

LUKE

Leon L. Combs, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D.

Chapter Nine

Luke 9:1-6

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. (2) And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. (3) And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. (4) "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. (5) "And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." (6) Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

We see similar instructions in two other gospels:

- Matt 10:1 *Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*
- Matt 10:9-10 *"Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, (10) or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.*
- Mark 6:7-9 *And He *summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; (8) and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff--no bread, no bag, no money in their belt-- (9) but to wear sandals; and He added, "Do not put on two tunics."*

We will read later (Luke 10:1-12) about Jesus sending out a group of 72 disciples but here Jesus sends out the twelve apostles and Matthew names them (10:2). Jesus gave them power and authority so that they could cast out demons and heal diseases. He also told them to not take anything for provisions. Mark tells them to go in pairs. The bag was used by some itinerant ministers to use to collect payment and they were to only depend upon God for their needs. Luke and Matthew tell them to not take a staff but Mark says to take only a mere staff, which was a smaller version used in walking and not a bigger shepherd's staff. The meaning could be that they would not be making more disciples and so figuratively needing a shepherd's staff for herding the new converts. The point is that they had a specific mission. They were to cast out demons and heal sicknesses as they proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God. They could wear sandals but not take extra sandals. They were not to take an extra tunic and to not take any bread or money so that they had to totally depend upon God to make people open their hearts and homes to take care of them on this journey. Later (22:36) Jesus told them to take provisions so these instructions are only for this mission. Thus this is not a direction to be carried forward to today's mission trips.

They were to only stay in one home so as to not make anyone jealous about them leaving to go to another home. Shaking the dust off their feet in a town where nobody helped them was a judgment against that town. Matthew reports that Jesus told them not to go into a Gentile town or

to a Samaritan town so, at this point; the ministry is to the Jews. Luke concludes this section by stating that the twelve did as Jesus commanded them as they preached and cast out demons.

Luke 9:7-9

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, (8) and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. (9) Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him.

Herod may have heard about the missions of the twelve or just about the work of Jesus and he was disturbed at what he heard. Perhaps he was perplexed and disturbed because he knew about the messianic movement and feared that Jesus was getting ready to lead a revolt. He also heard reports that John had risen from the dead and this would have greatly disturbed him for he knew that John was a righteous man (Mark 6:20) and he was bothered that he had John beheaded. Some people were also spreading the rumors that Elijah or some of the older prophets had appeared. Herod knew for certain that John was dead for he had him beheaded. Herod kept trying to see Jesus for he wanted to know personally the identity of this person causing such a stir in the community.

Luke 9:10-11

When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. (11) But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

Meanwhile, all the apostles returned and gave an account to Jesus of all that had been done by their authority and power Jesus had given them. He was concerned about their wellbeing so He took them with Him to an area outside of the city of Bethsaida where they could relax and discuss all that happened. However the crowds followed Jesus and the twelve. Jesus did not rebuke them from following them but welcomed them and began talking to them about the kingdom of God. He also was curing those who needed healing. The people could have just waited for Jesus to return as they did previously (8:40) but they went around the lake so that they could be with him in Bethsaida as elaborated by Mark:

*Mark 6:30-33 The apostles *gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. (31) And He *said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) (32) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. (33) The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.*

It is also meaningful that Bethsaida is outside of the jurisdiction of Herod who had just recently had John the Baptist beheaded. His killing of John clearly demonstrated his hostility toward the

kind of preaching of Jesus and His followers so perhaps this is a reason the people went around the lake to Bethsaida.

Luke 9:12-17

Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place." (13) But He said to them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." (14) (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each." (15) They did so, and had them all sit down. (16) Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people. (17) And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.

