



## Jesus: A Life: Week 8

### Jesus Reveals His True Identity

Big Idea: There is no denying Jesus' true identity; He is the Son of God.

Read the Bible:

Luke 9:28-36

### **STUDY**

\*\*\* Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. \*\*\*

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 9:28–36.



## **Summary**

Anyone who had been with Jesus this long would've known he was special. Jesus had already shown great power and miraculous abilities. He's made a meal for 5,000 out of next to nothing, he's healed the sick, given sight to the blind, and calmed the storm with nothing but his voice. Jesus is clearly special. But it is in this story of his Transfiguration that the divinity of Jesus begins to clearly shine through.

On this mountain, it is as if the divine glory that has been in Jesus all along begins to shine. He is no more divine on the mountain than he was on the ground. However, these three disciples who formed Jesus' inner circle were allowed to see the physical manifestation of the glory of Jesus.

It is not only the glory of the Son that is revealed in this passage, but also the presence of the Spirit. Luke tells us that a cloud came and overshadowed them. The Holy Spirit guided the people of Israel through the wilderness as a cloud by day. At this revelation of the glory of Jesus, the Spirit is present. Not only is there a revelation of the Son's glory and the Spirit's presence, but the Father's pleasure is also revealed. In the same way that he voiced his approval of Jesus at his baptism, the Father is again declaring Jesus as his Son.



## **Leading Your Group**

### **Community Time**

Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.

### **Bible Study**

\*\*\*Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting. \*\*\*

Start Group by Reading Luke 9: 28-36

### **Major Lessons – (These are the “Lesson Points” in Class)**

#### **Point No. 1: Jesus Reveals God’s Glory**

This episode on the mountain is a revelation of the identity of Jesus. There is no mistaking him here for a magician or wise sage. Here on the mountain, one cannot say that Jesus might just be a good teacher. His glory is physically shining. What has always been true of the Son is now physically manifesting itself for Peter, James, and John to see with their own eyes. They are left with no choice but to see him for who he really is.

Jesus will not settle for second place in our lives. He will not be content for us to see him as important or helpful. Jesus is God. He is not meant to be a priority; he is meant to be our reason for living. We need to see him for who he really is so that we can reorient our lives around him.

How are you missing God’s glory in your own life? What things are you looking to as more glorious than God? What’s taking your attention away from him?

#### **Point No. 2: Jesus Fulfills God’s Word**

Luke not only highlights Jesus as the revelation of God’s glory, but also as the fulfillment of God’s Word. It is no accident that Jesus is talking with Moses and Elijah. In the time of Jesus, Moses was synonymous with the Law. It was also common for Elijah to stand in as representative of all of the Prophets. Jesus is seen in all his glory talking with Moses and Elijah as a way of connecting him with the Scriptures. He is standing and talking with those that represent the Law and the Prophets. But after the voice of the Father had spoken, Jesus stood



alone. He stands alone as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He is God's Word manifest. Every promise finds its fulfillment in Christ and in Christ alone.

The promises of God find their fulfillment in Christ. What promises are you looking for in anything but Jesus?



## Resources

### Expositor's Bible Commentary

#### 3. *The Transfiguration* (9:28–36)

This glorious transformation of the appearance of Christ is the most significant event between his birth and passion. In each of the synoptic Gospels, it stands as a magnificent christological statement. Both the transformation itself and the divine commentary expressed in the Voice from heaven declare Jesus Christ to be the beloved Son of God. Luke emphasizes a further dimension of the event—the suffering that lay ahead of God's chosen Servant. Luke does this both through the conversation of Moses and Elijah (vv. 30–31) and through a slightly different wording of the message of the Voice. In addition to the main elements of the Transfiguration itself and the words from heaven, the narrative contains several motifs of deep significance: the eight day interlude (v. 28), the mountain, Moses and Elijah (v. 30) Jesus' impending "departure" (*exodos*, v. 31), the shelters (v. 33), and the cloud (v. 34).

Two frames of reference will help us understand these motifs. One is the Exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt with the events at Mount Sinai, especially Moses' experience on the mount (Exod 24). The other is the second coming of Christ, the "Parousia" (cf. reference in v. 26). These two frames of reference—one past, the other future—will help us understand the biblical imagery the events of the transfiguration episode would have brought to the minds of the disciples and all later readers familiar with Scripture.

