

*The Great Sayings in the Gospels*  
*Message 82*  
*Getting the Vision Wrong*

Luke 9:28-36

- 28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.
- 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.
- 30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:
- 31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.
- 32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.
- 33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.
- 34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.
- 35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.
- 36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen. KJV

We are using Luke's account of this event because it is longer and somewhat more complete than Mark (9:2-13) and Matthew (17:1-9). However, Mark and Matthew contain the fact that Jesus gave instructions for them to tell no one until His resurrection.

Interestingly enough, this happened immediately after Jesus had made a statement over which many have struggled and, I think, gotten it wrong.

Matt 16:28

- 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. KJV

Some have gone so far as to suggest (don't laugh, they are serious) that Jesus actually did come back in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.

We know that Jesus often spoke in cryptic ways and that what He seemed to be saying was something very different from what He was actually saying. I would suggest to you that this event on Mt. Hermon, this transfiguration of Jesus, was Him "coming in His kingdom," in a foreview and in a figure. His appearance there was certainly very similar to what we expect Him to look like when He comes.

If that is not the meaning, then we could also remember that John definitely saw a vision of Jesus coming “in His kingdom,” and while we do not know what the others ever saw, they very well could have seen similar visions.

But, putting that aside, what we have here is a very interesting event. Here we have some specially privileged men being invited to a revelation of Jesus Christ that no one but them ever saw. They are, without doubt, converted men. The revelation itself was exactly what they saw, an incredible manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ and the absolute testimony that there is life beyond the grave and a glorious life to those who die in faith.

But, amazingly, they, at least Peter, got the *meaning* of the revelation wrong and, without correction from the Lord Jesus, would have made a ghastly and ungodly application of the vision. Think of that, a great and true vision of God, turned into a hideous error by real and true Christians.

Minimizing the glory of Jesus  
Magnifying improperly the glory of men  
The absolute need of the guidance of God to ‘get it right.’

#### I. **Minimizing the Glory of Jesus Christ.**

Peter, a usual, spoke up for the group, suggesting three tabernacles, one for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Luke stated that he did not know what he said (v.33) and Mark commented that he did not know what to say (9:6).

It appears from the accounts that Peter’s suggestion triggered a response from heaven which served as a rebuke to his idea, “this is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.” (Matt. 17:5)

Let us examine the suggestion of Peter and see what flaws it contained.

##### A. First of all, the concept of making ‘tabernacles.’

I do not know that there could be any other thought involved in the making of such tabernacles than that worship would be carried on there.

Of course, the idea that God would be worshiped in a ‘tabernacle’ devoted to the honor of a man is totally contrary to the very basic understandings of scripture.

No creature is to be afforded any honor that comes even close to the worship that is to be devoted to God.

The first commandment is to be understood as just exactly that exclusive.

Ex 20:1-3

1 And God spake all these words, saying,

- 2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. KJV

Jesus Christ Himself affirmed that this is the first and most fundamental principle of the universe.

Mark 12:28-30

- 28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?
- 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:
- 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. KJV

The application that God Himself made in rejecting the suggestion of Peter was that even tabernacles devoted to the great saint Elijah and the great leader Moses constituted too much similarity to worship of them that the idea had to be firmly, immediately and directly rebuked.

I want you to think of all the churches that you have ever seen or heard of that bear the name of some human, regardless of how important you think that the man was.

One of the most famous is called “St. Peter’s Basilica” in Rome. It is, of course, the great cathedral of the Roman church and stands in the Vatican City. Just imagine the reaction that Peter might have gotten on that one!

- A. Secondly, consider how it demeans the Lord Jesus to be made “equal” in representation to His creatures.

We will expand on the issue of worshiping men in later comments, but let’s not consider the elevation of man right now but the bringing down of Jesus.

Paul catalogued in the first chapter of Romans, the descent of humanity from a true recognition of the Living God to utter and complete degradation and immorality. Do you remember the first three steps down that path?

Rom 1:21-23

- 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
- 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
- 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. KJV

They first refused to glorify God as God. Next, they took up the claim that they were ‘wise.’ And, thirdly, they reduced the glory of God in their minds and began to imagine Him as “like to corruptible man.”

Now, I am absolutely sure that Peter intended no such thing. But the problem is that he did not thoroughly think through what he had just seen and what it possibly meant.

It was Jesus Who had been transfigured and Who had shined like the sun. Moses and Elijah, Luke said, appeared in glory but Mark and Matthew gave no record of it. We assume, therefore, that whatever manifestation they had was far less in “glory” than the appearance of Jesus. Therefore, it could not possibly have been even reasonable that the three should have been equally recognized.