This feeding episode is mentioned in all four gospels so we know it was very important to the early church (Mark 6:37-44; Matt 14:15-21; John 6:4-13). We do not know the precise time of day but Luke tells us it was late and the people would have needed to eat. The twelve asked Jesus to send the people to some of the near villages so they could find lodging and food. However Jesus told them to feed them there. Stating that they needed to find lodging implies that at least some of them were not local people. The twelve told Jesus that they had no more than five loaves and two fish so they apparently had taken a sampling around the crowd to determine the food supply. John tells us that these were barley loaves, which was bread for the poor and that Andrew found a small boy who had these. Also we read from John 6:7 that Phillip said that two hundred denarii would not be enough money to buy the supplies needed to feed the crowd so sending the twelve to buy supplies would not work. Luke informs us that there were about five thousand men in the crowd. The Greek word translated "men" refers to men rather than also to women and children. Jesus told the disciples to sit them all in groups of about fifty each so that they could be fed in an orderly fashion. Luke states that Jesus gave this order to the disciples, which included the apostles but was a much larger group.

Jesus then began in a typical Jewish manner to serve a meal. He first had them all sit and He took the food, looked up to heaven, spoke a blessing, and then began to break the food into smaller pieces. The "them" upon which Jesus blessed was not the people but the food and the word does not imply some sort of blessing He gave to the food. Rather the meaning is that He said a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the food and for the miracle they are about to receive as the food is distributed to the people. Jesus gave the pieces to the disciples so that they could give them to the people. They were all satisfied so that they did not just receive a token but each received a full meal! Not only did they all receive a full meal but they had twelve full baskets of food left over.

Luke 9:18-22

And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" (19) They answered and

said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." (20) And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." (21) But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, (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 be raised up on the third day."

Luke now omits an entire section recorded by Mark (6:45-8:26) that includes another miraculous feeding of four thousand. Matthew (16:13-16) and Mark (8:27-29) place this episode near Caesarea Philippi, near the foot of Mount Hermon. This was a heathen region where Pan was especially highly worshipped. This was an area out of Herod's jurisdiction where Jesus could pray alone and give His disciples time to reflect on what had been happening. Jesus then addressed them to start them having some theological thoughts and discussions. To His question they replied similarly to what Herod had heard. The people were saying that He was John the Baptist, others thought He was Elijah, and others thought that He was a risen prophet of older times. But Jesus then asked them to tell Him who they thought He was and in all synoptic gospels the word "you" is emphasized so Jesus wants to know precisely who they think He is.

As always it is not important to hear who other people think of the identity of Jesus but the important question is "who do **you** say is Jesus?" As is often the case, Peter acts as the spokesman for the group. Peter replies that Jesus is the Christ sent from God, or the promised Messiah whom the people of God had been expecting for so long. This statement is not a human discovery but a special revelation from God:

Matt 16:16-17 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (17) And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Of course they did not really understand the meaning of the word "Messiah" as represented by Jesus. Jesus then warned them not to tell anyone this answer. The people were sick of the persecution of the Romans and would follow anyone who said that He was the promised Messiah. Of course the person stating that he was the Messiah would also have to demonstrate his political power to the people and Jesus was not going to do this for His kingdom is not of this world: *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."* (John 18:16) Jesus also told them some of the proper understanding of the word and they did not even understand this at His crucifixion.

After Pentecost they would understand that the Messiah must suffer much at the hands of the leaders of the Jewish religion, that He must be killed and then resurrected on the third day after He was killed. The fact of the resurrection has always been as certain as the crucifixion. We can only imagine what they would have thought of this answer as Luke does not elaborate. Matthew and Mark report that Peter rebuked Jesus:

- Matt 16:22-23 *Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." (23) But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."*
- Mark 8:32-33 *And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. (33) But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and *said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."*

The rebuke of Jesus on Peter in both reports shows that Satan was getting Peter to think upon the work of Jesus as the political Messiah when Jesus states that Peter is setting his mind on man's interests. Jesus would have recognized this strategy to be the same as put forward to Him by Satan in promising Him the kingdoms of the world in one of the temptations. Therefore Jesus is directly stating that the statement is from Satan and Peter is not to follow such insights. Jesus is God's Messiah and not the Jew's Messiah. He must suffer rather than conquer Rome.

