

Chapter Nine (9:1-62)

THE SON OF MAN ANTICIPATING HIS EXODUS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Are the instructions to the twelve disciples about evangelism applicable to all Christians (9:1-6)?
2. Why did Jesus tell the twelve disciples to give the thousands of hungry people something to eat (9:13)?
3. If Jesus wanted to know what people thought of Him, why did He tell the disciples to tell no one who He was (9:18-22)?
4. Who would not taste death until they should see the kingdom of God (9:27)?
5. To what extent was Jesus' appearance altered on the high mountain (9:28-36)?
6. How could Jesus' deliverance into the hands of wicked men be concealed from His disciples if He had already predicted it to them (9:45)?
7. Why wouldn't the Samaritans let Jesus and His disciples stay over in their country (9:51-56)?

SECTION 1

Training The Twelve (9:1-9)

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

⁷Now 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, ⁸by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. ⁹Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

9:1-6 Exciting Mission: The great year of popularity was drawing to a close. Even in Galilee the storm clouds of opposition were gathering on the horizon. A "crash course" in evangelism was in order for the Twelve. For two years the disciples have been soaking up the "classroom" lectures—now they are to have their first "field-trip" all on their own. Now they are to put to practice, without the Teacher's close supervision, the principles they have been taught. There is no way to learn to do evangelism but to do it! Methods are fine but no one method will suit every circumstance or personality.

The more detailed account of this event in Matthew 10:5-42 must be studied along with Luke's account here. Someone has outlined the event (as detailed in all three gospels) thus: Jesus conferred upon the Twelve (a) His mission, (b) His message, (c) His miracles, (d) His miseries, (e) His mastery. His purpose for sending them out was at least three-fold: (a) to multiply the effect of His mission to proclaim the kingdom of God, (b) to provide them with empirical evidence of His miraculous power when they should later become the only eyewitnesses to His death and resurrection, (c) to let them learn evangelism by doing. Matthew records that in addition to their power over unclean spirits and every disease, they were also given power to raise the dead. Their main objective was, of course, to preach the coming of the kingdom of God—miracles were merely to validate their message as the truth.

Due to the increasing opposition and disenchantment with Jesus (soon thousands of disciples will turn away from Him, Jn. 6:66), this mission of the Twelve was to be an intense and extensive mission. Jesus fully expected to join them later "before they had gone through *all the towns of Israel*" (Mt. 10:23). Their message was "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 10:7). There is no indication that they proclaimed Jesus to be The Christ. In fact, afterward at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus forbade the disciples from making such a public declaration. Matthew records that Jesus told the disciples not to go "among the Gentiles . . . or Samaritans." That did not mean they should not preach the kingdom to Gentiles and Samaritans should some of them be found in the cities and villages of Israel. It simply meant that the time was not yet available or opportune for an extensive ministry in Gentile and Samaritan cities outside the confines of Israel's borders.

Because of the intensity and rapidity necessary for their work (if they are to cover all the towns of Israel) Jesus placed limitations upon their physical and financial preparations. According to Matthew, Jesus told them, "You received without pay, give without pay." That does not mean that they were not to receive any financial or logistical support whatever in their ministry. In fact, Jesus concludes by instructing them to receive graciously and courteously any "room and board" offered

to them during this evangelistic tour, (cf. Mt. 10:11-14; Mk. 6:10-11; Lk. 9:4-5). The N.T. is clear that those who preach the gospel should have their livelihood supplied by those who receive the preaching (cf. I Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15-17, etc.). Preaching and teaching the Word of God is work and the laborer is worthy of his hire! On the other hand, the preacher or teacher is not to be a mercenary—a hireling—preaching *only* for financial gain. The preacher should not approach his work like the worldly-minded man—“how much am I going to get out of it.” He should “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). That is exactly what Jesus is trying to teach the Twelve by His limitations here. They are not to devote their energies to making elaborate and unnecessary material preparations. Luke and Matthew say, “take no staff” while Mark says, take nothing “except a staff.” Apparently the one staff (walking stick, also used to protect against highway robbers) every Palestinian traveler carried would suffice—they were not to make provisions for another one, an extra one. They were to carry no “duffel-bag” since they were to carry nothing extra; neither food or clothing, shoes or money. Jesus is instructing the Twelve to *put to practice* the Sermon on the Mount—“do not be anxious, what you shall eat or what you shall wear . . . seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt. 6:25-34).

Jesus also instructs these beginners that the evangelist must make wise use of time. The gospel message is a deposit from God to men over which they must exercise good stewardship. Notice the method Jesus gave the Twelve. First, they were to survey the city or village and find a home hospitable to their mission and to them (Mt. 10:11). They were to make that their headquarters (Mt. 10:11; Mk. 6:10; Lk. 9:4) and stay there until they had done their work and were ready to move on. While there, they were to be courteous and hospitable themselves, saluting the house and letting their “peace” come upon their hosts. Peace in Hebrew is *shalom* and means, “I pray for and will contribute all I can to God blessing you with well-being, both physical and spiritual.” What Jesus is really saying is that the Twelve should make expressions of their gratitude to their hosts, both verbal and physical. God does not wish to have ingrates and tactless men in His service. Thankfulness is probably the most beautiful characteristic of a man’s life—ingratitude is the most heinous sin (cf. Rom. 1:21). Third, if they were totally rejected in a city or village, or when they found no further hospitality to their mission in a place, they were to warn those opposing them that their blood was on their head as they rejected God’s message and His messengers (Mt. 10:14-15; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5) and “shake the dust of that town from their feet.” Shaking the dust from one’s feet was used by Jews to

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

symbolize disassociation from that which would incur guilt. Pharisees did this when they re-entered Judea from pagan territory.

Jesus is also giving the Twelve their first realistic experience of the tension between God's kingdom in the hearts of men and the mind of the flesh. There must be no further sheltering of these men from the antagonism of unbelief. They must not be nurtured on any illusions that discipleship to Christ would be tolerated by the worldly-minded. They must learn first hand that they were to be engaged in a life and death struggle and the disciple is not above his Master. But this is not the only world there is, so the Twelve were encouraged not to fear the battle or the enemy of God. He promised that if they would endure to the end of their lives they would receive their reward in heaven. If they feared God and loved Him more than life itself they would find eternal life (cf. Mt. 10:17-42).

9:7-9 Evil Machination: While the Twelve were rapidly covering as many cities and villages of Israel as they could with the message of the coming kingdom of God, Jesus was also circulating among the cities and villages preaching the same message. The "kingdom fever" was reaching astounding proportions. In just a few weeks thousands of people will attempt to take Jesus and force Him to be king (Jn. 6:15). When some of the dissolute, guilt-ridden, half-pagan politicians of Galilee (including Herod Antipas himself) heard all the accounts of miracles and "kingdom fever" circulating in Galilee they became superstitiously terrified that John the Baptist had come back to life. All kinds of conjectures were made. Some said it was Elijah returned from the dead or one of the old prophets. It presented Herod Antipas with a paralyzing problem. The Greek word translated "perplexed" is *dieporei* which means literally, "no way out." Herod thought he had gotten rid of any threat to his throne when he beheaded John the Baptist. Josephus states Herod gave as his public excuse for executing him that John was about to cause a revolution. Matthew and Mark tell the real reason Herod executed John. Any time Herod's position as ruler was threatened (whatever the approach such a threat took) all Herod could think to do was eliminate that threat by murder.

The Greek verb *ezetei* (translated, "sought") is in the imperfect tense and means, "he kept on seeking" to see Jesus. Herod had just killed John the Baptist because of his great popularity with the people and because he had threatened Herod's continued influence over the people by denouncing Herod's immoral union with Herodias. And now Herod turns his suspicions on Jesus. Jesus has been carrying on a campaign in every city and village of Galilee proclaiming the kingdom of God which has stirred up political excitement. Therefore it is abundantly evident why Herod wants Jesus found and brought to see him. But Jesus, when He heard all this, withdrew to a lonely place (cf. Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:31; Lk. 9:10-11; Jn. 6:1).

SECTION 2

Teaching The Throngs (9:10-17)

10 On their return the apostles told him what they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida. ¹¹When 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. ¹²Now 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." ¹³But 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." ¹⁴For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." ¹⁵And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

9:10-12 Desperation: This is one year before Jesus is to die the horrible death of crucifixion, accused of blasphemy and sedition. The disciples are definitely not prepared for this. Their hopes are centered in an earthly kingdom. So Jesus will spend the next six months (from Passover to Tabernacles) withdrawing from the hostility of His enemies and, at the same time, trying to isolate Himself from the fanatical multitudes. He wants to prepare the Twelve for the crucial climax of His earthly ministry. It is instructive that even Jesus recognized the need for His disciples to take a rest occasionally (see Mark 6:31; Greek *anapausasthe*, from which we get the English word, *pause*).

