



Type: Book Chapter

---

## Luke Chapter 9

Author(s): S. Kent Brown

Source: *The Testimony of Luke*

Published: Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014

Page(s): 441–500

---

**Abstract:** A commentary on the events of Luke 9, accompanied by parallel columns of the King James translation of the chapter alongside a new rendition.



BYU Studies is collaborating with Scripture Central to preserve and extend access to BYU Studies and to scholarly research on the Book of Mormon and other Restoration scripture. Archived by permission of the author S. Kent Brown and BYU Studies.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/>

# Luke Chapter 9

## INTRODUCTION

Gathered from a variety of sources, Luke's chapter 9 pulls the reader inside some of the Savior's most important moments, including the first empowering of representatives—the sending of the Twelve (see 9:1–6). Luke follows this high moment by narrating the feeding of the five thousand (see 9:11–17), Jesus' first prediction of his death (see 9:22), the transfiguration (see 9:28–36), and the purposeful adjustment of Jesus' travels from an itinerary inside Galilee to one that leads him toward Jerusalem (see 9:51). In light of this last notation, topography plays a subtle but important role, with Jesus moving from the waters of the lake where the chapter begins to the mountain top for the transfiguration and finally toward the holy city. In this scheme, water ties to the commissioning of the Twelve, the mountain becomes the scene of divine revelation, and the holy city stands as a beacon where the Atonement will occur. But the chapter offers more than a rough collection of stories. In fact, it presents key turning points in the ministry of the Twelve, namely, their receipt of the Apostleship, the grand, disclosing events on the Atonement, and the defining turn toward Jerusalem where they will become witnesses of the resurrection.

Above all, however, the reports take up the question of Jesus' identity, a question framed on the lips of Herod Antipas, “who is this, of whom I hear such things?” (9:9), a question that rises up in prior contexts (see 7:49; 8:25). Perhaps significantly, Herod's question arises from rumors of the resurrection of one important person or another (see 9:7–8). Thus, pointers to the Resurrection and Atonement begin to appear in unlooked-for places, rather than just in Jesus' words and acts. By rehearsing such accounts, Luke continues with more clarity to frame the Resurrection as the central dimension of Jesus' ministry.

Herod's question, of course, concerns the Savior's true identity. Linked to this question are a series of disclosures or revelations in this chapter

which expose one or more aspects of who Jesus really is. The feeding of the five thousand points to Jehovah's care of the former Hebrew slaves in the desert (see 9:11–17), Jesus' question to the Twelve about who he is illustrates his concern that they truly understand (see 9:18–22, 44), the transfiguration uncovers his divine majesty to the three disciples (see 9:28–36), and Jesus' healing of the boy with the unclean spirit drives home his possession of both power and compassion, aspects of personality which usually clash in an individual (see 9:37–42). Moreover, his teachings about discipleship unfurl the rewards of following him, namely, salvation (see 9:23–27). Furthermore, his words disclose both his demands for disciples and who he is as the leader of disciples, connecting together disciples and the Master and the celestial world from which he comes (see 9:57–62). A further matter related to Jesus' true identity concerns what he, as Lord of lords, will yet experience and do in his ministry. By his own words, he is to die (see 9:22, 44), and he comes to save, not to destroy (see 9:52–56).

A related issue has to do with how people respond to the revealed, divine Savior. For the Twelve, their response to Jesus' apostolic commission and preaching assignment is immediate (see 9:1–6, 10). In the case of others, their responses are slower, exhibiting their concerns for this world, concerns which hold them back from an immediate, unconditional response (see 9:57–62).

As noted, another dimension of this chapter has to do with the Twelve themselves. According to 6:13, Jesus "chose twelve" from among his disciples. He subsequently introduces them by coming "down with them" onto "the plain" before his sermon (6:17). Then, in 9:1, he empowers them to preach and to perform miracles. It seems evident that Jesus undertakes the calling and ordination of the Twelve in separate stages. When he chooses them, evidently not all have yet "compared with . . . the Lord Jesus" for any length of time (Acts 1:21). For Luke mentions only four by name in chapter 5 (Simon Peter, James, John, Levi). Hence, there is a need to allow all of them to observe and hear Jesus before he ordains them (see JST 8:1) and then sends them forth "to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (9:2). In undertaking these tasks, they are imitating the Savior (see 9:6), who soon after also "spoke unto [the crowd] of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing" (9:11). This principle of *imitatio Dei* or *imitatio Christi*, imitating God or imitating Christ, underlies the mission and ministry of the Twelve. It is perhaps in the fresh aftermath of their breathtaking experience as preachers and healers, having thereby imitated Jesus, that they wrongly counsel Jesus to "send the multitude away" when he has other ideas (9:12).

In this connection, discipleship rises particularly through the last verses of this chapter to claim a growing, essential part in Jesus' teaching. In the middle of the disciples' tussle over "which of them should be greatest," Jesus holds up a child and then stresses, "he that is the least among you all, the same shall be great" (9:46–48). When James and John witness a village's rejection of their Master and propose commanding "fire to come down from heaven," he teaches that the disciple's way is "to save," just as he will save (9:52–56). To those who seek to tidy up family matters before joining his burgeoning band of disciples, he requires that they immediately and decisively give up all to follow him, not "looking back" after putting their "hand to the plow" (9:59–62). But the disciple's effort and sacrifice will be worth it, at last coming to enjoy the company of "him that sent [Jesus]" (9:48).

Amidst all these events, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem, the city of God (see 9:51; Matthew 5:35 repeats "city of the great King"). He is ready to face his destiny: "a baptism to be baptized with" (12:50). The momentous days leading up to and including the Atonement now lie before us.

## SENDING THE TWELVE (9:1–6)

(Compare Matt. 10:1–15; Mark 6:7–13)

### King James Translation

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. 6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

### New Rendition

1 And when he had called together the Twelve, he gave them power and authority over all demons and to heal sicknesses. 2 And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 And he said to them, "Do not take anything for your journey, neither staff, nor a traveler's bag, nor bread, nor money. Do not even have two shirts. 4 And whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there. 5 And whoever does not welcome you, as you are leaving that town, shake the dust from your feet for a testimony against them." 6 And departing, they traveled through the villages, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.

