

# The Truth About Jesus

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“Just admit it; we know it was you!” “How long since your last confession?” “Let us profess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize.” These are all examples of calls to confess the truth. The story of Jesus’ transfiguration calls us to confess and believe the truth about Jesus. The truth about His identity; the truth about His work; and the truth about His authority.

**The first truth this story calls us to confess and believe is the truth of Jesus’ identity.** Just prior to His transfiguration, Jesus asked His disciples, “who do you say that I am?” Peter answered on behalf of the 12, “The Christ of God.”<sup>1</sup> Now Jesus’ bright, transfigured appearance shines light on the truth of who He is. Peter, James, and John, whom Jesus had taken up the mountain alone to pray, awaken to find Him in glorious splendor. His divine glory, which was usually hidden, shone through. Not only had His appearance changed, but He stood talking with Moses and Elijah, the great figures of OT history. So great were they that God was involved in the end of their lives on earth. God buried Moses Himself;<sup>2</sup> and He took Elijah up into heaven without tasting death.<sup>3</sup>

Together Moses and Elijah represent the entire OT. The first five books of the OT are called the Law of Moses because Moses is believed to have written them. Through Moses’ writing, God reveals Himself as gracious; and through Moses, God gave the law, His commands and demands of us. Elijah represents the other books of the OT referred to as the Prophets, for that was who wrote them. Elijah was the prophet of prophets, second only to Moses. No one was more zealous for the Law of God than he. Both, the transfiguration of Jesus’ appearance and who He was talking to point the truth of His identity: that Jesus is God.

But that’s not all. God the Father also testifies to Jesus’ identity. Enveloped in a cloud, as on Mt. Sinai and on the tabernacle and temple, the presence of God descended on the mountain. From the cloud, the Father confesses the true identity of Jesus. “This is my Son...” These words reflect the words already spoken by Father at Jesus’ baptism. “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”<sup>4</sup>

**The story of Jesus’ transfiguration also calls us to confess the truth of Jesus’ work.** Luke is the only Gospel writer to give us the details of the conversation between Jesus and these two representatives of the OT. “They spoke about [Jesus’] departure, which He was going to fulfill at Jerusalem.”<sup>5</sup> The Greek word used here for *departure* is literally “exodus” It draws parallels between Israel’s OT exodus and our NT exodus in Christ. Israel was trapped in bondage to the Egyptians. God freed them and led them to the promised land. We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. But Jesus’ exodus, His death and resurrection, frees us. By His work for us He leads us out of sin and brings us into new life in Him.

Again, the Father’s confession confirms this truth about Jesus’ work. “This is my Son, *whom I have chosen...*” Chosen to do what? To fulfill the *the Father’s* plan of salvation for sinners. In other words, His plan of salvation for you and me. Luke draws this together by sandwiching the story of Jesus’

<sup>1</sup> Luke 9:20

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 34:6

<sup>3</sup> 2 Ki 2:1, 11

<sup>4</sup> Luke 3:22 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Luke 9:31

transfiguration between two of the times Jesus predicts His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection.<sup>6</sup> This is the Father's plan of salvation. That Jesus would be rejected, suffer, die, and rise for the sin of the world.

**A final truth the story of Jesus' transfiguration calls us to confess is the truth of Jesus' authority.** Once again, the Father's words point to this. Not only does the Father confess that Jesus is His Son, whom He chose, the Father tells us that Jesus *alone* is the one to whom we should listen. He is the final word over the Old Testament, over the Law and the Prophets, over Moses and Elijah.

The Father calls us to pay attention to Jesus' words. Not only is Jesus *the* authority on the OT, He is the final word on our forgiveness and salvation. He didn't come to speak a new word of Law to follow, but to proclaim the Gospel. The Father tells us to listen to Jesus' words and Jesus says, "It is finished."<sup>7</sup> Our sins are forgiven. Our salvation is won.

The events of the story reflect the Father's words. The disciples look up to find only Jesus standing before them. 19th century English pastor, Charles Spurgeon, outlined in a sermon what Peter, James, and John could have seen.<sup>8</sup> They could have seen no one. What despair that would have brought. Left alone to contend with sin, death, and the devil on *their* strength. They surely would have failed. They could have seen Moses only. This would have left them trapped in their sin. Always trying to measure up to the impossible demands of the Law. Sorrow would remain as their sins remained unpaid for and unforgiven. They could have seen Elijah only. If that were the case, all they would have heard were continual calls to repentance. Left waning in unfulfilled promises, they would never know the sure and certain forgiveness and life won on the cross. Still, Moses and Elijah could have remained with Jesus. Peter seemed to desire this; though Luke tells us he didn't know what he was saying. He longed to remain forever in the glory they saw surrounding Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

But they saw none of those things. Who they saw was Jesus only.

We too are called to see Jesus only. He alone is the Son of God. He alone was sent to die for sinners, for us. He is our only hope for forgiveness, life, and salvation. As the Son of God, Jesus is greater than Moses<sup>9</sup> and He is greater than Elijah. Though they were the great witnesses and representatives of the OT, neither Moses nor Elijah could stop the reign of sin and death.<sup>10</sup> They could only point ahead to the coming of the promised one who could.

It was Jesus that the Father chose and sent to stop the reign of sin and death. In Christ alone, we see the Law fulfilled. In Christ alone, we see prophecy fulfilled. In Christ alone, crucified on the cross, we see our sins forgiven. In Christ alone, risen from the dead, we see the death of our death.

What God the Father confesses about Jesus, is what we confess and believe about Jesus. We confess the truth about who Jesus Christ is That He is God's only Son and our Lord. We confess the truth about what He has done in time and space and history. That He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. That He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. And, that on the the third day He rose from the dead. And, we confess that only Jesus could accomplish this for us. That our sins are forgiven and that eternal life is ours. **Amen**

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 9:21-22 & Luke 9:43-45

<sup>7</sup> John 19:30

<sup>8</sup> Spurgeon, Charles H., "Jesus Only", *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Vol. 16*

<sup>9</sup> Heb 3:3

<sup>10</sup> Kretzman, Paul E., *Popular Commentary of the New Testament Vol. 1*, 93-94.