



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 9:18-27**

To understand more about who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him.

## An “Aha!” Moment

Throughout Luke’s Gospel thus far Jesus has not been rightly recognized by His own people. Those who know God intimately recognize Him (Lk. 2:22-38). Gentiles seem to recognize Him (Lk. 7:1-10). People who are aware of their sin seem to recognize Him (Lk. 7:36-38). Even demons rightly recognize Him (Lk. 8:26-39). His people, on the other hand, often confuse Him with a Teacher or prophet (both of which are true, but not fully true in that they miss the most important details, that He is the Messiah and the Son of God), and His disciples certainly fall into this category, that is until Luke 9:18-20. Peter, when asked by Jesus who He is, responds by saying, “You are the Christ of God” (Lk. 9:20). For the first time, Peter gets the whole story correct. Matthew’s Gospel expands on this story a little further (Matt. 16:13-20), but the point is clear enough in Luke’s account - the disciples are *starting to understand* who Jesus is (though, not fully).

One of the values of reading and studying a book of the Bible expositorially (verse-by-verse) is that it allows you to see the progression of the story in a way that makes the whole of the story make more sense. We see more clearly those who rightly understood who Jesus is and what sets them apart from those who don’t. Peter, like many of his people, had a pre-conceived idea about what the Messiah would be like, and what He would *not* be like, and those pre-conceived notions clouded their judgment. However, after being exposed to the power and authority of Jesus over the storms of the sea, the demons, the sick and impaired, and even the dead, and then seeing Jesus feed 5,000 (minimally) people with barely enough food to even feed the twelve apostles, Peter was finally able to recognize the Lord for more than a Rabbi, but the Messiah.

## Rumors

Luke describes the beginning of this scene in verse 18 a little differently than Matthew and Mark's account. In both Matthew's Gospel and Mark's Gospel we are simply told that Jesus had just come into "the district of Caesarea Philippi" (Matt. 16:13; Mk. 8:27). Luke, however, emphasizes prayer as one of the central themes in order to demonstrate the connection to the divine that Jesus possesses, and thus we are told an additional detail regarding this scene: "Now it happened that as He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him" (Lk. 9:18). Jesus asked the disciples: "Who do the crowds say that I am?" Apparently, given all of the miraculous things Jesus was doing and the authority with which Jesus taught, there were rumors about Jesus. The disciples gave a few answers; the details are listed below.

### **JOHN THE BAPTIST**

The first answer given is "John the Baptist." In Session 33 we learned that Herod the tetrarch grew both concerned and perplexed with the news of Jesus because "it was said by some that John has been raised from the dead" (Lk. 9:7). There is no evidence anywhere of an instance in which a person would have been reincarnated or resurrected that would lead people to think that Jesus was John. More than likely this was to be understood as more of the spirit of John the Baptist, much in the same way the spirit of Elijah eventually rested on Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:1-15). Given also the Elijah connection, this makes the most sense.

### **ELIJAH**

The reasons for thinking that Jesus might be Elijah are more convincing. Elijah was first mentioned in Luke's Gospel in Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (Lk. 4:25-27). Chapter 7 also has a strong connection to Elijah and Elisha as well. Jesus heals the centurion's servant in Luke 7:1-10, which corresponds to Elisha's healing of Naaman (2 Kgs. 5) in that both of them are Gentiles, both have servants, and both of them send someone ahead of themselves to the prophet. Next, Jesus raises the widow's only son in Luke 7:11-17, which corresponds to the raising of the only son of the widow of Zarephath by Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:17-24) as well as the raising of the only son of the widow of Shunem by Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:32-37). The place where Jesus healed the widow's son, Nain, is roughly a half mile away from Shunem, which may be why Luke recorded the location to begin with. Beyond that, at the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus instructs them to gather in "groups of about fifty each" (Lk. 9:14), which is reminiscent of the Elisha story in Greek translation (LXX) of 1 Kgs. 18:13, which is the only other place in which the Greek phrase ἀνά πεντήκοντα ("groups of about fifty each") is found.

