

Evidence of Eternity

Luke 9:28-36

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for March 6, 2022

Stephen Davey

Almost everyone universally accepts the existence of an afterlife. Some cultures use mythology, some adapt from the Bible, others refuse to predict what eternity will be, but still acknowledge that earthly death is not the end. Only a select few human beings—besides Jesus—have been given any meaningful glimpse of what the glory of the eternal kingdom will look like here on earth. And every single one of those people are in this text from the Gospel of Luke.

No matter how far back you study world history, no matter where you travel today, the concept of eternity has been—and still is—a part of every culture in every generation in every nation around the world.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has put eternity in our hearts. And that's abundantly clear.

Australian aborigines pictured Heaven as a distant island beyond the western horizon while the settlers of Finland taught that eternal life was on an island in the faraway east. Mexicans, Peruvians and Polynesians believed that they went to live forever on either the sun or the moon after death. The early Babylonians taught that eternity was the resting place of heroes, and a tree of life was included in their story—an obvious combination of

their legend and the biblical account of creation. In the pyramids of Egypt, maps were found placed near entombed royalty to serve as guides to the future world. Even unbelieving Seneca, the Roman philosopher, wrote, "The day you fear as your last is the birthday of your eternal life."

Adapted from Randy Alcorn, [Heaven](#) (Tyndale House, 2004), p. ix

The global, unifying testimony of the human heart throughout history is simply and undeniable. God has stamped on the human heart this truth: there is life after death.

ibid

Where can you go in the Bible to get a glimpse of what life is like in the life to come? Where do we find evidence of life beyond the grave?

Well, I want to answer that question by taking you to something Peter and James and John will probably refer to as their mountain top experience. Who knows, maybe this is where that expression came from.

Let's go back to the next event in our study through **Luke's Gospel, chapter 9 and now we're at verse 28.**

Let's join them on the mountain top, for a few moments, today.

Luke writes in verse 28:

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

Luke 9:28-29

Over in Matthew's account, it reads:

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

Matthew 17:2

The word Matthew uses for **transfigured** is *metemorphōthē*, which gives us our word, metamorphosis.

You could think of it this way: the glory that was always in Him as fully God,

though fully man, rose to the surface for this incredible display of His divine, kingly glory.

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume One* (Crossway, 1998), p. 350

His face shone like the sun, Matthew writes; again, Luke writes that even ***His clothing became dazzling white***.

It's pretty bright up there!

And it's not enough to say the Lord's clothing became white; Luke is trying to describe how bright the white clothing was. In fact, the other Gospel accounts seem to struggle to describe it.

The other day, one of the lightbulbs in a bathroom upstairs burned out and Marsha asked me to reach up there and change it; it was one of six lightbulbs over the bathroom counter. I thought, *this is easy enough*, so I got a lightbulb from the closet and put it in and turned on the light switch and that white lightbulb glowed with a pale orange color compared to the other five lightbulbs.

So off I went to Lowe's to get an education. All the white lightbulbs looked alike, but some were described as: "cool white," "neutral white," "basic white," "relaxing white," "natural white," and "soft white."

I just wanted a lightbulb that gave off light!

Mark's Gospel account is obviously attempting to describe how white this light was. He writes:

And his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

Mark 9:3

In other words, Mark says, “You have never seen white this white!”

Luke uses the word **dazzling** or **gleaming**, which means to emit light; it’s a word used to describe flashes of lightning.

John MacArthur, *Luke: Volume One* (Moody Publishes, 2011), p. 283

It wasn’t so much that his brown tunic or grey tunic or whatever color tunic he was wearing changed color, what’s happening here is a brilliant light is literally emitting from His body, which turned everything into blazing, dazzling, light.

I didn’t see any lightbulbs at Lowe’s described as dazzling, or lightning white and that’s because this wasn’t natural; this was supernatural.



How do you think of the brilliant light of the glory of God? What images come to your mind to describe it?

The miracles of Jesus have shown us what He can do; this mountain-top moment shows us who He is.

David E. Garland, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 397

This is the light of the King.

Dwight Pentecost writes that this moment of transfiguration was: “a miniature picture of Christ’s second coming to earth to set up His kingdom—returning in the splendor of His glory; it was also a revelation of His personal glory that has been veiled by the incarnation.”

J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan, 1981), p. 258

He just let’s a little light peek of it out, if you please, and it is nothing less than staggering, blazing light.

By the way, this is also a preview of the glory that awaits God’s children, if you can imagine it.

The apostle John, who was here on this mountain top, will one day write the staggering news that **when Jesus appears, we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2)**.

We will share in the glory of His splendor as shining immortals, blazing with light. In fact, our future is previewed here in the presence of two men who arrive on this mountain top.

Now Luke goes on to write here in verse 30:

And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Luke 9:30-31

The word for **departure** is *exodon*, which gives us our words “exodus” and “exit.”

Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: Volume One* (Zondervan, 1994), p. 869

Just as the Book of Exodus gives us the account of Israel’s exit from Egypt, so Jesus is talking with Moses and Elijah about His exit from earth.

This would have included everything from His crucifixion to His ascension back to glory, all of which takes place in Jerusalem.

Garland, p. 394

None of this is an accident. Jesus isn’t a victim, He’s a willing sacrifice.

Earlier Jesus had preached to the people:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

Matthew 5:17

And who just so happens to be here talking to Him on the mountain? Moses—representing the Law—and Elijah—representing the prophets.

Jesus fulfilled everything to which the Mosaic law pointed; Jesus fulfilled everything the sacrificial system promised; Jesus fulfilled every promise of His first coming that had been predicted by the prophets.

Adapted from Hughes, 351

But they could also talk on a personal level about the nation Israel and their own personal rejection and suffering.

Moses’s first appearance to the nation was met by rejection and scorn. Throughout his time in leadership the people of Israel threatened to kill him; his mission was never easy.

Elijah suffered at the hand of a wayward nation and wicked rulers in Israel who refused to repent; he experienced threats to his life and the loneliness of rejection.

This meeting with Jesus fulfilled everything their lives represented and was a reminder that even the evil in this world cannot erase the plan of God.

This mountain top experience was a reminder to them—and to us—that Pharaoh had never been in charge of the times of Moses; Ahab and Jezebel and the false prophets of Baal were not in charge of Elijah’s generation; and now here, Rome and the Sanhedrin of Israel are not in charge of these events.

Who do you think is in charge of your world today? Who do you think oversees the events in your life today?

Moses has been dead for 1500 years and Elijah had been taken up 900 years earlier; but here they are evidently very much alive and well. They are the one’s now dressed in regal splendor. They are the one’s addressing the matters of eternity with none other than the Son of God.

Moses and Elijah are talking with the Lord about His coming exit from earth; in fact, “the original language indicates this was an extended conversation.”

Hughes, p. 350

And what a conversation it must have been!

John Phillips, Exploring the Gospel of Luke (Kregel, 2005), plife . 148

Jesus will be crucified, resurrected and then ascended back to the glory of Heaven. It’s all going to happen at the right time, according to the purposes and plan of God.

This meeting is a vindication of history; it’s also a preview of the coming glory of Christ and His kingdom; but it’s also a living portrait—brief as it is—of life in eternity.

This is a preview of what Jesus promised in **Matthew 13:43** that:

“The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Matthew 13:43b

This is the same brilliant light describing the face of Jesus shining with the brilliance of the sun.

We don’t become divine, we’re not little gods; we are simply given the glory of Christ and we literally wear it on our bodies as we become shining immortals.

One author outlined some observations in his commentary on this text: Powell writes that this is clear evidence that

there is life beyond the grave; there is intelligent life beyond the grave; there is glorious life beyond the grave and there is useful purpose in the work of God beyond the grave.

Ivor Powell, Luke’s Thrilling Gospel (Kregel, 1984), p. 228

Here is a portrait of your future in the coming kingdom and then on into eternity.

If you pair this mountain-top experience with Revelation chapter 6, where we’re given a description of martyred believers—martyred during the Tribulation—who now are before the throne of God, John the apostle writes in verse 10:

They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer.

Revelation 6:10-11a

Like Moses and Elijah, these martyred believers demonstrate a continuity between who they were on earth with who they are now in eternity.

In other words, they are still themselves, only now perfected and glorified.

Moses and Elijah are still Moses and Elijah. They even have their same names.

But now they are shining in glorious splendor, Luke writes.

They have bodies, which would be needed to wear a robe; and by the way, they're not in soul sleep until the resurrection.

Elijah and Moses—and these martyred believers are shown in Heaven—have voices and the necessary vocal cords.

They can communicate with each other; Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about real events and the progression of events; these martyred Christians are talking to the Lord.

Later in **Revelation chapter 7**, John hears the redeemed singing praise the Lamb! John describes the redeemed falling to their knees as they praise God.

Which would imply they have legs and knees to fall on and lungs and tongues and lips and voices to sing with.

Eternity isn't some state where disembodied spirits float around or lose their identity as they become one with the universe. No, they are still individuals with names and testimonies.

These martyred believers even remember what happened to them on earth, they remember the fact that they were murdered for their faith.

And John also writes here in chapter 6 and verse 9 that they are remembered in Heaven for being martyred. They will be rewarded in Heaven for being martyred (Revelation 2:10).

What happened to them on earth doesn't ruin Heaven for them, why? Because they now see their own lives in the light of eternity and according to the purposes of God, and it will cause them to glorify the Lord with holy perfection and confidence and joy.

Moses and Elijah aren't up here on the mountain top telling the Lord how bad they had it. No, they will remember, but they now have perfect joy and trust in the plan of God which leads to ultimate victory.



What is the significance of these two men being the ones included in this moment? Why are Moses and Elijah given this unique opportunity?

