



“Heaven Answers”  
Luke 9:27-36

**Idea:** In the midst of all the speculations about Jesus’ identity, heaven speaks and settles the question.

**Intro:** Who is Jesus? Anyone who has ever heard of Him has formed their own opinion. C. S. Lewis tells us that those opinions fall into one of three categories. Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. In *The Crisis of the Christ*, G. Campbell Morgan offers His perspective on Jesus’ identity. He says:

“He [Jesus] was the God-man. Not God indwelling a man. Of such there have been many. Not a man deified. Of such there have been none save in the myths of pagan systems of thought; but God and man, combining in one personality the two natures, a perpetual enigma and mystery, baffling the possibility of explanation.”

Who was and is this Jesus we read about in the Bible and to which people all over the world are still discussing after two millennia? Obviously, He was no ordinary man as James Hefley made clear many years ago. Of Jesus he said:

“Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the Child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His Divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a Cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying – and that was His coat. When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Such was His Human life – He rises from the dead. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the Centerpiece of the human race and the Leader of the column of progress. I am within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.”

As we have been working through Luke’s gospel and more specifically chapters seven through nine, I wonder if you have been able to answer this question for yourself. Who is this Jesus? We keep hearing in church about how He can and wants to transform lives. We have been reading through and studying different passages in Luke that show how He healed the sick, raised the dead, and stepped into the hard spaces of people’s lives. So, who is this Jesus that we are constantly being called to embrace as Lord and Savior? Have you settled it for yourself?

Peter, on behalf of he and the other disciples, settled the debate for themselves. When Jesus asked them who they believed Him to be, Peter emphatically declared Jesus to be “*the Christ of God*” (9:20). As we discovered last week, Jesus affirmed this rock-solid statement of faith; even naming him after it. Simon’s name was changed to Peter (Πέτρος). Jesus then called the disciples to put their faith into action by following Him. He explained how it required taking up one’s cross daily and dying to self (9:23). Thankfully, Jesus explained why it was necessary to do so. He warned against the danger of living for lesser things, which are not worth the price of our souls (9:24-25). And He spoke of the reward coming to all who follow Him (9:26). This reward is a kingdom. It is a share in God’s glory. It is the promise that all the self-denials and suffering endured during this life will be replaced with the reward of glorious joy and blessings to come in the Kingdom with Jesus.

As an offering of hope and encouragement to His disciples, Jesus said that a few of them would get to see this Kingdom before they died (9:27). Peter, James, and John are the ones who got to see the Kingdom. This foretaste of what was to come that we read about in the next set of verses also answers the ultimate question set before us. The answer has been on full display in each scenario. As Jesus healed the sick, calmed the storms, cast out the demons, fed the multitudes, and raised the dead, the only possible explanation for these miracles is that Jesus is the Christ of God. The Twelve were beginning to see and understand this for themselves, yet there was much they still did not comprehend. As Jesus predicted his suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter rebuked Him for it. The debate over Jesus’ identity and mission had not yet been fully settled in he and the other disciples’ hearts. In the passage before us today, heaven answers as God the Father steps in to settle the matter for Peter and for us today.

Read Luke 9:27-36.

**Inquiry:** We refer to this scene as the transfiguration of Christ. Luke’s account of it is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. As R. Kent Hughes points out, it invites us to enjoy a biblical feast. The meal served up for us is the shekinah glory of God...the visible presence of God seen in a radiant cloud. Israel first saw the shekinah glory of God when they left Egypt and headed to the Red Sea. As they set out, a pillar of cloud led them by day and gave light to them by night (Ex 13:21). God demonstrated His glorious presence amid His people through the cloud. The most intimate encounter with this cloud was experienced by Moses when he received the Law on stone tablets for the second time (Ex 33-34). On one occasion while in the Tent of Meeting, Moses asked to see the glory of God (Ex 33:18), and the Lord graciously invited Moses to ascend Mt. Sinai again with two stone tablets. There He would allow Moses to catch a glimpse of His glory. On the mountain, God’s shekinah glory passed by Moses as he was covered by God’s hand.