When we compare all four gospel accounts of this incident (Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Lk. 9; Jn. 6) we understand that the main reason for Jesus' withdrawal with the Twelve was the desperate, clamoring fanatical multitudes. Everywhere Jesus and the Twelve went the multitudes pressed upon them, crying out, demanding miracles be done for them. The poor, hungry, oppressed multitudes of Jesus' day, for the most part, had lost all hope in the promises of the prophets. All they could anticipate was continued oppression under the hated Herods, plus theological bigotry and hypocrisy under the Pharisees. They did not know where to turn for truth, compassion and, their deepest need, righteousness. It was at this moment Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). When these desperate,

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

hopeless thousands found out where Jesus was taking His Twelve on a "retreat" (to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee), they ran there on foot (from the cities and villages of Galilee) ahead of Him (cf. Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:33). Jesus went across the northern tip of the sea in a boat (from Capernaum to Bethsaida, see Mt. 14:13) and the multitude, gathered in Capernaum (Jesus' headquarters) from the recent preaching tour of Jesus and the Twelve, ran around the northern tip of the sea (some 2-3 miles) on foot. This great miracle-worker would not be allowed to get away. These poor down-trodden multitudes had at last been given a glimmer of hope. At last someone had come not to exploit them and oppress them, but to heal and excite them with the promise of the "kingdom of God." They had their hearts set on making Him king (Jn. 6:15).

Jesus had compassion on these throngs not only for their economic and political desperation but also because of their spiritual darkness. They were completely obsessed with the idea that the kingdom of God was some humanly-structured organization which would solve all their earthly distress. John's Gospel specifically states they "followed him because they saw the signs which he did. . . ." (Jn. 6:2). Why, then, did Jesus "welcome" this clamoring multitude when He was trying to get away from this very kind of superficiality; and why did He eventually work one of His greatest miracles for the very people who were putting such emphasis upon miracles? The fundamental purpose behind the enigmatic action of Jesus here is plainly seen when one connects the miraculous feeding of these thousands with His great sermon on The Bread of Life a day later in a synagogue at Capernaum (Jn. 6:22-71). The student *must* study this great sermon, recorded only by John, to understand the miracle of the loaves and fish. It is in this sermon that the compassion of Jesus for their spiritual darkness is really manifested. He pours out His heart in this discourse explaining that the real "bread" is His word (Jn. 6:63) and unless men "eat" and "drink" His word they are not really alive.

Jesus also took this unwanted circumstance (the hungry thousands) to teach the Twelve an important lesson. This multitude (numbering about five thousand men plus thousands of women and children) had probably left Capernaum and other villages early that morning to walk around the shore of the Sea of Galilee to a hillside near Bethsaida Julius. It was now late in the evening, and few of them had foresight to bring enough food with them. Perhaps most of them did not have enough at home to bring any with them. Whatever the case there was nothing to feed this vast multitude out there on the hillside so the Twelve became anxious. Their's also was a desperation of doubt. They really did not ask Jesus what could be done, they came and gave Him an order to (Gr. *apoluson*, imperative, "Dismiss") send the crowd away into the cities

nearby to find food and lodging. They also missed the point that what this multitude needed more than anything else was to realize Who Jesus Is. The Twelve thought the most urgent need of the crowd was earthly bread, and they knew they could not supply it, or did not want to. Perhaps they were also betraying a selfish indifference when they directed Jesus to send the crowd away to find food for themselves. They had retreated to this area specifically to "rest."

9:14-17 Demonstration: John tells us that Jesus knew what He was going to do about the situation but to test the faith and compassion of the Twelve, He said to them, "How are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?" (Jn. 6:5). The apostles had no answer except to send the people away to fend for themselves. So Jesus said to the apostles, "You give them something to eat!" In the Greek His statement reads literally, "Give (*dote*, imperative) to them to eat, you." This is an idiomatic way of putting the emphasis on "you." They complained that 200 day's wages (*denarii*) would not buy enough bread for this multitude. Andrew reported that the only vestige of food they had found among this great throng was five loaves and two fish a little boy had with him. Jesus said, "Bring them here to me" (Mt. 14:18). Then Jesus directed the apostles to have the thousands sit down upon the green grass of the hillside (it was early Spring, around Passover time) in groups of about hundreds or fifties (cf. Mk. 6:39-40). Mark uses the Greek words *sumposia sumposia* "companies upon companies" which literally refers to groups of party-goers or picnickers. Mark is describing the festive air about this great event.

Taking the five loaves and two fish Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and divided the fish, gave to the Twelve and they distributed among the thousands. All the thousands ate and were satisfied and the Twelve gathered up twelve baskets of left-over fragments. All four gospel writers record this astounding fact. Where did the miracle take place? Was it when Jesus broke and divided—or was it when the apostles went among the thousands making distribution? It really isn't indicated in the records, nor does it really matter. The point is it was an empirical demonstration of Jesus' supernatural power to create. This miracle and the one immediately following (Jesus' walking on the Sea) are two of the most indisputable miracles recorded of Jesus. The feeding of this vast multitude of people had so many witnesses there was no possibility of fraud. Foster points out, "A magician can fool a great crowd because his hands can move faster than the eyes of the people who watch. But here was a miracle in which everyone of the thousands present had a part. They all shared the feast." No magician or hypnotist could fool that many thousands of people. When these four gospel writers published their accounts near the middle of the first century A.D. there would have been plenty of people still alive who had

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

attended that great feast on the hillside. If the gospel writers were liars someone would have been quick to publish evidence to discredit them about such an astounding fraud.

Although this miracle did not have much impact on the multitudes in its relationship to Jesus' spiritual mission (many of them followed Him no more, Jn. 6:66) it did have tremendous impact on the Twelve. They acknowledged Him as the Holy One of God and the only One to whom they might cling (Jn. 6:68-69). It is worthy of notice that even though Jesus had the power to create as much bread and fish as He wished, He would not tolerate waste. Twelve *large* (Gr. *kophinoi*, coffins) basketfuls were gathered up of the leftovers.

SECTION 3

Testing The Twelve (9:18-27)

18 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?"¹⁹ And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen."²⁰ And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."²¹ But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,²² 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."

23 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.²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?²⁶ 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.²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

9:18-21 Crystallization of Confession: Although Jesus wished to withdraw from the multitudes that His disciples might rest and He might concentrate on their personal training, He conducted an extensive ministry between the feeding of the thousands and the confrontation of the Twelve at Caesarea Philippi. The following events, not recorded by Luke, transpired between Luke 9:17 and Luke 9:18:

1. Walking on the Water, Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Jn. 6
2. Miracles at Gennesaret, Mt. 14; Mk. 6
3. Sermon on Bread of Life at Capernaum, Jn. 6
4. Controversy with Pharisees about traditions, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
5. Healing Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
6. Healing deaf stammerer, Feeding 4000, Decapolis, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
7. Pharisees & Sadducees demand sign at Magadan, Mt. 16; Mk. 8
8. Warns disciples against leaven of Pharisees on Sea of Galilee, Mt. 16; Mk. 8
9. Healing of blind man at Bethsaida, Mk. 8

It may have appeared to the Twelve as if Jesus were retreating. He had refused the crown from the five thousand; He had not yet shown the characteristics expected by the populace in their Messiah; at Magadan it appears as if the Pharisees and Sadducees have him in retreat. The religious leaders have demanded a sign from heaven (a sign of military or political power) but Jesus refused to give such a sign since sufficient evidence for His claims had already been given. Jesus walks away from this confrontation, gets into a boat and heads across the Sea of Galilee toward the northeast. What are the disciples to think? Popular opinion circulating the countryside is confused, trying to find some great prophet with which to compare Him (Jeremiah or Elijah). Jesus seems to have given up the struggle with His opponents.

The Lord knew that this was a critical point in His whole earthly mission. So He proceeds to take the disciples apart from the confused, clamoring multitudes to a place of privacy for questioning and teaching. Jesus knows He must crystallize their convictions concerning His identity and His mission in anticipation of the very dark hours ahead. The only solution to the hopelessness and despair of mankind in rebellion against God is to convince, confirm and commit these twelve disciples to the knowledge of His deity and then to commission them to introduce Him as Savior and Lord to the world.

