

Luke 9:18-27
June 23, 2019

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Christianity contains key doctrines, one of which is built on an accurate answer to “*Who is Jesus?*” I want you to imagine Jesus coming to our class this morning and asking us “When people hear the name ‘Jesus,’ who do they say I am? How would you answer Him? Perhaps you have met others who subscribe to a different faith system who have an interesting answer to that question! What would you tell Him?”

Transition: Jesus is very interested in people understanding WHO HE IS! Let’s read our text and see what kind of answers His disciples were offering – before He points the same question to them! Let’s begin reading Luke 9:18-27.

BOOK:

Peter’s Confession of Christ

¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?”

¹⁹ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”

²⁰ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

²¹ Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²² And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

²³ Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? ²⁶ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus laid down the stern requirements for discipleship. We must first say no to ourselves—not simply to pleasures or possessions, but to *self*—and then take up *our* cross and follow Christ daily. This means to be identified with Him in surrender, suffering, and sacrifice. You cannot crucify yourself; you can only yield your body (Rom. 12:1–2) and let God do the rest.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 206-207). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Teaching (Luke 9:18–36)

In Luke's Gospel, the feeding of the 5,000 marks the end of what is called the "Great Galilean Ministry" (Luke 4:14–9:17). Jesus now begins His journey to Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; and 19:11, 28). This would be a time of relative retirement with His disciples as He prepared them for what lay ahead. There is a parallel between this account and the account in Acts of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem. In both books we have "a tale of two cities": in Luke, from Nazareth to Jerusalem; and in Acts, from Jerusalem to Rome.

In this section, you see Jesus teaching them three basic lessons about His person, His sacrifice, and His kingdom.

His person (vv. 18–21). If any of us asked our friends what people were saying about us, it would be an evidence of pride, but not so with Jesus Christ. People had better know who He is, because what we think about Jesus determines our eternal destiny (John 8:24; 1 John 4:1–3). It is impossible to be wrong about Jesus and right with God.

Jesus had prayed all night before choosing His disciples (Luke 6:12–13), and now He prayed before asking for their personal confession of faith. The crowd would have its opinions (see Luke 9:7–8), but His disciples must have convictions. Peter was the spokesman for the group and gave a clear witness to the deity of Jesus Christ. This was the second time that he confessed Christ publicly (John 6:68–69). Except for Judas (John 6:70–71), all of the Twelve had faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded them (the word means "an order from a military officer") not to spread this truth openly. To begin with, the message of His messiahship could not be divorced from the fact of His death and resurrection, and He was now going to teach this to the Twelve. They had a difficult time grasping this new lesson and did not really understand it until after He was raised from the dead (Luke 24:44–48). The Jewish people saw Jesus primarily as a healer and a potential deliverer. If the Apostles began preaching that He was indeed the Messiah, it might cause a popular uprising against Rome.

His sacrifice (vv. 22–26). Jesus had already given a number of "hints" about His sacrificial death, but now He began to teach this truth clearly to His disciples. John the Baptist had presented Him as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29), and Jesus had predicted the "destruction" of the temple of His body (John 2:19). When He compared Himself to the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14) and to Jonah (Matt. 12:38–40), Jesus was making statements about His suffering and death.

This is the first of three statements in Luke about His coming passion in Jerusalem (Luke 9:43–45; 18:31–34). It is clear that the Twelve did not understand, partly because of their unbelief and immaturity, and partly because it was "hidden" from them by God. Jesus taught them as they were able to receive the truth (John 16:12). It must have shocked the men to hear that their own religious leaders would kill their Master.

But Jesus did not stop with a private announcement of His own death. He also made a public declaration about a cross for *every* disciple. In his Gospel, Matthew tells us that this was necessary because of Peter's desire to protect Jesus from suffering (Matt. 16:22ff). Keep in mind that Jesus is talking about *discipleship* and not *sonship*. We are not saved from our sins because we take up a cross and follow Jesus, but because we trust the Saviour who died on the cross for our sins. After we become children of God, then we become disciples.

The closest contemporary word to “disciple” is probably “apprentice.” A disciple is more than a student who learns lessons by means of lectures and books. He is one who learns by living and working with his teacher in a daily “hands on” experience. Too many Christians are content to be listeners who gain a lot of knowledge but who have never put that knowledge into practice.

In the Roman world, the cross was a symbol of shame, guilt, suffering, and rejection. There could be no more despicable way to die. Crucifixion was not mentioned in polite conversation, and the people would no more think of wearing crosses on their person than we would think of wearing gold or silver electric chairs.

Jesus laid down the stern requirements for discipleship. We must first say no to ourselves—not simply to pleasures or possessions, but to *self*—and then take up *our* cross and follow Christ daily. This means to be identified with Him in surrender, suffering, and sacrifice. You cannot crucify yourself; you can only yield your body (Rom. 12:1–2) and let God do the rest.

Of course, this kind of life seems foolish to the world; but to the Christian, it is wisdom. To save your life is to lose it, and how can you ever get it back again? But to give your life to Christ is to save it and to live it in fullness. If a person owned the whole world, he would still be too poor to buy back a lost life.

Discipleship is a daily discipline: we follow Jesus a step at a time, a day at a time. A weary cleaning woman said to a friend of mine, “The trouble with life is that it’s so daily!” But she was wrong. One of the *best* things about life is that we can take it a day at a time (Deut. 33:25).

Our motive should be to glorify Christ. Anyone who is ashamed of Christ will never take up a cross and follow Him. But if we are ashamed of Him now, He will be ashamed of us when He comes again (Mark 8:38; 2 Tim. 2:11–13) and we will be ashamed before Him (1 John 2:28).

His kingdom (vv. 27). As far as the Gospel record is concerned, the Transfiguration was the only occasion during Christ’s earthly ministry when He revealed the glory of His person. Luke did not use the word *transfigure* but he described the same scene (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). The word means “a change in appearance that comes from within,” and it gives us the English word *metamorphosis*.

What were the reasons behind this event? For one thing, it was God’s seal of approval to Peter’s confession of faith that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:14). It was also the Father’s way of encouraging the Son as He began to make His way to Jerusalem. The Father had spoken at the baptism (Luke 3:22) and would speak again during that final week of the Son’s earthly ministry (John 12:23–28). Beyond the suffering of the cross would be the glory of the throne, a lesson that Peter emphasized in his first epistle (1 Peter 4:12–5:4).

Our Lord’s own words in Luke 9:27 indicate that the event was a demonstration (or illustration) of the promised kingdom of God. This seems logical, for the disciples were confused about the kingdom because of Jesus’ words about the cross. (We must not be too hard on them because the prophets were also confused—1 Peter 1:10–12.) Jesus was reassuring them that the Old Testament prophecies would be fulfilled, but first He had to suffer before He could enter into His glory (note especially 2 Peter 1:12–21).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 229-230)

4. JESUS’S TEACHING ABOUT HIS IDENTITY AND MISSION (9:18–27) (Matt. 16:13–28; Mark 8:27–9:1)

For the first time in this section Jesus taught His disciples about His ultimate mission—the fact that He had to die.

9:18–21. On this occurrence, which Mark said was on the way north to Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27), Jesus initiated the questioning about **who** people said He was (cf. Luke 9:7–9). Jesus was specifically interested in who the **disciples** thought He was. **Peter**, answering for the entire group, affirmed that He is **the Christ** (i.e., the Messiah) **of God**. Though some time had passed since the incident of the loaves and fish, the implication from Luke seems to be that it was Jesus' sufficiency in that instance which clinched His identification as Messiah in the disciples' minds. Jesus did not want others to know of this (v. 21) because it was not time for Him to be proclaimed publicly as Messiah. The public proclamation would come about at a later time and it was that proclamation which Jesus spoke about next.

9:22–27. The subject of these verses is death—Jesus' death and His followers' deaths. He pointed out that the Jewish leaders would play a prominent part in His death (v. 22). Jesus also gave His first indication that He would be resurrected (v. 22). Jesus then discussed the deaths of His followers. They were to have the same attitude toward death and life that He had. Each one **must deny himself**, that is, not think about his own good. Also he must **take up his cross daily**, that is, admit that the One for whom he carried the cross was right (see comments on 14:27). And he must **follow** Jesus, even to death.

The words Jesus spoke in this setting must be understood in their historical context. Not long before this the disciples had been actively engaged in telling the nation about the Messiah and His kingdom program. No doubt many thought the disciples were throwing their lives away. They had given up their sources of income and were in danger because they associated with Jesus. Jesus assured His disciples that they were doing the right thing. They had chosen the proper values (9:24–25). People were to respond in faith and identify with that program (v. 4). Those who did not identify with the kingdom program would be rejected (v. 5). In the same manner Jesus noted that if one **is ashamed of Him** (i.e., will not identify with Him or believe on Him) **and His words** (i.e., His message), **the Son of Man will be ashamed of him** in the future. It was vital that the people of that generation side with Jesus and His disciples in order to escape future judgment. That judgment will occur **when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels** (cf. 2 Thes. 1:7–10).

Jesus added, **Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God**. Over the centuries many views on this statement have been suggested. The four most common views are these: (1) Jesus was talking about the beginning of Christian missions at Pentecost. Surely most of the apostles did see the activities on the day of Pentecost for only Judas was dead at that time. However, to identify Pentecost with the kingdom violates much of the Old Testament teaching about the kingdom. (2) Jesus was speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem. However, it is difficult to see in what way that would even symbolize the kingdom of God. (3) Jesus meant that the disciples would not die with Him but would continue to spread the gospel after His death. But it is difficult to see how this would be related to the kingdom in light of the Old Testament with which the disciples were familiar. (4) Jesus was speaking of the three apostles who would accompany Him up the mountain of transfiguration. The transfiguration was a foretaste of the glories of the kingdom. This seems the best view. Luke linked this teaching (Luke 9:27) with the transfiguration account (vv. 28–36).

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 276-281). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Context

Whereas in Luke this account is located immediately after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, in Mark these two accounts are separated by Mark 6:45–8:26. By his “great omission” Luke tied these two events together. Mark and Matthew used the account of Peter’s confession as the turning point in Jesus’ ministry, after which he began to teach his disciples about the necessity of his death (cf. Mark 8:31; Matt 16:21). Luke again revealed that he was more concerned with logical rather than chronological order because for him Peter’s confession served primarily as the answer to Herod’s question concerning Jesus (Luke 9:7–9), even though it also served as a turning point. The location of the confession (cf. Mark 8:27; Matt 16:13) and Jesus’ rebuke of Peter (cf. Mark 8:32–33; Matt 16:22–23) are both unimportant and contrary to Luke’s interests. (Luke’s Gospel minimizes both Jesus’ ministry in “Gentile” territory [cf. Acts 10:39; 13:31] and some of Mark’s negative descriptions of the disciples.) Additional clarification of Herod’s musing will be provided in Luke 9:28–36.

The present account consists of three distinct parts: (1) Peter’s confession, 9:18–21; (2) Jesus’ passion prediction, 9:22; and (3) Jesus’ teachings on discipleship, 9:23–27. In favor of the historicity of the confession is the fact that it is tied to a relatively unknown place, Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27). Numerous places would better serve as a location for such a confession if this were simply a creative piece of fiction. (Think of how well this account would function after Luke 19:38.) The negative portrayal of Peter (Mark 8:32–33) is frequently pointed to as supportive of its historicity. As to the passion prediction, it must be admitted that Luke and the early church did word such predictions in light of their knowledge of subsequent events. Yet this is no reason to assume that the passion prediction is unauthentic, a creation of the early church. Even if one discounts the possibility of genuine foreknowledge, surely Jesus must have been aware of the possibility of a violent death; for John the Baptist and many OT prophets had been martyred. Given the hostility his preaching frequently aroused, it would be incredible for Jesus not to have contemplated the possibility of a like fate. There is also no reason Jesus could not have used the “cross” as a symbol of commitment, since the sight of people carrying a cross to execution was all too familiar.

The Lukan redaction is seen in several areas in addition to his omission of Mark 6:45–8:26, the place of Caesarea Philippi, and the rebuke of Peter. Luke also: omitted “and he began to teach” (Mark 8:31); enlarged the call to discipleship to “all” (Luke 9:23); added “daily” (9:23); omitted “the gospel” (Mark 8:35) and all of Mark 8:37; and changed Mark’s “in his Father’s glory” (8:38) to “in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels” (9:26).