Beyond that, Jesus is presented in Luke's Gospel in general as similar to Elijah and Elisha in that He holds a prophetic office, He demonstrates the ability to do supernatural things, and He includes the Gentiles in His ministry of reconciliation. Over and above that, 2 Kings 2:11 records that Elijah never actually died: "And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." The plausibility of Elijah coming back down is just as high as when he went up in the mind of an ancient Jewish person. Since Elijah lived so long prior to this time, no one would have known what he looked like, either. The people were certainly wrong in their assessment of Jesus, but it does make some sense why they thought it might be Elijah. The connections are not unfounded, and Luke seems to go above and beyond to give the pertinent details that connects the two in his account.

### **ONE OF THE PROPHETS OF OLD**

This one is certainly true as well, although again, not complete. It is reminiscent of God's words in Deuteronomy 18:15: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen." In fact, Luke, who also authored the book of the Acts of the Apostles,

makes this connection again in his account of Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico. Speaking of Jesus, Peter proclaimed, "Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you'" (Acts 3:22). Being described as "one of the prophets of old" is a term of reverence more than anything else. It connects Jesus with the prophets of old, men for whom the nation of Israel had tremendous respect.

### **THE MESSIAH**

After recalling the various answers of the people, Jesus asks Peter a second question: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter, speaking on behalf of the apostles responds: "The Christ of God." The word "Christ," is simply the Greek term Χριστός (Christos), which is the word that means "the Anointed One, Messiah." Peter, moving past the peripheral details about Jesus' prophetic office sees the true identity of Jesus: The Messiah!

## **The Messiah's Mission**

After Peter responds, Jesus "strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one" (Lk. 9:21). Why? Because the mission of the Messiah could not be jeopardized. If the people knew Jesus was the Anointed One, they might fight on His behalf and prolong or delay the will of God for the Messiah to die as a substitute. Jesus elaborates further: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Lk. 9:22). The mission of the Messiah is to die and be raised, not defended.

## **The Messiah's Call**

Jesus then tells the disciples that in the same way He must suffer and die, His followers must do the same: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23). The call to follow the Messiah is a call to suffer. However, in this treatise with His disciples, He also informs them that they will not die until they see the kingdom of God (Lk. 9:27). This, of course, is recorded in Acts when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they fully understand the meaning of Jesus' words and the purpose of their calling.

## **What About Now?**

One of the most important questions disciples of Jesus must be able to answer is: "Who do you say that I am?" Jesus is painted in a lot of different ways in the modern world. Some see Him as a teacher, and others see Him as a good, moral man. Still, others see Him as a prophet or a super-man of sorts. However, the New Testament is clear - Jesus is God. He has all power and authority, something only God possesses.

## **Study Questions**

### **Day One**

1. Read Luke 9:18. What was Jesus doing when He spoke to His disciples? What did He ask them?

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2. Read Luke 9:19. What answer did the disciples give to Jesus?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 9:20. What second question did Jesus ask the disciples? How did Peter respond?

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2. Read Luke 9:21-22. What did Jesus charge them not to do? Why did He command this?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 9:23. What did Jesus say to the disciples? What is the call of discipleship?

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2. Read Luke 9:24-25. In your own words, summarize the words of Jesus here for discipleship.

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 9:26. In your own words, summarize the words of Jesus. What does this mean for people today?

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2. Read Luke 9:27. What does Jesus mean in this final verse? (Hint: See above notes)

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## Week 34 Discussion: Deny and Die

The call of Jesus to His disciples is: “Deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9:23). The process of following Jesus includes regularly saying no to the things you want for yourself, daily putting to death your sinful desires, and following Jesus. Talk as a group about both the difficulty and the privilege of following Jesus.

1. Icebreaker: In what ways do you have to regularly “deny yourself?”
2. What was the hardest thing to “sacrifice” when you started to follow Jesus?
3. Has it become easier to “take up your cross daily” as you’ve continued to follow Jesus?
4. Are there things that are still just as difficult to deny today as they were when you were first saved?
5. How does our culture of self-centeredness oppose the call to follow Jesus?
6. How can the church be better at making disciples?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus asked the disciples who people said He was, and who they thought He was.
2. Jesus described the sacrificial posture that every disciple of His must possess.