The city of Caesarea Philippi was typical of the predicament of man in sin (then and now). In earlier times it was called Panium because it was a center of worship for the Greek god, Pan (god of all nature). It was destroyed but rebuilt by the Romans and named after the Roman emperor, Caesar, and eventually became a center of worship to Caesar Augustus. In 31 B.C. the Battle of Actium brought an end to 100 years of civil war in the Roman empire. Men were sick of war and thought they had brought an end to human misery. But 25 years later in the days of Jesus, men were as disillusioned as ever. Injustice, immorality and inveterate hatred between cultures and races was as deeply ingrained in men's hearts as it had ever been. Mankind desperately needed the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Anointed One of God, The Christ. Whether mankind came to know its *only* Savior or not depended upon whether Jesus could crystallize the firm, but immature, convictions the Twelve had about Him.

Jesus called the Twelve to confess (Gr. *homologeō*, "say the same as") Him. He called them to commit themselves to a Person, Himself, and not a cause. It is important to contemplate the questions Jesus did *not* ask the disciples here. He did *not* ask them what they thought of the political situation, the religious status quo or the economic circumstances. He did *not* say to Peter, "Who are you, Peter?" He did not indicate, as much modern psychology does today, that man's fundamental problem is a "self-identity crisis"—that man needs above all else to find out who he is. Contrary to the world's way of thinking, Jesus knew man's problem was his confusion about God's identity. So Jesus demanded these men (upon whom the program of the world's redemption would soon fall) solidify their convictions about His identity.

What we possess we profess, and what we profess we propagate. If the conviction of the disciples about Jesus' identity was really deeply possessed they would profess it. It is also axiomatic that the more a person professes someone or something, the more he possesses it. It is in repeated confession or profession that decision is confirmed and the will is set. Jesus, in asking the disciples who they had decided He was, was aiming for a decision. Jesus Christ always cuts through the jungle of muddled human confusion and speculation and aims at man's logic. Our minds must be made up about His identity. Only he who is convinced will commit himself. C.S. Lewis says, "Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you that chooses into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature." The N.T. has a great deal to say about *confession* (cf. Rom. 10:9-10; I Jn. 2:23; I Jn. 4:15, etc.).

9:22 Call to Conform: It was the will of God that the Christ should suffer and die and be raised from the dead on the third day. The suffering of the Messiah was predicted in many places in the Old Testament (i.e., Isa. 53; Psa. 22, etc.). Few of the Jews ever recognized this. Most of Jesus' disciples would not consider it a possibility (cf. Lk. 24:13-27). Therefore, at this most opportune time and place, Jesus focuses all His power of persuasion on the Twelve in an attempt to convert their Jewish preconceptions about the Messiah to the revealed will of God. After Peter's emotionally charged confession of Jesus' identity, and Jesus' characterization of His church (Mt. 16:17-19), the Lord abruptly made the shocking prediction about His death. It wasn't that the disciples were naive and didn't know all the hostility Jesus had aroused in the

religious leaders of the day. They expected some crisis sooner or later, but they believed (probably from Jewish tradition) that the Messiah would fight and conquer His enemies and they were prepared to fight to the death for Him (Mt. 26:35; Mk. 14:31). But they were not willing to accept a Messiah who would become "a lamb led to the slaughter"—they refused to think in these terms. Matthew and Mark record that Peter "rebuked" Jesus for His prediction of a passive death (Mt. 16:22; Mk. 8:32).

Immediately, the Lord rebuked Peter (Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Peter had, in fact, become the adversary (Satan) of Christ! Peter stood opposed to the will of God. He was a stumbling-block (Gr. *skandalon*, "scandal") in the path of Christ because He was "minding" the things of worldly-minded man rather than "minding" the things of God. Jesus intended that His followers conform their minds to the revealed mind of God in everything. God's revealed mind about the Messiah was that He should die a vicarious death to atone for the sins of all the world.

Most men applaud someone who dies for a cause. The world admires martyrdom (as long as I am not the martyr). Millions have sacrificed their lives for political ideologies and they are national heroes. But Jesus' death was different than all of this. He died for man's *justification* before God! Man has absolutely no moral merit by which he can stand before God except trusting in the atoning death of Christ in his place. A man may sacrifice his life to preserve my physical life and I may admire him and be thankful. But to believe there is nothing good in me that would cause God to accept me without Jesus' death means death to my human pride. That is what makes the doctrine of the cross "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews," (cf. I Cor. 1:23). Think of it this way: If you should die right now and appear before God and He should ask, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" what would be your answer? The only answer acceptable to God would be, "Because I covenanted with Christ to accept His death for my sins and He promised to give me His life." The self-righteous egotism of the human heart adamantly resists vicarious justification. Some few men claim they do not want to go to heaven after death—they want nothing to do with God, truth, holiness, or everlasting goodness. Most other men who do propose to go to heaven after they die aim to do so because they have done enough good deeds to balance out their bad deeds and thus feel they deserve to go there. Let us illustrate: A prominent theologian once wrote, "We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of someone else: It is my sin. I must atone." Thus reasons self-righteous man. This is the way the world thinks, but it is *not* the way God thinks! God has revealed His will concerning man's justification. Man, therefore, has only two options: (1) reject the revealed mind of God in scripture and, assuming he is more powerful than God, try to justify himself apart from Christ's vicarious atonement; or, (2) believe the revealed mind of God, Christ's death in his place, and accept it by entering into covenant relationship on Christ's revealed terms. Man must "mind" the things of God—man must conform to the will of God, executed in the death and resurrection of Christ, communicated in the N.T. scriptures.

9:23-27 Challenge to Commitment: The acceptance by faith of Jesus' death in man's place is precisely what these verses are teaching. To "deny himself" means to literally do what Peter did later to Christ! The Greek word *aparnesastho* means, "to disown, to contradict, to deny utterly any connection." It does not mean to abstain from certain pleasures and indulgences; *it means to deny, disown self*. It means to admit Self is dead. It means to acknowledge that I have no claims or rights for Self anymore because I "am bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19-20) and I am not my own! I am dead in Christ! "One died for all, therefore all have died," (II Cor. 5:14). He died our death, we live His life! Paul said it very succinctly in Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ (when Christ died); it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. . . ." (Gal. 2:20).

The struggle to believe and accept and practice this occurs *daily*. Every day we must "take up the cross" and accept the death of Self. Dying to Self may only be done by faith—not by feeling or by good works, because the death of Self occurred at a point in ancient history—at the crucifixion of Christ. The death of Self is, of course, accepted and applied to each person at the point in time when that person enters the New Covenant by confession and immersion in water according to the covenant terms. Good works are the fruit of death to Self by faith, but they are not the cause of that death—Jesus is the cause!

One of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith is that men must die to live. Jesus states it, "For whoever would save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." What does Jesus mean? He gives us a clue in the following phrase, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" The Greek word *heauton* is more emphatic ("himself") than the word *psuchen* ("soul") which is in the parallel passages (Mt. 16:26; Mk. 8:35). *Life is identity*; life is being, personality, character. *Life is purpose*. If there is no purpose there is really no life. God made man for a purpose. That purpose was to be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). God made us to be truthful, faithful, pure, good, loving and thankful.

In this we find our true identity. When we accept the death of Self in the death of Christ and let Him live His life in us, we become children of God, joint heirs with Christ. God adopts us as His children and gives us His name. That is the only identity which will last forever. If Christ is ashamed of us (Lk. 9:26) and does not confess us before the Father, we have no identity. Those who search for life apart from union with Christ will hear Christ say, "Depart from me, you who work iniquity, I never *knew* you." To be separated from Christ is death—eternal death. Apparently in the place of eternal death (Hell) there will be consciousness but no "life." If there is no life there is no purpose, no identity. The man with no godly purpose or character in this life will have none in Hell. Hell will be an eternal purposelessness, eternal falseness, eternal insecurity, anguish, disorientation and non-identity.

What has a man gained if he forfeits his birthright to be identified as a child of God and has all the power, fame and riches the world offers? He loses himself! So now we see why Jesus considered it so crucial that His disciples confess His identity. The only way men find out who they really are is to confess and commit themselves to the true identity of Jesus as Christ—Lord!

