

Study 8 Luke 9:10-36

Context

Having seen the accounts of Jesus' amazing authority over nature, over Satan, over disease and over death the question cannot be avoided; who do we think Jesus is? What do we make of him?

The disciples asked the question: 'Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and water, and they obey him?' (Luke 8:25) The crowds asked the same question (Luke 9:7-8). Herod asked the question: 'John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?' (Luke 9:9)

This final study declares who Jesus is; however it becomes clear that this acknowledgement is not enough on its own. Understanding the nature of who Jesus really is demands a serious response. Jesus tells his followers that it will be costly to follow him and challenges them to 'take up his cross daily and follow me' (Luke 9:23).

Background bits

Old Testament language and ideas

Son of Man - Daniel 7:14

The rule of the Son of Man is absolute. He was given dominion and glory and the kingdom. The duration of his rule is eternal and universal. Considering that Jesus is the absolute ruler it is extraordinary that he goes on to say that he must die. He links this title with the idea that it will be necessary for him to suffer (Luke 9:22).

Daniel 10:5-6 In this vision the Son of Man appears in dazzling brightness. As Jesus goes up the mountain eight days after his claim to be the Son of Man his clothing has the appearance of lightening. But again the astonishing glory of Jesus is linked to discussion about his coming death in Jerusalem.

The Suffering Servant -Isaiah 53

Jesus is clear that he must suffer, be reviled and rejected by men. Isaiah wrote of the mission of the exalted king who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. Jesus was clear that this was his mission.

Moses and Elijah

At the transfiguration the appearance of Moses and Elijah is particularly significant; Moses is unequalled as the one to whom God gave the law and Elijah was a mighty prophet. The appearance of these men show that all that went before both in the Law and the prophets was preparation for Jesus and his death on the cross. They speak of Jesus' departure that literally translated means his 'exodus'. They speak of Jesus' death and route to glory in which he would accomplish the long promised second exodus of all of God's people to his promised new creation.

‘This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to him’

These words spoken from heaven reveal the richness of the identity of Jesus. Each phrase comes from the Old Testament. These words are similar to those spoken at Jesus’ baptism but the key difference is the command to listen to him. Jesus is beginning to teach about his death. It is crucial for the disciples to listen even though they fail to fully understand.

This is my Son: Psalm 2:7-12, Jesus is the one who will rule absolutely.

My Chosen One: Isaiah 42:1-4, Jesus is the servant who will suffer and die for sin.

Listen to him: Deuteronomy 18:15, Jesus is a prophet like Moses to whom we must listen

Difficult Bits

What does it mean to deny myself?

It means to disown my selfish desires and ambitions and live for Christ. Our model is Jesus, he does not go his own way, he does not seek his own glory but God’s, nor does he seek his own promotion but God’s. If are to follow Jesus we must walk the same path.

What does it mean to take up our cross?

It does not mean coping with our own burdens and trials e.g. my difficult mother-in-law, my tennis elbow. The cross was a state sponsored tool of death. It will men living for God which is the opposite of sin instead of saying, “I’ll do it my way” we live God’s way whether takes us. Me doing it my way is what God hates – he wants us to live his way. This is entirely logical, if I am to follow Jesus I will disown myself and instead I will put him first, putting myself, my dreams, my desires, my rebellious attitude, my rejection of God to death. It will be more than worth it.

Do I really need to take this seriously?

Yes. Following Christ means repenting from putting myself first and following the way of Christ. Jesus gave this call to everyone who would follow after him. Living like this is not occasional affair but a daily one. Jesus could not have been more challenging. This discipleship will be seen differently in different lives; we will not all serve Christ in the same way but all will serve him wherever God has placed us.

Reading this with a seeker

• *Jesus is the Christ which means we should submit to him as Lord.*

This revelation demands us to submit to him, to bow the knee, to serve and follow him. We confess with our lips and live our lives for him. He is the one who has authority over everything including us. Seeing Jesus as a good teacher is not enough, believing he is the Christ without it changing our life is not faith it is at heart continuing in rebellion and refusal to submit to him as our king.

• *Jesus' teaching here may leave someone saying, "Hold on this is more than I bargained for this is more like fundamentalist extremism!"*

It can sound very heavy but to lose your life for the sake of Jesus is to live for him as king. In Jesus I don't really lose anything instead I find myself forgiven, in God's kingdom, looking forward to eternity, with a new power in my life to deal with sin. As we yield to Jesus what is opened up to us is amazing but the person who rejects this is like the one in Luke 6:24 who thinks they are rich. The challenge is stark, what does it profit a man if you gain the whole world but have lost yourself?

• *In the transfiguration we gain real confidence to put our trust in Jesus and submit to his authority.*

What stops us from following Christ? Often it is doubt. We fail to trust that Jesus is who he says he is. Luke has been showing his readers the person of Jesus so that we may be certain about who Jesus is and what he came to do. Although he has not finished his gospel already Luke has presented amazing things that can give us great confidence in Jesus. It is we see who Jesus is we can trust him. In the transfiguration we see yet more astonishing facts about Jesus; he is the one that the great heroes of all of God's revelation points. This is not a myth but history (2 Peter 1:16-18). We can have great confidence in this witness, the change in Jesus's appearance, the presence of Moses and Elijah and God the Father speaking from heaven and sealing Jesus' commission. We are called to listen to him which is key to following Jesus. We need to hear his word and act upon it.

Finally

When we are talking with friends who are not yet Christians it can seem scary to challenge them with this truth and we often try to politely avoid it. The evangelist Rico Tice tells this story. One day an old friend from university contacted him. He told Rico that someone had asked him to listen to a talk by Rico. He had listened to it and been amazed. He called Rico with a rebuke, "why did you not tell me these things when you were at university with me?" People prefer us to be honest. Our job is to show them what Jesus truly says.

If the person that you are reading this with is not yet ready to submit to Jesus as Lord keep praying and keep on seeking further opportunities. They may be willing to carry on reading the gospel with you after all there are another fifteen chapters to go and loads more to discover about Jesus. Encourage them to keep on seeking; God will make himself known.