

# Turning Points

## Luke 9:18-36

The ministry of Jesus hinges on several key points in Luke 9. The transfiguration is the “high point” of the Savior’s earthly ministry, after which the days approach “for His ascension,” when He determined “to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51).

In this lesson, we look at 3 pivotal episodes. Each one ends with a startling revelation. Moreover, the first and third paragraphs begin with Jesus praying and end with the disciples keeping a huge secret.

### I. Following Jesus as the Christ – Luke 9:18-22

- A. The teaser question: “Who do the people say that I am?”
  - 1. Was Jesus really interested in popular opinion, or was the question designed to get them thinking and skillfully introduce the follow-up question?
  - 2. Answers given:
    - a. John the Baptist, who was recently put to death
    - b. Elijah, who was prophesied to come, ushering in the Christ (cf. Mal. 4:5-6)
    - c. One of the prophets of old resurrected
  
- B. The follow-up question: “But who do you say that I am?”
  - 1. Peter spoke up, as he often does
  - 2. Peter’s answer: “The Christ of God”
  - 3. What it means: that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, the Savior-King who would come into the world
  
- C. Silence commanded: “But He warned and instructed them not to tell this to anyone”
  - 1. The time was not yet right for the truth of Jesus’ identity to be revealed to the world at large.
  - 2. **Amazing revelation #1** – In fact, a confrontation was coming, and it would lead to Jesus’ death and resurrection.
  - 3. Jesus predicts His future suffering and glory, but, as is obvious from the paragraphs that follow, the disciples did not completely understand the full import of it.

### II. Following Jesus to the cross – Luke 9:23-27

- A. Not only must the disciples come to terms with Jesus’ impending death (v. 22), but they must follow Him – v. 23.
  
- B. Discipleship is a radical choice that each person must make – vv. 23-26.
  - 1. Crucifixion was a shameful, horrifying means of execution, reserved for slaves,

lower class scum, and notorious criminals. Roman citizens were spared this horror.

2. What Jesus is calling for is an absolute, total commitment in the strongest possible language.

3. If we want to serve Jesus, we must deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him “daily.”

C. **Amazing revelation #2** – the kingdom of God would come during the lifetime of some of Jesus’ audience – v. 27.

### III. Following Jesus beyond the grave – Luke 9:28-36

A. A week later, Jesus takes Peter, John and James to a mountain to pray. During this time alone with God, there is a “transfiguration.”

1. Visual effects

a. Jesus’ appearance is transfigured; i.e., He takes on a radiant glory – perhaps a foretaste of the glory that He now has (Phil. 3:20-21).

b. Two men, Moses and Elijah, also “appear in glory”

c. A cloud overshadows them

2. Auditory effects

a. Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus

b. A voice comes out of the cloud

B. The significance of Moses and Elijah

1. Moses was the great Lawgiver at the beginning of Israel’s national existence, and Elijah was the foremost in a long line of prophets toward the end of Israel’s history.

2. Both had unusual departures from this life:

a. After he saw the land of promise from Mt. Nebo and the top of Pisgah, Moses died and the LORD buried him (Deut. 34:1-6).

b. Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, with chariots and horses of fire (II Kings 2:11-12).

3. Interestingly enough, they talk with Jesus about His own departure (lit.

“exodus”) – Luke 9:31. This fits well with the theme of all 3 episodes in this section – death and resurrection, followed by glory.

4. Perhaps they were sent to comfort Him in ways that no mere mortal could have done.

5. In many respects, Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets (i.e., two of three divisions of the Old Testament).

6. After Peter’s brilliant idea (“three tabernacles”), the two Old Testament heroes disappear, and the Voice says, “This is My Son, My Chosen One: listen to Him!” (**amazing revelation #3**).

7. Jesus Christ is not only greater than Moses and Elijah, but His message, the New Testament, supercedes the Old Testament – cf. Heb. 1:1-2; John 1:17

Thought question: **What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?**