Having mentioned that He would come for final judgment "in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (v. 26), Jesus did not want His disciples to confuse the Second Coming with other events which will manifest the power of His kingdom (such as the destruction of Jerusalem). Therefore Jesus states (v. 27) that some of the disciples standing there with Him would not die before they saw the kingdom of God come ("with power" Mk. 9:1). The popular Jewish concept was that when the Messiah came "in his glory . . . with the holy angels" it would be the "end of the world." What event was Jesus talking about in v. 27 (Mt. 16:28 and Mk. 9:1 also)? Apocalyptic language in both the O.T. and N.T. often describes any great intervention of God in history as the "coming of God" in judgment or redemption. There was only one of the Twelve dead before the establishment of the Church on Pentecost—Judas. The language of Jesus seems to imply that more than one would "taste of death" prior to the event described here. We think He was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem. Later, He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in the same apocalyptic style (cf. Lk. 21:25-28; Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-26, see also Mt. 26:64). Many of the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. John, and perhaps a few others, lived beyond that event. The destruction of Jerusalem also destroyed the Jewish State and its religious power. Christianity was rescued from apparent obliteration. No longer would it be considered an illegal Jewish sect. It went forth to establish firm "beachheads"

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

in the world of paganism and cause the Roman empire to tremble at its power. In this sense those who lived beyond the destruction of Jerusalem truly saw "the kingdom of God come with power."

SECTION 4

Transfiguration (9:28-36)

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. ³⁰And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now 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. ³³And 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. ³⁴As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!" ³⁶And 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.

9:28-32 Exodus: A week after the critical confrontation with the Twelve concerning His identity and Peter's carnal-minded rejection of His destiny of death, Jesus took the Twelve up on a high mountain to pray. This must have been Mount Hermon, a huge mountain, reaching 9232 feet above sea level at its peak. Caesarea Philippi was at the foot of this mountain. The mountain so dominated the entire land of Palestine it could be seen on a clear day from as far south as the Dead Sea. The Arabs named it, *Jebel esh Sheikh*, "the great mountain." It is doubtful that Jesus took the Twelve to the peak. They probably ascended to a secluded spot somewhere up the side of the mountain where they could find privacy. Both Matthew and Mark indicate the Lord took them "apart" for the purpose of privacy (Mt. 17:1; Mk. 9:2). While He was praying, the appearance of His face became *different* (Gr. *heteron*), and His clothing became gleaming white. Matthew and Mark say He was transfigured (Gr. *metemorphothe*; the word from which we get the English word *metamorphosis*). In Philippians 2:6-7 Paul writes that Christ having had the *morphe* (form) of *theou* (God) willingly assumed the *morphen*

(form) of *doulou* (a slave). Here on Mount Hermon the man *metamorphosed* (changed form) back into God the Son of glory. W. E. Vine says, Luke avoids the term *metemorphote*, which might have suggested to Gentile readers the metamorphoses of heathen gods, and uses the term, "became different." This was no phenomenon which could be explained by nature. It was not something externally happening *to* Jesus; it was emanating from within His very nature. Hobbs says, "It was His deity from within flashing forth in resplendent glory. The deity, which had been like a wick turned down low, suddenly was turned up to its brilliant brightness." Here was physical, scientific evidence that Jesus was the Incarnate God. The disciples had been in the presence of God and hardly realized it. Peter later testified of this event (II Pet. 1:16-21) to prove that what he preached about the deity of Jesus Christ was no myth. Peter was an eyewitness to Christ's majesty.

Suddenly, another spectacular phenomenon took place. Appearing with the metamorphosed Jesus were Moses and Elijah. The sleep-dazed disciples came wide awake! Moses and Elijah had been dead for some thousand years. But those who have departed this world still live in the constant presence of Almighty God and He has the power to make them appear at any time and place suitable to His purpose (cf. I Sam. 28:1ff.). Moses and Elijah, symbolizing all the Law and the Prophets, talked with Jesus about His "departure" (Gr. *exodon*; English, *exodus*). They were discussing Jesus' impending crucifixion and resurrection. Why did God choose this particular point in time for this great meeting between Heaven and earth? Because Jesus had reached the "watershed" of His earthly ministry. From this point onward popularity will be replaced by rejection and opposition. His ministry, viewed from human perspectives, will appear to be a tragic failure. It is at this point God will affirm unequivocally that is not so.

- a. It would encourage Jesus, Himself. It was predicted (Isa. 49:4ff.) that the Messiah would be discouraged but would be able to overcome it. Jesus was Man, very man, tempted in all points as we are tempted. It was only by the glory that was set before Him that He was able to endure the cross (cf. Heb. 2:10ff.; 5:7-9; 12:1-2; Lk. 22:42). Even His own disciples had become "stumbling blocks" to Him in their rejection of His mission. Fowler (*Matthew, Vol. III*, College Press, pg. 588) points out that the Father's affirmation of His pleasure in His Son would warm Jesus' heart "and encourage Him in His lonely mission among unsympathetic men." Fowler compares it to "the encouragement felt by an expert pilot flying through a storm-tossed night with no visible landmarks, when suddenly a voice comes over the radio, saying, 'We've picked you up on radar, friend, and you're right on course!'"

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- b. It would arrest the creeping carnality of the disciples. There must be a direct and drastic correction to their obstinately cherished worldly view of the Messiah and His kingdom. The appearance of Moses and Elijah discussing with Jesus His "exodus" would confirm that the Messiah's death was in complete harmony with all the Old Testament revelation (cf. Lk. 24:44-46). Jesus' "exodus" was symbolized by the Exodus from Egypt and the Exodus from Captivity. All the redemptive symbols of the O.T., the sacrificial lamb, the Passover, the victories over their enemies, find their fulfillment in Jesus' "exodus"!
- c. It was also to demonstrate that the death of the Messiah was no accident. It was in the plan of God all along. It would show that God was forever in control—men cannot wrest control of the universe and the goal of history from God's hands. God can intervene in history at any moment with supernatural power. He knows the beginning from the end and predicts it for man's salvation. It proved to Peter, and all who trust him as an eyewitness, that no prophecy about Jesus ever originated from man. The Transfiguration made the prophetic word "more surely" from God. All men will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place (II Pet. 1:19ff.).

9:33-36 Exclamation: Peter, impetuous Peter, so quick to speak and so often missing the mark, suggested they make three "booths" (Gr. *skenas*, "tabernacle, tent"—same word used in Hebrews 9:2, etc.), one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. The two great representatives of Israel's destiny of the glorious past, Moses and Elijah, were departing. It had been predicted that at the outset of the messianic age a prophet like unto Moses would be raised up (Deut. 18:18ff.) and Elijah would come (Mal. 4:5). Both Luke and Mark comment that Peter did not know what he was talking about. Apparently he had seriously misinterpreted the significance of this sublime moment when Heaven came so close to earth.

- a. When Peter said, "It is good for us to be here. . . ." he may have been suggesting that Jesus should take this Transfiguration as a sign from Heaven cancelling out His prediction of imminent death. Perhaps Peter supposes, "Heaven is on Your side, Master, You are not going to die; surely our religious leaders will not go against Moses and Elijah if they know about this, so let us build three shelters and keep them here with us until this is made known down in Jerusalem."

- b. Peter said, “. . . let us make three booths . . .” He was completely enthralled by the supernatural event he had just witnessed. Still thinking of the kingdom of God in terms of the popular materialistic concept, Peter envisioned this as the fulfillment of Zechariah 14:16-19. Rabbinical and apocryphal interpretation of Zechariah’s prophecy concerning the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) literalized the return of Elijah, conquest of the nations by the Jews, reinstatement of the Jewish theocracy, and the remnant of the Gentiles coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Peter was ready to be one of the first to celebrate Tabernacles in the new age of Israel.
- c. When Peter said, “. . . one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah . . .” it was evident he still did not understand that Jesus was different than other great human leaders. He did not fully comprehend that Jesus was God in the flesh or that Jesus had authority to abrogate and fulfill all Moses and Elijah had revealed. Hebrew Christians had a very difficult time accepting the superiority of Jesus over the Old Testament and that is why the book of Hebrews was necessary.

No wonder, then, that Luke editorializes, “Peter did not know what he was saying.” Peter was wrong on all three suggestions. The Heavenly Father quickly corrected that by engulfing them in a supernatural cloud and speaking audibly, in their language, “This is my Son, my Chosen (Gr. *eklelegmenos*, perfect tense verb, meaning, “one having been elected or chosen out from among others in the past and continuing to be chosen”); listen to him!” The phrase, “listen to him!” is in the Greek imperative mood and means it was a command! The disciples were to hear and accept the fact that the Messiah was destined to die at Jerusalem; that what the Messiah had been saying about His kingdom being a spiritual kingdom was correct; that the Messiah had come to fulfill and take out of the way the Law of Moses and the Prophets. The Law and the Prophets would not be destroyed (cf. Mt. 5:17f.) but wherever they stood in the way of man’s complete reconciliation to God, Jesus would bring about their completion.

When God finished speaking, Matthew notes the disciples fell on their faces with awe and fear, but Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” Then, when they looked up Moses and Elijah were gone, so was the enveloping cloud and Jesus was there alone. Matthew and Mark note that as they were descending from the mountain side Jesus “commanded” them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of man was raised from the dead. And, amazingly, they did not! Would men have believed them if they had? It is doubtful.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Today men who do not accept the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as an historical fact discredit the transfiguration of Jesus as either a myth or some subjective, emotional religious experience of the disciples themselves. But Peter was an eyewitness. And he emphatically declares it was no myth (II Pet. 1:16-21). The credibility and authenticity of Peter's testimony is unimpeachable. This event really happened just as the three Synoptics say it did.

SECTION 5

Tenderness Amid Tragedy (9:37-45)

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 And behold, a man from the crowd cried, "Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my only child; 39 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. 40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 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. 43 And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

But while they were all marveling at everything he did, he said to his disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." 45 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.

9:37-43 Failing Faith: The next day after the Transfiguration, Jesus came down from the mountain with Peter, James and John. There was a great crowd of people gathered around the other nine apostles (who had been left at the foot of the mountain during the Transfiguration). The crowd was involved in an argument with some Jewish scholars (scribes). Seeing Jesus approaching, the crowd ran to greet Him. Jesus asked the crowd what they were discussing with the scribes. The reader should study this incident from a harmony of the Gospels in order to get the full impact of it.

A man from the crowd came to Jesus kneeling (Mt. 17:14) and bellowed (Gr. *eboesen*, from *boao* which is the word used to describe John the Baptist's crying loudly, or bellowing forth in the wilderness), "Teacher, I plead with you, direct your attention to my son, because he is my only

son and, see, a spirit takes him and suddenly he screams out as he is convulsed with spasms." Matthew records that the father of the boy said he was "moonstruck" (Gr. *seleniazetai*, translated, "epileptic," Mt. 17:15). Doctor Luke uses the Greek word, *sparassei*, from which we get the English word, *spastic*. The boy was demon-possessed (9:42). The demon tortured the boy by causing him to fall into fires, into water, foaming at the mouth, grinding his teeth, dashing him down upon the ground and "bruising" (Gr. *suntribo*, "to shatter, to smash, to crush, to break") him.

Then the boy's father cast a lightening bolt into the situation. He said, "I plead with your disciples to cast the demon out of my boy but they were not able." Jesus' immediate reaction was to accuse His own disciples of being part of a "faithless and perverse" generation and to ask exasperatedly, "how long must I bear with you?" Was Jesus justified in speaking so severely to these disciples? Indeed! Why should He be partial toward any person? Any display of unbelief, especially in people who have been given so many extra-ordinary opportunities to know the truth and such miraculous confirmations of it, deserves quick and firm correction. Jesus minced no words with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:25-27) for their unbelief. Jesus rather bluntly corrected His own mother (Jn. 2:4; Lk. 8:19-21).

Jesus cast out the demon commanding it, "Come out of him, and never enter him again" (Mk. 9:25). He gave the boy back to his father and all the multitude was astonished at the very apparent demonstration of the majesty of Almighty God.

9:44-45 Fearful Forecast: The proper relationship to Jesus does not consist in marveling over the miraculous but in faith in the face of the fearful. While this particular crowd stood around subjectively soaking up the great privilege they had enjoyed by their close proximity to a real miracle, Jesus turned to His disciples with a fearsome forecast of His messianic fate. Jesus took the twelve aside and resumed His journey south through Galilee (see Mt. 17:22; Mk. 9:30) for He had something of utmost importance to say for their ears only. So He prefaced His remarks with this command, "Let these words sink into your ears. . . ." The Greek verb *theshe* is in the imperative mood (a command) and is from *tithemi* which means, "put in, deposit, establish." What Jesus is about to say to them is not just to make conversation. It is imperative that what He is about to say be deposited in their minds so that it may become a part of their thinking processes. And what were these all-important words? ". . . The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." Their Master, their Lord, the One they recently confessed to be "the Holy One of God" (Jn. 6:69), is going to be killed and raised again after three days (cf. Mt. 17:22-23; Mk. 9:31-32). It is important for them to believe this because it is the will of God for the Son of man

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

(the Messiah). Jesus must emphasize it and stress it because of the worldly-minded view of the Messiah held by most of the Jews (see our comments on Luke 9:18-27).

But the disciples did not understand what Jesus said to them. How could grown men not understand a statement as straightforward, un-mysterious, plain and brief as, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise"? The fact of death, even violent death at the hands of enemies is a common experience to mankind. Resurrection from the dead is not! This may be the reason they could not understand it. But Luke goes on to say that what Jesus said was "concealed" from them and they could not perceive it. The Greek word *parakekalummenon* means "to cover with a veil." The Greek verb is in the perfect tense indicating that the veiling had taken place previous to this statement and was continuing to veil their thinking. This same Greek word is used in II Corinthians 3:12-18 and 4:3 where it is talking about the veiled revelation concerning the messianic age in the Old Testament and that the devil uses this, along with man's unbelief, to hide the gospel. It was not God who concealed from the minds of the apostles the understanding about the Messiah's death and resurrection, for the Prophets predicted it (Isa. 53, etc.). It was not Jesus who concealed His death and resurrection from the Twelve, for He predicted it very plainly four times (Lk. 9:22; Lk. 9:44; Mt. 20:17-19; Mt. 26:1-2). It was the apostles themselves, choosing not to believe Jesus about His death, who were concealing the meaning of His teaching, (see Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:31-33). What the Lord says is perceived only if man is willing to let His word find a place in his heart (cf. Jn. 7:17; 8:37; 8:45, etc.). The parable of the soils illustrates this (see our comments on Luke 8:1ff.). The disciples deliberately resisted any thinking about this subject (the death of the Messiah) because it "distressed" them (Mt. 17:23) and it was a subject about which they were "afraid" (Mk. 9:32; Lk. 9:45) to seek any more information. Let all followers of Jesus of all ages take warning from the spiritual failure of the Twelve here. It is a betrayal of Christian discipleship to reject any teaching of the New Testament with the *a priori* that it does not conform to human experience. What Jesus commands and promises is accepted by faith in Who He Is!

SECTION 6

Taming Temperaments (9:46-62)

46 And an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. 47 But when Jesus perceived the thought of their hearts,

he took a child and put him by his side, ⁴⁸and 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."

49 John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you."

51 When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; ⁵³but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴And 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?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶And they went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸And 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." ⁵⁹To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

9:46-48 Ambition: Jesus knew the Twelve had been having an argument (Gr. *dialogismos*, dialogue) as to which of them was the greatest. The transfiguration, the miracles, the warning about His impending confrontation with the political authorities and the explanation to Peter about His paying the Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27) out of expediency only, convinced the Twelve that His kingdom was imminent. Since they still conceived of His kingdom as an earthly organization their first reaction was to begin "jockeying for position." The temperament for ambition is, of course, a part of the nature created in man by his Maker. Otherwise, man would have no drive to "subdue the world . . . and have dominion" over it (Gen. 1:28). But, that temperament for ambition must be held in check under the revealed will of its Creator. When human ambition is not under the direction of its Creator's will, it perverts, exploits and destroys. Thinking about the coming kingdom of God, the disciples were allowing visions of human grandeur to dance in their heads. They were all envisioning themselves in positions of power and human influence

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

and already counting the personal accolades and wealth that would come their way. The disciples persisted in their efforts to gain favored positions until near the very end of Jesus' earthly life (Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 22:24-26). Apparently the materialistic concept of the new messianic kingdom was deeply ingrained in the Jewish mentality.

Jesus wanted to make a vivid illustration of the true standard of greatness in God's kingdom, so He called a child to His side. He said, "Whoever receives this child . . . receives me." The Greek word *dechomai* means a warm, hospitable, embracing reception. The disciples thought in terms of ruling great masses of people. Jesus spoke of serving children. One's political ambitions cannot be advanced by ministering to children. Hobbs puts it this way, "Working with little children is a totally unselfish task. For it involves not what you can get from them, but what you can give to them. . . . It requires more grace and skill to guide a little child than to serve as chairman of the Board. . . ." or, we might add, even as the ruler of a nation. The significance of all this is that Jesus seems to be saying that men may test their own spirituality and fitness for citizenship in His kingdom by their relation to children. The spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) that will serve a child is the spirit that will not cause anyone to stumble. To "receive" a child in Jesus' name is, in essence, to become like a child (cf. Mt. 18:1-22; Mk. 9:33-50). Children are not concerned with human power and grandeur. Children know they are weak and gladly look to others for help and sustenance. Children are submissive and malleable. There are no false facades or veneers with them, they have to learn hypocrisy from adults. Most of all, children know how to love and be loved. They love to please others with actions of friendliness and loyalty. This is true greatness from God's perspective. Most of the world would not see greatness in those terms. But Jesus said, ". . . he who is least among you all is the one who is great . . ." or, ". . . whoever would be great among you must be your servant . . ." (Mt. 20:26-27; Mt. 23:11; Lk. 22:26; Jn. 13:16; 15:20).

