

# Transfiguration Pt.3: Listen Exclusively

Ignorance and Insight: Part 14

Mark 9:4-8 (Mt.17:1-6, Lk.9:28-35) 7/21/2019

If you are a believer, Jesus Christ is speaking to you every day. But whether his voice gets through depends on how you listen. These messages on the Transfiguration give insight into how to become a better listener.

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**Mark 9:1 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."**

**2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)**

**7 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son,<sup>1</sup> whom I love. Listen to him!" 8 Suddenly, when they looked round, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.**

**9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant. 11 And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" 12 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? 13 But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."**

## Introduction

We're studying through the Transfiguration, and we found that God himself tells us what the main point of it is: Listen to Jesus. And so we're learning all about how to properly listen to the Lord. Last time we found that we must listen confidently. Because of how much proof God has provided, how solid and unimpeachable the evidence is, listen to him the way you listen to the trusted expert, the most reliable source of information—the way you listen when you are 100% sure that the speaker is credible.

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<sup>1</sup> The glory is future, but the sonship is present.

## In a Class by Himself

Another thing we learn about how to listen is this: not only must we listen confidently and with faith, we must also listen exclusively—listen to Christ alone. Jesus emerges in the Transfiguration as the singular and exclusive mouthpiece for God. I think a failure to recognize that, was where Peter went wrong in his idea with the shelters. We know something was wrong with it, right, because right after Peter throws out his idea of building three shelters, or tabernacles, Mark says, “**He did not know what to say, they were so frightened**” (v.6) “Don’t mind him—he just said that because he was scared out of his mind.” So what was wrong with Peter’s idea? Evidently, the point of the three tabernacles was to build some kind of monument to commemorate these three great men. I don’t think he’s just thinking of shelters from the weather—like three lean-tos or something, because if that were all it was they would need 6, not 3. Peter specifies in v.5, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. What’s wrong with that? It’s wrong because it puts all three in the same class. And God corrects that error by steering attention to Jesus alone. Instead of hearing Peter out and saying, “Great idea Peter,” God interrupts<sup>2</sup> him and redirects all attention onto Jesus. Peter’s saying, “Let’s put up three shelters,” and God interrupts and says, “*This* is my Son. Listen to *him*.” In other words, God is saying, “Don’t think Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Just think, Jesus.” Then what’s the very next thing that happens?

### **8 Suddenly, when they looked round, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.**

Poof, Moses and Elijah are gone, and Jesus remains. The point is Moses and Elijah don’t belong on the same monument as Jesus. The Mount Rushmore of Scripture doesn’t have three faces. It has one.

Now again, Peter knew better than to put Jesus in the same category as Elijah and Moses—we saw that back in ch.8.<sup>3</sup> He was just so terrified he didn’t know what words were even coming out of his mouth.

So we don’t just listen to Jesus; we listen to him *alone*. The way God speaks to us now is different from the way he spoke in OT times.

### **Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.**

God no longer speaks through various prophets like he did in the OT—just Jesus.

Notice, God doesn’t even say, “Listen to us.” He says, “Listen to him.” Why? Because God the Father has nothing to say to humanity other than what he says through Jesus Christ.

### **John 1:18 No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.**

Only Jesus reveals the Father.

Does this mean the OT is obsolete? No. Jesus read it, memorized it, quoted it, and based his life on it, so we should too. He regarded the OT as the eternal, authoritative, life-giving Word of the living God, so if we listen to Jesus, we listen to the OT. But if we truly listen to it, we’ll hear it shouting the whole time about Christ.

## End of the Law

When Moses disappeared and Jesus remained, that was a visible picture of what Paul said in Romans 10.

### **Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law**

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 17:5 says God spoke while Peter was still speaking.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus asked “Who do *they* say I am,” and the answers placed Jesus on the same level as Elijah and other prophets. Then when Jesus said, “But who do *you* say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

He's the end (*telos*)—the purpose of the law, the objective, the place where the law of Moses achieves its goal and arrives at its destination. Every word in the OT is still significant, but its significance lies in the role it plays in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Theologians love to debate about what they call continuity vs. discontinuity from OT to NT. One side emphasizes discontinuity—"The NT is new, it's a better covenant, the old covenant is dead and gone, Israel has been replaced by the church." The other side argues for continuity—"The NT is a continuation of the OT, the fulfillment. The OT and NT aren't two different streams. They are one continuous river that just widens a bit when the Messiah comes."