## Notes

**9:1 called his twelve disciples together:** This scene does not frame the formal calling of the Twelve. Jesus calls them earlier (see the Note on 6:13) and then ordains them (see JST 8:1). At their ordination, of course, they receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, the right to serve as the presiding authority in his nascent church (see D&C 107:8, 18–19).<sup>1</sup> This authority, of course, comes by the laying on of hands, a very old practice (see Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 34:9).<sup>2</sup> In this setting, Jesus gives the Twelve their first charge. It is also possible that the Twelve are not all with him at the healing of Jairus’s daughter (see 8:41–42, 49–56) and that therefore he is summoning them to gather.<sup>3</sup>

**gave them power and authority:** The verb “to give” (Greek *didōmi*) stands in the past (aorist) tense, pointing to a single act of granting authority, that is, to the ordination of the Twelve under the hands of Jesus himself.<sup>4</sup> The Greek nouns are *dynamis* and *exousia*, common terms in Luke’s record to describe divine power and authority (see the Notes on 1:35; 4:6, 14, 36; the Analysis on 4:1–13).<sup>5</sup> Importantly, the Joseph Smith Translation points to events noted in 8:1 as the occasion for featuring the ordination of the Twelve, and possibly others. To what are they ordained on that earlier occasion? Evidently, to the Melchizedek Priesthood. In this latter instance, which is underlined in our current verse, they receive the full authority of the Apostleship (see the Notes on 8:1 and 9:2). Hence, they apparently receive priesthood authority in steps. Their newly received authority is underscored by their complaint about others exercising priesthood powers (see the Notes on 9:49–50).

**over all devils:** Properly, “over all demons.” The power to control those of the demonic world, and “to cure diseases,” form the proof that these men carry Jesus’ authority and commission as his proper representatives, much as Moses’ rod, as well as his ability to make his hand leprous and to turn water to blood, stands as proofs of his authorization from Jehovah in the eyes of the Hebrew slaves and in the view of Pharaoh (see Ex. 4:1–9).

---

1. *TPJS*, 166–67; *TDNT*, 1:429; Jae R. Ballif, “Powers and Offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood,” in *EM*, 2:882–85.

2. Schürer, *History*, 2:211–12, n. 42; *TDNT*, 6:362.

3. Morris, *Luke*, 178.

4. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1856; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §1)318).

5. BAGD, 206–7, 277–78; *TDNT*, 2:299–308, 562–70.

**to cure diseases:** Although the language here differs from that in the next verse (“to heal the sick”), the meaning may be the same, unless we see this earlier expression pointing to relieving health challenges that are long-term, such as those inherent in “raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear” (Mosiah 3:5).

**9:2 he sent them:** The verb (Greek *apostellō*) is the same that underlies the noun *apostle*, plainly drawing attention to this moment as the formal commissioning of the Twelve, much as the same verb denotes the sending of Moses as God’s authorized emissary (see LXX Ex. 3:10).<sup>6</sup> Luke omits the words “by two and two” (Mark 6:7). Verse 9:1 draws attention to Jesus empowering the Twelve and to his conferral of authority; this expression, “he sent them,” points to his specific instruction about what they are to do as his emissaries, to preach and to heal.

**to preach the kingdom of God:** The Twelve’s first assignment is to preach. This preaching embraces a certain message, that about the kingdom, not about private or political interests. Moreover, in the New Testament, the verb “to preach” (Greek *kēryssō*), and its associated nouns (*kēryx*, “herald,” and *kērygma*, “proclamation”), tie particularly to the message about the kingdom of God and about Jesus himself.<sup>7</sup> Out of their first commissioning, the Twelve carry a message that does not yet hold the full story of Jesus and his atoning actions. That part of their preaching will come later. As noted elsewhere, the expression “kingdom of God” is characteristic of Luke’s Gospel (see the Note on 6:20). Modern Apostles carry an added assignment “to prune [the Savior’s] vineyard for the last time” (D&C 95:4).

**to heal the sick:** Some of the earliest manuscripts omit “the sick,” hinting that these words are added later to Luke’s text. But the appearance of the same verb “to heal” (Greek *iaomai*) with an object in 9:11, describing Jesus’ actions, suggests their originality since, in their mission, the Twelve will imitate the Savior.<sup>8</sup>

**9:3 Take nothing:** Jesus’ command not to take any means of support throw the Twelve upon the mercies of God and generosity of other people. One surmises that it is a hard but necessary lesson for these men who otherwise enjoy support from families and acquaintances. The one item missing from the list here is shoes (see 22:35; Matt. 10:10). Early Latter-day

---

6. TDNT, 1:400–401, 414–24.

7. TDNT, 3:692, 703–717.

8. Marshall, *Luke*, 352.

Saint missionaries receive similar instructions (see D&C 24:18; 84:77–84, 86; compare Alma 17:7).<sup>9</sup>

***neither staves:*** The meaning (Greek *rhabdos*) seems to be that Jesus wants the Twelve to travel with no means of self-defense, that is, to be harmless and peaceful, and not to resemble wandering preachers.<sup>10</sup> But a problem arises in Mark 6:8 where Mark records that Jesus “commanded” that the Twelve “should take nothing . . . save a staff only.” One solution is to see Jesus saying in both passages, “Go as you are.”<sup>11</sup>

***nor scrip:*** The term (Greek *pēra*) can mean a traveler’s bag, but may here refer to a beggar’s bag.<sup>12</sup> The latter meaning may be untenable in light of 22:35–36 because Jesus does not want the Twelve to beg for their sustenance (see 10:4; the Note on 22:35).

***9:4 there abide:*** In a general sense, it seems that Jesus wants disciples to remain in the home that receives them rather than looking for a better place to stay. The Joseph Smith Translation strengthens this impression by adding to these words, “there abide until ye depart” (JST 9:4).

***9:5 when ye go out of that city:*** This instruction points to privacy when performing the act that follows, away from the sight and hearing of others (see Matt. 10:14). Such direction can be found in modern instructions to missionaries: “He that receiveth you not, go away from him alone by yourselves, and cleanse your feet even with water . . . and bear testimony of it unto your Father which is in heaven” (D&C 84:92; also 60:15; 109:39–42). In the case of the seventy disciples, who are to preach among Gentiles, the instruction differs: “go your ways out into the streets” (10:10; see the Note thereon).

***shake off the very dust from your feet:*** This action evidently goes back to a Jewish custom of shaking dust from one’s feet as one departs gentile territory and enters one’s own, thus leaving behind that which defiles (see the Note on 23:26). This act by the Twelve may envision that those Jews who reject them and their message possess the same defiling properties (see Acts 13:51).<sup>13</sup>

---

9. *DNTC*, 1:325–26.