9:49-50 Arbitrariness: Suffering embarrassment from this gentle but mistakable rebuke for their selfish ambition, the apostles became silent. Suddenly John remembered something he thought might please Jesus and put them back in His good graces. The apostles had observed a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus and they told him to stop because he was not one of the Twelve. Apparently, Jesus gave power to do miracles to other than the Twelve. Just three months after this He sends seventy disciples out two by two (Lk. 10:1ff.) to evangelize and do miracles. In the first place, it was blatant presumption on their part to forbid someone working miracles in the name of Jesus. Jesus had never given them the authority for such action. In the second place, it betrays an attitude of loveless, hypocritical sectarianism to assume

that no one can do anything in Jesus' name unless he is one of the Twelve. This attitude, unchanged, would have forbidden John the Baptist, or Paul, or Silas, or Timothy from doing anything in the name of Jesus.

To do something in the "name" of Jesus is to acquiesce to Jesus' authority and word, to do it according to His purpose or revealed will, and to acclaim His glory. When this is done it is not only approved but welcomed by Jesus, no matter who does it or in what cultural setting. Jesus told them they were wrong. Jesus must tame this temper of arbitrariness in those He will send into all the world to preach His gospel. They must surrender to the truth that whoever does the Lord's will is to be received and not hindered from continuing to do His will even though they may not "be with us" socially, ethnically, culturally and methodologically. No greater cultural and methodological difference ever faced the followers of Christ than that of the first century Jewish-Gentile confrontation. That these apostles needed preparation for that confrontation is evident from Peter's later problems documented in Acts 10-11 and Galatians 1-2. He who works in the name of Jesus cannot be an enemy of the Lord, and he who is truly great in the kingdom will recognize that and live by it.

9:51-56 Anger: Luke indicates that Jesus knew His major work in Galilee had come to an end. Jesus will return temporarily to the borders of Galilee for a brief ministry, but now the days are drawing near "for Him to be received up" (crucified and raised from the dead). He "sets his face" to go to Jerusalem. It is the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), one of the three major feasts of the Jews. For many months He has avoided Judea, the center of opposition to His messianic claims. The time has now arrived for Him to throw out the clear, unequivocal, absolute claim to Messiahship. There would be no better place or time than Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles. Apparently Jesus was giving so much intense concentration to His goal in Jerusalem it registered on His face and the Samaritans of the village where He wished to find lodging were offended by it. The Samaritans seemed to be hospitable to Jews traveling through their land from Judea to Galilee (cf. Jn. 4), but they were offended when Jews seemed to be traveling through their land simply as a short-cut from Galilee to Jerusalem to observe Jewish holy days! John 7:2-9 notes that Jesus' unbelieving half-brothers had sarcastically suggested He should go with them to the feast and make a public play for support for His messiahship, if He was really what He claimed. Jesus refused, but went later as non-publicly as He could. The usual, public route to the Jewish feasts from Galilee to Jerusalem was down the eastern side of the Jordan river basin, crossing the Jordan at Jericho and up the Jericho road to Jerusalem. Jesus went, instead, on a more direct route, through Samaria. The hostility of Samaritans toward Jews and vice versa was centuries old, dating back to the

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

days of Nehemiah or earlier. So any Jew, evidently hurrying through their land to a Jewish feast, was *persona non grata*.

The Feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles) takes place about mid-October, five days after Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). According to Jewish law and tradition all male Jews were to go to Jerusalem to observe this feast. The people were to dwell in temporary (lean-to) dwelling places made of olive, pine, myrtle or palm branches (no cloth). They must take their meals in these booths and sleep in them. The lean-to must have one open side, not be more than 20 cubits high (30 ft.) and be open to the stars at night. Every morning the high priest, followed by a procession of the multitudes of worshipers, went to fetch water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam. Then they returned, singing the great Hallel, to pour the water and a wine offering on the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court. More offerings and sacrifices were offered during this feast than any other except Passover. In addition to all the sacrifices the Jews made on their own behalf, seventy bulls were sacrificed for the seventy nations of the world, in token of the "messianic ingathering of the nations" at which time the Jews anticipated (traditionally) they would rule the world. As a matter of fact, Sukkoth probably was intended by God to symbolize the messianic ingathering of the nations—into the spiritual kingdom (the church). Jesus indicates this in John 10:16. Every evening extraordinary festivities took place at the Court of Women in the Temple. The four great lampstands were lighted; Levite musicians with lutes and cymbals stood on the fifteen steps that led to the Court of Men of Israel. At the sound of the *shophar* (ram's horn) a torch dance was begun and people sang and danced for hours. This is the most festive of all the celebrations of the Jewish year. It is the one at which the "messianic fever" would rise to its highest pitch. It is understandable why Samaritans would be offended at Jews using their country as a short-cut to attend such a festive gathering in Jerusalem.

The people of the village where Jesus wanted to stay overnight refused to accommodate Him. When James and John ("Sons of Thunder") saw this, they were filled with anger and were ready to retaliate with fire from heaven to consume this village. They asked the Lord if that was what He wanted too. Jesus' reply was a rebuke! A few ancient Greek texts of Luke's gospel (not the earliest texts), add, ". . . and he said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy man's lives but to save them." Whatever Jesus might have said, He displayed the spirit He wished to cultivate in the apostles, for He went on to another village in hopes of finding lodging. Jesus wants all His disciples to control their temperament to anger. There are times when controlled anger is needful (cf. Ex. 32:19; Num. 16:15; I Sam. 11:6; 20:34; Neh. 5:6; Psa. 97:10; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15; Mark 3:1-5;

Heb. 1:9; Rom. 12:9; Eph. 4:26; Rev. 2:6). But the Lord has specifically prohibited the Christian from personal retaliation or vengeance against his enemies (cf. Rom. 12:14-21; Mt. 5:38-42, etc.). That does not prohibit the Christian from calling upon properly constituted civil authority for protection and judgment against the lawless and wicked. However, the individual Christian or citizen is not to take the law into his own hands to act as judge, jury and enforcer. Our anger must be controlled within the revealed will of God.

9:57-62 Audacity and Affrontery: These verses are parallel to Matthew's account (Mt. 8:18-22). Either Matthew or Luke (or perhaps both) recorded these conversations out of chronological order. Matthew 8:18-22 is considered by most harmonists as chronologically following Matthew 13:53. Matthew probably inserted the incident where he did (8:18-22) to provide a cumulative documentation of Jesus' teachings on discipleship. Luke may have inserted it where he did (9:57-62) because it fits into the teachings of Jesus on "taming temperaments." If these discussions of Jesus with impulsive and irreverent volunteers should be placed immediately after the sermon in parables (Mt. 13:53), then Luke should have chronologically placed them right after the same sermon (Lk. 8:18). Whatever the case, they are authentic words of Jesus and demand serious study and application to His divine revelation about true discipleship.

The first would-be disciple came to Jesus and said, "I will follow you wherever you go." He was audacious, rash, hasty, over-confident and ignorant of the personal cost involved in discipleship to Jesus. Jesus never "smooth-talked" people into discipleship. He always insisted that those who wished to follow His way should count the cost (see Lk. 14:25-35). Jesus never pressured, "psyched," or "politicked" anyone into following Him. He preached the truth with compassion and persuasive logic, but He never manipulated people with emotionalism. The other two men answered His call to discipleship with excuses they deemed of higher priority than immediate and total commitment to Him. What they wished to do first seems innocent enough (go to a father's funeral, and say farewell to family). Seeing to the burial of dead bodies is of second priority, at least, to the saving of souls. There are always plenty of people who show no interest in following Jesus—let them take care of secondary issues. Nothing and no one is to come before obedience to clear, implicit commands from the word of Christ. Clinging to human ties or earthly associations or looking back and longing for them until they become more important than immediate obedience to Jesus makes a man unfit for discipleship. Those who wish citizenship in the kingdom of God must count the cost of discipleship and learn to live with the fact of Jesus' Lordship (cf. Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). They must

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

surrender all—thoughts (II Cor. 10:3-5), bodies, families, possessions—to His command. Impulsive discipleship based on emotionalism is uncontrolled audacity. Putting anything or anyone on a higher priority than immediate obedience to Jesus is irreverence. Jesus will have none of it! Why? Because divided loyalty saves no man's soul. Salvation is afforded only to those who trust completely in Christ.