But to me, one of the most wonderful surprises here is that Jesus is including Moses and Elijah in His great plan of salvation. He's talking to them about His exit from earth and His plans for an atoning death, resurrection, and ascension back to glory.

He's including them in this incredible scene.

I can still remember being called into my fifth-grade teacher's office. I thought I was in trouble, but I couldn't think of anything I'd done—recently. I sat down in this overstuffed chair, and he looked at me and said, "Listen, I want to talk to you

about some ideas I have for our class and see what you think about it.”

To this day I can still remember the joy I felt that this big guy, this tall 5th grade teacher, wanted to include me in his plans.

Imagine this, only a billion times more thrilling.

Imagine being dispatched by God the Father to meet with God the Son and talk over the plans they have for the glory of Christ and the kingdom of God and the future of the world!

What could Elijah do about it? What could Moses add to it or advise?

This is nothing less than an amazing demonstration of grace: that God, who does not need us, is willing to include us in the unfolding plan of the ages.

About this time, Peter, James and John wake up; **Luke tells us here in verse 32:**

Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said.

Luke 9:32-33

These three tents Peter suggested were little booths the Jewish people built during their Feast of Tabernacles, or The Feast of Booths.

They commemorated annually their wilderness wandering as well as their anticipation of the coming Messianic kingdom.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2010), p. 238

As far as Peter is concerned, the kingdom is about to begin, so let’s just stay up here on the mountain. Is this great or what?

Who doesn’t want to stay on a mountain-top experience?!

Besides, who wouldn’t want to hear some stories from Moses? Imagine a conversation with this great leader who wrote, among other things, the Genesis account of Creation. Wouldn’t that bolster your faith?

And wouldn’t it be great to hear directly from Elijah what it was like to face down those prophets of Baal and see the fire of God descend on that altar? How about hearing directly from Elijah about his ride to heaven in a chariot of fire? What was that like? That will charge anybody’s spiritual batteries.

Peter’s ready to settle in and get the conversation going and maybe even get some answers to questions he’s had.

But suddenly we’re told by **Luke here in verse 34:**

As he (Peter) was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

Luke 9:34

I'll bet they were. This cloud enveloped them. In a moment, a voice will speak from within it, the same voice of God the Father that spoke at the baptism of Jesus.

This isn't some low hanging cloud. This was that pillar of cloud that guided Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 13). This was the cloud that appeared to the nation Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 16). This was the cloud of God's presence that filled the temple (I Kings 8).

Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible Commentary: Luke* (Tyndale, 1997), p. 252

Luke adds here in verse 35:

And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

Luke 9:35-36a

God the Father uses the third person here, making it clear in His command that the disciples are the audience.

Bock, p. 875

"You disciples, listen to Him!"

You will hear a lot of voices in your world; test everything you hear against Jesus's

words. His word is the final authority. Don't be led astray. Listen to Him!

Adapted from Barton, p. 252

Are you saved? Are you searching? Listen to Him: "***I am the way, the truth and the life!***"

Are you wandering and weary? Listen to Him: "***Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***"

Are you troubled? Listen to Him: "***I will never leave you nor forsake you.***"

Moses thought He was alone; Elijah thought he was the alone; Peter, James and John will think the worst. But the Lord will keep His word. Listen to Him.

And the disciples are evidently ready to listen and not talk, because we're told here at the end of **verse 36:**

And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

Luke 9:36b

Matthew's account adds that Jesus told them not to say anything about what they had seen until after His resurrection

And rightly so.

Had the disciples rushed down after this incredible mountain top experience and told everyone, the nation Israel would have had one more reason to revolt from Rome and crown Jesus King; and

besides, the other disciples would have been green with envy.

Peter, James and John might have been tempted to add this to their resume: “I saw Jesus transfigured; Moses and Elijah are my new best friends.”

It would have led to distraction instead of instruction.

Besides, as exciting and terrifying and glorious as this was, and as much as they wanted to stay there, they had to leave that mountain top and go back down into the valley.

Warren Wiersbe writes here on this text; As wonderful as these experiences are, they are not the foundation for the Christian life. That can only come through the word of God. Experiences come and go, but the Word remains. Our recollection of past experiences also fades over time, but His Word remains forever.

Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, [Luke, Volume 1](#) (Victor Books, 1989), p. 106

John will later write very simply this statement, referring to that moment on the mountain top:

We have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We saw it; we saw it! But don't build your life on what we've seen; place your faith and trust in who He is, and what He has said because He's full of grace and truth.



We can't show people the radiant glory of God today, but how can we still share Him with others, considering this story? Can you think of any impact this story has on the gospel and how we present God to our world?

And one day, we who believe in Him—whom we have not seen—will one day see it too. We will literally live, surrounded by the glory of God, bearing in our future immortal bodies the dazzling, brilliant light of our King.

© Copyright 2020 Stephen Davey
All rights reserved.

Access the complete archive of Stephen Davey's teaching ministry at
wisdomonline.org or on the **Wisdom for the Heart app**.