

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Luke

SB_LK9C_The Cost of Discipleship and the Transfiguration

The two main pericopes that stand out in the remaining verses of chapter 9 involve the cost of discipleship (9:23-27; 9:57-62) and the transfiguration of Jesus (9:28-36). Closely related to the latter is the passages that contain Jesus' predictions of His death (9:21-22; 9:43-45) and the disciples' dispute among themselves regarding who was greatest in the kingdom (9:46-48). Without an understanding of the nature of the kingdom offer during Jesus' public ministry, the Bible student is left without an interpretive framework and such passages as these become an interesting, yet puzzling narrative.

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection (9:21-22)

Here again, we see Jesus commanding His hearers to tell no one that He was the Messiah. We've seen this on other occasions in Luke. For instance:

- 4:41 – the healing of many with various diseases then Jesus commands them to tell no one
- 8:39 – a demon possessed man is healed and commanded to tell no one but his own house
- 8:56 – girl is healed and Jesus commands her parents to tell no one

Question: Why would Jesus command those who witnessed such miracles not to proclaim Him as the Messiah even though He had commanded His disciples to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God (9:2), i.e. the gospel that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt 10:7)?

Answer: The proclamation of the kingdom of God or that the kingdom of heaven was at hand had not yet been completed at this point in Jesus' ministry. Therefore, the opportunity for Israel's volition to manifest itself with a positive attitude towards God's plan for the nation had not yet elapsed.

Nevertheless, based upon the evidence that Jesus had collected up to this point in His public ministry, He knew that the religious leadership of Israel had rejected the gospel of the kingdom first preached by John the Baptist, then by Jesus and His disciples. He also knew that He would die a sacrificial death in order to propitiate (satisfy) the righteousness of God the Father (Psa 22; Isa 53). Early in His ministry, the question was whether that sacrificial death would occur at the hands of the Romans or the Jewish religious leaders was still unknown. However, it soon became obvious that the Jewish religious leaders would kill Him. Even so, Jesus knew that the masses within Israel could still accept Him in spite of the Jewish religious leaders. Also, Jesus knew that even after His death, Israel would have a chance to accept Him and for the kingdom to come consistent with all Old Testament prophecy.¹

Take Up One's Cross and Follow Jesus (9:23-27)

Although Jesus offered salvation as a free gift (John 1:12; 3:16-18), He also warned that following Him would involve suffering, hardship and persecution (Matt 5:10-12). Jesus is encouraging His hearers to have a perspective on life that is based upon the reality of eternity. A wise investor knows the perils associated with a myopic view of a potential investment. To live one's life with a perspective focused upon the present and one's own comfort is myopic. A follower of Christ in any Age must live his/her life with an eternal perspective shaped by spiritual realities that include Truths relating to the purpose of man in the context of the Angelic Conflict. If you have a comfortable home, a job, transportation and good food, consider it logistical grace support from God in time. Your purpose should not be shaped by a focus upon logistical grace.

¹ See previous teaching on this subject in the previous lesson (SB_LK9B) and in lessons on the book of Matthew.

Your purpose in life should be shaped by how to best use the logistical grace provision from God to best serve Him. This is part of what is involved in taking up your Cross.

Jesus' statement in verse 27 that there are "some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" can be acceptably interpreted in one of two ways. Either Jesus was referring to the Transfiguration which was to follow in about eight days or He was referring to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom which He anticipated to occur seven years after His death. There is no evidence that Jesus had any knowledge of the intervening Church Age at this point in His earthly life and ministry.² Therefore, He could have been anticipating the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom after His death and it was a reasonable conclusion that some of those disciples to whom Jesus spoke would endure to the end (Matt 24:13) and thereby be transitioned into the kingdom. This would have been possible if the period of time between Jesus' death and His Second Coming had been based exclusively upon the eschatological time line obtained from Hebrew prophecy.

Jesus' Transfiguration (9:28-36)

Only Peter, James, and John went with Jesus up to the mountain. On this mountain, Jesus was transfigured. The Greek word for "transfigured" is from the verb μεταμορφοω (*metamorphoo*) and means *metamorphosis* or *to change in form*. These disciples were witnesses to a manifestation of Jesus' preincarnate glory (John 1:14; 17:5; Phil 2:6-7) and His post-resurrection exaltation (2 Pe 1:16-18).

