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## *JESUS, THE CHRIST OF GOD* *LUKE 9:1-62*

The identity of Jesus is the crucial issue of the Gospels. It is the most important issue of life. Jesus was the Messianic King foretold in the Old Testament. In this chapter Luke records Peter's confession of Christ, Christ's prediction of His death and resurrection, miracles which demonstrated His messiahship and lessons Jesus taught about true discipleship.

### **The Mission of the Twelve — Luke 9:1-6**

**9** And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup>and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal. <sup>3</sup>And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. <sup>4</sup>And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. <sup>5</sup>And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." <sup>6</sup>And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

**9:1-2.** Luke identified the apostles as "the Twelve." Jesus gave the

apostles both the power to work miracles and also the authority to do so. Power refers to the strength or power to do something. Authority designates the right to exercise the power. These works of might and mercy extended the work of Christ and authenticated their message. The power to cast out demons is separated from the healing of diseases. (See Luke 4:40-41; 6:17-18; 7:21; 8:2; 13:32.)

Jesus commissioned the apostles with instructions to teach and to minister on His behalf to the souls and bodies of men. Matthew added they were to raise the dead (10:8). Mark recorded that Jesus sent the apostles two by two (6:7).

The theme of their preaching was the kingdom of God. They were to declare that God's desire and plan is to rule in the hearts and lives of men. The word for preaching means to proclaim as a herald on the authority of a king. They were to declare the rule of God, particularly in the rule of the Messiah-king. Mark included the instruction to teach repentance (6:12).

**9:3-6.** No special preparations were necessary. They were to concentrate on the task at hand. They were to travel light so they could be free to go as far and as fast as necessary. Money and bread were not needed because "The laborer is worthy of his food" (Matt. 10:10, ASV). God would provide their needs. The staff was a traveler's walking stick. A problem is presented by the text in Mark 6:8 where disciples are told to take nothing except a staff. Morris said, "Various attempts have been made at harmonizing the two . . . . But so far no explanation seems really satisfactory. Perhaps both ways of putting it mean 'Go as you are'. Jesus is instructing them to make no special preparation for the this trip" (p. 163). The bag was a provisions bag for travelers. The task was urgent. They were simply to go. "They have to go just as they are and trust to God that He will provide whatever is needful while they are engaged in accomplishing their task" (Geldenhuys, p. 266).

Time was not to be wasted moving from house to house seeking better accommodations. They were to stay in the home hospitable enough to provide lodging, evangelizing a village or an area from this fixed center. See Luke 10:5-7 for similar instructions to the Seventy. The church in the New Testament often met in a home (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 2).

Shaking the dust off their feet when they were rejected dramatized the lost opportunity and the seriousness of the refusal. It symbolized that those refusing to hear had nothing in common with the evangelists. Paul and Barnabas did this in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts

13:51). The apostles obeyed Jesus' command and instructions and covered considerable territory. Several weeks may have been spent evangelizing the Galilean villages. Concern for both soul and body was evident in Christ's ministry and has continued in Christian missions. Morris observed, "We should perhaps add that the instructions given here are not to be regarded as applying universally. At a later time Jesus could command His followers to take purse, bag and sword (22:36). These instructions are for this one trip" (pp. 164-165).

### Herod's Fears — Luke 9:7-9

After recording the apostles' evangelism in Galilee, Luke briefly notes what the ruler of Galilee thought about Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, <sup>8</sup>by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. <sup>9</sup>Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

**9:7-9.** Luke gives Herod's official title, *tetrarch* (Luke 3:1,19; 9:7; Acts 13:1). Mark (6:14) and Matthew (14:9) designate him as *king*. Popularly Herod Antipas was viewed as king but technically he was not. From 4 B.C. to A.D. 39 he ruled as tetrarch over Galilee and Perea. He was a son of Herod the Great. He was interested in the reports and opinions about Jesus and the apostles. He was puzzled and perplexed at all that was being done by Jesus and His apostles. "Antipas was utterly at a loss as to what he was to think of Jesus" (Plummer, p. 241).

