

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):

Year C - Transfiguration Sunday, Text: Luke 9:28-36

RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Year C - Transfiguration Sunday, Text: Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

In the verses that precede Luke's account of Jesus' transfiguration, Luke points out that Jesus, the Son of Man, is present at every moment throughout history. Yes, He would be present when Jerusalem fell to the Romans. With the destruction of Jerusalem, Christianity broke free of the narrow limitations of Judaism and reached out to the world-at-large to establish a radically different worldwide Kingdom. As the disciples began to understand, the Final Age of the world broke in with Jesus' Person and ministry.

Jesus did not focus merely on "getting people into heaven." He focused on helping people understand that to belong to Him is to belong to His Heavenly Kingdom now and forever. He calls His brothers and sisters to live now (in this present world) as they will then (after He finally reappears).

Verse 9:28: Where the Transfiguration took place is not known. Some suggest that it took place on Mount Hermon (in present-day Lebanon). However, what matters is not locality, but implication. Luke tells us that Jesus went up on a (nameless) mountain *to pray* — a detail found only in Luke's account of the Transfiguration. We read frequently of Jesus praying before great events in His ministry.

Only Luke makes reference to a time-frame of "about eight days." Matthew 17:1 and Mark 9:2 refer to "after six days." Perhaps Matthew and Mark have in mind a Sabbath day — and Jesus has come to bring endless everyday rest to His brothers and sisters. Perhaps Luke links eight to the first day of the week (seven plus one), Sunday — the day of Jesus' resurrection.

Verse 9:29: Jesus takes with Him Peter, James, and John — His inner circle. While Jesus is praying, the appearance of His face changes and His clothes become dazzling white. The radiance of the divine glory that once descended from heaven upon the face of Moses (see Exodus 34:29–34) now transforms Jesus' appearance and reveals His true identity.

Verse 9:29: The three men now see Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus. However, both Moses and Elijah met and spoke with God at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:1–8; 24:15–18; 1 Kings 18–19). The entire worldview of the disciples had been fashioned by what these two key figures from the past represented. The truths that surfaced during the transfiguration event summoned the disciples to rethink those worldviews!

Verses 9:30-31: Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus about His coming "exodus" (rescue event) that He is about to complete in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, few translations make use of these terms when referring to the contents of the conversation. However, Jesus came to carry out a final exodus — a "final rescue" of God's people — something that He achieved once and for all when He gave up His life on a Cross and was vindicated in His resurrection. After all, Jesus did not come merely to rescue His people from the political dominion of Rome; He came to rescue them from the spiritual dominion of the powers of Satan, sin, and death.

Verse 9:32: No doubt Jesus is strengthened by His visit with Moses and Elijah, even as He is eventually strengthened by the visit of the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane. Although the disciples are weary from lack of sleep on the Mount of Transfiguration, they manage to stay awake and see Jesus' glory and the two great men who speak with Him. However, they do fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to Jesus completing his Final Exodus through his passion and crucifixion.

Verses 9:33-34: As Moses and Elijah depart from Jesus' presence, Peter suggests to Jesus that he and the other two disciples should build three tents — one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. However, Luke states that Peter did not understand the implications of what he was saying.

Was Peter suggesting that the Messianic celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (or Tents/Booths) was at

hand? “Tabernacles” was a word rich in meaning, with links to Moses’ Tabernacle that was filled with God’s glory, of God’s constant care for His people during the wilderness wanderings, of the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s Temple, of the Messianic day (see Exodus 40:35; Leviticus 23:43; 1 Kings 8:11f; Zechariah 14:16–19).

Verse 9:35: The voice that speaks in this verse expresses a profound truth. It reflects Psalm 2:7 (a coronation psalm) and declares that, in Jesus, the Davidic line of kings was being restored — even though Jesus was a radically different kind of king from David. “Listen to Him” reflects Deuteronomy 18:15, and states that in Jesus, a new, final, and radically different kind of “prophet Moses” has appeared on the scene.

Verse 9:36: After the heavenly voice has spoken, Jesus is seen to be alone. The three disciples keep silent, and say nothing to anyone about what they have seen and experienced.

The truths that surface in this event are profound. God has shown up in the flesh-and-blood Person of Jesus. Jesus is the long-awaited King, but a King very different from what the Jewish people were waiting for. Jesus is indeed the final, long-awaited prophet. However, He would teach a way of life very different from that embraced by the Judaism of Jesus’ day.

Additional Verses 9:37–43: When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he had to deal with a mob swept into sensuous religious worship. When Jesus descends from the Mount of Transfiguration, He sees a day “darken into night” because of the people’s unbelief.

There is a touch of pity in the father’s appeal, “my only child.” Jesus addresses His audience as a “faithless and perverse generation.” Eventually, Jesus heals the boy by rebuking the spirit that occupied him — and then gives him back to his father.

Worthy of thought: In Mark’s narrative, the first thing Jesus does when beginning His ministry to the Jewish people is to cast a demon out of a man in a synagogue — on a Sabbath day; see 1:21–28. The first thing He does when beginning His ministry to the non-Jews is to cast a host of demons out of a Gentile in the Decapolis (see 5:1–20). In like manner, the first thing Jesus does after His identity and mission are revealed in a grand and glorious manner in His transfiguration is to cast out a demon.