God made man with these temperaments. They serve useful purposes (see our notes on Lk. 4:1-13). But Jesus knows these temperaments must be under the control of the will of God or the devil will deceitfully seduce man into perverting them to his own self-destruction. Jesus knows that if these temperaments are tamed to conform to the will of God they will produce the image of God in man—they will produce perfected man. Jesus demonstrated Perfected Man controlling these temperaments within the will of God all through His life.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Is the evangelistic tour of the Twelve apostles to be emulated by Christians today? In what way?
2. What effect did the "kingdom fever" have on the politicians of Jesus' day? Does real Christianity still antagonize human rulers? Why? Can there ever be unity of Christianity and State?
3. Why did Jesus have compassion on the multitudes? Should we have compassion on the worldly-minded today?
4. Why did Jesus feed the five thousand?
5. Why did Jesus want to know what the Twelve thought about Him?
6. Just how much did Peter believe about Jesus when he made the good confession?
7. What did Peter *refuse* to confess about Jesus? Do men still refuse?
8. How does man really find himself—find real identity?
9. What does the transfiguration of Jesus mean in *your* relationship to Him?
10. Do you believe it is possible to tame your temperament as Jesus indicated about ambition, anger, audacity and affrontery? How?

GIFTS, MIRACLES

(Heb. 2:3-4)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, Feb. 1977

Introduction

I. DEFINITION OF MIRACLE

- A. "An event occurring in the natural world, observed by the senses, produced by divine power, without any adequate human or natural cause, the purpose of which is to reveal the will of God and do good to man." (McCartney, in *Twelve Great Questions About Christ*)
1. Hume once argued: there is more evidence for regularity in nature than for irregularity; therefore, regularity and not irregularity must be the truth of the matter.
 2. Certainly there is more evidence for the regular occurrence of nature than for any supernatural occurrence. If there weren't we could not talk of miracles.
 3. The argument of miracle rests on the regularity of nature generally.
 4. Only if all the historical evidence available to man could show there is no being outside nature who can in any way alter it can there be an argument against the possibility of miracles. This evidence does not do—indeed cannot do!
- B. In our text four different words are used:
1. *semeiois* = signs
 2. *terasin* = wonders
 3. *dunamesin* = powerful deeds
 4. *merismois* = distributions (of the Holy Spirit)
 5. Milligan (Hebrews) says these words classify miracles as:
 - a. to their design (signs)
 - b. to their nature (wonders)
 - c. to their origin (supernatural power)
 - d. to their Christian aspect (distributions of the Holy Spirit)

II. THE FACT OF MIRACLES RESTS ON THE HISTORICITY OF OUR NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

- A. Were these writers eyewitnesses?
- B. Are they credible
- C. Are the documents authentic?
- D. This is another subject—but it is the fundamental subject.

I. PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- A. As our text points out, the primary purpose of miracles was to "bear witness" that the message from Jesus and that Jesus Himself was from God. Jn. 10:25, 37, 38; 14:10-11; Mt. 9:1-8

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The miracles do not prove Jesus to be the Son of God—many men worked miracles—but they prove Him to be a truthful messenger, and this truthful messenger says that He is God. Christ may have wrought miracles and not have been God; but He could not have wrought miracles and said that He was God without being God.

- B. To demonstrate the mercifulness of God in the case of individual men. Miracles illustrate and explain the teaching of Jesus on the love and mercy of God.
- C. To demonstrate God's wrath upon sin and rebellious sinners Mt. 21:18-19 (cursed fig tree), Acts 13:11 (blinding of Elymas) Acts 5:5-10 (Ananias and Sapphira). Bible miracles taught not only God's love and goodness but also His power and authority, and sometimes His righteous and fearful judgments.
- D. Miracles of the Bible demonstrate clearly that miracles were never intended to be universal:
 - 1. In extent: for they were always limited to few and special cases. Never have they been used to relieve suffering or prolong life here for all of God's people universally.
 - a. Some received no miraculous deliverance here (Heb. 11:35-40)
 - b. John the Immerser, greatest born of women, worked no miracles, nor was he delivered miraculously (Mt. 11:7-11; Jn. 10:41).
 - c. Jesus could have healed all or raised all from dead but He didn't.
 - d. Paul healed many, but did not heal Trophimus and Timothy (II Tim. 4:20; I Tim. 5:23).
 - 2. In result: All who were delivered from sickness had at other times to suffer again and die. All who were raised from the dead had to die again. Peter was delivered twice, but not a third time (God was no less compassionate and Peter no less believing).

II. PASSING OF MIRACLES (AS SUCH)

- A. It would take some convincing to persuade me that God does not work providentially in history today. I believe He answers when we pray (sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes without acting at all).
 - 1. I teach Life of Christ, Old Testament Prophets and Revelation. You cannot study and teach those books and believe them for 20 years without believing God is active in the affairs of men and nations.
 - 2. I do not deny that God could reinstitute an age of miracles such as we read in the Old Testament and New Testament if it suited His purpose.

GIFTS, MIRACLES

3. It is just that I believe He will not because He has no further need of such miracles and signs. Here is why I believe that:
- B. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away . . ." I Cor. 13:10.
1. The reason for the election of the Jews in Christ (Eph. 1) was for "a plan in the *fulness of time*, to unite all things in him. . . ." (not for heaven, but for earth). Thus the plan was to unite both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman, into one body, the church. This is why the spiritual miraculous gifts were given in Eph. 4:11f., for this ministry of unifying. These miraculous gifts were to last until the *teleios* "man" was formed (Eph. 4:13).
 2. The identical context, outline, illustrations, and terminology in I Cor. 12—14 lead us to conclude that such is also the meaning of *teleios* there . . . to perfect both Jew and Gentile in the one body.
 3. It is unquestionably apparent that the problem in both Ephesians and Corinthians was the immaturity and schismatic tendencies of the early church. In light of the frequent association of love with perfection (maturity)—and in light of the fact that the entire epistle of I Cor. deals with the grand theme of divine love in the context of the childish immaturity of so many Christians at Corinth, it seems best to define "the perfect" in terms of the ultimate goal, aim, and end which Paul seeks to accomplish in bringing God's people to the fulness of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ.
 4. Paul's description of the carnal immaturity of Christians at Corinth serves to underscore his emphasis on the ultimate goal which he sets for them in chapter 13. Chapter 13 must be read in the context of the whole book and may not be interpreted apart from his charge in 14:1—"Make love your aim," and in 14:20 "Do not be children in your thinking; in malice be babes, but in thinking be perfect."
 5. When the "perfect" comes, says Paul, the tongues, etc. would cease. These miraculous gifts were not proofs of spiritual maturity. Paul does not say that these will cease when Jesus comes again, nor when the Corinthians get to heaven. Rather, that in time, during their life on earth, the miraculous demonstrations will cease.
 6. I do not think "perfect" means just the completed canon of New Testament books; it also has to do with a "perfected" church.
 - a. The canon's formation was by uninspired men (so far as we know). I believe every book in the New Testament is inspired

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

and apostolic. But what if another scroll of antiquity is found with the same credentials as the books we now have? We would not have a "perfect—complete" New Testament!

b. The "perfect law of liberty" was already at work when James wrote of it in James 1:25. This perfect law was in action before the completion of our 27 books of the New Testament were formed in a New Testament. One could look into this law then and be blessed in obedience to it. It was the perfect law of freedom because it accomplished what the incomplete Law of Moses could not do. It is significant in this context that James also speaks of the children of God as being perfect and complete in the church (James 1:4-5).

C. The end for which miracles were wrought, to attest to the veracity of Christ and His claims, to bring the church to maturity, and to bring about faith through which we may partake of the divine nature (II Pet 1:3-4)—this is the ultimate goal of God's work with us. **MIRACLES CAN NEVER BE AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS INDWELLING** (I Tim. 1:5; II Pet. 1:3-11; I Jn. 1:5-8; 3:1-6; I Cor. 12:31—14:1; II Cor. 3:18). (See "A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Christians," by Seth Wilson, mimeo, OBC bookstore.)