10. *BAGD*, 740; Marshall, *Luke*, 352.

11. Plummer, *Luke*, 239; Morris, *Luke*, 179.

12. *BAGD*, 662; *TDNT*, 6:119–21.

13. *TDNT*, 6:629; Marshall, *Luke*, 354; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:754; Morris, *Luke*, 180.

***for a testimony against them:*** In these words lies the core of Jesus’ grim attention toward those who reject the message about the kingdom—their rejection will not go unremembered (see D&C 99:4). Such an act will carry consequences in the final judgment: “it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom” (10:12); and “it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment, than for that house” (D&C 75:22). Moreover, the outcomes may occur in this world: “Wo, I say again, unto that house, or that village or city that rejecteth you, or your words . . . For I, the Almighty, have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness” (D&C 84:95–96; also 99:5). Significantly, this last declaration holds one polished key: punishment—its timing and intensity—belongs to God. The acts of his emissaries stand merely as “a testimony”; they do not bind him to a fixed course of action.

***9:6 they departed:*** The sense is that the Twelve leave immediately, not returning home even for essentials. This response contrasts sharply with those noted later (see 9:59–62). It thus becomes clear why Jesus chooses these men to serve with him.

***preaching the gospel, and healing:*** We observe two points. (1) The Twelve, now empowered by Jesus, take up his work by imitating exactly what they have so far seen him do. (2) The two dimensions of their mission, preaching and healing, go together. One does not occur without the other, for miraculous powers validate the right or authority to preach, as Jesus affirms elsewhere either by word or deed (see 5:1–9, 17–25; also 1 Cor. 2:4–5; Gal. 3:5; 1 Thes. 1:5; etc.).

***every where:*** As with Jesus, the power and authority which the Twelve carry from him are not restricted by location, as we see in the account of the healing of the demoniac in gentile territory (see 8:26–39; the Note on 8:26). Limitations will arise only because of an unwillingness to accept Jesus and his message (see 10:13–15; Morm. 9:18–21; Ether 12:12; Moro. 7:37).

## Analysis

These verses embrace the Savior’s commissioning of the Twelve, one of the vital moments for the church organization that he establishes. In effect, he entrusts his ministry into their hands, broadening the impact of what he alone can exert. To date, they have spent months at his side observing every gesture, hearing every word, and absorbing every lesson. Now the time arrives for them to imitate what they see and learn from their own experiences. At the heart of their preaching, assumed but unrecorded by



Luke, rests their testimony of Jesus and his message. They already know much about him, and can testify to others about what they know. From other sources, we learn that he asks them to follow precisely what they have seen him do (see 3 Ne. 18:6, 13, 16, 24; 27:21).

Luke alone writes that Jesus generously confers both “power and authority” on the Twelve. For their part, Matthew and Mark record only that he confers authority on them (Greek *exousia*) although the King James translators render these expressions “gave them power” (Matt. 10:1; Mark 6:7). Luke seems to understand the inner connection between power and authority which will manifest itself in miraculous events that he will report in the later ministry of the Twelve. For the gift inherent in their commissioning for this initial mission will continue with them—it is not a one-time gift to them—and will manifest itself in power at the coming of the Holy Ghost: “ye [the Twelve] shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). This early experience will prepare the Twelve for their grand, challenging future, a future that will see Jesus intensifying his expectations for them, including extending their ministry to “all nations” (see 22:33–38; 24:47–48).

A number of commentators hold the view that the reports of the sending of the Twelve and the sending of the Seventy go back to the same event or same source.<sup>14</sup> But no compelling reason steps forward that sweeps one or the other account from Luke’s Gospel as inauthentic. Although the circumstances of the two missions are similar, the audience of each differs significantly: the Twelve go to fellow Jews (see Matt. 10:6),<sup>15</sup> the Seventy to Gentiles, as the suspension of food laws illustrates (see 10:7–8). Moreover, the response to those who reject them varies markedly: the Twelve are to remove the dust from their feet in private (see 9:5) whereas the Seventy remove it publicly, in “the [cities’] streets” (10:10–11).

The differences that matter, it seems, concern those between Luke and Matthew, and Luke and Mark, whose account Luke may be repeating and modifying. The common view is that Matthew and Luke draw information from Mark and from another source, termed “Q” for the German word *Quelle*, which means “source.” In this view, Luke draws on both accounts to form his story of the sending of the Twelve and the sending of the Seventy.<sup>16</sup>

---

14. Caird, *Luke*, 144; Marshall, *Luke*, 349–50; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:751; against this view stands Plummer, *Luke*, 270.

15. Marshall, *Luke*, 351.

16. Marshall, *Luke*, 349–50; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:751–52.

As a caution, one observes that the existence of Q is without proof because no remnants of this hypothesized text have ever been found. In remarkable contrast, one observes that a control of sorts exists by which to test the accuracy of all the reports. This control lies in the Savior’s reminiscences in a modern revelation.

In this later revelation, the Risen Jesus speaks of his “friends in days when [he] was with them.” He declares that when he sends them “to preach the gospel in [his] power,” he “suffered them not to have purse or scrip, neither two coats” (D&C 84:77–78). Moreover, in an apparent allusion back to his instructions on that occasion, he declares that “he who feeds you, or clothes you, or gives you money, shall in nowise lose his reward.” In addition, “He that receiveth you not, go away from him alone . . . and cleanse your feet . . . and bear testimony of it unto your Father which is in heaven.” In fact, broadening the audience from individuals to communities, he instructs that “in whatsoever village or city ye enter, do likewise” (D&C 84:90, 92–93). In all, it is important to note, God sets the timing and character of rewards and punishments.

When we step back into Luke’s account of the sending of the Twelve, we notice items that are different from the reports of Matthew and Mark. For example, Luke records nothing about the results of the mission of the Twelve; Mark does (see Mark 6:12–13). Luke reports nothing about villages or cities that, as a whole, reject the preaching of the Twelve; Matthew and Mark do (see Matt. 10:6, 11–15; Mark 6:9, 11). Each of these elements, as we notice, rise in the modern reminiscences from the Risen Savior, underscoring their value for illuminating passages in the Gospels. Further, these reminiscences point up the authenticity of these details in his instructions to his mortal “friends,” the Twelve. In this light, we judge that Luke’s report is lacking in these respects and is therefore to be supplemented by those of Matthew and Mark, as well as by the Savior’s reminiscences, in order to gain a full picture of the instruction to the Twelve. This lack may be due, in part, to the fact that Luke, a second-generation Christian, is gathering information from others’ memories—incomplete in this case—and, in contrast, Mark is effectively reporting the eye-witness reminiscences of Peter.<sup>17</sup>

---

17. Brown, “Testimony of Mark,” 61–87; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 124–27, 155–82.

**HEROD'S RESPONSE****(9:7–9)**

(Compare Matt. 14:1–2; Mark 6:14–16)

**King James Translation**

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; 8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. 9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

**New Rendition**

7 And Herod, the tetrarch, heard about all the things which had taken place, and he was greatly perplexed because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. 9 And Herod said, “I have beheaded John. Who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.

