



The Gospel of Luke - Chapter Nine

IV. Luke 4:16-9:50 - The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Nine

At this time, Jesus gave his disciples the power over demons and diseases and sent them out into the country in pairs. The disciples went from town to town, telling the people about Jesus and healing them in his name.

Herod began to worry about Jesus. Some believed that he was John the Baptist who had come back to life after Herod had beheaded him. Others believed he was the prophet Elijah. Herod was eager to meet with Jesus.

The disciples returned and were euphoric, telling Jesus all that had happened. Jesus took the disciples to Bethsaida, where they could be alone and talk. A large crowd had followed them; Jesus had compassion, taught them and healed many. As time got on, it was realised they had no food to eat other than 5 loaves and 2 small fish. Jesus got the people to sit down, gave thanks to God and divided up the food so there was enough to feed everyone what they wanted. Afterwards, the disciples collected up 12 baskets full of left over bread! There were at least 5,000 men in the crowd.

Later, when they were on their own, Jesus asked them who the people thought he was. Most thought he was a prophet but Simon Peter, through the Spirit, recognised he was the Christ of God. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone.

He also explained for the first time that the Christ had to suffer and die but on the third day he would rise. He spoke of the cost of being a disciple and remarked that some of them would see him in his glory.

Eight days later Jesus took Peter, John and James up a mountain to pray. Jesus was transfigured and joined by Moses and Elijah. The disciples were terrified and Jesus warned them to say nothing of this until after he was raised from death, which the disciples again could not comprehend. They returned to join the others and continued in his ministry of healing the sick.

Jesus again tells them what will happen to him but again they fail to understand.

A power struggle emerges within the ranks of the disciples because they did not understand who was the greatest in heaven. Jesus instructed them that they must come to him as little children would and that the humblest among them would be the greatest.

They told Jesus about others that were preaching the Gospel in his name but who were not part of their group. Jesus replied that it was OK for this to happen, as those who were for him were not against him and they should not be restricted from doing so.

Jesus and his disciples then started out on what would be his final journey to Jerusalem. They came to a Samaritan village that refused to receive Jesus. Two of the disciples wanted to rain down fire from heaven on them for this but Jesus reminded them of grace.

Jesus again reminded his followers of the cost of being a disciple.

IV.g [Luke 9:1-50 - Jesus and the twelve](#)

Jesus interacts with his 12 apostles in various ministry and teaching situations.

IV.g.i [Luke 9:1-6 - Jesus sends out the twelve](#)

The mission of the 12 apostles serves as a time of apprenticeship for their ultimate mission after Jesus' ascension, with further guidance given as Luke outlined in these texts: <<Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word>> (Luke 1:2), <<Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high>> (Luke 24:45-49), and: <<But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth>> (Acts 1:8).

¹ When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

[Luke 9:1-2](#)

[When Jesus had called the twelve together.](#) See Luke 6:13-20 for a list of those chosen.

[Power and authority](#) and the power to [cure diseases](#) was discussed in Luke Chapters 4 & 5.

Some think this [power and authority](#) was for the duration of this mission as its absence in v.40 and the equipping in Luke 24:49 and in Acts 1:8 suggest. It is manifested in their casting out [demons](#), curing [diseases](#) and proclaiming the [Kingdom of God](#).

The close relationship between '[the Kingdom of God](#)' and '[the Gospel](#)' is shown in v.6, where the work of the disciples is described as '[preaching the Gospel and healing](#)'.

[He sent them out](#) is the verbal form of the noun apostle.

³ He told them: Take nothing for the journey – no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.

Luke 9:3

Let us consider the corresponding verses in Matthew 10:9-10 <<Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep>>, and Mark 6:8-9 <<These were his instructions: Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic>>.

Take nothing for the journey. Jesus is not prohibiting the Twelve from owning any of these items; rather he is stressing the specific requirements for this particular mission. This is to be a relatively quick preaching journey, so they are not to spend time procuring extra supplies. Those to whom they minister must support their mission for the labourer deserves his food. Although some have seen a contradiction between the commissioning of the 12 disciples in Matthew 10:1-4 and Luke 9:3, as compared to a similar commissioning account in Mark 6:8-9, it is best to understand the two accounts as being complementary. That is, they report two different parts of a longer set of instructions, in which Jesus told the Twelve not to acquire new supplies but that they could take the essential supplies needed for the journey, i.e. the staff and sandals that they already had.

The travel instructions are unique and specific for the disciples. These unique instructions serve as signs to Jewish people of peace, defencelessness, trust in God and urgency. In both instances, there is liberation from servitude. Bread, bag, money in their belts and two tunics all represent that which secures life. The provisions are to come from people who repent upon hearing the disciples' message.

Various explanations have been proposed to reconcile these words with Matthew 10:9-10 and Luke 9:3. The best solution is probably that in Matthew and Luke, Jesus tells the disciples not to acquire a new staff or sandals for their journey but in Mark he adds that they can take the sandals and staff they already have. Some interpreters have proposed that the disciples were permitted to take a walking staff, while the staff prohibited in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 9:3 was for self-defence.

Perhaps this is due to the brevity of their mission and to teach them to trust God to supply their needs as we see in Luke 12:22-31, which has the title 'Do not worry'.

No staff. According to Mark 6:8 the disciples *were* allowed to take a staff. Here in Luke's account Jesus is probably not prohibiting a staff altogether but prohibiting taking an extra one just as Luke 10:4 prohibits extra sandals: <<Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road>>.

Bag is a knapsack for carrying provisions. As they are travelling light they have no need to take such a bag with them. A container for water should be sufficient as they would have been fed in the towns and villages they visited.

⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.