1. Miracles are signs or works of the Holy Spirit, not the Holy Spirit Himself. They are the effects of which He is the cause. Miracles have been found where the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit did not occur. (Mt. 10; Lk. 10, apostles and 70 disciples worked miracles months before Jesus said the Holy Spirit had not come yet, Jn. 7:38). King Saul on his way to murder God's anointed was made to prophesy by the Spirit of God (I Sam. 19:18-24). Balaam's ass (Num. 22:25-30). Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48).
2. It is evident that some men whom Christ called "workers of iniquity" claimed to have worked many miracles in His name. If they speak that boldly to His face, at judgment, does it not appear that they will be sincerely convinced that they have actually wrought such mighty works by His power here?
3. It does not appear that miraculous demonstrations are necessary effects whenever or wherever the Holy Spirit dwells in men. I Cor. 12:3, the man who honestly says Jesus is Lord manifests he has the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:29-30 shows that not all in the New Testament church had the gifts of miraculous works.
4. The word of God has the power to regenerate and to sanctify through faith which allows the Spirit of God to dwell in us. Eph. 3:16-19; I Tim. 1:5; Gal. 5:22-25; II Pet. 1:3-4; II Cor. 3:18.

GIFTS, MIRACLES

5. Miraculous deeds did not guarantee a spiritual church. The Corinthian church "came behind in no gift" and was enriched "in all utterance and in all knowledge" (I Cor. 1:5-7); yet that church was notorious for errors in doctrine and evils in practice.
6. Are such wonders and signs always caused exclusively by the Holy Spirit? May some of the experience and utterances be caused by the workings of the subconscious mind, by something like hypnotic influences? (See *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, Harper & Row.)
7. Isolated wonders do not necessarily prove a divine revelation from God. Bible miracles were part of a coherent combination of many miracles and messages to which they were significantly related. The extent and quality of Bible miracles and revelations is different from the many alleged miracles and prophecies of today or any century since apostles. Philip's miracles and those of Simon Magus were different. Even Pharaoh could see (or should have) the difference between Moses' miracles and those of his magicians. (Gal. 1:6-9) Even a gospel by angels, if different than Paul's would be condemned.
8. I Jn. 4:6 says it is not the Holy Spirit if men show they do not hear (heed and keep) the word of the apostles.

James 3:13-18 shows that the Spirit of God does not cause men to be jealous and factious—divisive.

WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY DENOMINATIONAL FACTIONS, ALLEGING TO HAVE THESE MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS, YET STRIVING TO MAINTAIN THEIR DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES EVEN IN THE FACE OF PLAIN SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS?! What are we to conclude about their claims?

III. FUNCTIONAL GIFTS (Rom. 12:1-13)

- A. I believe all men and women have gifts from their Creator.
 1. All may not have the same gifts or latent potentialities.
 2. Some may have many more potentialities than others.
 3. BUT THEY ARE ALL NEEDED AS FUNCTIONS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. This is the important point: No gifts, capacities, talents, abilities (all given by the grace of God) are more important FUNCTIONALLY, than others.
 4. The whole context here indicates Paul is talking *not* about miraculous gifts given by God for the same purposes as those of

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- I Cor. 12-14; but of functional gifts, one of which at least every member of the body has (“... I bid every one among you. . .”).
- B. I like the way Carl Ketcherside explains it in *Mission Messenger*, Vol. 36, No. 10, Oct. 1974, “Functioning Gifts.”
1. Any gift freely bestowed by God is a gift of the Spirit, regardless of how it is communicated to the recipient. That is why I object to designating any period of time a charismatic age. There is no such thing as a charismatic age, for the simple reason that there is no non-charismatic age. There has never been a time when the will of God was not enhanced and promoted by gifts of grace. A gift is not charismatic because of its nature, method of reception, or effect, but because of its origin. It is charismatic because it is a gift of *charis*, grace.
 2. The man who has the enviable gift of understanding and relieving the needy is “charismatic” as surely as one who has the gift of prophecy. The one who can give cheerfully and freely as his contribution to the work of the saints is “charismatic.” In view of this, I am not turned on by such expressions as “The Spirit is working again in our time.” The Spirit has never ceased working.
 3. The gifts of God are varied. Paul wrote to a congregation which came behind in no gift and told them that the ability to restrain sexual passion, making marriage unnecessary was a *charisma* of God. But he also implied that the gift of sexual need which could be gratified in marriage was a *charisma*. “I would that everybody lived as I do; but each of us has his own special gift from God—one in one direction and one in another” (I Cor. 7:7). It is quite evident that Paul’s gift was in a different direction than that of the majority.
- C. Eph. 4:7 “But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”
1. Do not the parables teach that men are *given* (how else, but by the grace of God) “talents” and “pounds” according to different measures, and each one is expected to *use* (none are non-functional) and be rewarded according, not to what he does not have, but according to how he uses what he does have?
 2. Now if we will follow the leading of the Spirit in His revealed will and make sure instead of worrying about “having the Spirit” that the “Spirit has all of us,” we will “use” our *praxin* (function, or action) *charismata* (gifts) for the benefit of the one body. Actually, if we simply let ourselves be “transformed” by “the renewing of our minds . . .” (Rom. 12:1-2) we will use our gifts of grace for the upbuilding of the body in love.

GIFTS, MIRACLES

Even unconverted men and women have *charismatic gifts!* *functional gifts*—whatever they have in potentialities they have by the grace of God but they are not allowing the Spirit to use them for the upbuilding of Christ's body.

- D. Does all this mean that the special *supernatural* gifts should also be continued by the Holy Spirit in the church today? No.
1. They were for special needs. The functional gifts will always be needed.
 2. I do not need to see a miracle performed by anyone else, nor have one performed upon me, to produce faith in the revealed Word of God.
 3. The original envoys of Jesus who gave the message were thoroughly accredited and their message was confirmed by miracles, wonders and signs. There is no sense in having miracles to confirm miracles, and once truth is confirmed it never needs to be confirmed again.
 4. The spectacular, *supernatural*, signs and wonders were to cease (there is no doubt about that), but the functional gifts through which every member of the body may *love* man and God will abide!
 5. AFTER ALL, THE GRACE OF GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US GIFTS FOR FUNCTIONING IN THE CHURCH AND WE USE THEM ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF OUR FAITH.

The miraculous, supernatural gifts could be given and made to function regardless of the measure of the faith of the person.

CONCLUSION

Accepting the possibility of miracles is a matter of morality. C. S. Lewis wrote, “. . . the question whether miracles occur can never be answered simply by experience. Every event which might claim to be a miracle is, in the last resort something presented to our senses, something seen, heard, touched, . . . etc. and our senses are not infallible. If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been the victims of an illusion. If we hold a philosophy that excludes the supernatural, this is what we shall always say.”

What we learn from experience depends on our philosophy of epistemology (theory of how one learns) and that ultimately rests on our moral honesty. Many people think one can decide whether a miracle occurred in the past by examining the evidence according to the ordinary rules of historical inquiry. But the ordinary rules cannot be worked *until* we have

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

decided whether miracles are possible, and if so, how probable they are. So, we are back to whether we are being honest or not.

Man's ability to think and reason gives evidence that something beyond nature exists. The Naturalist cannot deny the thinking-reasoning process without thinking and reasoning! It is obvious that the thinking process is not just a natural event composed of cells, electric impulses, etc. Therefore, something other than nature exists.

Morality is another undeniable evidence of the possibility of that which is beyond nature. Even the great determinist Karl Marx held there was "good" behavior and "bad" behavior and subjected what he determined to be "bad" behavior to withering moral scorn. He could justify this only with the presupposition that there is a moral responsibility—something beyond natural reflex.

Why does liberal theology exclude miracles? Because it excludes the "living God" of Christianity and believes instead in a kind of God who obviously would not do miracles, or indeed anything else outside of nature.

Men are reluctant to face up to the fact of a *living* God. They much prefer an abstract "Idea" to a Person. An idea does nothing, demands nothing. It is there for a person to change, manipulate or obliterate as the whim calls for. But a living, supernatural, all-sovereign Person is something else! It is shocking to discover there is a Person, a feeling, thinking, moral Person who is Creator and Sustainer of life, alive and active in our everyday affairs. It is even more alarming to think this Person has the right to demand mental and moral control of our lives. C. S. Lewis puts it thus: "You have had a shock like that before, in connection with smaller matters—when the fishing line pulls at your hand, when something breathes beside you in the darkness. So here; the shock comes at the precise moment when the thrill of life is communicated to us along the clue we have been following. It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. 'Look out,' we cry, 'it's alive!'"

An impersonal God—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. But God Himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, king, husband, that is quite another matter.

There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at cops and robbers hush suddenly: was that a *real* footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion (called, "man's search for God") suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? Supposing He has worked miracles over and above and outside the natural order of things? We never meant it to come to *that!* Worse still, supposing He has found us?