**Notes**

**9:7 *Herod the tetrarch:*** This individual, known as Herod Antipas, “not born earlier than 20 B.C.” and now in his early fifties, is the same person whom Luke mentions in 3:1, 8:3, 13:31 and 23:7–12.<sup>18</sup> He is tetrarch of Galilee and thus is interested to learn of events and prominent persons within his area of rulership (see the Note on 3:1).

***heard of all that was done by him:*** This pointer to the winds of story and rumor—“it was said of some”—demonstrates the accuracy of earlier notices that “there went out a fame of [Jesus] through all the region” (4:14; also 4:37; 7:17).

***was perplexed:*** The imperfect tense of the verb (Greek *diaporeō*) signifies that Herod’s muddled interest lasts for an extended period, certainly until he meets Jesus personally (see 23:8–11).<sup>19</sup>

***John was risen from the dead:*** This sort of news will unsettle Herod Antipas, who imprisons John and then is tricked into executing him (see 3:19–20; 9:9; Matt. 14:3–12; Mark 6:17–29). The list in this verse and the next of those who might be resurrected parallels the list named by the disciples in 9:19. The difference lies in the observation that Antipas does not know who Jesus is (“who is this . . . ?” in 9:9) but the disciples do (“The

18. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 12.

19. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §327.

Christ of God” in 9:20). Though Luke does not repeat the viewpoint that Jesus’ power somehow comes from the resurrected John, the other two synoptists do (see Matt. 14:1–2; Mark 6:14). Herod’s question, “who is this . . . ?” in 9:9, illustrates that he does not believe in the resurrection, and certainly not in John’s. In his mind, apparently, John is dead, and that is that. Incidentally, the place of John’s burial remains unknown. Presumably his disciples bury him away from the Machaerus fortress where he dies (see the Note on 3:20).<sup>20</sup>

**9:8 *Elias had appeared:*** The notion that Elijah is to appear in special situations is very old and arises in people’s minds because he does not suffer death (see 2 Kgs. 2:11).<sup>21</sup> His appearance is also to herald the arrival of the judgment (see Mal. 4:5).

***one of the old prophets:*** In connection with Jesus’ trek to Caesarea Philippi, Matthew records that popular opinion links Jesus with the prophet Jeremiah (see Matt. 16:14). But the sense of the news that comes to Herod seems to be that, in contrast to current pretenders, one of the recorded ancient prophets has reappeared in Jesus.<sup>22</sup>

***risen again:*** The verb (Greek *anistēmi*) in its intransitive form means “to rise” and is related to the noun (Greek *anastasis*) which comes to mean resurrection in Christian parlance (see 9:19; 18:33; 24:7, 46).<sup>23</sup> It seems clear that those who willingly speculate about a person risen from the dead also carry a belief in the resurrection.

**9:9 *John have I beheaded:*** Herod’s words replace the entire story of John’s execution that one finds in Matthew 14:3–12 and Mark 6:17–29. As Josephus reports, the execution takes place at the palace-fortress Machaerus that overlooks the east shore of the Dead Sea.<sup>24</sup> Part of Herod’s puzzlement over John’s rumored reappearance (see 9:7) arises from the fact that he orders John’s execution. Luke’s quotation from Herod places the admission of responsibility in Herod’s own mouth.

***who is this . . . ?:*** As with the guests at the dinner (see 7:49), the disciples in the boat (see 8:25), and the authorities in Jerusalem (see 22:67), Herod Antipas asks the right question but will not reach the right answer.

20. Josephus, *A.J.* 18.5.2 (§119); also Matt. 14:12; Mark 6:29.

21. R. J. Zvi Werblowsky, “Elijah: Ancient Sources,” in *EM*, 2:451–52; Byron R. Merrill, *Elijah: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 141–71.

22. *TDNT*, 6:812–28; Marshall, *Luke*, 356.

23. BAGD, 59–60, 69; *TDNT*, 1:368–71.

24. Josephus, *A.J.* 18.5.2 (§§116–19); Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, 169, map 229.

Moreover, his question here about rumors that John is back from the dead (see 9:7) shows that he does not believe the rumors about such a resurrection and, possibly, does not believe in the divine world. However, the rumors and his question do anticipate the eventual resurrection of John, which Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72 assures us is already a reality.

*he desired to see him:* This notice anticipates the meeting of Herod and Jesus in 23:7–12.

## Analysis

This interlude with Herod, that follows the commissioning of the Twelve, falls in the same place as it does in Mark’s Gospel. In effect, it skillfully advances the passage of time until the Twelve return (see 9:10). But unlike Mark, Luke does not now write an extended account about John’s imprisonment and death, leaving this to a summarizing note in 3:20 and to Herod’s words about executing the Baptist. Instead, by omitting the report about John, which is part of the so-called “great omission”<sup>25</sup> wherein Luke does not repeat any part of Mark 6:45–8:26, Luke holds his focus on the empowerment of the Twelve (see 9:1–5), their successful mission (see 9:10), and their deeper grasp of who Jesus is through ensuing events such as the feeding of the five thousand (see 9:12–17) and the divine disclosure on the Atonement (see 9:28–36). Given this frame, it is difficult to know whether Luke makes a conscious choice to omit the Baptist’s execution, for he must know about it.

In its own way, the story of Herod anticipates not only the appearance of his name in the later warning that comes to Jesus from the Pharisees (see 13:31–33) but especially his unexpected meeting with the Savior in the capital city (see 23:8–11).<sup>26</sup> By now, news reaches him, perplexing him (see 9:7). For the moment, he represents others, both in positions of power and in the larger populace, whose response to news and rumor about Jesus is to question who he is—“who is this . . . ?” (9:9)—and what they should make of him. We hear nothing more of Herod until Luke reports the Pharisees’ warning to Jesus that the tetrarch seeks his life (see 13:31). Evidently, he comes to understand the man from Nazareth as a significant threat whose continued existence will only cause trouble, the same conclusion that other authorities will draw about Jesus.