Luke 9:23-27

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (24) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (25) "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? (26) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. (27) "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

Jesus now begins to explain what it means to be His disciple and we all need to meditate on these verses daily as we evaluate our position with Him. Taking up his cross reflects the Roman custom for criminals to carry the crossbar of their cross to the place of execution by crucifixion and using the word "daily" means the person must contemplate this choice all his physical life. The phrase "follow Me" means that the person must dedicate his entire life to emulating Jesus in all areas. Jesus gives three reasons why people should submit to His radical demand. The **first** (vs 24) is that if one models his life after the customs, standards, and values of the world then that life will be lost. The **second** (vs 25) reinforces the first in that people show their discipleship to Jesus by accepting the values of this world to neglect the values put forward by the Lord. That life will be lost and the meaning is that it is lost forever. The **third** reason (vs 26) is apocalyptic as those who reject the values of Jesus and so show a shame of His values will be ashamed by Jesus at the End Times. This reminds me of the terrifying verses:

Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (22) "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Even those who call Him Lord and do all of those things could also be those who have secretly kept allegiance to the world and pretended to serve Him.

The last verse has been the subject of considerable controversy. Some think it refers to the transfiguration that will occur in the next episode recorded by Luke. However it seems overly dramatic to say that those who will not taste death will witness something happening in a week or so. Jesus is probably referring to those who, even though not fully understanding, will witness His death, resurrection, ascension, and their journeying into the world to witness for Him: *To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.* (Acts 1:3)

Luke 9:28-36

Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. (29) And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. (30) And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, (31) who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Matthew and Mark write that this event occurred six days later and Luke writes that it occurred about eight days later. There is no contradiction for Luke is just using the Jewish term for a week and Matthew and Mark are being more precise:

- Mark 9:2-4 *Six days later, Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John, and *brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; (3) and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (4) Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.*
- Matt 17:1-3 *Six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves. (2) And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. (3) And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.*

Comparing the three gospel accounts, we see that the appearance of Jesus was not some natural artifact but a supernatural occurrence as God was revealing to Peter, James and John the heavenly features of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Luke is more precise in his description whereas Matthew and Mark say He was transfigured. We expect the physician to be more precise but he also may be keeping this description from sounding like pagan myths of gods transfiguring themselves and humans. Luke is clearly stating that this event was real.

Luke records that Jesus is conferring with Moses and Elijah about His coming trial, execution, and ascension that was to be accomplished in Jerusalem. Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the prophets so Jesus is talking to permanent occupants of Heaven about His ordeal that had been planned before the foundation of the world. This miraculous event was presented veiled through the Law and the prophets and finally revealed by Jesus. Jesus knew the horror of what He was facing and it would have been helpful to Him to discuss this with someone who

totally understood what He was to endure. We are not told how they knew that the two men were Moses and Elijah but it must have been the same source that revealed to Peter the correct identity of Jesus: God the Holy Spirit. Luke states that they were discussing the departure of Jesus and the best translation of that word is “exodus”. Moses represents the first exodus of God’s people from their slavery and Jesus is the final route to an exodus from spiritual slavery. Elijah was prophesied to return (Mal 4:5) and, although he did come spiritually as John the Baptist to prepare the hearts for Jesus, now he physically returns. The first time Moses visited Israel he was rejected (Acts 7:22-29) and he spent forty years in exile. Elijah also suffered as a persecuted prophet before he was taken to heaven by a whirlwind. So both of these men worked miracles and suffered under the judgment of Israel. Now centuries later they came from heaven to discuss the coming exodus of Jesus in Jerusalem who would also suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders. They then confirmed the words of Jesus that He would have to undergo rejection, suffering, and death.

Luke 9:32-36

Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. (33) And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"--not realizing what he was saying. (34) While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. (35) Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (36) And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

Luke makes it clear that, although Peter, James, and John were very tired, they were fully awake when they saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus. Luke alone reports that they saw the glory of Jesus as well as seeing the two men. Peter was overcome with emotion and said something rather foolish in retrospect. Of course he wanted this time to last rather than having to face that his teacher was going to have to face the fate Jesus revealed to them (9:22). The tents would probably have been like those at the Feast of Booths, but he made a big mistake in assuming equality between the three men. Moses and Elijah would fall to worship the Lord Jesus and certainly would not have accepted an equal tent with Him. The Shekinah glory (Exod 24:15-18; 13:21-22; 16:10) began to envelop them all and they heard a voice from the cloud. This was the voice of the Father letting the three disciples know that Jesus was His Son and He was God’s Chosen One. This identification helps Jesus to be connected to the suffering servant (Isa 52:13-53:12) and helps the disciples to understand the mission of Jesus in terms of God’s will and glory. They were commanded to listen to Him. After this phenomenal event they were suddenly left alone with Jesus. Peter, James, and John were then silent and did not report during the service time of Jesus what they had seen. After the Parousia, they would report this event so that Luke would know about it and they would all be encouraged to continue in the service of Jesus Christ.