Moses and Elijah appeared also and they were speaking with Jesus. There are a number of observations and explanations associated with Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus at the transfiguration. For instance:

- No one witnessed the death of Moses and Elijah was immediately translated from earth to heaven (Deut 1:37-38; 3:23-28; 34:1-8; 2 Ki 2:11-14)
- Both Moses and Elijah had eschatological prophecies connected with their ministries.
 - Moses was a type of the Prophet to come, i.e. Jesus (Deut 18:15-18)
 - Elijah was prophesied to be a forerunner of the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6)
 - John the Baptist would have fulfilled this role in Jesus' 1st Advent had Israel accepted Him as the Messiah (Matt 11:14)

² This conclusion is based upon a line of reasoning set forth in previous lessons in the Matthew series. Briefly, Jesus, in His incarnate existence, based His understanding of future events upon prophecies made by Israel's prophets as recorded in Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus was intimately familiar with prophecies regarding His death (Gen 3:15; Deut 18:15-18 cf. 21:23; Psa 22; Isa 53), Daniel's 70th Week (Dan 7:1-7 cf. 9:27), His Second Advent (Dan 2:44-45; 7:11-14), His Messianic reign on earth (Deut 30:1-10; Psa 2; 96-99; Isa 2:3-5; 9:2, 4, 7; 11:10; 52:13; 53:12; Jer 23:5-8; 31:23-25; 31:31-34; Ezek 40:1-43:27; Dan 2:44-45; Micah 4:1-8; Zech 9:9-17; 14:9-21), and the final judgment (Dan 12:2-3). Nowhere in Hebrew Scripture is the Church Age anticipated. In addition, even after His death when He spent 40 days ministering to His disciples, Jesus taught them "things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3) and the disciples wondered if He would restore the kingdom to Israel at that time (Acts 1:6). The implication is that even at this point, either Jesus did not know about the Church Age to eventually come according to the Father's plan or chose not to disclose it to His disciples (Acts 1:7). Later Peter would interpret the Pentecost events in a Jewish eschatological context, not in a Church Age context (Acts 2:17-21 quotation of Joel 2:28-32 by Peter). Peter would also fulfill Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 16:18-19 as the leader of the Jerusalem church (assembly – ἐκκλησία) which would include the offer of the kingdom to Israel should Israel then repent (Acts 3:19). All of these events are allowed within an eschatological framework constructed from Hebrew prophecy without any requirement that a knowledge of the Church Age be present in our incarnate Lord's understanding.

- However, even if that had occurred, there would have still been a 2nd Advent preceded by a seven year Tribulation during which an Elijah figure would be needed to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi
 - Both experienced a vision of God's glory
 - Moses at Sinai (Exod 31:18)
 - Elijah at Horeb (1 Ki 19:8-18)
- Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets, therefore together on the Mount of Transfiguration, they symbolized the Law and the Prophets which Jesus fulfilled (Matt 5:17)
- Moses, Elijah, and the disciples represent all the people who will be present in the coming Kingdom, i.e. the disciples represent those present in physical bodies, Moses represents saved individuals who have died or will die, and Elijah represents those who will not experience death, but will be caught up into heaven alive (1 Thess 4:17).
- Finally, two witnesses of the Messiah will prophesy during the Tribulation for a three and one-half year period. These two witnesses have long been identified as resuscitated Moses and Elijah due to the linkage between the miracles that they perform and those performed by Moses and Elijah of antiquity (Re 11:3-14)
 - They can prevent rain (Re 11:6) like Elijah whose prayer caused it not to rain for three and one-half years (1 Ki 17:1, 7 cf. Lu 4:25; James 5:17).
 - They can turn water into blood (Re 11:6) like Moses did with the plagues upon Egypt (Ex 7:17-21)

In verse 33, Peter expresses a desire to build three tabernacles – one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Peter's suggestion is not as ridiculous as some have suggested. The idea of a tabernacle was associated with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles when Jews built shelters for themselves and lived in them for seven days (Lev 23:42-43). The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) was designed to be prophetic of Israel's millennial rest whereby the kingdom of heaven is tabernacled (dwelling) among men on earth. What Peter desired, the dwelling of heavenly and earthly people on earth, was not possible at that time, but will be possible during the Messianic kingdom portrayed by Christ in the transfiguration.