---

25. Marshall, *Luke*, 364; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:770–71.

26. Marshall, *Luke*, 355.

The most important dimension about this short narrative is that it frames the persistent question on everyone’s mind, “Who is Jesus?” Most of the chapter responds to this question: Jesus is the one who authorizes the Twelve “to preach the kingdom of God” and confers on them the remarkable powers that demonstrate that authority (see 9:1–6); he is the one who feeds the five thousand, much as Jehovah nourishes the Israelites in the wilderness (see 9:12–17); he is the one who will suffer death and then rise again (see 9:22, 44); he is the one who, when stripped of his mortal dress on the mount, stands forth as the glorified Lord (see 9:28–36); he is the one who bids all to follow him (see 9:57–62).

## **FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND (9:10–17)**

(Compare Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; John 6:1–15)

### **King James Translation**

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. 13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14 For they were about five thousand men.

### **New Rendition**

10 And when the apostles returned, they described to him all the things which they had done. And taking them, he withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. 11 And when the crowds found out, they followed him. And when he had welcomed them, he spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing.

12 And the day started to come to its close. And approaching him, the Twelve said, “Send away the crowd, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and food, for we are here in a deserted place.” 13 And he said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said, “We do not have more than five loaves of bread and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.” 14 For there were about five thousand men.

And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15 And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

And he said to his disciples, “Have them sit them down in groups of about fifty each.” 15 And they did so and made them all sit down. 16 And when he had taken the five loaves and two fish and looked up to heaven, he blessed and broke them, and he gave to his disciples to distribute to the crowd. 17 And they all ate and were filled, and the part left over was gathered up by them—twelve baskets of pieces.

## Notes

**9:10 *the apostles*:** Luke returns to this early title, instead of *disciples* (see 6:13; 9:1), apparently underlining that these men, because of their commissioning and recent experience, are functioning fully in their callings.

***when they were returned, [they] told him*:** The past (aorist) tense of the verbs indicates that these events occur at the same time,<sup>27</sup> clearly hinting that the return time is planned and the reports are delivered in a single meeting. This pattern of returning and reporting will underlie the actions of the Twelve and other disciples, as well as the Seventy (see 10:17; Acts 15:2, 4).

***he took them*:** Mark notes that Jesus invites the Twelve to separate themselves from others in order to rest from their missionary labors (see Mark 6:31). In contrast, Luke emphasizes Jesus’ leadership in taking them where he wants them to go, and then in receiving the crowds who follow them (see 9:11).<sup>28</sup>

***desert place . . . Bethsaida*:** Luke is the only writer to locate the feeding of the five thousand in the general neighborhood of Bethsaida, above the north-east shore of the Sea of Galilee, although John hints that the event occurs on the eastern shore (see John 6:1, literally “on the other side of the sea”), and both Matthew and Mark report that they go by boat (see Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:32). Herod Philip, in whose territory Bethsaida lies, rebuilds the town.<sup>29</sup> More than this, reasons exist to believe that Luke visits this region during his two-year residence in Caesarea while the Apostle Paul is under house arrest in that city (see Acts 27:1–2; the Introduction V.C). We do not typically think of this region as a “desert” but as merely uninhabited. The Joseph Smith

27. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1856; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §1)318).

28. Marshall, *Luke*, 359.

29. Josephus, *A.J.* 18.2.1 (§28); Josephus, *B.J.* 2.9.1 (§168).

Translation reads “solitary place,” a better rendering both here and in 9:12, although some manuscripts omit reference to a desert place.<sup>30</sup>

**9:11 *he received them:*** As in his action of taking the Twelve away to a private place (see 9:10), Jesus leads out in receiving the crowd and in meeting their needs at the end of the day, acts that signal the “compassion” that Matthew and Mark write about (see Matt. 14:14; Mark 6:34).

***spake unto them of the kingdom of God:*** The Greek verb “to speak” appears in the imperfect tense and thereby implies a continuous, major sermon.<sup>31</sup> The topic, “the kingdom of God,” repeats that which the Twelve previously preach (see 9:2) and may be aimed as much at them, to show them his approach to the subject when it is still fresh in their minds, as at the multitude.<sup>32</sup> On this occasion, he mirrors them and, with meaning known only to them, shows his warm approval of their just-completed preaching efforts.

***healed them:*** Besides holding the emphasis on Jesus as the one who is in charge, the imperfect tense of the verb, indicating repeated action, illustrates that he heals many.<sup>33</sup>

**9:12 *then came the twelve:*** The Twelve, apparently after consulting with one another, attempt to assert their influence with Jesus. They are witnesses to his day-long interaction with the crowd and seek to disengage him, perhaps believing that he needs to get away and rest.

***Send the multitude away:*** This attempt to counsel Jesus is a first. By now, the Twelve have been traveling with the Savior for some months and have developed a level of familiarity which allows them to approach him as counselors. But, as JST Matt. 3:25 reminds us, Jesus “needed not that any man should teach him.” Hence, as this incident shows, no one, including the recently called Twelve, knows the mind of Jesus and can anticipate what he might do. In their minds, it is time to send the crowd home. For Jesus, it is time to provide food to the assembly, much as long ago he provides food to his people in the desert (see Ex. 16:4–5). The connection between spiritual nourishment through his words and physical nourishment through food should not be missed.

***lodge:*** Only Luke notes this part of the Twelve’s concern. It is late enough in the day that many in the assembly are not able to reach home.

---

30. Marshall, *Luke*, 359.

31. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §327.

32. Marshall, *Luke*, 359.

33. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §325.



**9:13 Give ye them to eat:** Again, Jesus is in charge of what is happening and, in a lesson to the Twelve, takes back the initiative from them, though their concerns about the crowd must please him.

**five loaves, and two fishes:** All the Gospels record this detail. According to John 6:9, these food items are in the possession of “a lad” and the fish are “small.”

**buy meat:** The term translated “meat” (Greek *brōma*) means food in general.<sup>34</sup> The concern of the Twelve for the multitude rises more sharply in an addition by the Joseph Smith Translation, “we can provide no more food [than the five loaves and two fishes] for all this multitude” (JST 9:13).

**9:14 sit down by fifties:** In a crowd of “about five thousand men,” one must think of about one hundred companies of approximately fifty each. The number fifty itself, of course, points both to the Exodus and to the function of judges. For with the encouragement of Jethro, Moses chooses individuals to lead and judge groups of fifty during the Exodus period (see Ex. 18:21, 25). One suspects that Jesus’ instructions to the Twelve to arrange people in companies of fifty is one way to connect them preliminarily to their eventual function of “judging the twelve tribes of Israel,” though the scene is not one of judgment (see 22:30; Matt. 19:28; also 1 Ne. 12:9; Morm. 3:18; D&C 29:12).

**9:15 they did so:** Subtly, Luke conveys the Twelve’s immediate obedience.

**9:16 he took:** This act is the first of five detailed in the following verbs, meaning that he takes the loaves and fishes in his hands. Jesus thus becomes the host for what follows.

**looking up to heaven:** By reporting this action, Luke and the other Synop- tists confer a divine sanctity on what follows (see Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41) as well as a sense that the report rests on an eyewitness memory (see the Notes on 7:9, 44; 19:5). Further, we notice that Jesus acts contrary to the custom of looking down when pronouncing a blessing, perhaps showing his independence from the prevailing winds of Judaism.<sup>35</sup>

**he blessed them, and brake, and gave:** These actions, repeated in the Eucharist or sacrament (see 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23–24), mirror those of beginning a meal with a prayer<sup>36</sup> and confer a sacred aspect on the act of eating (see the Notes on 22:17; 24:30). In the Book of Mormon account, the Savior repeats all of these actions, except looking into heaven, in connection with both the miraculous feeding of a multitude and the institution of the sacra- ment (see 3 Ne. 18:3–7; 20:3–9). The verb translated “gave” (Greek *didōmi*)

---

34. BAGD, 147.

35. TDNT, 2:762.

36. Plummer, *Luke*, 244; Marshall, *Luke*, 361–62; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:764.

appears in the imperfect tense, conveying “the successive acts of distribution to the disciples, who then put the pieces in the hands of the crowd,”<sup>37</sup> much as priests hand the bread in successive acts to deacons in modern LDS church services.

**9:17 *they did eat, and were all filled:*** In these words lies the miracle. In these words rests an emphasis on abundance that is observed chiefly by the Twelve who distribute the food and then, evidently, gather the remainder, each carrying a basket. Hence, the miracle is aimed at them—they are its main witnesses because they see the whole scene unfold—and raises anew the question, “Who is this man?”<sup>38</sup>

***twelve baskets:*** The baskets are the same as those carried by soldiers for equipment and food.<sup>39</sup> The number twelve, of course, points to the Apostles as well as, more distantly, to the tribes of Israel who traveled with Moses through the desert. Such abundance graces the lives of people on at least one other occasion (see 2 Kgs. 4:43–44).

## Analysis

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle common to all four New Testament Gospels. Its essential elements also lie in the pages of the Book of Mormon. Hence, the miracle serves a broadly important function of revealing who the Savior is and how widely he is willing to cast his powers to bless people in their needs.

Throughout the account, Jesus is the main actor, thereby disclosing the full range of his efforts to reach into people’s hearts. He guides the Twelve to a place that he chooses for debriefing and instruction, he graciously receives the crowd that follows him, he teaches them and heals them, and he hosts a meal for all.<sup>40</sup> Within one day, he interacts meaningfully with his closest followers and edifies and satisfies a large group, including especially the Twelve.

The Gospel of John ties the miracle to the Israelite Exodus by noting that the season is Passover and that Jesus later speaks of the meal as manna (see John 6:4, 31). The synoptic Gospels do not make this connection overtly, though it stands in the background because, in the wilderness, God meets all the needs of his people, including food and drink (see Ex. 15:23–25; 16:4; Num. 11:8–9; Ps. 78:15–16, 24; 105:40–41).

---

37. Marshall, *Luke*, 363.

38. Marshall, *Luke*, 357, 363.

39. Josephus, *B.J.* 3.5.5 (§95).

40. Marshall, *Luke*, 359.

Further, as Jehovah gives his law to his people as a guidepost, thus nourishing their souls and minds in the desert, so by speaking about “the kingdom of God” (9:11) Jesus nourishes the hearts and minds of those present in the “solitary place” near Bethsaida (JST 9:10). Although none of the Gospel writers preserve anything of what Jesus says before the miracle—Mark notes only that he teaches them “many things” (Mark 6:34)—we cannot miss the elevating wholeness of the experience. Here, in a scene orchestrated by the Savior, we find guiding words, healing powers, and nourishing food.

We also find the same essential elements in the Resurrected Savior’s meeting with people at the temple in the land Bountiful. The presence of the temple, of course, adds a special quality to the experience in the New World. In that scene, particularly on the first day of his three-day visit, the Risen Jesus comes with words of instruction and edification, even repeating long segments of what he says during his Old World ministry (see 3 Ne. 11:22–41; 12:1–14:27; 15:3–16:20). Moreover, he graciously offers his broad healing powers to those in his audience who are “lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that [are] withered, or . . . deaf, or . . . afflicted in any manner.” On that stunning occasion, “he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him” (3 Ne. 17:7, 9).

In addition, at the end of a long day with no breaks for meals, he asks his newly called twelve disciples to look for “bread and wine.” As soon as they bring a supply, he does exactly as he does near Bethsaida: “he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples.” But in a detail that is missing from the New Testament Gospels, he first “commanded [the disciples] that they should eat.” Only “when they had eaten and were filled” does he command “that they should give unto the multitude” who, in their turn, eat “and were filled.” Then, in a scene reminiscent of the Last Supper, the Resurrected Lord takes occasion to connect the experience with the sacrament, saying to the disciples, “Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name” (3 Ne. 18:1, 3–5).<sup>41</sup> Hence, in one day, as in the territory of Bethsaida, the Risen Jesus brings

---

41. Joseph Fielding McConkie, “The Doctrine of a Covenant People,” in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9–30, This Is My Gospel*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), 172–74; Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 163–65.

unlooked-for blessings of wholeness and completeness, overlaying the experience with sacred, sacramental meaning.

Perhaps the most striking similarity between scenes in the Old and New Worlds has to do with the matter of Jesus' true identity, framed by Herod's question, "who is this . . . ?" (9:9). As noted, in the stories that Luke repeats in chapter 9 he is holding up this matter for resolution among Jesus' hearers and followers, particularly the Twelve. In contrast, the Book of Mormon account solves the issue of the Savior's identity at the beginning of his visit and clarifies the question in light of a misunderstanding that initially identifies him as an angel (see 3 Ne. 11:8). For at that blurring, confusing moment, the Resurrected Lord declares, first and foremost, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world" (3 Ne. 11:10). Thus, in an instant, his identity becomes known to all.<sup>42</sup> But that is not the case in the Old World. There, for whatever reason, he reveals himself cautiously, in stages. The Twelve, we conclude, must grasp his identity early on, though apparently not its full significance. But other admirers and followers seem not to understand.

The absence of a reaction from the five thousand in the Synoptists' accounts is striking, particularly because John writes that "those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet." Moreover, Jesus detects that "they would come and . . . make him a king," leading him to withdraw (John 6:14–15). Luke is silent. In the New World, by contrast, the reaction is one of joy and wonder at the Risen Lord's actions and words (see 3 Ne. 11:16–17; 17:5, 16–17). Although no crowd reaction is reported at the end of the first meal that he provides, by contrast, at the end of the second New World meal, which he miraculously caters in the absence of bread and wine (see 3 Ne. 20:6–7), we read that the gathered people "were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus" (3 Ne. 20:9). These people rightly sense that divine powers are in this moment gracing their lives.

We ask, What is the point of Luke's silence on this matter? He and the other Synoptists may well know about some reaction from the multitude. Whether or not this is so, it seems that he is leading his readers to focus on the Twelve and not on the assembly's reaction to the miracle.<sup>43</sup> Readers

---

42. Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 131–33; Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92), 4:52–53.

43. Marshall, *Luke*, 363;

know that the Twelve, who are involved first in the conversation about what to do for the crowd and then in settling the people and distributing and gathering the food, witness first-hand what is happening. They are the true audience. In addition, at first the Twelve clearly see that they are unable to offer substantial help to the gathered throng. But with Jesus' aid, they can extend a meaningful, sustaining hand.<sup>44</sup> That lesson is not to be missed. Further, they gather enough to fill their twelve baskets, an observation that points directly to their number. With these experiences, they come one giant step closer to grasping who Jesus really is. And this account sets in place the stepping stone for their representative, Peter, to express his testimony in the next story about who the Savior truly is (see 9:18–22).<sup>45</sup>

Finally, the sheer abundance of the miracle pushes itself into our consciousness. In the past, Israel's God blesses his people with abundance, especially during their days of wandering and camping in the desert with Moses. And Luke may intend his readers to recall those earlier experiences. For example, Bethsaida lies east of the Jordan River where it empties into the lake. In the Exodus, the children of Israel receive manna before reaching the west side of the Jordan. But that is in the past. Jesus' acts, in contrast, point to the here and now—who he truly is—and apparently give directions to the future as well. One thinks of the coming Atonement that his miracles anticipate. We think of the messianic banquet, or marriage supper, on the other side of the Atonement at which the Savior will join his faithful followers in a celestial meal (see 6:21; 14:15; 22:30; Isa. 25:6–8; Rev. 19:9; D&C 27:5–14; 65:3; 58:8–11; 65:3; the Notes on 4:3; 12:37; 13:25, 28; 14:15; 22:16–18, 30; the Analysis on 4:1–13).<sup>46</sup> One also thinks of the days of the Messiah when the earth will yield in abundance, at last escaping the curse placed on it in the beginning (see Gen. 3:17; Moses 4:23). According to Old Testament passages, this abundance will manifest itself in the growth especially of grapevines and their fruit (see Jer. 32:15; Hosea 14:7; Amos 9:13–14). In other sources that are roughly contemporary with the New Testament, this idea expands to hold that every vine will grow a thousand branches, every branch will produce a thousand clusters of grapes, and each cluster will bring forth a thousand grapes.<sup>47</sup>

---

44. Marshall, *Luke*, 357.

45. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:764.

46. *TPJS*, 66; Morris, *Luke*, 182; Madsen, "Marriage Supper of the Lamb," 2:860; Smith, "Messianic Banquet," 4:788–91.

47. 2 Baruch 29:5; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.33.3–4; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:105.

## JESUS' FIRST PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH (9:18–22)

(Compare Matt. 16:13–23; Mark 8:27–33)

### King James Translation

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. 20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. 21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; 22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

### New Rendition

18 And it came to pass as he was praying that only his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” 19 And answering they said, “John the Baptist, and others Elijah, and others that one of the ancient prophets has come back to life.” 20 But he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answering said, “The Anointed One of God.”

21 And strictly commanding them, he warned them not to tell this to anyone, 22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day.”

### Notes

**9:18 *he was alone praying*:** Only Luke pens this note that, before Peter bears witness about Jesus' identity, Jesus prays. Luke seems to be saying that Jesus prays privately before major moments in his ministry, such as meeting the challenges of detractors (see 5:16–17), calling the Twelve (see 6:12–13), and facing the pains of Gethsemane (see 22:41). In this case, “his disciples were with him,” and the Joseph Smith Translation adds that they join him in this private setting: “he went alone with his disciples to pray” (JST 9:18). In effect, he is preparing to reveal for the first time what will happen to him in Jerusalem (see 9:22). Notably, in our mind's eye we must see women disciples in this gathering, or in the following scene (see 9:44), if we trust the angel's words to the women at the tomb: “remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again” (24:6–7). According to Matthew and Mark, Peter especially does not receive this news happily (see Matt. 16:22–23; Mark 8:32–33).

Also missing is any notation about geography, perhaps not surprising since Luke does not reproduce here any of an entire section that lies between Mark 6:45 and 8:26, following the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Both Mark and Matthew locate Peter's testimony and Jesus' prophecy of his death in the general area of Caesarea Philippi, some twenty-five miles north and slightly east of Bethsaida. Although this may be understood as an indicator that Luke is only minimally acquainted with the geography of northern Palestine, see the Notes on 4:31, 6:12, 6:17, 7:11; the Analysis on 6:20–49; and the Introduction V.C.

***Whom say the people that I am?:*** This form of the question stands close to Mark's report (see Mark 8:27). According to Matthew's record, the question included "the Son of man," which may not be original (see Matt. 16:13). This question, and the one that follows (see 9:20), seek to answer the issue of Jesus' real identity.

**9:19 *John the Baptist . . . Elias . . . one of the old prophets:*** The listing is identical to that reproduced in the story of Herod Antipas (see 9:7–8; see the Notes thereon). Antipas's uninformed response to rumors ("who is this . . . ?" in 9:9) sets up the disciples' informed answer ("The Christ of God" in 9:20). Matthew adds the name Jeremiah (see Matt. 16:14). The two lists point to a widespread, popular view about Jesus' identity, a view that he will soon correct.

