

Have you noticed how easy it is to find a product review? The internet is full of them, if you are shopping at Amazon, or even a store's website. There is the problem of being able to trust the reviewer, and making sure that the reviewer doesn't have a stake in the product. It is easier, though, than the days of having to get the special magazine, *Consumer Reports*. Wouldn't it be nice if everything came with an unbiased rating system given by someone known and trusted? We could choose the ideal career, find the perfect place to retire, and embrace the right religion just by looking for the excellent rating. Wouldn't that make life much easier? Perhaps, but unrealistic. Well, to follow the right religion, it **is** that simple. Jesus comes with an excellent rating. More important, this rating comes from the most reliable source. God the Father gave Jesus his highest rating when he said, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!*"

### **Jesus has the Father's Stamp of Approval**

#### **1. To do glorious work (1-5)**

As we hear of Jesus' transfiguration, doesn't the amazing glory that Jesus revealed to three of his disciples impress you? <sup>2</sup>*There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.* This brightness was the glory that belonged to Jesus as the Son of God, shining forth from his human body and clothes. Jesus was none other than the true God, shining with the splendor of his divine nature. Jesus repeatedly told his disciples that he was God. He demonstrated that fact by his miracles. The transfiguration is a more visible declaration that he is God. Soon, Jesus would enter into the depths of his humiliation by being arrested, mocked, tortured, cruelly crucified, and buried in a tomb. Above all this he would triumph, he had told his disciples, by rising from the dead. His transfiguration verified that claim, and prepared the disciples for Jesus' dark days of deepest humiliation.

Moses and Elijah appeared in splendor and began talking with Jesus. These two men were among the many prophets of the Old Testament who had testified that the Messiah would come. Matthew does not relate the content of their conversation, but Luke says *They spoke about his departure* (Lk 9:31). His departure was much more than leaving the mountain for Jerusalem. It was the work of his humiliation about which he had already told his disciples. It was a glorious work, but with a hidden glory. He had been chosen to suffer for the sin of the world.

Peter got carried away in the glorious glimpse of heaven. He liked the glory part, but didn't want it hidden by heading down this mountain for Jerusalem. Impulsively he suggested, <sup>4</sup>*Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.* He wanted to make this experience more permanent, but he did not know what he was saying. Caught up in the glory of the moment with such a glimpse of heaven, Peter failed to understand that Jesus Christ was chosen by God to suffer for him. His glory had to be hidden for a time. Jesus had to face the full depth of humiliation on the cross, and suffer hell itself, in order to redeem sinners. Peter wanted to bask in the glory of heaven without leaving this world of sin.

We repeat Peter's mistake if we fail to appreciate how we need a Savior who suffered for us. Only by his suffering could our guilt be removed. From time to time, all of us have mountaintop experiences (the day of confirmation, a child's baptism, a wedding, or family reunion). Do we try to freeze the moment? But heaven is not found this side of the grave. Our feelings won't always be in tune with our faith. Yet one need not despair, for the word of God is certain. It states that the Lord is always with his people. Jesus will come with us to the plain.

Peter's plan to stay in revealed glory was not God's plan. God confirmed that with his words from the radiant cloud, <sup>5</sup>*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!* God the Father put his stamp of approval on Jesus' work of salvation. God says take him seriously! Sad to say, so many in the world have no time for Jesus or don't care about what he has to say. In a

nation of religious freedom, we face a mindset that all religions teach people to be good, so there must be many highways to heaven. Truth is - Jesus is the one and only Savior this world will ever have. Do we always listen to Jesus with as much attention as he deserves? Does your lifestyle always give clear evidence that you listen to the words of Jesus? Are there things that Jesus told you to do that you have not been doing? Are there things that Jesus told you to not do that you keep right on doing? Are there certain teachings of the Bible you say are too hard to accept? We all need the reminder: Listen to him, he has the Father's stamp of approval.

## **2. To take away our fear (6-9)**

Sinful human beings that we are, we react to the times we fail to listen to Jesus as we should by becoming afraid of the holy, almighty God. Even minor demonstrations of his power cause people to quake, think of how people react to the approach of a tornado or the eruption of a volcano. Hearing the Father's words, Peter, James, and John *fell facedown to the ground, terrified*. They knew their sins had disqualified them from God's presence. But God points you to Jesus to save you, and he says, "This is my approved Savior. No one else can rescue you from sin. So listen to Jesus speak. Believe what he says, and what he did for you, and you will have eternal life." With Jesus, listen is a comforting command. Jesus knew what his disciples needed. <sup>7</sup>*Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."* God's approval and Jesus' work take away our fear.

When the majestic glimpse of heavenly glory disappeared, <sup>8</sup>*they saw no one except Jesus*. With the Father's testimony, Jesus was enough. Blinding glory wasn't needed. "Only Jesus!" As we keep our hearts fixed on him as our Savior, we have every assurance that heaven is ours. On Ash Wednesday, and in the coming weeks, we will listen to what Jesus says about his passion, death, and resurrection. As he calls us to repent, and suffers for us, the Chosen one reveals his hidden glory, taking away our sin as true God – come to us.

I remember a conversation I had in Mexico as I lived with a Roman Catholic host family while I learned Spanish. The lady of the house knew that I was attending seminary to be a pastor. One day, she mentioned how I behaved better than the majority of the American exchange students. She half-jokingly masked fear of death's unknown by adding, "When I die, I plan to be close to you so I can grab your heels as you go up to heaven." She saw me as someone who might bring her closer to God. I tried to explain the fallacy of putting hope in anything I, a sinner, could do to get her to heaven; especially with what Jesus has suffered for us. But I don't think she understood. I remember that event and know that only Jesus takes away fear of death.

God chose Jesus to do what none other could do. He never sinned. So he was able to sacrifice himself for the sins of the entire world. The Transfiguration marked the beginning of the final leg of Jesus' sacrifice. He descended the mountain intent on completing his suffering for us. He told the disciples to keep this event to themselves until after he rose because he didn't want any false 'superman' ideas to detour his road to the cross.

With all of the religions in the world today, different gods and different churches to choose from; do you ever worry that maybe you have chosen the wrong one? Some might say we are deceived by a clever man who lived 2000 years ago. Is there a better Savior out there? No, there is not. God gives us his own rating system. He points us to Jesus and says, "This is the one I have chosen. He is the one you need to listen to." God does not give his excellent rating to any inferior product. He settles for nothing less than absolute perfection. That is what Jesus is. He lived an absolutely perfect life in obedience to God. He offered the perfect sacrifice for sin when he gave his life on the cross. He was gloriously able to rise from the dead. He gives the perfect salvation to everyone who trusts in him, and he gives it for the perfect price: absolutely free. When God looks at all the work that Jesus did as our priest and our prophet, he says, "I approve!" We say, "I believe!"