It was a mystery why the path to glory had to proceed through suffering but the same path continues two thousand years later. Paul expressed this understanding well:

- 2Cor 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*
- 2Cor 4:4 *in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

We chosen ones of God are being transformed into the image of Jesus but the journey proceeds through suffering because God allows Satan to still rule the world.

Luke 9:37-42

On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. (38) And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, (39) and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. (40) "I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not." (41) And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." (42) While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

Matthew and Mark insert an interlude between the transfiguration and this exorcism:

- Matt 17:9-13 *As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." (10) And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (11) And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; (12) but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (13) Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.*
- Mark 9:9-13 *As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. (10) They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. (11) They asked Him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (12) And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? (13) "But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."*

The disciples obviously have a steep learning curve before they are able to take up their crosses and follow Jesus (9:23). The transformation experience led them to ask about the purpose of Elijah whom they had just seen. They still obviously do not understand the true mission of God's Messiah. Luke seems to place this exorcism event right after the transformation to illustrate the miracles of Jesus. Luke describes in detail the way that the demons affected this man and his family. Although Jesus empowered His apostles to heal and cast out demons, it is only Jesus that is shown capable of casting out demons. Jesus then rebuked them all as being a perverted and unbelieving generation. This kind of rebuking seems to relate their lack of ability to cast out a

demon with their lack of understanding the true role of Jesus as God's Messiah. Luke gives a much briefer account of this event than do Matthew (17:19-21) and Mark (9:17-29) as he focusses only on the power of Jesus to cast out the demon.

Luke 9: 43-45

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, (44) "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." (45) But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

The crowds were focused on the power of God to do these remarkable events but Jesus wanted to get the minds of His disciples away from being amazed at such events and to turn them to the true purpose of Jesus that would be achieved through His deliverance into men's hands. Luke omits the statement by Mark (9:30-31) that Jesus left, passed through Galilee, and was teaching His disciples. The meaning of this statement will even be still concealed from them as they draw nearer to Jerusalem (18:34). It will only be after all that God willed to occur will their minds be opened to understand how God could accomplish His goals in His divine plan:

Luke 24:45-47 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (46) and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, (47) and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Luke 9:46-48

An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. (47) But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, (48) and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

After all that they had been exposed to pertaining to Jesus, it is rather difficult to understand how they could have this argument among themselves. Certainly the reputation of Jesus had spread widely and they were probably feeling like the members of an elite group. But they should realize how small a part they were. They even will later have a similar argument among themselves at the Last Supper (22:21-24). Jesus was obviously not among them for He read their minds to know what they were arguing about. Jesus then used a child to rebuke them. Jesus was not setting up a child as a model of them to emulate for they had no power, no status, and no rights. Children were regarded as insignificant and disposable since they were often exposed to the elements to rid the parents of being responsible for them, especially for females. However such a status of being small, weak, and totally dependent was a perfect illustration of those who have been chosen by God as His children. Those people who react to this situation with swagger and desiring recognition show an unworthiness of being in the family. However at the trial of Jesus they will not have this attitude!

Luke 9:49-50

John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." (50) But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you."

John shows the same selfish attitude as the others as he does not want anyone else to be empowered as members of their group. John's boast reminds us of the interaction between Joshua and Moses:

Num 11:28-29 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them." (29) But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

Perhaps the person in question was in the process of joining the disciples or perhaps he was under the power of Satan for certainly he can cast out demons through someone. It is unusual for an impostor to be using the name of Jesus to cast out demons but remember:

Matt 7:22-23 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

But at this point in the ministry, Jesus does not want the disciples to be judging others who are using His name in their ministry so He urges them to accept them until later.

Luke 9:51-56

When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; (52) and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. (53) But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. (54) When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (55) But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; (56) for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."] And they went on to another village.