Like most theological arguments, the reason it persists is because a lot of passages support one side, and other passage support the other side. The Transfiguration is a passage that supports both sides, and it shows how both sides fit together. There is continuity when Moses and Elijah are brought as witnesses to endorse Jesus. He is the fulfillment of Daniel 7, he is the fulfillment of what Moses promised, he is the fulfillment of the Elijah promises, the meaning of the whole event can't even be understood without all the OT background that we looked at in the first message. All that shows seamless continuity from OT to New.

But when Moses and Elijah disappear, leaving Jesus alone—that's the discontinuity. That's the new system that Hebrews 1 talks about where God now speaks one way: through his Son alone. Jesus' arrival on the scene inaugurated a whole new era in redemptive history. And one feature of the new era is that we listen to only one source.

## His Mouthpiece: The Apostles

So we listen to Christ alone, but if that's the case, what about the Apostles and the NT prophets? Don't we also listen to Mark and Matthew and Peter and Paul and the rest of the writers of the NT? Yes, we do, but only because they are mouthpieces for Jesus.

**Matthew 10:27 ... What I whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.**

**1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.**

**Galatian 1:11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.**

And a couple verses earlier he said, "If I ever preach anything else, I should be damned to hell" (Gal. 1:8-9). Every word in the NT is the gospel of Christ. There is nothing else, because God has nothing to say to us other than what he says through Christ through his mouthpieces in the NT.

## How do You Listen? Read the Bible

So, how do you listen to Jesus? Read the Bible. He speaks through his Word. Don't read your Bible every day just so you can get the next chapter checked off your reading schedule. Read in order to hear the voice of Christ speaking to you that day. When you listen to a sermon or podcast, don't listen to the preacher; listen to the Lord speaking to you. Pay attention to him.

And don't go searching elsewhere for his voice—it comes through the Scriptures. We don't need anything else, just his Word.

## Don't Try to Freeze Time

So I think that's the main thing we learn from what was wrong about Peter's idea of three monuments: listen to Jesus exclusively. But there might be another thing we can learn as well. I'm not 100% sure about this, so you can take it for what it's worth, but I'll just throw it out there because I found it helpful these past few weeks. It could be that Peter was attempting to preserve a situation that was not

to be preserved. The building of the shelters would make this a permanent situation instead of the brief event God designed it to be.

It's very common to want to stay forever in a mountaintop experience. But God designed life as a journey. God keeps time ticking away—minutes pass, weeks pass, years pass, and we want to resist that. Nothing could be more futile, but we try it anyway. We have that mountaintop experience—maybe at camp, or maybe some church you went to in the past that was just amazing, or whatever, and you then define the Christian experience by that mountaintop experience.

We do that in all areas of life. We want our kids to stay this same age forever. We want to keep this same job and for all the familiar things around us to stay the same. Maybe you're one who gets depressed every time you have a birthday—especially those decade birthdays that really remind you how old you're getting. This is why some people take so many pictures. Every time they get a glimpse of glory, they have so much anxiety about it not lasting forever that they spend the whole time trying to get it all on film—even to the point where they miss out on actually enjoying the experience. How often do we fail to get the joy God wants us to get from a wonderful moment because we have anxiety about the fact that it's going to end?

When we do that, it's a lack of faith. Do we think God is going to run out of grace, and this is the last time he'll give us something wonderful? Do we forget that his mercies are new every morning? When we get comfortable, we want to freeze time and keep everything the same from that point on. But God designed life to keep moving, keep progressing, keep growing.

Sheep never want to move to a new pasture. Without a shepherd, sheep would all die because they want to just stay in the same pasture even after the grass is all gone. They will keep eating until they kill that grass, and then they start eating the dirt—even if there is another great pasture nearby. Sheep are one of the few animals on earth that can't find food and water even when it's nearby. They need a shepherd to get them moving. That's what we're like. Every time we find a green pasture, we want to freeze time and stay there forever. And when God prods us to keep moving, we say, "No, I like it here." "But the grass is all gone here. It's time to move to another green pasture. And to get there, we're going to have to pass through that dark valley. Let's go."

When you have anxiety about some season coming to an end, remind yourself that you don't need that. What you need is Jesus. You don't need that particular experience of glory; what you need is to be as close as possible to the source of all glory.

Summary: When God interrupted Peter's idea of three monuments and focused all attention on Jesus, and then Elijah and Moses disappeared, it showed the uniqueness of Jesus. The Mt. Rushmore of Scripture doesn't have three faces—just one. They pointed to him, and he is the fulfillment of the entire OT. Therefore we listen to Christ alone (through his Apostles).