Luke 9:4

Whatever house. The Twelve were not to go from house to house possibly to seek better housing as confirmed in Luke 10:7 <<Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house>>, but were to establish their headquarters within the hospitality of one house as a base for ministering in the community. By staying in one location, they are not just making it easy for

those who support them to come to hear them but it also makes a statement to those who oppose them to show that they are not afraid to make a stance.

⁵ If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.

Luke 9:5

If people do not welcome you or wherever they do not receive you. Receive is used elsewhere with respect to welcoming and receiving God's word: <<Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away>> (Luke 8:13), Jesus (v.48 and v.53), Jesus' followers (v.5 and v.48), and the Kingdom of God (Luke 18:17).

Shake the dust off your feet is also recorded in Luke 10:11 and Acts 13:51. Shaking the dust off your feet was a sign used by Jews after leaving a Gentile region. Here it also serves as a sign of displeasure against those who did not welcome them. But there is no human militancy in the proclamation of Jesus' message. For the missionaries, it is a sign of judgment on those rejecting the Gospel: <<Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near>> (Luke 10:11). This visibly illustrates the future judgment of those who reject Christ's messengers. God is the sole judge. The act of shaking off the dust is an illustration to the fact that their rejection of God's message leaves the town accountable to God.

⁶ So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

Luke 9:6

Preaching the gospel and healing people. This is clear indication that disciples not only have the authority of Christ to go and proclaim the Gospel but, if they are truly doing so in his name and according to his will, then they will see people respond to the message and even mighty miracles of God being performed through their faithful actions.

IV.g.ii Luke 9:7-9 - Herod Antipas is perplexed by Jesus

This section picks up the question of Luke 8:25 'Who then is this?' and provides an interlude to Luke's report of the mission of the Twelve (vv.1-6 and v.10).

⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸ others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life.

Luke 9:7-8

Herod the tetrarch was discussed in Luke 3:1. Herod heard about all that was going on, perhaps due to the mission of the Twelve (vv.1-6).

As a careful historian, Luke uses the proper title tetrarch to describe Herod Antipas rather than the less precise general term king. Although Matthew also refers to him as tetrarch he does write: <<The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered

that her request be granted>> (Matthew 14:9). Mark simply refers to him as king: <<King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known>> (Mark 6:14).

Some were saying that John had been raised, others that Elijah had appeared, one of the prophets. These are among some of the misconceptions people had about Jesus at the time. The list of popular beliefs about Jesus include that he is:

1. The revived John the Baptist.
2. The expected Elijah from Malachi 4:5.
3. One of the OT prophets who had been brought back to life.

The first belief, held by Herod Antipas, as we read: <<But when Herod heard this, he said, John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!>> (Mark 6:16), is clearly false.

The second opinion reflects the widespread expectation in Judaism, based on prophecies like: <<See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap>> (Malachi 3:1-2), and: <<See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse>> (Malachi 4:5-6), or he was Elijah who was caught up to heaven without dying: <<As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind>> (2 Kings 2:11), who would return at the end of time.

Contrary to popular speculation that Jesus might be the expected Elijah, Jesus himself describes John the Baptist as having come 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' as confirmed in Mark 9:11-13 <<And they asked him, Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first? Jesus replied, To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him>>.

The third proposal: 'a prophet like one of the prophets of old' might have arisen from Deuteronomy 18:15 <<The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him>>, and Deuteronomy 18:18 <<I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him>>. Jesus was far greater than any of these three theories, something that Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi will now show.

Had come back to life or had risen. The term is used to describe Jesus' resurrection, which would indicate that a literal return from the dead is probably meant.

⁹ But Herod said, I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about? And he tried to see him.

Luke 9:9

I beheaded John. For a fuller account of this story refer to Deuteronomy 18:15, which gives a background, and Mark 6:14-29.

John the Baptist had publicly charged Herod Antipas with breaking the law by marrying Herodias, the former wife of the still living half brother Herod Philip I, the son of Mariamne II and Herod the Great in AD27. As a result, Herod had put John in prison.

John said to him 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife'. Although Herod Antipas was not a Jew, John did not hesitate to tell him that he had violated the moral law of God. Similarly, the Gospel message that people should repent, which would eventually go to Gentiles as well as Jews, assumes that God holds all people in the world accountable to his moral laws as revealed in scripture. This still applies today. Just because someone does not believe in Jesus does not mean they will not be judged by him. Although we must never judge their decisions and life-style choices, we must never condone them either if they are contrary to the teaching of Jesus and the will of God.

Herodias thus held a grudge against John and intended to put him to death. But Herod Antipas feared John and resisted this plan. Perhaps he feared an uprising on account of John's popularity and also held a superstitious fear of some kind of divine punishment. The Jewish historian Josephus notes that people viewed Antipas' death as God's judgment for slaying John the Baptist (Jewish Antiquities 18.116-118). Antipas also saw John's innocence and godliness, and thus had conflicting thoughts about him <<When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him>> (Mark 6:20b).

Leaders of the three societal groups were invited to celebrate the birthday of Herod Antipas: nobles or high-ranking governmental leaders of Galilee, military officers and wealthy, prominent Galilæan men. As part of the entertainment, Herodias' daughter Salome danced for them. Antipas was so pleased with what he saw that he offered her any wish. On her mother's prompting she asked for the head of John the Baptist.

Foolishly, Herod Antipas not only offers to fulfil the wish of Salome but reinforces his statement by means of a public oath. 'Up to half of my kingdom' is to be understood more as a figure of speech than a literal promise. We should all be careful what we promise!

He was exceedingly sorry but could not go back without losing face. Herod Antipas was grieved because he did not relish putting John to death. However, Herodias had manoeuvred Antipas into a public oath in the presence of his most important subjects. His reputation and authority were at stake, so he had John beheaded.