We also see the shekinah glory in the tabernacle and the temple. When both places of worship were erected and dedicated to the Lord, God’s glory descended in a cloud (Ex 40; 2 Chron 7; 1 Kings 8). His presence was visibly seen in the column of glory that ascended from the tabernacle and temple.

The shekinah glory was also seen by the prophet Ezekiel while in exile. In his vision, he saw cherubim with the four spinning wheels leaving the temple. Above them floated the dazzling glory of God (Ezek 10:18-19). In this scene the glory of God was moving slowly away to the east, across the Kidron Valley, and upward from the city where it lingered above the Mount of Olives. Then, it departed (Ezek 11:23). Ichabod! The glory had departed, and for the next six hundred years, though the temple would be rebuilt there would be no glory in it.

Thankfully, the story is not over. On a cold winter’s night in a shepherd’s village in Judah, there were two young Hebrews who had traveled from Galilee. We find them in a stable. The young man, Joseph, holds up a newly born son. It is not his biological son, but he will raise the boy as his own. Mary, his wife, has given birth to this boy just as the angel Gabriel had said she would. As this birth is taking place, the angel of the Lord appeared to nearby shepherds in the field with their flocks. The glory of God shone all around them as the heavens erupted in glorious praise (Luke 2:8-9, 13-14). After six hundred years, the glory of God had returned in the person of Jesus Christ.

The angel of the Lord told the shepherds they would find a baby in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. The baby born that day was no ordinary child. He was the Savior (σωτήρ) and the Christ (χριστός). It is significant that the first mention of a savior in the Bible is found alongside the very first sin. God told Eve that a son would be born through her offspring who would crush the head of the serpent as it bit his heel (Gen 3:15). After this gracious prophecy, glimpses of the salvation to come through the Christ are presented in the Ark, the Passover, and the Day of Atonement. Heaven has been declaring the answer for sin from the very beginning. Throughout history as man has wrestled with sin and wondered how to get out from under its tyranny, heaven has continually pointed to the Savior. Even as the disciples in this passage wrestled with the identity of Jesus and how He fit into the story of God's salvation, heaven once again answers. They debated among themselves, and they even debated with Jesus over His identity and how His messiahship would play out; however, heaven would have the final say. Let's hear from heaven today as God the Father answers the ultimate question for us. There are four truths about Jesus we need to hear and heed.

## 1. Jesus is greater.

Read Luke 9:29.

I believe we are meant to see in this scene a parallel between Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 34) and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Both men went up on the mountain. Both talked with God. Both had their faces changed. While there are incredible similarities, there are also significant differences.

- Moses' face shone with God's glory, but Jesus' entire appearance changed in a flash to radiate glory.  
This was quite a spectacle! I love how R. Kent Hughes describes it. He says, "Jesus was framed by a thousand summer stars." Luke tells us that "*his clothing became dazzling white.*" The word translated "white" is λευκός. It is the grand apocalyptic color representative of what is beyond. In Revelation it is used to describe the white stone, the white horse, and the white throne (Rev 2:17; 6:2; 20:11). Matthew adds that Jesus' face "*shone like the sun*" (Matt 17:2).  
  
For a brief moment, the veil set over Jesus' humanity was lifted, and His true essence was permitted to shine through. This was both a glance back into His prehuman glory and a look forward into His future glory. Here we are meant to see that Jesus is glorious in and of Himself. Moses' face shone with the glory of God because He had been in the presence of God. Jesus' radiated glory because He is God.
- Moses was alone; Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus.  
As Jesus stood radiating light, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. Many have wondered why it was these two men and not one of the other great prophets of old. Perhaps, the reason lies in the fact that both of them spoke with God on mountain tops. Moses spoke with God on Mt. Sinai (Ex 31:18, and Elijah spoke with God on Mt. Horeb, another name for Sinai (1 Kings 19:8ff). They both also had been shown God's glory and had famous departures from this life. There are many other things we could point to as qualifiers for appearing with Jesus here. The main point we want to see in this is that they both appeared with Jesus. They attended to Him, which speaks of superiority and greatness.
- Moses received the Law; Jesus discusses the gospel.  
As Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus, they spoke of His departure, which included His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
- Israel, apart from a mediator, wanted to hide from God's glory; Peter, James, and John see Jesus' glory and want to worship (vs. 33).

