

Luke 9

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What it means and doesn't mean to be a disciple of Jesus!

A great question to ponder once one acknowledges Jesus is God and died for our sins, what now? As I "pound the pulpit" a lot, it doesn't mean we're now free to live however we want! Jesus saved us so we can use our lives to make a difference for Him. It rarely means we've got to quit our lives as they are to wear a sandwich board and pass out Bible tracks! It means we're to use our lives as He desires. We're called to pray for guidance and God makes it clear what He desires of us at this moment. If you are not sure, do what's logical and figure He's working in the background to guide our lives for His glory. I am getting into all that, because Chapter 9 is mostly a guide Jesus gave His disciples on what to do and not do as those trusting in Him. We're not perfect nor are we one of the "12", but all believers are called to draw close to Him through prayer and Bible study so that we can use our lives for His glory. With that out of my system, I'll discuss this chapter and how each of these stories apply to our lives:

The last thing we read in Chapter 8 was two miracles "intermingled": A woman was cured of a disease where she couldn't stop bleeding (like a women's period that never stopped) and a story of Jesus raising someone from the dead. As most of you know, the chapter numbers weren't added until about the time of the printing press! Sometime after those two miracles is when Chapter 9 picks up. The Gospels talk about (mostly) a 3-year period of Jesus' life with a heavy emphasis on the final week. My point is Luke doesn't give a blow by blow of Jesus, but specific things he wants to teach us about Him. Chapter 9 has an emphasis on stories that teach us what Jesus does and doesn't expect of us as His followers! It starts with Jesus sending out the 12 (in pairs) on a short-term mission trip. It is the first time we'll read of the disciples doing miracles in support of Jesus. In effect, the text raises the question: Can we heal people like Jesus? I always preach He's God and we are not. Like most veteran Christians, I've seen my share of miracles, but it is always up to God and not me! The apostles got specific temporary assignments to preach the Gospel and heal people as evidence. Again, Jesus calls us to be a witness for Him and if He wills, signs follow as evidence. Only God saves souls, as our job is just to be a witness for Him!

There's one more thing I should share about the opening story. For those of us who grew up watching Bugs Bunny cartoons, there was a gun shooting character named Yosemite Sam. He would state, if he stepped on Yankee territory (he was Southern) he must burn his boots! I thought of that, as Jesus said if people rejected Him, the "12" were wipe the dust off their feet as they left town as warning against a rejection of the Gospel! That doesn't mean if people reject our preaching they go to hell. If they reject God's free gift of salvation to their death, it's then too late and that's the point! OK then onto story #2.

The scene moves to the palace of Herod, the one who had John the Baptist killed. His father killed the babies in Bethlehem when Jesus was born! Herod never saw Jesus until Jesus was on trial for His life. Here Herod (again ruler over the area where Jesus and the 12 were working), heard of the miracles He was doing. It says Herod sought Jesus out, but apparently, no follow through! Many people hear about Jesus, but they'll never turn their lives over to Him, such as this Herod. It's a reminder that some hearts are simply too closed up to accept that truth!

The scene now moves to a vacant spot off the Sea of Gallie (for my nearby readers, the sea is about the size of Lake Tahoe). This is the famous "feeding of the 5,000". It is the only miracle stated in all four Gospels other than the resurrection! The large crowd was there as John's Gospel states that the holiday

of Passover was coming, so people were passing on the way to Jerusalem for that holiday. My guess is it was about 20,000 being fed if you count women and children. Jesus had them sit in groups of 50, so I suspect counting the crowd size was easy! Luke didn't come on the scene till years later, so most likely a disciple shared this story! As most of you know, Jesus multiplied the small amount of food a boy had on him. I'm sure that boy didn't go hungry! Jesus blessed the food before multiplying it. The 12 started feeding the groups of 50! It shows that we're not just to preach the Gospel but also care about the needs of others. I realize miracles on this scale are rare! A point is to show Jesus cares for us now, as well as our eternal salvation. I'm not a health, wealth and prosperity teacher in any way, shape or form. I'm just saying where God leads us is also His opportunities to provide what we can't provide for ourselves!

The scene now switches to sometime after this, where Jesus was alone praying. Jesus stops praying to ask the disciples who feed the crowd who Jesus was. This is not a "marketing meeting" so Jesus could "sell Himself better". Jesus was trying to teach His disciples who exactly He is! Bottom line, Peter got it right saying Jesus is God's Messiah! For those who don't know the word "Christ" is simply the Greek word for the Messiah, not Jesus' last name! I'd argue this is here so the disciples would not believe the rumors Jesus was someone else!

This leads to one of the times when Jesus stated He'd be rejected, killed and raised on the 3rd day! The story of His death and resurrection is stated twice in this chapter. It teaches Jesus is God and a prophet! I also suspect the disciples were expecting Him to ride into Jerusalem and overthrow Rome, so He said all this trying to get the truth to sink in!

Speaking of dealing with His death, Jesus tells the twelve they must pick up their cross to be disciples! Given their lives in that Roman world, they understood it meant death! Obviously, most Christians do not suffer that way, but martyrdom is common for many who give their lives to Jesus. Best to think of it as a willingness to not live as we desire, but as how Jesus wants us to live. None of us are perfect as we chose that path, but the commitment is what Jesus asks of us with the Spirit's power to guide us!

This is a long chapter, and I am trying to summarize it the best I can. The next story is when Jesus took three of the disciples to watch Him physically change (how I suspect He'll look in heaven). With Jesus at that moment was Moses (who represents the law) and Elijah (who represents the prophets). I always wondered if they had name tags! Peter tried to make all three equal, so God the Father shows up to say listen to Jesus and no one else! Does that mean we're only to read Jesus words? No, it just means Jesus is in charge, deal with it! Jesus also told the disciples don't discuss this till after the resurrection. I also pondered why all the disciples weren't invited? Best I can figure it is to grasp Jesus alone decides each of our roles in life as His followers!

When they got back Jesus had to heal someone from having a demon. Jesus in effect yelled at those in the room to say in effect, I won't always be here, so others must be saved to lead demons away!" Those demonic spirits cannot embody believers and they're afraid of those who can lead others to Jesus. Their goal is for Satan rule as long as possible His rule! Then Jesus gave another "I'm going to die" speech as that might help to explain the end of Satan's rule.

Then the disciples argued over who was the greatest. I'm guessing the three who saw Jesus change His appearance argued their superior for witnessing that! The lesson Jesus taught was about being great in heaven requires humility in this lifetime!

Then we get a story about someone other than the "12" and those with Jesus following Him. He made a point that it's not just about "us" but anyone willing to give their lives to Him! The point was expanded

to discuss non-Jewish people. The underlying point is the same that anyone willing to trust Jesus is the Lord (ruler of all) and our savior gets that reward.

The final point comes back to the cost of following Him. As it said earlier, "take up one's cross to be a follower". The final point is in effect we must accept the fact most people will reject the message even though it leads to eternal damnation. Yes, we're to witness to all people but at the same time we are not to "cast our pearls before swine". (Matthew 7:6). The point being not everyone will get it and wisdom's necessary to know when to witness to people and when to let it go!

I realize I went long here. Bottom line these are all lessons for us on how Jesus expects us to live once we commit our lives to serving Him!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.