

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

May 22, 2019

The Gospel of Luke

Lots of Travelling Leading Up to the Transfiguration

Topics – Luke 9:18 - 36; The Transfiguration

Text – Luke 9:18 - 36 (parallel passages are found in Matthew 16:13 – 17:8; Mark 8:27 – 9:8)

Introduction - An Explanation of Itinerary

In Luke 9:10 – 17, we examined Jesus' feeding of the 5,000. Beginning in v. 18, we will see Jesus in a dialogue with his disciples about the perception of the people regarding Jesus' identity, and from there we will see Jesus as He is transfigured before Peter, James, and John. However, between the feeding of the 5,000 and the events leading up to the Transfiguration there are a lot of events that take place that are not included in Luke's gospel.

According to Matthew 14:22 - 33, Mark 6:45 - 52, and John 6:15 - 21, immediately following the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus goes up to the mountain alone to pray, while the disciples are sent away by boat. While on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples go through a severe storm and are fearful for their lives. Jesus miraculously sees them from the mountaintop, and goes out to them. He does not need a boat, however; He merely walks on top of the water. When Jesus gets out to where the disciples are, they are at first afraid, thinking they were seeing a ghost. Matthew's gospel alone tells us that upon realizing that it is Jesus, Peter asks the Lord if he could join him out on the water, which he does after receiving permission from the Lord. Peter does well as long as he has his eyes on the Lord, but as soon as he focusses on the waves and the storm, he begins to sink. He cries out to the Lord, and Jesus brings him into the boat and calms the storm.

Jesus and the disciples arrive in Gennesaret where He heals many people (Matthew 14:34 – 36; Mark 6:53 – 56).

According to John's Gospel (John 6:22 – 7:1), He also taught at the synagogue in Capernaum where He delivered the Bread of Life discourse. (Note – The Bread of Life Discourse marks the third Passover of Jesus' ministry. His ministry began just before the first Passover mentioned. So this event concludes Jesus' second full year of ministry.)

According to Matthew 15:21 – 28, Jesus travels up to Tyre where he heals a Gentile woman's daughter, a Syrophenician woman from Canaan.

Mark tells us that He travelled from Tyre, and went into the coasts of Decapolis where He healed a man that was deaf (Mark 7:31 – 37).

He also went up into an unnamed mountain, according to Matthew 15:29 – 39, where he heals more people and then feeds another four thousand people from seven loaves and a few fishes.

He then went to Magdala, the home town of Mary Magdalene, where he was confronted by some Pharisees who wanted to see a sign from him. Jesus tells them that the only sign that they would get was the sign of the prophet Jonah.

From there Jesus travels all the way up to Caesarea Philippi, which is where our text takes place.

I. A Clarification of Jesus' Identity (Luke 9:18 – 27)

There are a few aspects of this account that Matthew gives us further clarification:

1. He tells us that the event takes place in Caesarea Philippi.
2. He also includes in his list of prophetic comparison Jeremiah.
3. Matthew's gospel includes the statement by Jesus regarding Peter's confession and the building of the church:

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-19)

4. When Jesus foretells of His death, Matthew tells us that Peter rebuked the Lord, which in turn, brought about a stern rebuke from the Lord:

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matthew 16:22-23)

Analysis of Luke's Account:

A. Jesus Makes and Inquiry Regarding His Identity

What do the people say about me? (Luke 9:18 – 19)

The answer given is somewhat flattering, but at the same time, represents a complete lack of understanding and faith on the part of the people that Jesus had been ministering to for two full years. The people had compared Jesus to some great men:

1. John the Baptist:

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11)

2. Elijah: He called down fire from Heaven; killed the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the grove.
3. Jeremiah (according to Matthew's gospel): He was the weeping prophet. He wept over the people who rejected his message.

But even though the people compared Jesus to the greatest of men, they failed to recognize that Jesus was much more than a man, He was the God-man.

What do you say? (Luke 9:20)

Peter makes a very bold reply: *“Thou art the Christ of God.”* According to Matthew, this is where Jesus paid a compliment to Peter, and also made a comment regarding the foundation of the Church.