Several opinions about Jesus were afloat. One view was that Jesus was John (the Baptist) returned to life. Matthew and Mark indicate that this was Herod's personal opinion. Even though John had not worked miracles yet he had such an impact that many thought he was a prophet who had come back to life and was working miracles. Others thought that Jesus was Elijah. A reappearance of Elijah would not be a resurrection, since he had not died. (See Mal. 4:5; Isa. 40:3. See comments on Luke 1:76; 7:27.) A third view was that another of the prophets had risen from the dead.

Herod mused to himself, "John I caused to be beheaded, but *who is this* about whom I hear such things?" His conscience was bothering him, his mind was wrestling with the most important question, "Who

is Jesus?" "He continued seeking to see him" is a more exact translation. He knew John personally so seeing Jesus could help him decide that question. His desire to see Jesus was fulfilled during Jesus' trials, but Jesus chose not to communicate with him (Luke 23:8-12). Matthew and Mark recorded the details of John's beheading (Matt. 14:1-11; Mark 6:17-29).

### **The Feeding of the Five Thousand — Luke 9:10-17**

The only miracles recorded in all four Gospels are the feeding of the five thousand and the resurrection of Jesus. The miraculous feeding of the large crowd demonstrated Jesus' deity, and it was used by Jesus as a basis for teaching that He was the Bread of Life. It is helpful to study the other accounts of this miracle (Matt. 14; Mark 6; John 6).

<sup>10</sup>On their return the apostles told him what they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida. <sup>11</sup>When the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing. <sup>12</sup>Now the day began to wear away; and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a lonely place." <sup>13</sup>But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish — unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." <sup>14</sup>For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." <sup>15</sup>And they did so, and made them all sit down. <sup>16</sup>And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. <sup>17</sup>And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

**9:10.** The apostles returned to Jesus from their evangelistic tour. Many things had happened. John had been murdered. Matthew said Jesus retired with the Twelve to a deserted place after he heard of John's death. The people felt leaderless with John gone. The crowds were excited by Jesus' miracles. Expectations were stirred by the apostles' preaching of the kingdom. It was spring of the year, as the passover was near (John 6:4). This was about one year before our

Lord's death.

Jesus said to the apostles, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while." Mark added, "For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat" (Mark 6:31). The site of their retreat was near Bethsaida. Bethsaida Julius was a town on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee east of the Jordan's inlet to the sea. The town was built by Philip the Tetrarch and named for Julia the daughter of Caesar (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18,28).

**9:11-12.** Mark recorded, "And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:32-34). Luke's account is brief. Even though Jesus and the apostles were seeking a quiet retreat, Jesus welcomed the people and gave His time and attention to teach them and to heal their sick.

When it grew late in the day, nearing the usual time for the evening meal, the Twelve approached Jesus requesting that He dismiss the crowds, sending them away so that they could go to the villages and hamlets and find lodging and food because they were in an uninhabited area. This fact and the mention of going into the hills (John 6:3) indicate that Jesus fed the people a mile or two southeast of Bethsaida Julius.

**9:13-15.** Jesus put the responsibility back upon the apostles. "*You* give them something to eat" (emphasis in original). Some think this means to give the people spiritual food. It seems more likely He meant physical food. He intended to show His divine power by doing what was humanly impossible. John gave a more detailed record, "Jesus said to Philip, 'How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?' This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 'Two hundred denarii [200 days' wages] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?' " (John 6:5-9). Bread and fish was the common food in this area. The lad's lunch consisted of five barley cakes and two small fish.

The crowd numbered about five thousand adult males not counting the women and children (Matt. 14:21). Jesus directed that the crowd be seated in groups of fifty and hundred on the green grass

(Mark 6:39-40). Winter is the rainy season. Green grass could have been plentiful in the spring. In Palestine it does not rain from June through September so green grass would have been unavailable later. The spaces between the groups made the serving more convenient.