The bright cloud of verse 34 is associated with the departure from Egypt via Moses (Ex 13:21-22; 16:10; 19:16; 24:25-28; 40:34-38) and with the shekinah glory of God in the Holy of Holies (e.g. the glory of the Lord departing from the Temple in Ezek 10:3-5, 18-19; 11:22-23).

The voice from heaven had a significant effect upon Peter. He referred to it in his epistle years later (2 Pe 1:16-17). Also, these are the identical words that were spoken at Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:17.

The disciples kept quiet (v. 36) because Jesus commanded them to do so (Matt 17:9). Jesus' reasoning was most likely based upon the logic presented previously on page 1 of this set of notes.

A Boy is Healed (9:37-42)

Mark's parallel account in 9:14-29 provides more detail. When Jesus, Peter, James and John returned from the Mount of Transfiguration, a crowd had evidently gathered around the other nine apostles. A man with a demon possessed son had sought healing help from the nine. They had not been able to cast out the demon. Note the following points of observation:

- The Greek word for "knelt" is used only four times in the NT (Matt 17:14; 27:29; Mk 1:40; 10:17) and has no overtones of worship. It simply suggests humility and entreaty.
- It is presumed that the disciples who were unable to heal him were the nine who were left behind when Jesus took Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration.
- Jesus had clearly given the disciples (apostles to Israel) the power to heal and cast out demons (Matt 10:1, 8 cf. Lu 9:1)

- The failure of the disciples to exercise this authority and perform kingdom miracles was related to their own walk of faith (Matt 17:20)
- Jesus' comments were directed to His disciples (not the Church Age believer) and must be understood in view of His commissioning of them in Luke 9 and Matthew 10

In verse 41, the juxtaposition of “perverse” with “faithless” or “unbelieving” implies that the failure to believe stems from failure to recognize the truth, not from a lack of evidence, but from a willful neglect of the evidence. The Greek word for “generation” is γενεα (genea) and in this context it refers to the “sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time.”³ Therefore, this word refers to the Jews first as the recipients of the offer of the kingdom and then to the Gentiles who also had the opportunity to accept Jesus as the Messiah of Israel (e.g. the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 and the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:8-12).

Question for personal application: In your own personal ministry to others, can you say with Paul that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you? Or do you find yourself discouraged by adversity, distracted by self-centered thinking, and without focus in your spiritual life? God has given each CA believer a spiritual gift and places the *yielded* believer in a ministry with that gift. Have you learned to tap into the spiritual power that is available to you as a Church Age believer? (See 1 Cor 1:4-9; 2 Cor 1:3-7; Eph 1:3-23; Phil 1:3-11; Col 1:9-14; cf. 1 Cor 9:3-14; 2 Cor 10:4-5; 11:22-28; 1 Tim 1:18-20; and Phil 1:27-29 as examples of Paul's prayers for CA believers and his personal example of enduring in the midst of adversity because of a spiritual vision).

Principle: Without a spiritual vision for one's life that is built upon the truths pertinent to this dispensation of the Church and the concomitant appreciation and motivation derived therefrom, the believer will remain a slave to his/her own selfish interests and in a perpetual state of spiritual babyhood. This believer will be forever relegated to a system of thinking that focuses only upon his own self-interest much like the undisciplined child who never learns to set aside self in the interest of others or a greater cause.

This is the blindness that characterizes the world and is similar to the blindness from which the disciples who were apostles to Israel (Lu 9; Matt 10) had to escape. At this point, these disciples had not given proper attention to their spiritual lives (i.e. neglect of the truth presented to them and prayer), therefore they had no power to push through the spiritual adversity pertinent to their ministry to Israel, i.e. a demon possessed boy.