There seems to be a pattern involving the two adjoining sections—vv. 18–27 and vv. 28–36. Three themes are stated and then repeated in reverse (chiastic) order. The first theme is the affirmation of Jesus' identity as the Messiah (v. 20); the second is the prediction of his passion (v. 22); and the third is the promise of his glory (v. 26). In the transfiguration narratives the order is reversed (not only in Luke, but also, except for the words about his "departure," in Matthew and Mark), and the three themes are portrayed dramatically. The third theme, that of Jesus' glory, is first portrayed (v. 29). The prediction of his passion is confirmed by the conversation between Moses and Elijah (v. 30). The identity of Jesus is the subject of the heavenly proclamation (v. 35).

**28** Luke's note on the passage of time—"about eight days after Jesus said this" (*meta tous logous toutous hōsei hēmerai oktō*, lit., "after these words about eight days")—is less precise than "after six days" in Matthew and Luke. It is obviously an alternative way of indicating the





passage of approximately one week. However commentators have not agreed as to any specific reason for the different wording. Luke is, as pointed out above, more precise than the other Synoptics in linking the Transfiguration with Jesus' preceding sayings by a specific reference to Jesus' "words." There may be an allusion here to the time Moses waited on Mount Sinai for the revelation of God (Exod 24:15–16). This is even more likely in Matthew and Mark, where the phrase "after six days" corresponds directly to the period Moses waited.

Peter, James, and John had been taken into Jesus' confidence elsewhere, e.g., at 8:51 and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). Luke uses the definite article *to* ("the") with "mountain," from which we may infer that the original readers knew what location he had in mind. On the other hand, the construction might indicate that Luke uses "mountain" symbolically. Symbolism is not infrequent in references to mountains, in Matthew especially; but this does not rule out a specific geographical location. The locale of the Transfiguration could have been any high mountain (Mark 9:2; cf. Notes). The article with *oros* ("mountain") is normal in similar grammatical constructions in the Gospels (except for Matt 5:14). If we think of the Exodus as a frame of reference, then Sinai is symbolically in mind, if the Parousia then the Mount of Olives may be symbolized (Zech 14:4; Acts 1:10–12).

Once again Luke mentions that Jesus is at prayer, an observation repeated in v. 29 but absent from the account in Matthew 17:1–2; Mark 9:2.

**29** Luke omits the actual word "transfigured" (*metemorphōthē*, used in Matt 17:2, Mark 9:2), possibly to avoid a term that might have suggested Hellenistic ideas of an epiphany, the appearance of a god. Instead he describes the remarkable alteration of Jesus' face and the dazzling whiteness of his clothing, "bright as a flash of lightning" (*exastraptōn*).

**30–31** Moses and Elijah also appear in this scene of supernatural glory (NIV, "glorious splendor," *en doxē*, lit., "in glory," only in Luke). Nevertheless, Luke still describes them in ordinary human terminology (*andres*, "men"; cf. 24:4 and comments). Scholars debate the significance of Moses' and Elijah's presence. The old view that they represent the Law and the Prophets respectively does not do justice to the rich associations each name has in Jewish thought. Moses had a mountaintop experience at Sinai; his face shone (Exod 34:30; 2 Cor 3:7); he was not only a lawgiver but also a prophet—indeed the prototype of Jesus (Deut 18:18). Elijah was not only a prophet but was also related to the law of Moses as symbolizing the one who would one day turn people's hearts back to the covenant (Mal 4:4–6). In Jewish thought, Elijah was an eschatological figure, that is, one associated with the end times. So one may say that in the transfiguration scene Moses is a typological figure who reminds us of the past (the Exodus), Moses being a predecessor of the Messiah, while Elijah is an eschatological figure pointing to the future as a precursor of the Messiah. Each man was among the most highly



respected OT figures; both had one distinctive thing in common—their strange departure from this world. Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11), and Moses was buried by the Lord (Deut 34:6). (The disposition of Moses' body was a matter of speculation in ancient Judaism, cf. Jude 9.) In summary, it seems that the presence of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration draws attention, first, to the place of Jesus in continuing the redemptive work of God from the Exodus to the future eschatological consummation; second, to the appropriateness of Jesus' association with heavenly figures; and, third, to the superiority of Jesus over even these great and divinely favored heroes of Israel's past.

The conversation (v. 31) is about Jesus' "departure" (*exodos*, lit., his "exodus"). In 2 Peter 1:15 the term means death. But here in Luke it also recalls the redemptive work of God in the Exodus from Egypt. Jesus' coming death was one that he would deliberately accomplish (*hēn ēmellen plēroun*, "which he was about to bring to fulfillment"). Luke portrays Jesus as moving unhurriedly toward the accomplishment of his goals (e.g., 4:43; see comments there). He specifies Jerusalem as the city of destiny for Jesus (v. 31; see esp. comments on 13:31–35; cf. 9:51; 18:31). Thus Luke, having knowledge of this saying, which perhaps Matthew and Mark did not, included it to reinforce Jesus' passion prediction in v. 22.