**9:16-17.** As the Host at this meal Jesus looked into heaven and gave the blessing ("thanks" John 6:11). Jesus regularly gave thanks before meals (Matt. 14:19; 15:36; 26:27; Mark 6:41; 8:6; 14:23; Luke 9:16; 22:17,19; 24:30,35; John 6:11,13; I Cor. 11:24; also see Acts 27:35; Rom. 14:6). Often the host would break the bread during this prayer then distribute it to others. Jesus gave the food to the apostles who in turn distributed it to the assembled crowd. The people had a full meal and were satisfied. The abundance was such that twelve baskets of leftovers were collected. Jesus was not wasteful. The baskets were wicker baskets that could be carried on the back to hold provisions.

Some try to explain the miracle by spiritualizing it. They say the people were filled with Jesus' teaching. When a Sunday School teacher suggested this view, a small boy asked, "What about the twelve baskets of leftovers?" The Gospels present the physical miracle of the feeding of the five thousand as an actual historical event. Another naturalistic explanation is that the people were selfish but when the disciples laid before them the lad's lunch then they were all motivated to share their own small provisions and in the end there was more than enough for everyone (Barclay, p. 118). Neither of these explanations fit the plain words of the Gospel texts and both assume a prejudice against miracles. But if God exists, He can certainly work miracles if He chooses. Far better evidence exists for accepting the historical truthfulness of the Gospels than for the view that miracles can't happen. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is a dramatic demonstration of Jesus' divine power.

### **Peter's Confession and Christ's Announcement** **Luke 9:18-22**

Luke omits the dismissal of the disciples and the crowd, the storm and walking on the water, the Sermon on the Bread of Life, the Syro-phoenician woman, the healing of the deaf and mute man, the feeding of the four thousand and the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida Julias at least five months later (Matt. 14:22-16:12; Mark 6:45-8:26; John 6:14-71).

<sup>18</sup>Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?" <sup>19</sup>And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen" <sup>20</sup>And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." <sup>21</sup>But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, <sup>22</sup>saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

**9:18-20.** This incident occurred in Caesarea Philippi, near the foot of Mt. Hermon, north of Galilee (Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27). Jesus is praying privately, even though the disciples are present with Him. See a similar statement in Mark 4:10. Now was the time for important teaching concerning His identity and His mission. Jesus takes the initiative and asks the disciples, "Who do the people say that I am?" Their answers are similar to the reports that Herod had received (9:7-9).

Jesus asked the apostles, "But who do *you* say I am?" (emphasis in the Greek original). He wanted them to state their personal conviction about Him. A person may know much true information about Jesus and not be a believer. "Who is Jesus?" is a crucial question which all must answer. Peter spoke up, apparently speaking for the others, "The Christ of God." *Christ* is Greek for *Messiah*. It literally means the anointed one. In the Old Testament repeatedly God had promised He would send a redeemer who would be a prophet, priest and king. Matthew recorded a more complete answer, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Peter recognized Jesus was the promised divine deliverer.

**9:21-22.** Jesus "gave them strict orders" (NEB) not to tell others that He was the Messiah. This was to be kept quiet, not because it was false, but because it was true. But the time was not right to reveal this truth. The term *Messiah* was emotionally charged and represented to the Jews a political and military deliverer (John 6:15). A public announcement at this time would have made it much more difficult to teach the spiritual nature of His kingdom. When the time was right, Jesus made the confession of His messiahship to the religious authorities (Matt. 26:63-64; Luke 22:66-70).

Jesus gave His first clear announcement to the apostles of His death and resurrection. This was at least six months before He was killed. Two other similar predictions are recorded by Luke (9:43-45;

18:31-34). The following verses show early intimations of tragedy ahead: Matthew 5:11,12; 7:13-27; 10:21-25,38-40; Mark 2:20; 3:4,6; Luke 2:34-35; 4:24,29; John 1:5,10,11; 1:29; 2:17,20; 3:14,19; 5:18; 6:51-58. The term *Son of Man* is a synonym for Messiah. Some interpret it as pointing to Jesus' identification with humanity. Generally the title conveys the idea of divine, kingly rule and power. The verb translated *must* expresses the divine purpose of God, which of necessity must come to pass (13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7,26,44; Acts 17:3). God's word declared in the Scripture must come to pass (18:31; 24:46).