This first sentence sets the stage for all that is to follow. Jesus knows that He now is on the final leg of His appointment and He was determined to do His Father's will. Jerusalem has been His destination since He began His ministry. It is the place where He will suffer and die and it is the place from which the gospel message will be delivered to the world (24:47). This also reflects the discussion He had with Moses and Elijah regarding His exodus that was about to be fulfilled. Luke uses the ascension as the goal of Jesus (24:51). Stating that the "days" were approaching signifies that several events are still to occur. Jesus was determined to fulfill His mission and nothing would interfere with that effort even though He knew the dangers that lay ahead of Him. This attitude of Jesus may also echo the following hinting at the judgment to come:

Ezek 21:2-6 *"Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel; (3) and say to the land of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am against you; and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked. (4) "Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh from south to north. (5) "Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return to its sheath again.'" (6) "As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight.*

The group is heading south toward Jerusalem and will need to pass through Samaria. Most Jews would avoid this area but Jesus sent a scouting party to give the Samaritans an opportunity to serve Him. But the Samaritans rejected the offer because He was heading toward Jerusalem and they did not want to assist a Jew in such a travel. When Jesus sent them out on a mission trip He told them to shake the dust of the area off their feet as a warning of judgment. However James and John want to reduce them to dust! This attitude may explain why they are referred to as “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). The phrase “even as Elijah did” is in some manuscripts but not the oldest. However they may actually be trying to emulate Elijah since they have stated that some think Jesus is Elijah. Also they had recently been exposed to Elijah and surely that event is still clear in their minds. They are in the area where Elijah incinerated some soldiers: *Elijah replied to them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.* (2 Kings 1:12) But clearly they did not yet understand the role of Jesus as He renounces any vindictive violence. Most of verses 55 and 56 are not in the oldest manuscripts but they do clearly state the different mission of Jesus from the Messiah expected by the Jews. They then proceeded to another village.

Luke 9:57-62

As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." (58) And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." (59) And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." (60) But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." (61) Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." (62) But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Because of the miracles told in the area surely there were some who thought they wanted to join Him in His ministry. Jesus would not necessarily reject them but would explain some of the difficult aspects of a calling to follow Him so they could determine if indeed such a calling was for them. Such a situation exists today also as some people may think they want to join a Christian organization until they find out what all is involved such as “taking up their cross daily”. An altar call that asks people to come and suffer with Jesus might attract fewer applicants than some of those done today. Jesus has no material benefits or security to offer any of His

disciples either then or now. He comments that even the animals have more material blessings than He does.

Jesus then approaches another person and said for him to follow Him. But the man told Jesus that first he had to bury his father. This may seem like a legitimate request for Jews had such a strict requirement regarding their fathers. However there is no mention that his father had even died so he may be stating that he wants to wait until his father dies and is buried before making any commitment to Jesus. The reply of Jesus may also sound very harsh but He is referring to those who are spiritually dead:

Eph 2:1-2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

The spiritually dead can bury the physically dead so Jesus is stating that this man is not qualified to be His disciple. Today also, the church needs to be as certain as possible that those seeking membership are indeed born again and have repented from their sins. The second man had an excuse that certainly showed that he was not chosen to be one of the disciples of Jesus. The Greek tenses used in this sentence reveal that the man is considering many other items of more importance than following Jesus. Paul clearly stated his desire to only press on in this life for the cause of Jesus Christ:

Phil 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Christians must daily die to self and have the calling of Jesus Christ foremost in all of their decisions. The Christian life is not just another commitment that is to be added to our other commitments but is the top commitment demanding out total dedication. Jesus is not interested in recruiting people for a “spring break” trip for Christ or some other short duration dedication. He is interested in people having a total commitment to Him as their first choice. The minister today must lay out a similar demand on their members rather than giving a crowd-pleasing gospel message to tickle the ears. It seems that the following has occurred in many congregations today:

2Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, (4) and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Paul told the ministers to set the example as he had:

1Thess 2:1-12 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, (2) but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. (3) For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; (4) but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. (5) For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness-- (6) nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or

from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. (7) But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. (8) Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. (9) For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (10) You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; (11) just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, (12) so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.