**32** The writers of the Gospels use fear and sleepiness to indicate the slowness of the disciples to understand and believe. On this point see the explanation of Peter's words in v. 33 in Mark 9:6 and the way Mark and Luke handle the sleepiness of the disciples at Gethsemane in different ways [Mark 14:40; Luke 22:45]. It is not clear from the Greek whether they were only drowsy but managed to keep awake or whether they actually fell asleep and woke up. At the least they were far from alert during the conversation about Jesus' approaching passion; and the spectacular scene aroused them thoroughly.

**33** Only Luke mentions that it was as Moses and Elijah "were leaving" (*diachōrizesthai*, present tense) that Peter made the suggestion to make three shelters. This may imply that Peter did this to keep them from going. Both Luke's parenthesis here and Mark's in 9:6 show that Peter's suggestion was highly inappropriate. His use of "Master" (*epistata*, cf. 5:5) is itself appropriate (cf. "Lord" in Matt 17:4; "Rabbi" in Mark 9:5). His comment "It is good," though banal given the grandeur of the occasion, is not entirely out of order. The idea of three shelters is the main problem. These would have been temporary shelters, such as were used at Sukkoth, the Feast of Tabernacles. Peter's proposal of three, presumably equal, shelters may have implied a leveling perspective, putting Jesus on a par with the others. More than that, it connotes an intention to perpetuate the situation as though there were no "departure" (v. 31) for Jesus to accomplish. Whether the shelters symbolize a future or present rest is not completely clear (cf. TDNT, 7:380; Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, pp. 386–87; W. Liefeld, "Theological Motifs in the





Transfiguration Narrative,” in Longenecker and Tenney, *New Dimensions*, pp. 174–75). What does seem clear is that Peter wanted to prolong the stay of the heavenly visitors because he still failed to grasp the significance of the passion prediction of v. 22 and its confirmation in v. 31.

**34** The cloud, like other elements in this narrative, can symbolize more than one thing, among them the cloud in the wilderness after the Exodus (Exod 13:21–22; 16:10; 24:16; 40:34–38). But clouds are also associated with the future coming of the Son of Man (Dan 7:13; cf. Mark 14:62), of the Messiah in intertestamental literature (2 Baruch 53:1–12; 4Ezra 13:3), and with the two prophets in Revelation 11:12.

G.H. Boobyer (*St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1942]) sees in this symbolism a possible reference to the Parousia. H. Riesenfeld (*Jesus transfigure. L’arriere-plan du recit evangelique de la Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur. Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis* 16 [Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1947], p. 296) thinks it relates to Jewish concepts of eschatology, especially a future enthronement of the Messiah. Isaiah 4:5 describes a cloud, reminiscent of that which showed God’s “shekinah” glory in the wilderness, which will appear during a future time of rest under the Messiah. The word “shekinah” is from the Hebrew *šākan*, which is translated by the Greek *episkiazō* (“overshadow”) in Exodus 40:35 LXX. The same Greek verb is used here in v. 34 (“enveloped”). But above all the cloud symbolizes the glorious presence of God (cf. Exod 19:16). This is notably true in the passage so clearly recalled by the Transfiguration (Exod 24:15–18). Matthew’s use (17:5) of *phōteinē* (“bright”) also suggests the shekinah glory. Though the disciples enter the cloud (v. 34), a sense of the transcendence of God is retained as the Voice comes “from” (*ek*) the cloud (v. 35).

**35** The Voice speaking from the cloud is that of God the Father himself. No indirect or mediated message, no mere echo or “daughter of a voice,” as Jewish writings put it, was sufficient to unmistakably identify Jesus. The awesome voice of God himself must be heard. The message expressed by the Voice is so clear that any uncertainty about the meaning of some of the other aspects of this great scene become comparatively unimportant. Whether seen in relation to the Exodus or to the second coming of the Son of Man, the focus throughout the Transfiguration is on the supreme person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now he is expressly declared to be God’s Son—a declaration similar to that spoken by the Voice at Jesus’ baptism (cf. 3:22; cf. also Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11). In Mark the Voice addresses Jesus directly, here it addresses the three disciples. In John 12:28–30, just preceding Jesus’ passion, the Voice from heaven speaks for the “benefit” (v. 30) of a whole crowd. In each case the Voice from heaven affirms that Jesus is the one who is sent by God and who has God’s authority. These words spoken by the Voice on these three occasions affirm that Jesus is the Son of God, is obedient to him, and possesses



divine authority for his mission. The words “this is my Son” (*houtos estin ho huios mou*), also in Matthew and Mark, recall Psalm 2:7. “Chosen” (*eklelegmenos*) for “whom I love” (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; KJV, “beloved”) points us to Isaiah 42:1 (“my servant ... my chosen one”) and the concept of the Suffering Servant found in the broader context of Isaiah, especially 52:13–53:12.