And he tried to see him foreshadows Luke 13:31, which we will read in a moment, and Luke 23:6-12, where Pilate sends Jesus to Herod. It refers to either Antipas' desire to see Jesus perform a miracle, as recorded in these words: <<When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle>> (Luke 23:8), or his desire to kill him: <<At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you>> (Luke 13:31). It was a bit of a quandary for Herod. Because of his position he could not go to Jesus, and because of what happened with John, he could not appear to make it look as if he had seized him, as he had done with John. This may well have started riots, as the people were following Jesus in large numbers at this stage.

IV.g.iii Luke 9:10-17 - Jesus feeds the 5,000

When the Twelve returned from their mission, as we saw in vv.1-6, Jesus sought to spend some time with them in private (v.10). But they were soon found by the crowds (v.11). Jesus performed many miracles of healing and then miraculously provided a meal. This is another example of Jehovah-jireh - God provides.

¹⁰When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,

Luke 9:10

The apostles, the Twelve and the disciples are used interchangeably here.

What they had done refers to their use of Jesus' delegated power and authority in the casting out of demons, healings and preaching.

Bethsaida was just northeast of where the River Jordan flows into the Sea of Galilee from the north. Research since the 1980s has focused on et-Tell as the site for Bethsaida. This site does have residential remains from around NT times, including an apparent fisherman's house with ancient fishing equipment. It is located above an earlier Iron Age, that is, Abrahamic OT-era settlement. Excavation geologists suggest that the Sea of Galilee originally extended closer to this site than it does today.

¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

Luke 9:11

Kingdom of God. Jesus' and the apostles' message was identical. The Gospel should always be proclaimed as it is recorded. It must not be added to or significantly altered. However, this does not take anything away from modern translations that continue to evolve as more manuscripts are found that allow interpreters to understand better how the language was used in those days.

Healed those who needed healing. As in v.6, healing receives more emphasis than casting out demons. Probably the need for exorcism was less common than the need for healing.

We should not forget that the real healing power of Jesus is spiritual as he prepares us for life eternal.

¹² Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.

Luke 9:12

Send the crowd away. The disciples manifest a sincere concern for the crowd but have forgotten Jesus' miracles in Luke 8:22-56 and their own in v.6.

¹³ He replied, You give them something to eat. They answered, We have only five loaves of bread and two fish – unless we go and buy food for all this crowd. ¹⁴ (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.

Luke 9:13-14

About five thousand men. There were almost certainly women and children along as well. Commentators estimate the crowd to be between 10-20,000 people but it is not the number that is important but the intent, the compassion and the capability.

¹⁵ The disciples did so, and everybody sat down.

Luke 9:15

The disciples did so. As in Luke 5:5, the disciples' obedience precedes understanding.

¹⁶ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people.

Luke 9:16

Looking up to heaven. Jesus depends on his heavenly Father in this miracle of multiplying food. As the true shepherd he satisfies them. As God provided manna in the desert so Jesus provides food in a deserted place. The focus is thus not on the miracle itself but on the one who worked it. Jesus is not merely a prophet; he acts as God acts. The feeding of the 5,000 reinforces Jesus' proclamation: after feeding them the word of God, they now miraculously receive bread and fish, i.e. their basic foods.

Jesus' prayers should always remind us that everything comes from God and through Jesus. We must always be ready to ask and spend even more of our time giving thanks for everything we have received from him and through him.

With the exception of looked up, a praying gesture, all of these actions taking, gave thanks, broke, gave are found in the accounts of the Last Supper as recorded for us in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19 and is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.

¹⁷ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Luke 9:17

Twelve basketfuls. As with the miracles of Elijah and Elisha written in 1 Kings 17:16, 2 Kings 4:7 and 2 Kings 4:42-44, much of the food is left over. Jesus did not want any food to be wasted.

Jesus fills our souls with his message and collects up what is left over, demonstrating that heaven has all the 'bread' we need and then some!

IV.g.iv Luke 9:18-20 - Peter's confession of Christ

At last the realisation of who Jesus really is has dawned on the disciples as Peter confesses Jesus to be the long awaited Messiah of God. However, a full understanding of who Jesus really is will not become apparent until after his death, resurrection and ascension.

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.

Luke 9:18-20

Praying in private. For Jesus, praying before important events was as natural as breathing.

John the Baptist. The disciples repeat the same possibilities mentioned in vv.7-8. The responses are in line with the popular messianic expectations held in Israel arising from a strand of OT predictions about a great prophet who was to come.

But what about you. You is plural and is emphasised in the Greek, therefore all the apostles are being addressed and not just Peter.

Peter, as spokesman for the disciples, answered, 'The Christ of God'. Jesus is the Son of the God, who is alive unlike the pagan gods of Cæsarea Philippi. Jesus is God's unique Son, the fulfilment of the OT promise of a divine son as anointed king. When Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, he is acknowledging him as the divinely anointed leader and Messiah, who was expected to liberate the Jewish people from the oppressive yoke of Rome. Consider this verse: <<Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself>> (John 6:15). That Peter's confession is God-given we have: <<Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven>> (Matthew 16:17), and Peter's understanding was incomplete: <<He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. Get behind me, Satan! he said. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men>> (Mark 8:31-33). For the messianic Son of Man is divine, as confirmed by King David: <<The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet>> (Psalm 110:1), and: <<The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath>> (Psalm 110:5), and by Daniel: <<In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed>> (Daniel 7:13-14).

He is also destined to suffer, as it is written in Isaiah Chapter 53 <<Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto

death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors>>.

For me Isaiah Chapter 53 stands alongside the writings of Daniel as being among the most remarkable Messianic prophecies ever recorded: both in terms of its descriptive beauty and its historic accuracy.

That he is the Messiah is why Jesus charges his disciples to tell no one about him. As previously stated, the expectations of a political or military Messiah were high in Israel and for this knowledge to be made public prior to his crucifixion could have had all sorts of serious repercussions for Jesus earthly ministry and God's plan for salvation would not be thwarted.

Jesus' identity as the Christ was confessed by angels in Luke 2:11, by the Gospel narrator in Luke 2:26, by demons in Luke 4:41 and by Jesus himself in Luke 4:18. It is now confessed for the first time by the Twelve.

Christ comes from the Greek word *Christos* and has the same meaning as the Hebrew word Messiah. It is a title and not a name.

Even with this confession, the disciples still have more to learn about the kind of Messiah Jesus will be, as vv.21-22 will show. What the disciples do understand at this point is that Jesus is more than a prophet. That is, that Jesus' role as the Messiah is central to the inauguration of the new era of the kingdom.

IV.g.v Luke 9:21-22 - Jesus foretells his death

For the first time, and then restated in vv.43b-45, Jesus clearly teaches the Twelve that his role as God's anointed Messiah involves suffering and death.

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.

Luke 9:21-22

Not to tell this to anyone. Peter's confession in v.20 is correct but, as already discussed, proclaiming it widely at this time would be misunderstood because of Jewish nationalistic expectations, and would make Jesus' ministry more difficult, as people tried to force him into the role of a political and military leader against the Roman army.

That Jesus must suffer refers to the necessity of God's providential plan being fulfilled in his death.

For the Son of Man is Jesus' favourite self-designation indicating the true meaning of his identity and ministry:

1. The humble servant who has come to forgive common sinners.
2. The suffering servant whose atoning death and resurrection will redeem his people.
3. The glorious King and Judge who will return to establish God's kingdom on earth.

By the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law. The use of a single article in English 'the', emphasises in Greek the unity of this group. The chief priests are not the high priests but are members of the most prominent priestly families.

Jesus will be raised to life by God's Holy Spirit showing the deep and trusting relationship within the Trinitarian Godhead.

lv.g.vi Luke 9:23-27 - Jesus teaches the disciples

The following teachings on discipleship are addressed not just to the Twelve but to all (v.23).

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.

Luke 9:23

Come after me means to become a disciple qualified by: <<And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple>> (Luke 14:27), and requires a disciple to:

1. Deny himself: not simply denying certain things but denying personal control of one's life.
2. Take up his cross daily: <<and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me>> (Matthew 10:38). Crucifixion is a shocking metaphor for discipleship. A disciple must deny himself or die to self-will, take up his cross, i.e. embrace God's will no matter the cost and follow Christ. The goal of self-denial and taking up one's cross is not pathological self-abasement or a martyr complex but being free to follow the Messiah. Self-denial means letting go of self-determination as we see here: <<No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough that he should live on for ever and not see decay>> (Psalm 49:7-9), and replacing it with obedience to and dependence on the Messiah. Disciples are required to make a commitment that will lead to rejection and possibly even death.
3. Follow me: means to follow the example and teachings of Jesus. In Jesus' day, follow me meant also joining the company of Jesus' disciples who travelled in ministry with Jesus around Palestine.

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?

Luke 9:24-25

Save his life will lose it and gaining even the whole world is infinitely less valuable than one's eternal destiny in relation to God. Jesus' paradoxical statement demands two different senses of the word life. Whoever lives a self-centred life, focused on this present world, i.e. would save his life, will not find eternal life with God, i.e. will lose it. Whoever gives up his self-centred life of rebellion against God, i.e. loses his life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, will find everlasting communion with God, i.e. will save it.

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.

Luke 9:26

Being ashamed of Jesus means to deny any link with him, as confirmed in Peter's denial of Jesus in Luke 22:54-61, and is the opposite of acknowledging him as one's Lord and teacher: <<I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge

him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God>> (Luke 12:8-9). Jesus claims divine authority in final judgment. The person and message of Jesus, me and my words, are indivisible.

When he comes in his glory refers to the Second Coming. Luke emphasises the glory of Jesus by: <<At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory>> (Luke 21:27), and: <<Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?>> (Luke 24:26).

²⁷ I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:27

I tell you the truth used over 70 times in the Gospels was placed by Jesus at the beginning of statements rather than at the end. It emphasises the truth of what follows.

Some who are standing here refers to Peter, John and James who, within a matter of days, would witness the transfiguration.

This predicted event has been variously interpreted as referring to:

1. Jesus' transfiguration.
2. His resurrection.
3. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.
4. The spread of the kingdom through the preaching of the early church.
5. The destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in AD70.
6. The Second Coming and final establishment of the kingdom.

The immediate context seems to indicate the first view, the transfiguration, which immediately follows and is confirmed in Matthew 17:1-13 and Mark 9:2-10. There 'some' of Jesus' disciples 'saw' what Jesus will be like when he comes in the power of his kingdom. This interpretation is also supported by 2 Peter 1:16-18 <<We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain>>. Here Peter equates Jesus' glory with his transfiguration of which Peter was an eyewitness.

At the same time, interpretations 2, 3 and 4 are also quite possible, for they are all instances where Jesus 'came' in the powerful advance of his kingdom, which was partially but not yet fully realised. This is part of the 'now but not yet' of the kingdom.

Some interpreters think that Jesus is more generally speaking of many or all of the events in views 2 through 4.

View 5 is less persuasive because the judgment on Jerusalem does not reflect the positive growth of the kingdom.

View 6 is unacceptable for it would imply that Jesus was mistaken about the timing of his return.

IV.g.vii [Luke 9:28-36 - The transfiguration](#)

The question 'Who (then) is this?' asked in Luke 8:25 and v.9, and answered by Peter in v.20, is now answered decisively by God himself.

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

[Luke 9:28](#)

[About eight days after](#), which is probably an inclusive reckoning of time as Mark 9:2 gives it as: <<After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them>>. Peter, John and James see the kingdom coming in power at the transfiguration.

[Peter, John and James](#) are Jesus' chosen inner core group as we saw when Jesus raised the little girl in Luke 8:51.

There was no apparent hierarchical structure in the apostolic group. However, these three could be seen as 'first among equals'. Peter then might be seen as being 'first among equals' within this group and, therefore, of the whole group of apostles and disciples. Having said that, he must not forget that Jesus said repeatedly: <<If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all>> (Mark 9:35b).

[Mountain](#). Church tradition identifies this as Mount Tabor about 12 miles or 19km from the Sea of Galilee, but most scholars favour Mount Hermon, outside of Galilee and rising 9,166 feet or 2,794m above sea level.

[To pray](#). Even at the approach of this key face-to-face meeting with the Father, Jesus first reaction is to pray, probably giving thanks.

²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

[Luke 9:29](#)

Luke does not use the Greek word for transfigured (metamorphosthe) that is used by Matthew and Mark probably because it had pagan overtones. Instead, he is much more descriptive about Jesus, speaking of 'the fashion of his countenance was another thing from what it had been'. His face shone far beyond what Moses' did when he came down from the mount. Jesus clothes were 'white and glistening; as bright as lightening'. A Greek word used here is found nowhere else in the bible and indicates that he seemed to 'cover himself with light as with a garment'.

[His face changed](#). The transfiguration is not an illumination of Jesus from the outside but from the inside. This is confirmed in Exodus 34:29-35, when Moses' face becomes radiant after meeting with God although his appearance would only be a foreshadow of that to come in Jesus.

[Bright as a flash of lightning](#). The transfiguration provides a glimpse of the future glory of the Christ (v.20), as the Son of Man at his Second Coming (vv.26-27), when he comes in the cloud of the glory of God. This is confirmed in v.26 and in Luke 21:27 <<At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory>>. Once again in 2 Peter 1:16-18 <<We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received

honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain>>, [and in Revelation 1:7](#) <<Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen>>. It likewise gives a glimpse into the reality that Christ is the transcendent Son of God, sent by the Father, for the salvation of his people, i.e. for all who believe in him, both Jews and Gentiles.

³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah,

[Luke 9:30](#)

[Moses and Elijah](#) represent the Law and the Prophets. Their appearance refutes the incorrect guesses of v.8 and v.19 indicating that Jesus is the fulfilment of both.

Jesus is greater than both Moses, who represents the Law, (refer to Exodus 24:1 and 24:9), and Elijah, who represents the Prophets, (see 1 Kings 19:8). Jesus thus fulfils both the Law and the Prophets, as confirmed in Matthew 5:17. Whereas Moses' radiance reflects God's glory (see Exodus 34:33-35), Jesus radiates light 'from the inside'. Moses and Elijah are not reincarnations but rather come from being in the presence of God. Luke adds the detail that they discuss Jesus' imminent departure.

³¹ appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.

[Luke 9:31](#)

Jesus' [departure](#) comes from the Greek word *exodus* and refers to his future death, resurrection and ascension, all of which would take place [at Jerusalem](#). It is interesting that this discussion of death, especially that it was borne in such suffering, is described in the Greek in such positive terms. Not only was death the [fulfilment](#) of Jesus work, it is also for all who believe in him, the time when we depart from this life to a better one.

³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. (He did not know what he was saying.)

³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

[Luke 9:32-34](#)

[Very sleepy](#). The disciples appear to have missed the transfiguration of Jesus and the initial appearance of Moses and Elijah due to their sleepiness. Whether this was through human frailty or providential we are not told but we see them here sleeping when Jesus enters his glory and again in the garden when he enters his agony during his final night, see Matthew 26:40.

[Let us put up three shelters](#) or tents. This suggestion is a mistake as indicated by Luke's comment: [He did not know what he was saying](#) and the Father's pronouncement 'this is my

Son, my Chosen One' in v.35 (ESV), confirming Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Christ in v.20.

The cloud is a manifestation of God's presence, i.e. Shechinah.

This is reminiscent of the cloud of God's presence and glory that appeared at various times in the OT, e.g. the cloud leading the Israelites in the wilderness in Exodus 13:21-22, the Lord passing before Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34:5-7, when they first set up the Tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-35, and filling the newly dedicated Temple of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:10-13 and 2 Chronicles 5:14.

³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.

Luke 9:35

This is my Son - the very words recorded by Matthew at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17b).

It is uttered for the benefit of the three disciples. Jesus with all his claims is endorsed by the Father: <<I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, You are my Son; today I have become your Father>> (Psalm 2:7), and: <<Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations>> (Isaiah 42:1).

Listen to him echoes Deuteronomy 18:15 <<The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him>>, and Deuteronomy 18:18 <<I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him>>, where Moses is shown to be a leader-prophet. Anyone who does not listen to the Messiah of God rejects God who sent him. The three disciples see the glory of Jesus; they see his greatness over Moses and Elijah, and they hear the divine authentication of Jesus as the eternal Son.

In Deuteronomy 18:15, listen to him also indicates that Jesus is the prophet that Moses predicted 'the LORD your God will raise up for you'. It also means to give attention to Jesus' teaching above all else, even above the Law (Moses), and the Prophets (Elijah), of the OT. Not that they are any less the word of God but that Jesus' teaching supersedes and rightly interprets the OT for the new age of the Kingdom of God, and for the new covenant. Jesus is not merely equal to Moses and Elijah, he is far greater. All the OT pointed to him. For example, in Luke 24:27 Jesus was speaking to two disciples on the road to Emmaus: <<And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself>>.

³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no-one at that time what they had seen.

Luke 9:36

Kept this to themselves and told no-one at that time contrasts the situation in Jesus' day with that of Luke's day, i.e. the time after Pentecost when Peter, James and John freely proclaimed this event, e.g. 2 Peter 1:17, as mentioned before.

IV.g.viii [Luke 9:37-43a - The healing of a boy with an evil spirit](#)

This is an abbreviated version: just 7 verses, whereas Mark 9:14-29 uses 16 verses. The story is also recounted in Matthew 17:14-20.

³⁷ The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.

[Luke 9:37](#)

[The next day](#). This close tie with vv.28-36 suggests that the account provides an example of Jesus' glory in v.32 and confirms v.43a.

³⁸ A man in the crowd called out, Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹ A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.

[Luke 9:38-39](#)

[A spirit seizes him](#). In the parallel account in Matthew 17:15 and 17:18, the demon appears to be associated with some form of epilepsy. But in Matthew 4:24, we see that seizures are distinguished from demon possession because it says: <<News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed, and he healed them>>.

[It scarcely ever leaves him](#). The demon continually plagued the child.

⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.

[Luke 9:40](#)

[They could not](#). The disciples' inability to heal, highlights Jesus' greater ability. Mark explicitly points to the weak faith of the disciples.

The father of the possessed son expected to find Jesus and he transfers his expectation to the disciples, who are learning to represent Jesus. The evil spirit seeks to destroy the boy and he screams. The disciples are not able to heal him.

⁴¹ O unbelieving and perverse generation, Jesus replied, how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.

[Luke 9:41](#)

[O unbelieving and perverse generation](#). The fundamental problem of the people, i.e. his opponents, the spiritually oppressed and even the disciples, is that they lack faith. Jesus' burdened expression echoes that of the prophets. The father merely seeks help through Jesus' miraculous powers. He begged them as any father would.

This is the first of several such references: see Luke 11:30-32; 11:50-51, and 17:25. It is addressed to the disciples (v.40), and 'all' in v.43a.

Generation does not refer to everyone then living but to the leaders and others who rejected both John the Baptist and Jesus, and who were still the dominant force in the culture in their rejection of both the ascetic John and the non-ascetic Jesus.

⁴² Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ^{43a} And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

Luke 9:42-43a

They were all amazed. The amazement at Jesus' miracles is a recurring theme and not surprising when you consider the magnitude of the work he was doing.

The healing performed by Jesus (vv.37-42) is credited to the greatness of God. Compare the close tie between the glory of the Son and of the Father (v.26), the interchangeableness of declaring what God has done and what Jesus has done (Luke 8:39), and being astonished at, and marvelling with respect to, God and Jesus (v.43).

IV.g.ix Luke 9:43b-45 - Jesus again foretells his death

Once again as noted in vv.21-22 Jesus warns his disciples of his impending violent death.

^{43b} While everyone was marvelling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples,

Luke 9:43b

The marvelling of the crowd, seen also in v.37, is not necessarily due to faith as we see in v.41 and v.43a.

⁴⁴ Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.

Luke 9:44

Listen carefully, tell you. The subject you is emphasised in the Greek underscoring the importance of heeding Jesus' second prediction of his suffering.

The Son of Man is going to be betrayed, by God, into the hands of men. The paradox is profound: the murderous intent of Jesus' opponents succeeds because God the Father hands him over to achieve the atonement planned through his death.

⁴⁵ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Luke 9:45

The disciples' lack of understanding is due to the meaning of Jesus' words being hidden from them by God. Compare an almost identical statement in Luke 18:34, which reads: <<The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about>>.

And they were afraid to ask him probably because they could comprehend enough of what he was saying, but that they did not want to know more.

IV.g.x [Luke 9:46-48 - Who will be the greatest?](#)

The disciples' inability to understand Jesus' forthcoming suffering is linked to their own desire for greatness.

⁴⁶ An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.

[Luke 9:46](#)

[Which of them would be the greatest](#) can refer to having the greatest authority, deserving the most preferential treatment, being most valuable, or being most favoured by God.

In conjunction with their messianic expectation of a political liberator, the disciples' dream of status, honour and power along the lines of the Maccabean revolt in 166-160BC. Any such comparison, however, was clearly wrong.

⁴⁷ Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and made him stand beside him.

[Luke 9:47](#)

[Jesus, knowing their thoughts](#). Again, this is an indication of Jesus' deity. It also warns us of the need to guard our every thought, as God can perceive them all and to him every whisper is a shout: <<But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean'. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander>> (Matthew 15:18-19).

[Took a little child and made him stand beside him](#). The attitude of heart Jesus is teaching does not even overlook a lowly child. At times, children would be marginalised in ancient societies but Jesus receives, and thereby cares for, such a little one and expects his disciples to do the same in Christ's name.

Children were also expected to live their lives in innocence; trusting those that are there to protect them. In many ways, that should be our relationship with God.

In contrast to the status-seeking of the disciples, Jesus is showing them they should willingly take on lowly, often unnoticed tasks and care for those who have little status in the world. Anyone who does this, Jesus says, receives him and in doing so also receives the Father, i.e. 'the sender'.

Receives not me should be understood as an idiom meaning 'receives not only me'. Humbly caring for people of lowly status out of obedience to Christ, i.e. 'in my name', will be rewarded by such rich personal fellowship with both the Son and the Father.

⁴⁸ Then he said to them, Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all – he is the greatest.

[Luke 9:48](#)

[Welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me](#). An example of step parallelism, as in Luke 10:16 <<He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who

sent me>>, in which the first thought is raised a step higher in the second thought: a child is received as a representative of Jesus; Jesus is received as a representative of God.

He who is least. The one who is servant of all and thus has lowly status as in Mark 9:35 <<Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all>>.

He is the greatest, i.e. in God's eyes, as confirmed in Luke 14:11 <<For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted>>, again, in Luke 18:14 <<I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted>>, and in Luke 22:26 <<But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves>>, not according to the disciples' mistaken understanding of greatness, e.g. v.46.

IV.g.xi Luke 9:49-50 - Anyone not against us is for us

Jesus is comfortable with the idea that others can proclaim the true Gospel in his name, providing they do so faithfully to the message of God. In some ways it may seem to indicate the acknowledgement that there will be many instances of church. Perhaps one church but in many flavours.

⁴⁹ Master, said John, we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.

⁵⁰ Do not stop him, Jesus said, for whoever is not against you is for you.

Luke 9:49-50

Because he is not one of us probably refers to a believer outside the circle of the Twelve.

For whoever is not against you is for you is the reverse of Luke 11:23, which states: <<He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters>>. The two sayings should be seen as complementary. Those who cast out demons in the name of Jesus are his friends. Those who attribute Jesus' casting out of demons to Beelzebub, and thus do not believe in him, are his enemies: <<But some of them said, By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons>> (Luke 11:15).

Paul makes a similar argument in Philippians 1:17-18. Paul, writing of those who are taking advantage of his imprisonment in Rome and are preaching as his rival, states: <<The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice>>. The disciples are to focus on their task and leave the rest up to God, not being quick to criticise others who follow Christ but who do not belong to their group. This is the first indication that there will be different denominations within the Church. It is not something Jesus would have wanted but something he recognised as inevitable with the way that man thinks and works. But providing other churches are following Christ in honest perception of his teaching, they are 'for us'.

Such generous acceptance, however, does not apply to those who do not follow Christ at all. Against them the Christian message must stand firm, although as individuals they should always be treated with kindness and love.

V. Luke 9:51-19:27 - The Journey to Jerusalem

Amid all the activities of his ministry of teaching, healing and making disciples, Jesus 'set his face' (v.51) for his final journey to Jerusalem, which is the longest section in Luke's Gospel.

V.a Luke 9:51-13:21 - The first mention of the journey to Jerusalem

Jesus resolves to fulfil the mission for which God sent him into the world and he 'set his face' (see v.51 in the ASV, ESV, KJV translations but not in the NIV). It is also confirmed by 'must' in v.22 and in Mark 10:45 by: <<For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many>>. He must accomplish his 'exodus' in Jerusalem and confirms his future death, resurrection and ascension, all of which take place in Jerusalem.

V.a.i Luke 9:51-56 - Samaritan opposition

As Jesus and his disciples go south from Galilee to Jerusalem, they enter and minister in Samaria. It was unusual for Jews to take this route and they often preferred to take the longer route, east of the Jordan through the Decapolis, such was their disdain of the Samaritans.

⁵¹ As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51

Taken up to heaven. The Greek noun used is *analēmpsis* and corresponds to the verb *analambanō* that is translated 'taken up' in Acts 1:2, 1:11 and 1:22, and in 1 Timothy 3:16; all instances that refer to Christ's ascension.

Jesus resolutely set out for or his face was set toward Jerusalem provides the theme for Luke 9:51-19:27, which is the largest section in Luke's Gospel and points toward the Cross (Luke 23:33), his resurrection (Luke 24:6), and his ascension into heaven (Luke 24:51). There is an excellent correlation with Isaiah 50:7 <<Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame>>.

⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him;

Luke 9:52

A Samaritan village. Jewish-Samaritan relations were always strained and the two cultures clashed.

The Samaritans were a racially mixed group of partly Jewish and partly Gentile ancestry who were disdained by both Jews and Gentiles. The scripture in 2 Kings 17:24-31 describes how the king of Assyria, probably Shalmaneser (727-722BC), brought foreign people to settle in Samaria in 722BC. The Samaritans claim it was Esarhaddon (681-669BC), who was responsible for repopulating the land. This would have to have been a later influx due to the time lapse between the capture of the land and its repopulation.

Over time they had intermarried with some Jews, who had remained in the area.

Many inhabitants of this region between Judæa and Galilee were descendants of the OT northern kingdom of Israel, although from the Jewish perspective these Samaritans had assimilated strongly into non-Jewish culture and had intermarried with Mesopotamian colonists. The Samaritans had their own version of the Pentateuch, their own temple on Mount Gerizim and their own rendering of Israelite history.

Manasse, brother to Jaddus the high priest of the Jews, having married the daughter of Sanballat the governor of the Samaritans, gave instructions to build a temple on Mount Gerizim and then removed all the foreign gods to worship only God. It is uncertain whether this was a genuine attempt to bring faith in the true God to the Samaritans and other non-Jews living in the region at the time, or whether it was done purely for political reasons. It was clear that those involved were considered as opponents of Nehemiah and the work he was doing in Jerusalem around that time. According to Josephus, Manasse was the priest exiled in Nehemiah 13:28 and that his father-in-law, Sanballat, built him the temple as a consolation. Also see Nehemiah Chapters 2, 4, 6 and 13 for further examples of the opposition of Sanballat and his people.

Whatever the reasons, there still remained a history of confusion giving rise to the comments of Jesus in John 4:22.

Abraham (Genesis 12:7) and Jacob (Genesis 33:18-20) both built altars in that region. A Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was recorded in Josephus (Jewish Antiquities) and appears in 2 Maccabees 6:2. It was destroyed by the Hasmonean leader John Hyrcanus during his reign (134-104BC). This temple has been identified by some with a large Hellenistic-era structure made with un-hewn stones atop Tel er-Ras, at the northern spur of the mountain; although many have suggested that a more probable location is beneath the old Byzantine 4th-7th Century AD church atop the mountain itself. Despite the destruction of this temple, Samaritan sacrificial worship has continued atop Mount Gerizim even until the modern era.



The Temple on Mount Gerizim

Copies of their Pentateuch in Hebrew and in Targumic Aramaic remain extant, as do their basic historical narratives. Tensions often ran high between Jews and Samaritans thus Josephus recounts fighting between Jews and Samaritans during Claudius' reign in the 1st Century AD being so intense that Roman soldiers were called in to pacify, and to crucify, many of the rebels according to Jewish War 2.232-246.

To get things ready for him would be to arrange accommodation.

⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.

Luke 9:53

Did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem is confirmed in v.51. The Samaritans rejected the messengers, most likely because the Samaritans did not accept Jerusalem as the place where God should be worshiped, as claimed by the Samaritan woman at the well: <<Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem>> (John 4:20), and also because Jesus was going there to die and the cost of following him was high.

Jesus would have been well known as a teacher by the Samaritans and they would not have welcomed his determination to claim the temple in Jerusalem as 'his Father's house', despite the tremendous opposition he faced there from the religious leaders. It is possible the Samaritans would have wanted him to then turn to their temple instead but of course he could not.

⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them? ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, ⁵⁶ and they went to another village.

Luke 9:54-56

Jesus rejects the suggestion of James and John to call fire down, for his ministry at his first coming is not to bring judgment as we see in John 3:17, which says: <<For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him>>, and not to compel people to follow him through threat of immediate punishment but to bring the free offer of the Gospel, as recorded in Matthew 11:28 <<Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest>>.

To bring fire down from heaven raises three points for us. Firstly, it would seem that the disciples had been given the power of the OT prophets like Elijah, who also used fire from heaven to show he had the authority of God in his ministry. Interestingly, this was done nearby in Samaria and would have been well known by the inhabitants. See 2 Kings Chapter 1 for the full story.

Secondly, Elijah did bring down fire to kill King Ahab's men but only in his own defence and with the authority of God, as he was demonstrating the power of God's law in contrast to the wickedness of Ahab's rule.

Thirdly, the attitudes of some of the town's people in rejecting Jesus was not akin to the wickedness of the people of Sodom and even there God had said he would have saved the city for the sake of 10 righteous people. See Genesis Chapter 18 for the full story.

The Christian message is: Christ came to seek out and save the lost; not to destroy those that stood in the way of the message. Their judgement day will come upon them in the fullness of time. We must guard against having a spirit of revenge against those who oppose Jesus but instead embrace our own message: that is, the forgiveness of enemies; to bless those who curse us for the sake of Jesus; and to call for abounding grace rather than fire to pour out from heaven upon them and us!

V.a.ii [Luke 9:57-62 - The cost of following Jesus](#)

Jesus encounters three would-be disciples. The word 'follow' plays a key role in each encounter (v.57, v.59 and v.61).

It has been said that following Jesus will cost you nothing and yet it will cost you everything. But surely that is a price worth paying compared with the rewards of free grace and mercy that abound to those who believe, and the promise of eternity in the presence of God.

⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, I will follow you wherever you go.

⁵⁸ Jesus replied, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

[Luke 9:57-58](#)

[The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head](#) is Jesus' challenge to a would-be follower, reminding him that the path of following Jesus is not easy and comfortable, for ultimately Jesus is not at home in this world. In this, and the following two brief stories (vv.59-62), Luke does not tell his readers how the person responded.

⁵⁹ He said to another man, Follow me. But the man replied, Lord, first let me go and bury my father.

[Luke 9:59](#)

To [go and bury](#) a deceased parent was an important duty and Jesus clearly upholds honouring one's parents. [Matthew 15:1-9](#) has an interesting dialogue: <<Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat! Jesus replied, And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honour your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death'. But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God', he is not to 'honour his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men>>. [The request seems reasonable on the surface but the man's first response was not to obey Jesus immediately as others did, such as Luke 5:11 <<So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him>>, and in Luke 5:28 <<and Levi got up, left everything and followed him>>, but to make an excuse for not following him.](#) Burial at this time in Judaism often involved a year-long period from the time when the body was first buried until a year later when the bones of the deceased were placed in an ossuary box. Although this was a basic family obligation, Jesus is teaching the priority of the kingdom over family.

⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:60

Let the dead bury their own dead constitutes a pun in which dead means both spiritually dead, as in the Prodigal Son story: <<For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'. So they began to celebrate>> (Luke 15:24), and: <<But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found>> (Luke 15:32), and physically dead. Here, as in Luke 14:25-26 <<Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple>>, Jesus insists that following him must take precedence over every other relationship and obligation. This does not imply that Jesus' followers can never care for their family obligations, but when they do it must be out of obedience to Jesus not *instead of* obedience to him. In this man's case, Jesus was clearly not his highest commitment as we saw in v.59.

⁶¹ Still another said, I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.

Luke 9:61

As in v.59, this man's half-hearted discipleship begins with a 'but': I will follow you, Lord, but. This recalls 1 Kings 19:19-21, where Elijah permitted Elisha to say good-bye; but Jesus does not permit this. Jesus' summons to discipleship takes precedence over everything else.

⁶² Jesus replied, No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:62

Anyone who puts his hand to the plough has to keep looking forward to guide the plough for if he looks back the plough will quickly veer off course.

Jesus perhaps sums up what it means to be follower in these three men:

The first says he is prepared to give up everything to follow Jesus but has not counted the cost and does he really understand this means accepting all the trials and tribulations the route into the kingdom of heaven can have in stall for us. It doesn't say we have to give up all the trappings of a modern society but we need to expect times when we may have to.

The second is our tendency to make excuses, however plausible, to put off doing what we should, and to only undertake our kingdom work in a half-hearted manner. Jesus is not saying here that we should neglect our commitments to family and loved ones but our whole life needs to be put in context of what it truly means to follow Jesus and what the eternal outcomes will be.

The third person is the one who has the tendency either to hang back to see how things are going or gets carried along when the ministry is exciting and all is well but when the going gets tough wants to look back to Egypt, to the draw of the world or hanker after the 'good old days'.

In essence, the message we need to proclaim is that God will save us from an evil world and promises a much fuller, brighter eternal life but we will face trials and tribulations in this one!