Peter’s suggestion absolutely ignored the great revelation of Jesus Christ that he had just seen; not only vastly superior to living humans but also to dead saints of the Jewish faith.

The setting of creatures on a level with Christ does not elevate men, it shows them to be foolish. And, it does not honor dead heroes (even of the faith) but rather dishonors Christ.

God the Father immediately and powerfully rejected even the hint at any dishonor to His Son.

#### **I. Peter’s suggestion magnified the glory that is due to men.**

Nothing even vaguely approaching worship is ever to be offered to any of God’s creatures, not man, and not even angels.

In Judges 13, the story of the announcement of Samson’s birth by an angel to his parents is recorded. Samson’s father, Manoah, wanted to offer an offering to the angel but he refused it.

Judg 13:16

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD. KJV

The angel knew that nothing even approaching worship was to be directed toward him.

Twice in the book of Revelation John fell down at the feet of an angel and was rebuked for it. (19:10, 22:9)

The angels all know that no creature is to be elevated in any way that might be construed as worship. Godly men also know the same thing and refuse the honor of men lest they intrude into that special realm reserved only for The Living God....worship.

Let’s review some of the basic ideas taught in scripture that make the case against the worship of any man.

- A. All men are sinners.

Rom 3:10-12

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. KJV

- A. Any good that they are or good that they do is done by the gracious empowering of God.

1 Cor 15:10

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. KJV

- A. The task of every servant of God is to direct men's attention and worship toward God, not themselves.

Rom 15:5-9

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. KJV

## I. **The absolute need of the guidance of God to 'get it right.'**

Since Peter did not know what he was saying, or did not know what to say, he might well have considered asking for guidance from the Lord Jesus rather than giving guidance as to what should be done in light of the revelation he had seen.

The fact is that God was absolutely willing to give guidance..... and He did. But who wants, as a first choice, the guidance given by rebuke? Wouldn't it have been better for the three to have asked the Lord Jesus for an explanation?

While it is true that we need God's guidance always in His Word, there are things that require extra revelation..... or..... silence.

The revelations, the prophecies, of scripture that have little if any commentary in other places are among those issues in which we need to exercise all due caution, remaining silent when our own conscience tells us that we do not know what they mean.

**I. Peter might well have consider what he could absolutely know about what he had seen.**

Moses and Elijah are still alive. Those who leave this life in faith do not perish but are preserved by God in a conscious state of existence. We might even note that they are allowed, at times, to participate in the unfolding of the purposes of God on earth.

He might have also paid attention more closely to the difference in the glory that surrounded Christ and that which surrounded Moses and Elijah. In doing so, he would have realized that any honor expressed here would have been to Jesus exclusively just as the Father stated.

This is a discipline that should always be exercised in the study of God's Word, especially in those parts that are mysterious and filled with imagery.

Finally, he might have noted that it was *while Jesus was praying* that He was transfigured and considered that prayer, the discipline of it and the actual doing of it, is fundamental in the change that any sane human being desires, the change from one state of glory to another, as Paul spoke about.

2 Cor 3:18

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. KJV

2 Cor 3:18

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. RSV

By way of application, we each might ask ourselves, based on this text, "do I desire to be transfigured?" Do I desire to be far more, spiritually, than I have ever been? Do I have my sights set on Higher Ground?

If your answer to any of that is "yes," then I recommend to you the Christian discipline of prayer.

Set aside time daily to pray.

Learn the discipline of prayer. What works? What doesn't work?

Teach yourself to pray. Start small and build daily on what you are learning.

Pray on your own and gather, as you have opportunity, with other Christians to pray.

The more time you spend in real prayer before God and in communion with Him, the more you will be changed and the more you will long for even further change.

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I'm pressing on the upward way  
New heights I'm gaining every day  
Still *praying* as I onward bound,  
Lord, plant my feet on Higher Ground

My heart has no desire to stay  
Where doubts arise and fears dismay  
Tho some may dwell where these abound,  
*My prayer*, my aim, is Higher Ground.

I want to live above the world,  
Tho Satan's darts at me are hurled,  
For *faith* has caught the joyful sound,  
The song of saints on Higher Ground.

I want to scale the utmost height,  
and catch a gleam of glory bright,  
But *still I'll pray* till heav'n I've found,  
Lord, Lead me on to Higher Ground.

I would suggest that a better question for Peter than, "what should I say?" would have been, "how can I learn to pray that I might be transformed into the Likeness of Jesus?"