Jesus Predicts His Death Again (9:43-45)

This is the second of several predictions recorded in Luke of Jesus' suffering and death (9:21-22; 9:44; 12:50; 13:31-33; 17:25; 18:31-33). The unique point about this prediction is its setting – it occurred in the midst of those still marveling at the miracle He had just performed. This is somewhat similar to the previous prediction by Jesus – immediately after Peter's acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah (9:21-22). The setting of these two predictions by Jesus points to Jesus' acute awareness of the fickle nature of man. Jesus knew that man could be easily impressed by a miracle one moment and blinded to Truth the next. Jesus knew that people could pledge their allegiance to Him one moment only to be swept away by the cares of the world the next.

Who Is the Greatest? (9:46-48)

Mark (9:33-38) says that the disciples were disputing along the way and when challenged, they became silent. Luke (9:46-48) says that Jesus discerned their thoughts. Most likely, Jesus

³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957,1979), 154.

detected their rivalry (Luke), challenged them, and thereby silenced them (Mark), after which they blurted out their question. Their question was not without some basis:

- Jesus had said that there would be distinctions in the Kingdom (Matt 5:19)
- Three of the apostles to Israel (Peter, James, & John) appeared to have been the recipients of special revelation (Matt 17:1-3)
- Peter had been repeatedly singled out even if some of those occasions also included a rebuke, e.g. Luke 9:18-20 cf. Matthew 16:23.
- In the case of James & John, their ambition had most likely been set in motion by their mother (see Matt 20:20-21) and it had sparked the jealousy of the other ten (Matt 20:24)

In Luke 9:46-48, Jesus uses the child as an ideal, not of innocence, purity, or faith, but of humility and unconcern for social status. A child is not in a position to advance us in society. Jesus taught His disciples humility of mind, not childlike thinking (cf. Matt 10:16). If the disciples (more than just the 12) do not trust only in Him as Savior, they cannot enter the Kingdom. The Kingdom (and eternal salvation) cannot be gained by personal merit (or by violent force – Matt 11:12).

Jesus Forbids Cliques (9:49-50)

The only explanation for this statement by Jesus is that the person casting out demons in Jesus' name was perhaps one of the 70 disciples that Jesus is going to commission in chapter 10. John did not recognize this man. However, Jesus was not interested in building a power base among a few of His clique. This is truly the mark of a great leader – a great leader places primary importance upon his followers internalizing the vision rather than building a power base upon an exclusivist attitude.

A Samaritan Village Rejects the Savior (9:51-56)

Jesus begins to make preparations to journey to Jerusalem where He would suffer and die. He knew this was His divinely appointed destiny. His journey to Jerusalem was not a direct journey for in Luke 10:38-42, we see Jesus at Mary and Martha's house in Bethany (just outside of Jerusalem); however, in Luke 17:11, we find Him in Samaria and Galilee. Luke's Gospel is unique in its emphasis upon the journey to Jerusalem (13:22, 33-35; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28, 41). Luke records much of Jesus' teaching and parables on this journey as Jesus contrasts His way of suffering with the way of the Jewish religious leaders.

The Cost of Discipleship (9:57-62)

The first man in this section demonstrates the nature of an emotional commitment that hasn't factored in the cost of discipleship (9:57-58). This would be similar to the believer who attends a rally, conference or seminar and is excited about all the victorious stories or the brief exposure to the Truth he has received. Yet, he is not prepared for the monotony, the days and weeks and months of just plugging away. He has no reservoir of Truth in his soul with which to combat the lures and distractions of the world and the false doctrine of religion. His is just an emotional high.

The second man in this section (9:59-60) demonstrates those who procrastinate and use the cares of this world as an excuse to not move forward in the plan of God. Jesus would have had no objection to the man burying his father if his father had already died. Under the Law, the man would have been ceremonially unclean and not out in public if he had been in contact with his father who had died. However, Jesus knew that this man just wanted to wait until his father died and procrastinate in serving Jesus.

The third man (9:61) also demonstrates procrastination, but he also demonstrates a commitment that is subordinate to the wishes of his family. He had already put his hand to the plow and demonstrated a commitment to the task of following Jesus. Yet, he now desired to

check with his family. This man might have caused Jesus to reflect upon God's command to Abram in Genesis 12:2 – "Get out of your country from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you." Jesus was indeed pointing the way to a new kingdom at this point in his ministry and that new kingdom would be a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.