

Luke Chapter 9

1. Verses 1 to 6 The sending forth of the 12 disciples

In these few verses, the Lord gives instructions to the 12 disciples before He sends them out to represent Him. He gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. He also sent them to preach the kingdom of God.

What is of note here is the way in which they went out. They were to take nothing with them – no bag, no purse, no bread, and no money. From the very first, they would be dependent upon the Lord to support them. They were to go in faith, putting God to the test, and the Lord did provide. Later on, in chapter 22, He asked the question:

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

The same principle applies today with the Lord's servants. The faith they put in the Lord to supply their material needs is the same faith they will need for Him to support them in spiritual things.

The Lord gives similar, but more detailed, instructions to the 70 whom He sends out in chapter 10. Particular mention is made of the house or the city in which they dwelt. As regards houses, they were to stay in one house and not go from house to house. They were not to become spiritual beggars. But they were also to pass judgement upon the house or city that rejected them. Those who did reject them would be held responsible for it in a day to come. How great will be the guilt of this land of ours, considering that the gospel has been preached for over 4 centuries, and men are becoming more resistant to it. It will be more tolerable for Sodom, or for Tyre and Sidon, than for this country of ours.

2. Verses 7 to 9 The perplexity of Herod

The news is beginning to spread around the country of the work of the Lord Jesus. Soon this news reaches the ears of Herod and he is perplexed. Various rumours are gathering momentum:

1. That this was John the Baptist risen again from the dead
2. That Elijah had appeared
3. That one of the old prophets had risen again

Whichever story was true, Herod is perplexed and he has a great desire to meet this Jesus of Nazareth to settle the matter.

Herod is the third out of a line of five Herods mentioned in the gospels and in the book of Acts:

- Herod the great – the king in Matthew 2
- Archelaus, the son of Herod the great

- Herod Antipas – the Herod who killed John the Baptist
- Herod Agrippa I – the king of Acts 12

Herod Agrippa II – the man "almost persuaded" by Paul

The Herods were of Edomite descent and therefore not Jews at all. They had dealings with the nation and held authority over many of them. They blew hot and cold in their dealings with the people of God and the things of God.

We read first of all regarding the Herod of Luke 9 in chapter 3:19 of this gospel:

Herod had been reprov'd by John the Baptist for having taken Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, to be his wife. This was a union condemned under the law of Moses. That was Herod's first sin. But then he compounded the evil by trying to silence John by putting him in prison.

We read of this period of time however that Herod sent for John often in the prison, and heard him gladly and did many things. But he was still married to Herodias.

What happened next came as a shock to Herod. The daughter of Herodias danced before him and he made a rash promise to the girl that she could ask any favour she wished. To his consternation, she asks for the head of John. Not willing to lose face, Herod orders the execution of John, who loses his life to meet the whim of a young maiden and to salvage the pride of Herod.

Now in Luke 9, Herod is seeking to meet this Jesus. But soon his curiosity gives way to his old cruelty and the Jews warn the Lord that Herod was seeking to kill Him.

Herod gets his wish eventually in Luke 23 when Pilate sends to him Jesus of Nazareth. Herod is pleased – he hopes to have seen some miracle done by Him. He questions the Lord but the Lord answers him not a word. The curiosity turns again to cruelty and he and his soldiers beat and buffet the Lord before sending Him back to Pilate.

Herod is therefore a man full of contradictions. A man who was given many opportunities to repent but a man who spurned them all, and is surely now lost for ever.

3. Verses 10 to 17 The feeding of the 5000

This is the only miracle recorded by all four gospel writers. It is obviously a miracle of some significance. I believe it is a picture of the future millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus. The Lord will dispense His blessings to all the peoples of the world.

In verse 10, we read of how the Lord took the 12 disciples after their return into a desert place. We read elsewhere in Mark chapter 6, in similar circumstances:

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

This was immediately after the death of John Baptist. There is a time to serve,

but there is also a time to mourn and a time to reflect. There is a time to work and a time to rest. Verse 31 is such a time of reflection. But the Lord and His disciples get little time for quiet, for when the people learn that He is in this place near Bethsaida, they follow Him into the wilderness. The first thing He did when they arrived was that "He spake unto them of the kingdom of God". Secondly, He healed them that had need of healing. Their spiritual need of all came first followed by the physical need of some.

As the day wore on, the disciples asked the Lord to send the multitude away to buy food for it was a desert place. But the Lord over-ruled them. "Give ye them to eat". In John chapter 6, the Lord is more specific. He picks out Philip and asks him, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat". Why does He pick on Philip? The verse continues, "But this He said to prove him, for He Himself knew what He was about to do". The Lord is putting to the test the bold words spoken by Philip in John chapter 1. There, Philip says to Nathaniel:

45 We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

It is as though the Lord is now saying to Philip, "You made a bold declaration on that first occasion. Here is the test. Do you really believe what you said. If you did, you would have asked Me to feed the multitude". Philip's faith was being put to the test and it failed. He looks at the size of the crowd and says, "Two hundred penny worth of bread is not sufficient that each one may eat a little". In other words, Philip is saying that the task was too big for them.

Our attention in John 6 is then diverted to Andrew. He says:

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,
9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

Andrew's complaint is at the other end of the spectrum. He is saying, "Our resources are too small". But Andrew also had made a statement in John chapter 1 regarding the Lord Jesus. He fetched his brother Peter and said to him:

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

The lesson we learn from Philip and Andrew is that we must not make statements about the Lord Jesus which we may not be able to support when the time of testing comes.

Returning again to Luke 9, how do the disciples react to the Lord's command?

And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

John again adds another detail that the others omit. He describes the loaves and the fishes as "five barley loaves and two small fishes". Barley cost only a quarter the price of wheat so these were cheap loaves. They were also small fish. Again, only John records the fact that the food belonged to a young lad. A common meal for a little lad was sufficient in the Lord's hands to feed a multitude.

The Lord had compassion on the multitude because He saw them as sheep scattered, without a shepherd. His shepherd's heart went out to them. Soon He brought order into the scene. He commanded His disciples to make them sit down by fifties in a company. Mark's description goes further. He set them down in ranks, by fifties, and by hundreds. He brought order out of chaos – which will be another feature of the millennial kingdom.

In verse 16, the Lord looked up to heaven and blessed the loaves and fishes before giving them to the disciples. He gave God His place first as the provider of all food, then He gave His disciples their place also as He enlisted their help in the distribution of the food.

Philip need not have worried that each may only have eaten a little. They all ate and were filled and they gathered up of the fragments that remained 12 baskets full. Divinely given things are precious things and not to be discarded. There will be sufficient left over to feed the twelve tribes of Israel some other day.

4. Verses 27 to 36 The Transfiguration

Our account of this scene really begins with verse 27 for the words of the Lord Jesus in this verse help us a great deal in understanding the verses that follow:

27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

These words were fulfilled for some of the disciples only eight days later when they had a glimpse of the kingdom of God – what we call the millennial kingdom. The scene is recorded for us by Matthew, Mark, and Luke – but not by John. Why is this? For John has a lot to say about the Lord's glory in his gospel. After the Lord's first miracle in John chapter 2, we read that "He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed in Him". It is all the more remarkable in that John was the only one of the three disciples on the mount to have written a gospel. He was the only eye-witness who could have described the scene in perfect detail, yet there is no mention of this event in John's gospel. The scene recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke was but a passing scene. It lasted a relatively short time and then it was over. It was only a preview of coming glory. John, however, is more concerned about the glory of the Lord Jesus which He showed every day He was here on earth, and that is the glory of the only begotten Son of God:

and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father

This was the glory of a Son who came to do the Father's will, to speak the Father's words, to do the Father's works. It was a glory that John and the other disciples saw in Him every day for over three years. I think that is why John omits any reference to the transfiguration.

Verse 28 of Luke 9 tell us when the Lord's words were fulfilled:

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

There is an interesting difference between Luke and Matthew and Mark in the respect of this number of days. Luke says it was after 8 days, Mathew and

Mark both say it was after 6 days. Which of them got it right? Well, of course, they all did – it all depends on how you calculate the days. If I asked two men, "How many days are there between Monday and Friday?" The first might say "Three" – because he's counting only the three days in between. But the second man might say, "Five", for he is including Monday and Friday in his count. That is the logical explanation, but I believe there is also a spiritual explanation. Six is generally seen as man's number. Adam was created on the sixth day. The Jew worked for six days then rested on the seventh. The number of the beast in Revelation 13 is 666 – it is described as the number of a man. The beast is man at his most arrogant self, in total defiance of God. Mathew and Mark are therefore telling us that the scene took place after man's day had run its full course. After man's day comes the day of Christ, followed by eternity, which is the day of God.

Luke, however, says it was about an eight days after. If seven is the number of perfection, then eight is the number of a new beginning, and that is what the millennial kingdom will be – a new beginning for this world.

It will be a new beginning for creation – the fields will yield an abundant harvest. The desert shall blossom like the rose.

It will be a new beginning for the animal kingdom. The wolf and the lamb shall lie down together – they shall not hurt nor destroy in all His holy mountain.

It will be a new beginning for mankind – they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: neither shall they learn war any more.

The Lord is accompanied on this occasion by only three of His disciples – Peter, John, and James. They are the favoured three whom the Lord took with Him into the house of Jairus to witness the Lord raising the daughter to life again. They are the three disciples whom the Lord takes with Him a stone's cast further into the garden of Gethsamene.

And where did He take these three disciples to in Luke 9? He "went up into a mountain to pray". Mountains in the Bible are often spoken of to represent kingdoms. In Daniel chapter 2, the prophet watched as the stone cut out without hands became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. It became a great kingdom. Micah also spoke of a mountain in this way in chapter 4 of his prophecy:

1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

So everything so far in Luke 9 is pointing towards an illustration of the Lord in His coming kingdom. But what happens next in verse 29?

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.

Luke is the gospel of the dependent man, and the dependent man, even though He is the Son of God, is a prayerful man. It should not therefore surprise to learn that Luke records on no less than eleven occasions in his gospel the fact that the Lord was found in prayer.

1. Luke 3:21 His baptism
2. Luke 5:16 His increasing fame
3. Luke 6:12 His choice of His disciples
4. Luke 9:18 The revelation of Himself
5. Luke 9:29 His transfiguration
6. Luke 10:21-22 Revelation of divine truth
7. Luke 11:1 A pattern of prayer for the disciples
8. Luke 22:32 His prayer for Peter's recovery
9. Luke 22:42 Gethsemane
10. Luke 23:34 Father, forgive them
11. Luke 23:46 Father into Thy hands I commend My Spirit

But, did the Lord need to pray? Was He not the One who made the worlds, who is the source of all life, who fed 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish, who calmed the storm, and who raised the dead? Surely someone with such power and authority could go through life without having to resort to prayer. He could act independently if He so wished. But the Lord was the perfect man and the perfect man lives and moves in dependence upon God.

The Lord prayed at moments of crisis in His life - at major events in His experience. Hence He prayed at His baptism, at His Transfiguration, in Gethsemane and on the Cross. That is what one would expect, for what Christian would not do likewise. If a crisis comes our way or the way of a loved one, we would be quick to take the matter to God in prayer. Where we often fail, however, is in the routine daily prayers of life when all is going well. The Lord prayed as a matter of course as part of His daily routine. He gave to men the words which the Father had given Him to speak, and I believe He received those words during His times of prayer.

It is of interest also for whom the Lord prayed. He prayed often for Himself of course, but He prayed also for His disciples including Peter who was going to deny Him. He even prayed at Calvary for the soldiers who were in the process of nailing Him to the cross.

Notice how that as He prayed, "The fashion of His countenance was altered. Prayer changed Him. We are used to the thought of prayer changing things but here prayer changed the man. We might well say of course that the Lord was unique. But do we not see another example of this in Stephen. He is being pounded by stones, but he lifts up his eyes to heaven and prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit", and again, "Lay not this sin to their charge". He had become like the One he was praying to.

It is while the Lord is still praying that the transformation occurs. The Lord now appears in glory. This is Him now as the world will see Him when He comes in His kingdom.

What could He have been praying about now? What followed was the appearance of Moses and Elias with Him. They have only one subject of conversation. "They spake of His decease that He should accomplish at Jerusalem". Moses and Elijah each had a notable exodus - Moses as he led a nation out of Egypt and Elijah as he was caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire. But they spoke only of His departure. The Lord was praying about His death as He prayed on the mountain. His death was ever before Him, from the

time that He spoke in John 2 about the temple of His body being destroyed and raised again in three days.

What do Moses and Elias represent here in this scene? Various applications have been made but what would a Jew think of when he heard these two men mentioned? Moses was the great law-giver and Elijah was the great prophet of Israel. These two men represent the law and the prophets, and these scriptures all pointed towards the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

What a pity that Peter and his two companions fell asleep on the mountain. They missed out on part of this scene of glory. They fell asleep also in Gethsemane and missed part of that scene of the Lord's agony in the garden. In a spiritual sense, if we are slumbering, we shall fail to appreciate the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. When Peter did awake, he saw that Moses and Elijah were about to leave the scene. It is then that Peter makes the suggestion, "Let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah". Some have thought that Peter was here putting the Lord on the same level as Moses and Elijah, and because of this, God rebuked him from the cloud. But this was the same Peter who just 8 days earlier had made the great statement, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God".

Peter's first thought I believe was rather, "Please don't go. We want this glory to continue. Let's build three tents where you can all abide". Peter and the others had been following the despised Nazarene, the rejected man. Peter wanted the glory to continue.

At a deeper level, these tabernacles would conjure up thoughts of the Feast of Tabernacles, but this was the last of the Feasts of Jehovah – first of all He must accomplish His exodus at Jerusalem by becoming the Passover Lamb..

Peter is often criticised for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. When the Lord spoke about His death in Matthew 16, Peter takes Him aside to rebuke Him – and receives the sternest condemnation from the Lord. Peter protests in John 13 when the Lord kneels before him to wash his feet. The one thing about Peter is that, even when he erred, he did it out of love and devotion to Christ. One could not doubt his love – one often called into doubt his wisdom. That is why in Philippians chapter 1, Paul prayed for the saints that their love might abound in all knowledge and discernment.

What happened next is recorded in verse 34:

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

"They feared" refers to the three disciples. "They entered" refers to the Lord, Moses and Elijah. Matthew records the fact that it was a bright cloud. Many see in this the Shekinah glory which filled the Tabernacle and the Temple, and which was the visible evidence of the presence of God amongst His people. Certainly, when Peter later wrote about this incident, he says, "This voice which came from heaven, we heard". Heaven is where God is, and God was in the cloud.

What did the voice have to say?

35 This is my beloved Son: hear him.

Matthew adds the middle phrase, "In whom I am well pleased". Matthew is repeating what the Father said of the Son at the river Jordan. What is added in Luke 9 is the phrase, "Hear ye Him". What has the Lord been speaking about? – His decease in Jerusalem.

The incident obviously had a profound effect upon Peter. Many years later, he writes about it in his second epistle, chapter 1:

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

The apostle's preaching about the Second advent of Christ was becoming the subject of much scorn. Would Peter and his fellow apostles wilt under such pressure? Peter reverts to what he saw on the holy mount. He had seen a preview of the Lord's coming and nothing could persuade him otherwise.

5. Verses 37 to 62 Lessons in discipleship

5.1. Verses 37 to 45 The powerlessness of the disciples

5.2. Verses 46 to 48 Striving to be the greatest

In verse 46, we read of how there arose a dispute amongst the disciples as to who should be the greatest. Their expectations are rising as to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. They assumed that He was about to establish His kingdom and reign, and that they, His disciples, would reign with Him. But which of them would get the greatest place in the kingdom?

This is just one of at least three occasions when such disputes arose. In Mark chapter 10, we read of how James and John came to Him, requesting that they might sit with Him in His kingdom, one on the left side and the other on the right.

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

Matthew in chapter 20 of his gospel may well be referring to the same incident when the mother of James and John comes and asks a special place in the kingdom for her two sons.

However, we know that in each gospel, this caused much displeasure amongst the other 10 disciples. They were still arguing about this subject in the upper room, as described in Luke 22:

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

This is all the more disturbing when we see the Lord in John 13 kneeling before the disciples and washing their feet.

Sadly, pride is always there in our hearts, and the desire to be the greatest in assembly life has often been the cause of much disputing in our own generation.

The Lord deals with the issue by taking a little child and setting him forth as an example of the humility He would expect in those who would enter His kingdom.

5.3. Verses 49 to 50 Exclusive thoughts

5.4. Verses 51 to 56 The wrong spirit shown

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because he his face was as though go to Jerusalem.

In verse 51, the Lord was thinking, not of Calvary where He would be delivered up, but rather about His ascension, when He would be received up. He sent messengers before Him into a certain city of the Samaritans but they would not receive Him, because "His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem".

This causes James and John to ask, "Shall we command fire to come down and consume them, as Elijah did?" They have just seen Elijah on the holy mount so perhaps that caused them to think of Elijah on the mountain top when Ahab sent captains with their fifties to capture him. Elijah brought down fire from heaven to consume them. Would the Lord repeat the process? He had come, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. How strange to hear these words from John, the disciple who leaned upon Jesus' breast. He is often spoken of as the apostle of love, but in these early days, he often lived up to another title - "Boanerges, the sons of thunder".

5.5 Verses 57 to 62 The cost of discipleship