Comments

9:18 Once when Jesus was praying. Again Luke portrayed Jesus at prayer before a significant event. See comments on 3:21 and Introduction 8 (7).

Who do the crowds say I am? Matthew 16:13 uses “Son of Man” instead of “I.” See Introduction 8 (4).

9:19 The possibilities given in Luke 9:7–8 are repeated here, so that this account forms its climax. Luke had no objection to portraying Jesus as a prophet (see comments on 4:24). It is not an incorrect description but an inadequate one by itself: Jesus is a prophet and more. Tannehill aptly notes, “Those who speak of Jesus as a prophet in Luke may not understand him completely, but this title does not represent a distortion to be rejected.”

9:20 But what about you? The “you” is emphatic. This question of Jesus clearly implies that Jesus wanted more from the disciples than a repetition of the current speculation found in 9:7–8, 19. Jesus expected more insight from the disciples. Having experienced the preceding miracles, they should have had a better understanding than the crowds.

Peter answered. Peter replied as spokesman for the disciples.

The Christ. For the meaning of this term, see comments on 2:11 and 3:22. Jesus already had been so designated by the angels (2:11), the narrator (2:26), the demons (4:41), and indirectly by Jesus himself (4:18); but this is the first time the disciples had recognized him as such. It thus marks an important step in their training. (The importance of this event is heightened in the parallels in Mark 8:31 and Matt 16:21.) Peter and the disciples had witnessed Jesus’ miracles of healing, his rule over nature, his raising of the dead, and had heard his teachings. They now acknowledged that God has, indeed, visited his people. The promised Messiah has come. He who brings God’s kingdom is the King, David’s Son, the Anointed! Luke’s readers have been prepared for this by 1:32–33, 69; 2:11.

Of God. By this qualification Luke emphasized that Jesus is the Anointed One whom God had promised to send. It is thus an allusion here to the fulfillment of Scripture.

9:21 Not to tell this. The command for silence was given not because Peter’s confession was false but precisely because it was true. The confession was not inappropriate, but its proclamation was dangerous. Such a proclamation would have had disastrous consequences; for to Jesus, “Christ/Messiah” meant suffering and death as God’s Anointed, whereas among the people it signified the Anointed King who would throw off the Roman yoke, smite the Gentiles, and bring political independence and greatness to Israel. Jesus had rejected such a nationalistic conception of messiahship at the beginning of his ministry (see 4:1–15, “Context”). Because of this popular misconception, the public proclamation of Jesus as the Christ would have brought about an immediate confrontation between Jesus and Rome. Even the disciples failed to comprehend what Jesus’ role as the Christ entailed. What was lacking in Peter’s confession was the realization that Christ’s role included the suffering of 9:22.

9:22 Jesus’ first passion prediction follows immediately upon Peter’s confession. This close association underlines the fact that for Jesus and the church, God’s Anointed was a suffering Messiah (cf. also Luke 9:43b–45; 18:31–34; cf. also 24:7).

The Son of Man. See comments on 5:24. Here it is the Son of Man who suffered, whereas elsewhere it is the Christ (24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3; 26:23). Since these two titles, as well as such titles as Prophet and Lord, were used to describe Jesus, it is not surprising that his suffering could be described variously as the suffering of a prophet (Luke 13:33–34), of the Son of Man, of the Christ, and of the Lord (Acts 2:36). The titles most commonly associated with the passion, however, are the Son of Man and Christ.

Must. The death of Jesus is not to be seen as a mistake or tragedy. It was a divine necessity and took place in accordance with the divine plan. This will be confirmed in 9:31. See Introduction 8 (1).

Suffer. This is not a synonym for “to die” in Greek, but in the context of Jesus’ passion it does refer to his death. For its use with “many things and be rejected,” cf. Luke 17:25.

By the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law. The use of a single “the” indicates the unity of these three groups in their plan and purpose. “Chief priests” does not refer to the high priests but to those priests who held leading positions in the temple hierarchy.

