his tent." We see in the text that Peter tries to build Moses, Elijah, and Jesus tents ("tabernacles") as well. Why? They realized that Jesus was being revealed as the glory of God (cf. Peter's remembrance of the Transfiguration: "*We were with him on the mountain! and the voice came out of the Majestic Glory*" 2 Peter 1:16-18.) and assumed that the mediation was coming next (tabernacle).
- d. Jesus is both God and Man, and as such is the Mediator between God and Man for our redemption and God's mercy and justice to be expressed.
 - i. 1 Tim 2:5
 - ii. Heb 12:24 – Jesus' blood speaks better than the innocent blood of Abel, and thus He is a greater mediator of the new covenant between God and Man
 - 1. Most human beings have known that there is a God behind the universe, and also that there is a gap or chasm of some kind that cuts us off from God.
 - 2. Therefore, many religions had "temples," in which the presence of the divine was mediated in some way (through priests or rituals or sacrifices or transformations of consciousness, etc.). But here on the mount we learn that not only is Jesus the God on the other side of "the gap," but he is the bridge over the gap. He is not only the God we need, but the Mediator, the way to come into the presence of the Holy and the Glory.

4. How Do We See Jesus' Glory?

- a. Recognize the Real Jesus – the supernatural, glorious, wondrous Jesus
 - i. We must learn to see Him as He is
 - ii. How do we do this?
- b. "Listen to Him!"
 - i. This is the only command in the passage, strongly indicated by the Father that the disciples are to listen to Jesus in a way that supersedes Moses or the prophets
 - ii. The unique superiority of the God-Man means that His words are life itself, the Word who created the world
 - iii. If Jesus is the glory of God with all the splendor, majesty, power, authority, GLORY, then we should listen to Him!
 - 1. What else can compare with Him?! He is GOD shining His majesty!
- c. PRAY for His presence

- i. Jesus took three closest and went up the mountain to pray
 - 1. After giving the revelation that the Christ was to suffer, die, be raised, and the subsequent calling that those who follow Him taking on the same, He gives these three leaders of His Church an encouraging vision
 - a. He was changed *as he was praying*
 - 2. Jesus brought these three in to see His glory – He is for you seeing Him as He is.
 - a. So pray with expectation that He will give you a glimpse of His glory, His supremacy, His beauty, His power, His sufficiency, His authority
- ii. Prayer is our active reliance upon God for the resources that we need in order to carry out His desires and His plans which He has given to us
 - 1. We need the presence of the glorious Son of God among us, so that we might do the works of God by faith, taking great risks to carry our crosses with great joy that He is our fullness of life and the One with power to bring about success in the eyes of the Father

“Our fallen hearts are predisposed to think that we can ‘do church.’ But we only think that way if we’re task-oriented to begin with. Real ‘church’ is not running a program; real church is the manifest presence of Jesus among His people. And we can’t program Him. We can only pray for His presence.” ~Ray Ortlund
- iii. Prayer brings us into the necessary power behind our witness and the revelation of the Glory of God: His Spirit, His power, His Glory. Like all others who have been called by God to reveal to the world His glorious gospel, we have been given His very presence to accomplish the impossible task of witnessing and proclaiming His glory to the world.

Conclusion: When the cloud dissipated and the light relinquished its forward place in the face of Jesus, Peter, James, and John were left in the presence of the Jesus they knew before. Or, rather, thought they knew before. But now everything was different. For, they had seen the dual heartbeat of Jesus. One beat echoes from eternity the voice of God and the other echoes as our brother. Underneath that calm Nazarene exterior lay the ferocity and terrible beauty of the God who created the world by sheer announcement. The Lion was still in there.

Oh, that we would know the greatness, the supreme and sublime greatness of the glory of Jesus. That we would see that He is superior over all things. He is the glory of God, equal with the Father in all His attributes – the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, sublimely excellent in all He is or does. He is superior in His knowledge, knowing the last things from the beginning and the small things from the farthest reaches of the universe. His knowledge surpasses all the greatest thinkers of the world combined like the ocean surpasses a raindrop, and makes all the greatest books that have ever been written seem like a Bazooka Joe wrapper in comparison to His wisdom. He is superior in His sovereignty, for nothing AT ALL can happen unless Jesus says it to be so – not one hair from your head and not one bird from the sky, no demon can move an inch, and no star can shine its light, no one can hold back his hand or require from him an answer, for all things exist for him and through him and to him to the praise of God. He is superior in his faithfulness, he will fulfill his promise with all the power and constancy of the uncreated God. He is superior in his purity – always having done and doing the will of the Father without one inkling of doubt or a self-serving thought. He is superior in his love – setting his face to fulfill the exodus of his people – our deliverance through swallowing all the judgment fire of the supremely just God in his body for sinners, *to make* them friends. He is superior in his justice which will bring the heavens down upon his enemies and the enemies of his people with the more potent ferocity than that which formed the heavens and the earth. He is supreme in grace which brings life to the dead, freedom to the captive, forgiveness to hell-bound haters of God by removing their hearts of stone and giving them repentant hearts of flesh, opening their blind rebellious eyes by the sovereign grace of His own mercy. Jesus is supreme over all.

How, then, shall we go on living?