While Peter spoke when he should have remained silent, and the offer to make booths was out of place, Peter demonstrated a desire to be in God's presence. Something new was happening.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Moses and Jesus in these two scenes is that God the Father speaks to the disciples to answer the question of who Jesus is. This brings us to a second truth.

## 2. Jesus is God the Son.

The shekinah glory of God overshadowed them on the mountain (vs. 34), and from the cloud came the Father's voice (vs. 35). Heaven answered the question that these men had been mulling over in their minds and hearts. He said, *"This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to him!"* Now, this is not the first time the Father has spoken from heaven about His Son. When Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke, and the Spirit descended on Him like a dove (Luke 3:22). More than likely Peter, James, and John were not with Jesus for His baptism, so they would not have heard the Father's voice. Surely, though, they had heard the story from others who were there. In any case, the Father settles the debate about who His Son is, declaring He is His Chosen One.

Today, if you are still wondering about who Jesus is, please hear from the Father. He is God the Son and shares deity with the Father and the Spirit. Jesus is God and Messiah.

There is a third truth for us to know about the Son.

## 3. Jesus is the final word.

The Father commanded Peter, James, and John to listen to Jesus. The words recorded here are not the groggy recollection of sleepy disciples. Peter with clarity recounted his experience in his second letter (2 Pet 1:16-18). The Father's command was emphatic, speaking to Jesus' superiority over Moses and Elijah as well as the Law and Prophets. They were only partial expressions. In Jesus, we find the final statement and the full expression of God.

<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>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. – Hebrews 1:1-2

Jesus is the One to whom both the Law and the Prophets have pointed. John would later say of Jesus that He is the Word made flesh who has dwelt among us (John 1:14). John would also record Jesus' words about Himself saying, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6).

Jesus is the final word. There is no one greater and no greater word on redemption, which brings us to a final truth.

## 4. Jesus is the focus of everything.

Read Luke 9:36.

After the Father had finished speaking, Jesus is alone. Moses and Elijah are no longer standing with Him. This image reveals that everything the Old Testament has been revealing about the Messiah is wrapped up in Jesus. He is its focus. For that matter, He is the focus of history (Col 1:15-18), as well as the focus of eternity (Rev 4:11; 5:6-14). Jesus is everything. All that the Bible has been speaking and pointing toward finds its fulfillment in the Person of Jesus. He is the Savior and the Christ.

**Conclusion:** Who is Jesus? Have you settled this ultimate question in your heart and mind? As we read the Bible, we discover that its storyline leads the reader to see and believe on Jesus as the Savior and the Christ. He is greater than the Law and the Prophets. They point to Him as the means of redemption. Therefore, it is vain to seek forgiveness of sin and a relationship with God through religious activity. He is God the Son. The miracles of healing the sick, calming the storms, casting out the demons, feeding the multitudes, and raising the dead, reveal Him to be God. There can be no other explanation. For this reason, Jesus is the final word and the focus of history.

Who is Jesus? He is Lord and Savior. As such, you and I must listen to Him. He calls us to turn from our sin and shame and find in Him forgiveness and healing. Have you answered this call? It is not a call to be more religious. It is a call to die to oneself and be made alive in Christ. Trust in religious activity says, "I can make a way for myself. I will be accepted by my sincerity and commitment." This is not the gospel. The gospel tells us to die that we might be made alive. We long for an answer for the emptiness in our souls. Jesus is that answer.