On the third day. Both Luke and Matthew (Matt 16:21) preferred “on the third day” to Mark’s “after three days” (Mark 8:31). (Cf. Mark 9:31 and 10:34 with Matt 17:23 and

20:19/Luke 18:33.) This may be due to a concern that “after three days” could be misunderstood and not allow for a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday resurrection. “After three days,” however, can simply mean on the third day (cf. 1 Sam 30:12 “for three days and nights” with 1 Sam 30:13 “the third day today” in the LXX). It is more likely that Luke and Matthew chose “on the third day” because it was the more traditional designation.

Be raised to life. Here God’s raising of Jesus from the dead is emphasized by the use of the passive. The active tense can also be used (cf. 16:31; 24:46; Acts 10:41; 17:3).

9:23 Then he said to them all. The audience of disciples in Luke 9:18 is enlarged.

If anyone would come after me. This metaphor describes what it means to become a disciple (in the sense of a follower) of Jesus as 14:27 shows.

Three conditions of discipleship are laid out. The first involves a need to deny oneself. This is much more radical than simply a denial of certain things. This mandates a rejection of a life based on self-interest and self-fulfillment. Instead a disciple is to be one who seeks to fulfill the will and the teachings of Christ. Another metaphor to express this act of commitment is to hate one’s own life (14:26). The opposite response can be seen in 12:9; Acts 3:13–14; 7:35.

The second condition involves the need to take up one’s cross. This need not be a *vaticinia ex eventu*, or a prophecy after the fact, but Jesus’ own crucifixion reveals more fully to Luke’s readers that this call is for a commitment unto death. There needs to be willingness to suffer martyrdom if need be. (Cf. Luke 14:27 and 23:26, where Simon of Cyrene takes up the cross and follows Jesus.) Luke added the need to do this “daily.” Whereas Mark emphasized the initial act of denying oneself once and for all (Mark 8:34), in Luke there is an emphasis on the need to make such a commitment each day.

The final condition is the need to follow Jesus. In contrast to the other conditions this verb is a present imperative, indicating that following Jesus must be continual. For this metaphor see comments on 5:11.

9:24 This saying is an example of both antithetical and chiasmic parallelism: *A = save; B = lose; b = lose; a = save*. There is also a pun, in that the first use of “save” means *a failure to deny oneself*, but the second means *to receive eternal life* (cf. John 12:25). Conversely, to “lose” in the first instance means *to suffer the judgment of hell*, but in the second it means *to deny oneself*. This verse is also an example of paradox.

For whoever wants to save his life. This is the opposite of Luke 9:23. Compare 17:33.

Loses his life. To lose one’s life is to be equated not with Christian martyrdom but with the fulfillment of the three conditions given in 9:23. On rare occasions this may lead to martyrdom, but one can fulfill the conditions of 9:23 without suffering martyrdom.

For me. In Mark’s parallel “and the gospel” (Mark 8:35) is added, emphasizing that commitment to Jesus involves a commitment to his teachings as well. By not including this statement, Luke focused attention more upon Jesus’ person. Nevertheless, being ashamed of Jesus’ teachings is equivalent to being ashamed of Jesus himself (Luke 9:26). Once again Jesus was claiming that the eternal state of humanity depends on a relationship to him. See comments on 7:23.

9:25 This verse is essentially a proverb stating that one should live in light of ultimate values. The loss of one’s soul, i.e., experiencing God’s judgment (cf. 10:14), is far too great a price to pay for possessing the whole world.

9:26 If anyone is ashamed of me. This is another way of saying “to disown me,” and the opposite is “to acknowledge me” as 12:8–9 points out (cf. 22:54–61). The loyalty to ultimate values demanded in 9:24 becomes more focused on Jesus.

And my words. The person and message of Jesus cannot be separated. (Cf. how Paul combined being ashamed and the gospel in Rom 1:16.)

The Son of Man. Attempts have been made to distinguish between Jesus and the Son of Man in this verse because the Son of Man is referred to in the third person (cf. also Luke 12:8; 22:69; Matt 19:28), but no Evangelist interpreted these sayings in this way. It is better to interpret the Son of Man sayings in the third person as referring not to two different persons but rather to two different states: Jesus' present lowly condition and his future glory and exaltation. See comments on 5:24.