The one thing that Peter and the other disciples did not understand, however, that being “the Christ,” meant that Jesus would have to suffer and die.

B. Jesus States a Prophecy Regarding His Destiny (Luke 9:21 – 22)

Jesus charges the disciples to keep the truth of who He was to themselves, which is very interesting. Possibly, the reason was that He did not want to speed up the process of His death. He was on a timetable, and everything was going according to His plan. Had the disciples broadcasted their pronouncement to the world, the religious leaders may have tried to kill Him sooner. Also, the people’s understanding of Messiah was different from God’s plan. They saw the Messiah as the conqueror of Rome and the corrector of the corruption in the Jewish religious system. Jesus did not want to incite an uprising against the government. God’s plan for the Messiah at His first coming was for Him to die for the sins of the people.

Wiersbe states:

Jesus commanded them (the word means “an order from a military officer”) not to spread this truth openly. To begin with, the message of His messiahship could not be divorced from the fact of His death and resurrection, and He was now going to teach this to the Twelve. They had a difficult time grasping this new lesson and did not really understand it until after He was raised from the dead (Luke 24:44–48). The Jewish people saw Jesus primarily as a healer and a potential deliverer. If the Apostles began preaching that He was indeed the Messiah, it might cause a popular uprising against Rome.¹

In v. 22, Jesus clearly prophesies regarding His death and resurrection. This is the first of three mentions in Luke regarding what lay ahead for Jesus (see Luke 9:43 – 45; 18:31 – 34).

The amazing thing to note here is that even though Jesus explicitly foretells of His death and resurrection, the disciples will still be despondent after His death and they even doubt the truth of the resurrection when they hear that the tomb is empty.

Here is where Matthew records Peter’s rebuke of the Lord regarding the prediction of His death.

C. Jesus Shares Some Sobering Principles Regarding True Discipleship

Notice here that His audience seems to expand.

Jesus is not at all stating here the conditions for salvation; nor is He stating that true disciples can somehow lose their salvation if they are not faithful to the Lord. He is merely stating the fact that a true disciple will not be ashamed of their Lord, and will be required to carry a cross for Him. Jesus would have to sacrifice and suffer greatly, and so would anybody that follows Him in discipleship. This is a reference to “counting the cost” (See Luke 14:25 – 33).

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 206.

II. A Revelation of Jesus' Deity (Luke 9:28 – 36)

Verse 27 is a prophecy of the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John would see the glorified Christ in his transfigured form.

On an unidentified mountain², Jesus was seen by His disciples in a glorified form. The veil of flesh was temporarily removed, and the glory of the Resurrected Lord shone for the disciples to behold. Matthew tells us: "... his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." (Matthew 17:2). This was the same Light that Moses saw up on the mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29 – 35). This was probably very similar to what John saw in Revelation 1:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, ... And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (Revelation 1:10, 12-16)

Here, we see the pre Bethlehem glory of the pre-incarnate Christ, as well as a prophetic glimpse of his resurrected glory.

Peter later writes about this event:

"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. 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. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Peter, James, and John were asleep when all this was going on, but when they awoke, they saw the glorified Lord, and they also saw Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Possibly, they are representative of the Law and the Prophets (see Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27).

Note – Could these be the same "two men" who witnessed the resurrection (Luke 24:4 – 7); and the same "two men" who witnessed the ascension (Acts 1:9 – 11); and possibly even the same two witnesses in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:3).

Peter makes the same mistake "the people" made earlier. They compared Jesus to great men. Peter proposes to make three tabernacles: one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for the Lord.

This brings about a strong declaration from the Father: *"And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."* (Luke 9:35)

Men may be great, but the only one that deserves our worship is the Lord Jesus Christ.

² Some have speculated Mt. Hermon or Mt. Tabor.

JESUS' MINISTRY IN PALESTINE

Numbered events of Jesus' ministry

• City

▲ Mountain

0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometers

