

Listen Only to Jesus

Gen. 15: 5-12, 17-18; Ps. 27; Phil. 3: 17-4:1; Lk. 9: 28b-36

David Copperfield, not the character in the Charles Dickens novel but the American magician, is a master illusionist who once made the Statue of Liberty disappear! His performances are so impressive that audiences often think they are seeing supernatural events.

Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him when He went up a mountain to pray. There, the disciples were witnesses to a truly supernatural event. They were given a glimpse of Jesus in His heavenly glory. Jesus' face shone like the sun and His clothes were dazzling white. And they saw a vision of Moses and Elijah with Him speaking to Him about His 'exodus'. The appearance of Moses and Elijah as attendants to Jesus was fitting because Jesus was the fulfilment of the Old Testament Law and the prophetic messages.

The 'exodus' was a reference to the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. God led the Israelites out of slavery and protected them as they walked through the desert to the land of Israel. During their exodus, the Israelites faced hardship and temptations to give up, to turn their back on God, and to return to Egypt where they were assured of a certain standard of living. Through the twists and turns of their long pilgrimage in the desert, the Israelites developed an intimate relationship with God and learned to trust Him to bring them safely to the end of their exodus.

Jesus' exodus would be much different than that of the Israelites but it would be characterized by hardships and temptations as well; hardships such as: skepticism, ridicule, persecution, torture, and death and temptations to give up His 'exodus'. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was tempted by the devil to worship him, and to give up following the will of the Father to pursue worldly pleasures. As with the Israelites, Jesus placed His entire trust in the Father and God accompanied Him throughout His life to the Cross and then raised Him up after three days to complete His exodus.

We have our own exodus experiences as well. Our lives may be considered to be our 'exodus' as we suffer through this 'valley of tears' on our journey to our heavenly home. We must endure many hardships such as: the pandemic, natural disasters, famine and wars as well our own personal hardships and sacrifices. Often these experiences tempt us to turn away from God and to follow the ways of the world.

Just as the Israelites and Jesus placed their trust totally in God, we must do the same. Peter was so taken with the supernatural vision, that he wanted to preserve it; not understanding the exodus that Jesus was to undertake. God intervened from a cloud, invoking memories of Old Testament encounters with Him. He told the disciples that Jesus was the Son of God and that they must listen to Him. When the cloud departed, they saw only Jesus.

The message for us is that we must listen to Jesus and follow His teachings. Just as the disciples saw only Jesus after God had departed, so we must keep our attention fixed only on Jesus. The disciples had Jesus and He was enough for them. So too, Jesus is enough for us. If we follow God's command to listen to Jesus, we have faith that He will help us complete our exodus on earth and bring us joyfully to our heavenly home..