When he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father. The parallels in Mark 8:38 and Matt 16:27 have only "his Father's glory." Luke heightened the Christological nature of this saying by attributing personal glory to Jesus (Luke 21:27; 24:26). The coming of the Son of Man is also referred to in 12:40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30; 18:8; 21:27, 36.

9:27 Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God. Grammatically this is a subjunctive of emphatic negation used to indicate strong denial. This statement has caused a great deal of confusion. It does not say that the disciples would not die but rather that they would not die before they saw "the kingdom of God." Some of the various interpretations suggested include: (1) the coming of God's kingdom in Jesus' resurrection; (2) the coming of God's kingdom in the Spirit's coming at Pentecost (this is weakened by Luke's omission of "come with power" from the parallel in Mark 9:1); (3) the spread of the church throughout the world; (4) the recognition that God's kingdom is already realized; (5) Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70; (6) the transfiguration, which follows this saying in each Synoptic Gospel; and (7) the parousia, or second coming. The last interpretation has as a corollary that this saying is, of course, in error since the Lord has not returned. It is most unlikely that Luke understood this as a reference to the parousia; for by the time he wrote, the disciples were for the most part, if not entirely, deceased. If Luke wrote his Gospel in part in order to correct a disappointment caused by a misunderstanding concerning Jesus' return, it is even more unlikely that this saying refers to the parousia. See Introduction 7 (3). Although Luke's omission of the expression "come with power" (Mark 9:1) was quite intentional, it appears that he understood this promise (Luke 9:27) as having been fulfilled in the next event—the transfiguration. The form of this saying in Luke is less troublesome than in the Matthean counterpart (Matt 16:28). The expression "taste death" is also found in John 8:52 and Heb 2:9 and refers to "death as a bitter experience."

The Lukan Message

This section contains several Lukan theological emphases, and it is difficult to do justice to all of them. One clear theme found in the passage involves Christology. Peter's confession is perhaps the Christological high point of the entire Gospel. Here is the authoritative confession of the "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:2) about the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Who is this man? He is the Christ of God (9:20). Peter thus provided a definitive answer to Herod's question in 9:9. Additional titles may be attributed to him in Luke-Acts, but none are more important or more basic than this. Jesus is God's Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ. Along with the description of who Jesus is, this passage also contains the clear teaching that the destiny of all humanity is based upon one's relationship to him. Salvation consists of following him (9:23), of losing or surrendering one's life to him (9:24), of not being ashamed of him or his teachings (9:26). The "totalitarian" nature of this claim must not be overlooked. For Luke (as for all the NT writers) life, death, heaven, hell, salvation, judgment, justification, and damnation are

all determined by one's attitude toward Jesus. Jesus is unlike all others in that the destiny of this world and the ultimate fate of all humanity revolves around him.

A second Lukan theme in this passage is Jesus' future death. This is the clearest reference found so far in the Gospel. The necessity of this death is clearly taught (9:22). The "must" (*dei*) reveals the divine imperative, but Luke did not give a clear explanation of why this death was a divine necessity. We cannot obtain any doctrine of the atonement from this passage. See Introduction 8 (8).

This passage also contains a description of the human response necessary for participation in the divine plan of salvation. Whereas elsewhere the required response has been described primarily as the need to "believe" and "repent," here a different set of metaphors are introduced. One needs to "come after" or "follow" Jesus, "deny oneself," "take up the cross daily," "lose one's life," and not be "ashamed" of Jesus or his words. These are not additional requirements on top of "believing and repenting." Nor are they to be seen as a challenge urging Christians to a deeper commitment, for what is at stake is saving one's life (9:24), forfeiting one's life (9:25), and being denied (access to God's presence) at the final judgment (9:26). These new metaphors are best understood as different aspects of faith and repentance. To deny oneself is to have a radical change of mind (to repent) regarding one's priorities in life. These metaphors help to focus attention on what is involved in true faith and repentance. If one were to look at the human response in conversion as a kind of prism, the faith, repentance, denying oneself, and not being ashamed would all be different refractions of that prism, viewed from different angles.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 9:18-36). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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