That Jesus would suffer many things may be a general summary of the whole of His sufferings and death. The leaders of the Jews, without adequate investigation of the evidence for His Messianic claims, officially rejected Him. Being the Messiah meant he would die. But just as certain as that He would be killed, He would rise from the dead on the third day. See Matthew 16:13-21 and Mark 8:27-31 for more detailed accounts.

### Conditions of Discipleship — Luke 9:23-27

After predicting His own cross, Jesus predicted another kind of cross for those who would follow Him. "Their cross was not literal and their sufferings not atoning. But it was (and is) real" (Morris, p. 170).

<sup>23</sup>And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. <sup>25</sup>For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? <sup>26</sup>For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. <sup>27</sup>But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

**9:23-25.** Jesus did not mean denying oneself some luxury for a time, but rather being willing to deny one's right to do as he or she pleases. It means saying "No" to one's own ambitions and selfish desires. Wholehearted surrender to Christ's will is required of His followers. In the first century the cross was not a pretty symbol to wear as jewelry. To them it meant a torturous death. The commitment



Christ requires is so deep and complete that one must have daily readiness for martyrdom. We must not only be willing to die, but we must daily offer our service to Christ in total submission to His rule. Following Jesus requires surrender to His Spirit and willingness to obey His commands in all things. Still, we do not stand before God as righteous by our own deeds, but in the righteousness of Christ accounted to us because we believe and follow Him.

Self-worship is a deadly cancer. Self-rule is the desire to be outside the law of obedience. Self-interest is the desire to be outside the law of sacrifice. Self-complacency is the desire to be outside the law of fellowship. Christ cures this cancer when we say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Some have given an unhealthy and unbiblical emphasis to loving oneself. We are not to hate ourselves. It is not wrong to have a proper self-respect and self-esteem. We gain this through understanding we are created by God and redeemed by Christ. We find our true selves when we lose ourselves in service to God and others.

Pursuing only personal pleasures at the expense of one's spiritual life will mean the loss of a worthwhile life here and the precious fellowship with God in heaven. Losing one's selfish desires in complete dedication in service to Christ means finding the best that life has to offer. We show how much we value our lives by what we are willing to exchange for our lives. Many exchange their hours, days and years for little or nothing of lasting value. What a person is, is more important than what he or she has. If one owned all the material possessions in the world but lost his eternal soul, he would be the loser. Eternal lostness from the presence of God is a horrible price to pay. It may seem like a bad bargain to give one's whole life to Christ, but those who do so will find that in giving themselves to God they have found the greatest profit possible.

**9:26-27.** If anyone is ashamed of Jesus and of His Word, Jesus will refuse to own that person as His when He comes in divine glory as judge of men's eternal destinies. We must not be intimidated by the world's wisdom and standards so that we are ashamed to stand up for Christ and the Bible. We need to fear God's rejection more than we fear the rejection of the world.

Some of those standing and listening to His voice would not die until they had seen the kingdom of God. This most likely refers to the establishment of the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This

would have been less than a year away.

### The Transfiguration — Luke 9:28-36

This revelation of glory was an encouragement to Christ and to the three disciples that eternal glory and the cross are not incompatible. Over thirty years later eyewitness Peter gave his testimony about the transfiguration. "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain" (II Pet. 1:16-18).

<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 countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup>And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened 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 well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah — not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup>As he said this, 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; listen to him!" <sup>36</sup>And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

**9:28-29.** Luke dates the transfiguration "about eight days" after Peter's confession. Matthew 17:1 and Mark 9:2 have "a high mountain." Jesus took only Peter, James and John with Him up the mountain "to pray."

While Jesus was praying, His appearance was changed and His clothing became brilliant and gleaming like light. His face "shone like the sun" (Matt. 17:2). His clothing was whiter than any laundryman could bleach them (Mark 9:3). His divine glory was flashing forth.

**9:30-31.** We are not told how Moses and Elijah were identified,

perhaps the conversation revealed their identities. They were representatives of the law and the prophets. The departure from the earth of these two was unusual. Elijah did not die but was taken into heaven (II Kgs. 2:11). Moses was buried by God (Deut. 34:6; Jude 9). The topic of conversation was Jesus' departure (*exodus*, literal Greek) soon to occur in Jerusalem. Peter used this same word when speaking of his own death (II Pet. 1:15). They discussed heaven's viewpoint on His death.