“Listen to him” is not only a command; it is a correction of the human tendency to substitute human opinion for divine revelation (e.g., Peter after his confession in Matt 16:22, also implied here in the Transfiguration [v. 33]). The words also fulfill Deuteronomy 18:15, which predicts the coming of the prophet God would raise up and commands, “You must listen to him.” Jesus alone is the True Prophet, the Chosen Servant, and the Son of God.

**36** All three synoptic Gospels note that at the end of the Transfiguration only Jesus was there with the disciples. So the scene ends with Jesus as the center of their attention. Luke’s statement is concise and ends emphatically with the word “alone” (*monos*). Luke’s comment on the silence of the disciples is shorter than Mark’s very significant treatment of this (cf. Wessel’s commentary on Mark, this vol., at Mark 9:9–10).<sup>2</sup>

## Teacher’s Bible Commentary

### Revelations to Disciples (Luke 9:1–50)

*The passage.*—Chapter 9 begins with the mission of the twelve, which is really an extension of Jesus’ own mission. It was a rapid tour of Jewish communities for the purpose of proclaiming the breaking in of the messianic age through preaching and miracles of healing.

This is followed by a series of incidents and teachings that revolve primarily around two of the principal themes of the Gospel: (1) who Jesus is, and (2) what it means to be a disciple. The great confession (vv. 18–27) and the transfiguration (vv. 28–36) are, of course, the crucial events that mark a real turning point in the ministry of Jesus. From this time he is less concerned with his public preaching and more concerned with teaching the inner circle of his followers about the meaning of his life and theirs in the light of his impending death.

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<sup>2</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, “[Luke](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 925–928.



*Special points.*—The twelve were commanded to “take nothing” (v. 3) when they set out on their preaching mission. They were to depend for food and shelter on the hospitality of the inhabitants of towns in which they preached. Some Jews returning to their homeland from Gentile country would shake the dust of the pagan lands from their feet. This act by the disciples (v. 5) symbolized that the city which rejected them was regarded as pagan.

Herod’s question: “Who is this?” (v. 9) is really the primary question that the Gospels answer. An insight into the answer is given to the disciples by the feeding of the five thousand (vv. 10–17), the only miracle recorded in all Gospels. This miracle took place near Bethsaida, the capital of Philip’s territory north of the Sea of Galilee. By feeding the people in the desert, Jesus showed that he was the prophet like Moses that God had promised to raise up (Deut. 18:15).

Peter recognized Jesus as God’s Christ, or Messiah (9:20). But he did not understand that the Messiah was to suffer and die (v. 22). Nor did the disciples understand that they were also required to walk the way of the cross, if they were going to follow him (vv. 23–27). To be ashamed of Jesus (v. 26) meant to refuse to confess him for fear of persecution or hardship. Some early Christians did deny Jesus in times of testing, but others were faithful to death.

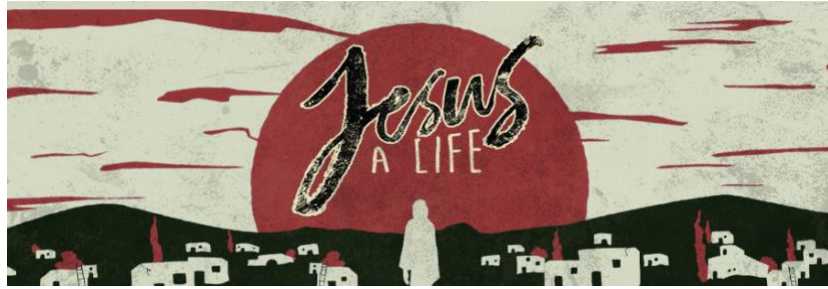
Verse 27 is difficult. To “see the kingdom” could refer to the end of the age, of course. But it may refer to some special manifestation of the kingdom’s power and glory in this age, such as the transfiguration or Pentecost.

The transfiguration (vv. 28–36) followed closely on Jesus’ Prediction of his death. It gave to the three disciples a glimpse of his deity and of the glory that awaited him beyond the cross. Moses and Elijah were both closely related to the messianic age in Jewish thought. The Messiah was to be a prophet like Moses: Elijah was to be his forerunner.

The power struggle among the disciples (v. 46) is almost inconceivable in light of Jesus’ teaching about the meaning of the cross. Jesus explained that greatness among his disciples was to be understood in terms of service to the little ones of the world (v. 48).

*Truth for today.*—The Greek word that we translate “disciple” means “learner.” This is a good definition if you are thinking about a disciple of some Jewish rabbi or Greek philosopher. But it falls far short of defining what Jesus meant by disciple. Primarily a disciple is one who follows him along the way of the cross. The path to glory for the disciple also leads through suffering and humiliation.

We have substituted beliefs about Jesus for commitment to follow him. You can believe certain things about Jesus without its costing you money, position, or prestige. But if you dare to follow Jesus, that is something else altogether! You may have to give up your job; or move to another country. You will have to cut across the grain of accepted social values and prejudices. It



is much safer to believe in Jesus with the top of the head than to make the dangerous decision to follow him.<sup>3</sup>

## THE BIBLE PANORAMA

**V 1–6: SENT** The twelve disciples are empowered and sent by Jesus to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. They obey His commission to go to the villages throughout the region. They travel light and leave if people reject the message. **V 7–9: SEE** Herod wants to see Jesus. He is perplexed because someone says that Jesus is John, risen from the dead, whereas others have told him that He is Elijah or a prophet. Sadly Herod's seeking does not result from spiritual conviction of his sin. **V 10–11: SELFLESS** Jesus takes the returning disciples aside near Bethsaida, to be with them. However, when crowds come, He gives Himself selflessly and unstintingly to speaking to them and healing them. **V 12–17: SUSTENANCE** The amazing miracle follows of feeding 5,000 people from five loaves of bread and two fish. It blends Christ's compassion and divine power with good organisation and use of the disciples in the Lord's work. There is a lot more left over than there was to start with! We must never doubt Christ's power to sustain us in any situation where we trust Him. **V 18–22: SUFFERING** Peter correctly answers that Jesus is 'The Christ of God', in stark contrast to the other speculation that Jesus is John the Baptist, Elijah or a prophet risen from the dead. Jesus immediately warns His disciples that He must suffer, be put to death, and rise from the dead. **V 23–26: SHAME** Jesus goes on and teaches His disciples that they, too, must take up their cross to follow Him daily, as must any disciple of Christ. The Christian must crucify self, refuse sin and the overtures of the world, and live for Christ. Those who are ashamed of Jesus and His words will find that He will be ashamed of them at His second coming. **V 27–36: SUPREME** Jesus tells His disciples that some who are standing with Him will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God. About eight days later, He is transfigured in front of them and immediately focuses on His death to come. The sleepy disciples wake up to see His glory, in which He is shown to be supreme over Moses and Elijah (standing for the Old Testament law and prophets). God the Father declares from a cloud that His Son pleases Him and that all must hear Him. Jesus then remains as Moses and Elijah disappear. The disciples keep this amazing experience to themselves. **V 37–43a: SPIRIT** Jesus casts out an evil spirit from a man's son, after

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<sup>3</sup> Malcolm O. Tolbert, "[Luke](#)," in *The Teacher's Bible Commentary*, ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972), 646–647.



His disciples are unable to do so. The people are amazed at God's greatness and Jesus returns the renewed boy to his father. **V 43b–45: SPECIFIC** While everyone marvels, Jesus repeats to His disciples that He will be betrayed. They do not understand and dare not ask about it. **V 46–48: SIMPLICITY** An argument starts among the disciples about who will be the greatest. Jesus shows them the need for simplicity of spirit by placing a child in front of them to show them how a child reacts. Humility and childlikeness are required. **V 49–50: SUPPORT** Jesus warns against party spirit in His work and cause. Those who are not against Him and His disciples are with them. **V 51–56: SAMARIA** En route to Jerusalem, when a Samaritan village refuses to listen, James and John want to emulate Elijah in calling down fire on its inhabitants. Jesus turns, rebukes them, emphasises that He has come to save, and passes on to another village to teach. **V 57–62: SACRIFICE** Two people express a superficial desire to follow Jesus but 'first' have other matters to attend to. Jesus teaches that His disciples must sacrifice to follow the Lord. This must take priority over all our desire for comfort and over all our family ties. The follower of Christ must look ahead, not dwell on the past.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gerard Chrispin, [\*The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide\*](#) (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2005), 433–434.