**9:32-33.** The bright light awakened the disciples from deep sleep. They saw the Lord's glory and Moses and Elijah. As the two were about to depart, Peter spoke. He wanted to extend the good experience. He suggested building three booths. The word means shelter or temporary hut or tent. They were not worship centers as the word tabernacle conveys, but temporary dwellings.

**9:34-36.** The cloud was associated with the presence of God in Exodus 24:15-18 and 40:29-34, as it is here. It is not exactly clear who entered the cloud. The *Revised Standard Version* gives the impression that the disciples entered the cloud and were afraid. It is certain that the disciples were the ones afraid. It is not certain that the *they* who entered the cloud meant only Jesus, Moses and Elijah or if it also included the three disciples. It is most likely that it meant the former. The disciples were afraid when they saw the others enveloped by the cloud.

The voice of God spoke out of the cloud. The message is similar to what God said at Jesus' baptism. At the baptism, God spoke to Jesus, "Thou art my beloved Son, with thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). At the transfiguration, the message is directed to the disciples with Jesus spoken of in third person, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him." God affirmed Jesus' deity and messiahship. God chose Jesus to follow the path of suffering the death as the Messianic Savior (Luke 23:35). Jesus was superior to the law and the prophets. God was saying that men now need to hear, trust and obey Jesus as their absolute Lord in all things.

After God had spoken, the disciples found Jesus *alone*. What a powerful demonstration of His unique supremacy. Mark's record helps us understand why they kept silence. "He charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves questioning what the rising from the dead meant" (Mark 9:9-10). The keeping of an important secret increases the excitement and power of the eventual telling of it. This was no doubt true of this event (II Pet. 1:16-19).

For persons being taken into heaven in the clouds, see Daniel 7:13; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Acts 1:9; I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:17; 11:12; 14:14-16.

### **The Demon-Possessed Boy — Luke 9:37-45**

After the mountain-top experience, the disciples' failure to cast out the demon possessing a boy stands in sharp contrast (Matt. 17:14-18; Mark 9:14-29).

<sup>37</sup>On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. <sup>38</sup>And behold, a man from the crowd cried, "Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my only child; <sup>39</sup>and behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him till he foams, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. <sup>40</sup>And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." <sup>41</sup>Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." <sup>42</sup>While he was coming, the demon tore him and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. <sup>43</sup>And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

But while they were all marveling at everything he did, he said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup>"Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." <sup>45</sup>But they did not understand this saying and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

**9:37-40.** Jesus and the three apostles stayed overnight on the mountain after the transfiguration. A great crowd was waiting for Jesus when He came down. A father shouted to Jesus that He give special attention to his son, his only child, who was troubled by an evil spirit. The spirit caused the boy to exhibit symptoms similar to those in epilepsy. The man reported to Jesus that he had pleaded with Jesus' disciples to cast out the evil spirit but they had been unable to do so. Did the disciples to whom the father referred include the nine apostles? The apostles had been given power to cast out demons (Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:1-6). If the apostles had failed in this case, and this may be true, it was an exception to the usual.

**9:41-43a.** Jesus expressed sadness at the lack of faith on the part of the people. Jesus' statement appears to be addressed to the father and to the crowd including the disciples. The father may have come just to see what the disciples could do but without a real trust in the power of

God. The crowd may have shared the same mind-set. The disciples may have wavered in their confidence in God's power to work through them. Mark recorded an interesting exchange between the father and Jesus which Luke omitted: " 'But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.' And Jesus said to him, 'If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!' " (Mark 9:22b-24).

Jesus requested the boy be brought to Him. "The demon dashed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion" (NASB). Jesus dismissed the spirit. He healed the boy. Then he gave the only son back to his father. All those present were amazed at the glorious manifestation of God's power.

**9:43b-45.** Even though Jesus worked divine miracles, that did not mean He would use His divine power to avoid the path of suffering. Jesus expected His disciples to give strict attention to His prediction. He wanted them to remember these words even if they did not understand them at that time. The meaning was concealed from them. "They were not allowed to understand the saying then, in order that they might remember it afterwards, and see that Jesus had met His suffering with full knowledge and free will" (Plummer, p. 256). "On the other side of the cross it must have been terribly difficult to grasp the truth that Jesus' Messiahship meant His death" (Morris, p. 175).

### **Who Is the Greatest — Luke 9:46-50**

This conversation took place after Jesus and the disciples returned from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum (Matt. 17:24; Mark 9:33). The disciples needed the lessons Jesus taught on humility and tolerance.

<sup>46</sup>And an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. <sup>47</sup>But when Jesus perceived the thought of their hearts, he took a child and put him by his side, <sup>48</sup>and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me; for he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

<sup>49</sup>John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us."

<sup>50</sup>But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you."

**9:46-48.** The apostles were thinking of themselves and their self-importance. They did not yet understand Jesus' way of self-sacrifice.

They were arguing about who was the greatest among the apostles. C.S. Lewis observed, "Pride is *essentially* competitive . . . . Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man." People are proud of being richer or better-looking than others. "It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest" (*Mere Christianity*, pp. 109-110).

The discussion among the apostles was stated, "Who is the greatest?" but in their hearts they were thinking, "Am I not the greatest?" (Plummer, p. 257). The word for greatness here concerns position and prestige.

Jesus used a child for an object lesson. Several times Jesus referred to children in His teaching (Luke 10:21; 17:2; 18:16). The apostles were around Him, but Jesus put the child at His side, the place of honor. True disciples welcome little children because they belong to Christ. One who welcomes little children welcomes Christ. When one welcomes Christ, he welcomes God. The person who considers others better than self is like Christ. The truly humble person is the great person. Jesus did not use the comparative term, greatest. There is no place in the kingdom for those who want to be over others, to be above others. We are to compare ourselves to Christ not to one another (II Cor. 10:12).

**9:49-50.** The apostle John told Jesus that they had told a man to stop who was casting out demons in Jesus' name, because he was not one of the disciples accompanying Jesus. The idea of the text is that they were persistent in their efforts to stop him. It is ironic that they did this in the light of the disciples' failure to cast out the demon possessing the boy.

Jesus told the disciples they should not forbid the unnamed miracle worker. In this context Jesus spoke of those who sincerely confessed Christ, "He that is not against you is for you." In a later context when Jesus spoke of those who were open in their opposition to Him, He said, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Luke 11:23). We must be patient and tolerant with those who are serving Christ but do not see eye-to-eye with us in everything. However in dealing with Satan and those opposing Christ there can be no neutrality and no compromise. We must take our stand for Christ.

### **Opposition in a Samaritan Village — Luke 9:51-56**

Most of the narrative found in Luke 9:51-18:14 is found only in

Luke's Gospel, Luke frequently mentioned that Jesus was headed to Jerusalem (9:51,53; 13:22,33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11,28). Jesus' journey from Galilee did end in Jerusalem but it was a circuitous route. Luke was speaking of different passages: in Luke 9, from Galilee; in Luke 13, from Perea; in Luke 17, from eastern Samaria where He hid briefly after raising Lazarus at Bethany; in Luke 19:11, from the southern border of Galilee to Jericho; in Luke 19:28, from Jericho. He actually arrived at Jerusalem three different times.

<sup>51</sup>When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup>And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup>but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup>And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" <sup>55</sup>But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup>And they went on to another village.

**9:51-53.** Jesus was in charge of His schedule. Some things were not to be done because it was not yet time (John 7:6) and other things He said must occur because the time had come (Matt. 26:18). He knew His remaining days on earth were few. He started His journey to Jerusalem with fixed purpose knowing full well the danger and death which awaited Him. "To be received up" translates a phrase which means "the days of His receiving up." The verb form is used in Acts to refer to the ascension. Luke apparently used it here to mean the completion of Jesus' death and resurrection, finalized by His ascension into heaven.

Luke did not record the names of the messengers who were sent by Jesus into a Samaritan village to prepare for their arrival. The Samaritans did not want to have anything to do with Jesus because He was headed toward Jerusalem. "Their feud with the Jews was so bitter that they would not help anyone travel to Jerusalem." "Josephus tells us that Samaritans were not adverse to ill-treating pilgrims going up to Jerusalem, even to the extent of murdering them on occasion" (Morris, p. 179). Often Galileans headed to Jerusalem would by-pass Samaria, going east of the Jordan River through Perea. Other references to the Samaritans in the Gospels are as follows: Matthew 10:5; Luke 10:33; 17:16; John 4:9,39; 8:48.

**9:54-56.** James and John exhibited their fiery disposition by asking Jesus to call down fire and destroy the village. Mark called James and

John “sons of thunder” (3:17). The unfriendly reaction was not to be met with retaliation. Revenge is not a Christian response (Matt. 5:38-42; Rom. 12:14-21). The statement, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy men’s lives but to save them” is not in the earliest manuscripts. Geldenhuys held that this saying is authentic oral tradition which was included in later texts of Luke’s Gospel (p. 294). Jesus and His company went to another village for lodging.

### **The Cost of Discipleship — Luke 9:57-62**

Jesus taught three would-be disciples the high cost of discipleship.

<sup>57</sup>As they were going along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup>And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup>To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup>But he said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup>Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup>Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

**9:57-58.** A would-be follower professed unlimited allegiance to Jesus. Matthew reported that he was a scribe (8:19). Jesus detected an overconfidence and a naive idea of the sacrifice such a profession included. Instead of relying on the emotions of the moment, Jesus wanted the man to count the high cost of discipleship. Frequently being rejected and constantly seeking souls, Jesus’ life was one of being on the move. Jesus was not complaining but He wanted the man to know what it meant to be a committed follower of His.

**9:59-60.** Jesus invited another to be His constant follower. He said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” What did he mean? The man’s father probably was not dead. The man wanted to delay discipleship until after his father’s death. An Arab declined an offer of a scholarship to an English university, saying, “I will take it after I have buried my father.” His father was then forty years old. (Barclay, *Luke*, p. 133).

The probable meaning is “Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.” Allegiance to Christ must come before allegiance to family. Jesus was not being brutal about family responsibilities but



rather was teaching about what is top priority. If one does not respond to God's call at a crucial moment he or she may never respond. The man needed to decide right then to go everywhere publishing the good news of the kingdom.

**9:61-62.** Having a difficult time breaking with his past, this man wanted to enjoy family and friends before coming with Jesus. The plows used in Jesus' day needed one's full attention. Momentary inattention would result in the plow being out of the ground. In Christ's kingdom half-hearted service will not do. Unconditional commitment to the rule of Christ is an essential requirement for being His follower.

Jesus did not beg anyone to follow Him. He did make clear the high cost of discipleship. We must give up our selfishness; we must offer ourselves as a sacrifice; we must submit in total surrender to Christ as Lord in all things.

Childlike trust in Jesus, hating and turning from one's sins, baptism in water, daily serving the King. The price is right! Buy it!

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What authority did Jesus give to the twelve?
2. They were sent out to do what two things?
3. Why were they to stay in the house where they entered?
4. Identify Herod the Tetrarch.
5. Jesus and the apostles withdrew to near Bethsaida. Locate this Bethsaida.
6. Give the book and chapter where the feeding of the 5000 is recorded in all four Gospels.
7. What did Jesus do before He multiplied the loaves and fishes?
8. What was Jesus doing just before He asked the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"
9. Explain what Peter's confession "the Christ of God" meant.
10. Why did Jesus charge them not to tell He was the Christ?
11. List the demands of discipleship stated by Jesus in 9:23-24.
12. When would people see the kingdom of God predicted in 9:27?
13. What was the significance of Moses and Elijah being with Jesus at the transfiguration?
14. What was the significance of the transfiguration?
15. What are demons or evil spirits?
16. How did James and John respond to an inhospitable Samaritan village?
17. What did Jesus mean "Leave the dead to bury their own dead"?