**9:20 *whom say ye that I am?:*** The moment has arrived for Jesus to draw out of the Twelve, and likely other followers, what they know of his true identity. In this connection, the *ye* is emphatic, implying personal discovery.<sup>48</sup> As Luke relates matters, they would and should have grasped his identity from witnessing Jesus' words and acts.<sup>49</sup> It is Matthew who puts the response within the added framework of divine revelation when, after Peter's testimony, Jesus affirms that "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

***The Christ of God:*** Peter's words gather all the meaning associated with terms such as Messiah and Savior (see the Notes on 2:11 and 24:26). Like the Hebrew word *Messiah*, *Christ* means "anointed one." The appearance of the definite article "the" points past the ancients who are anointed as they take office, such as priests and kings (see Ex. 29:7, 21; 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 105:15; Isa. 61:1; etc.), and leads us directly to Jesus who, in his various roles, is *the* anointed one of God. The Joseph Smith

---

48. Morris, *Luke*, 185.

49. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:775.

Translation adjusts the title to read, “The Christ, the Son of God,” equating two terms and framing a clearer Christological statement about who Jesus is. A deeper meaning of this title will become clear to the three Apostles who accompany Jesus onto the Mount of Transfiguration (see 9:28–36). Of course, Jesus will soon tell the Twelve, and others, that being the Christ will involve dying and rising from the dead (see 9:22). What is more, we see Peter’s more mature view of this man than what he expresses at the time of his call (see 5:8).<sup>50</sup>

**9:21 *commanded them to tell no man that thing:*** The Joseph Smith Translation adjusts Luke’s note so that it is closer to Mark’s report: “tell no man of him” (JST 9:21; see Mark 8:30). In Mark, Jesus’ command fits into Mark’s larger interest of highlighting Jesus’ efforts to keep his messiahship under wraps.<sup>51</sup> In Luke, Jesus’ directive bottles up, for the moment, the disciples’ enthusiasm for telling others who Jesus is. His words hint strongly that they do not yet fully understand, and that their private thoughts and hopes about the Messiah must not stand in the place of a true understanding.<sup>52</sup> In effect, he is preparing them to come to grips with who he is. And his next disclosure to them forms one piece of his true identity.

**9:22 *The Son of man:*** Questions about the nature of this title, and whether Jesus applies it to himself, generate wide debate among New Testament specialists. Most conclude that the title “Son of man” originates among Aramaic speaking Jews in the form of *bar ‘enōsh* (“son of man”)<sup>53</sup> and that it carries no messianic meaning, pointing rather to a human being.<sup>54</sup> Additional scripture, however, fills in much of the picture, pointing to an early title for God, “Man of Holiness,” and holding that “Son of Man” refers to God’s “Only Begotten.” The full, original sense of the title is therefore “Son of the Man of Holiness.” In the same passage, one of the other titles of the Only Begotten is “righteous Judge,” indicating early connections between the title *Son of Man* and his status not only as Only Begotten but also as Judge (Moses 6:57; also 7:35; see the Note on 5:24 and the Analysis below).<sup>55</sup>

---

50. John Marsh, *Saint John*, The Pelican Gospel Commentaries (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1968), 130–31.

51. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:772, 775.

52. Lane, *Gospel According to Mark*, 290–92.

53. *TDNT*, 5:688–95.

54. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:208–11, 584–85, 779–80; for this title in John’s gospel, see Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1:84.

55. Brown, “Man and Son of Man,” 57–72; Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 103–4, 130.



***must suffer . . . and be slain, and be raised the third day:*** This verse forms the first of Jesus' predictions of his suffering, death, and resurrection. Luke notes six other occasions when Jesus speaks of these approaching events (see 9:44–45; 12:50; 17:24–25; 18:31–34; 22:15, 37; the Notes on 17:25; 18:32–33; 22:15). Hence, a proper grasp of who he is must also include his Atonement,<sup>56</sup> and therefore will not come until after his resurrection (see 24:6–7, 46; the Notes on 24:5, 26). Evidently, the Twelve do not comprehend Jesus' plain prediction, for "they understood not this saying" (9:45; see also 18:34). In this connection, perhaps importantly, Jesus repeats the title "Son of man" at the moment Judas approaches to kiss him (see 22:48 and the Note thereon). As elsewhere, the verb "must" (Greek *dei*) points to the divine necessity of Jesus' labors and ministry (see 2:49; 4:43; 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 44, 46; the Note on 19:5).<sup>57</sup> The phrase "the third day" mirrors Jesus' sayings elsewhere about the timing of his resurrection (see 13:32; 18:33; 24:7).

***the elders and chief priests and scribes:*** This cluster of officials, whose power base lies in Jerusalem (see 20:1), are to reject Jesus with a ferocious intensity that will lead to his death. But this passage ascribes no blame to them for his looming death. According to Luke, Jesus names "the Gentiles" as those who will "put him to death" (18:32–33). But clearly, Jewish officials are deeply involved.<sup>58</sup> The fact that he points to them forms another indicator that Jesus travels to Jerusalem more than once during his ministry and crosses verbal swords with them, a significant omission (see the Notes on 10:30, 38; 13:34; 19:47; 22:9; 23:5, 28, 50; 24:13; also the Notes on 5:6, 11; 9:33; 19:5).<sup>59</sup>

## Analysis

These few verses (9:18–22) continue the ever-pressing interest in who the Savior truly is. To be sure, Herod's question—"who is this . . . ?"—builds the proper framework for addressing this weighty matter. Notices about Jesus have reached the highest offices of the land, certainly via Herod's trusted agents (see 8:3). This means that Jesus' activities and words are gathering a relentless momentum among the populace that cannot be ignored. But the questions persist. Is he simply a wonder worker? A superb orator? A man

---

56. *TDNT*, 5:913.

57. *TDNT*, 2:22–25.

58. Brown, "Arrest," 207–8; Thomas A. Wayment, "Responsibility for the Death of Jesus," in Holzapfel and Wayment, *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection*, 422–49.

59. Plummer, *Luke*, 290: "from a short visit to Jerusalem which Lk. does not mention."

in the ancient prophetic tradition? Popular views, such as those reflected in the rumors that reach both Herod and the Twelve, make out Jesus not as an important person in his own right but as a mere reincarnation of one of the former prophets. But such views demean the man Jesus. It is in this stunted climate that Jesus seeks to reveal parts of his true identity. And he starts with the Twelve.

As a contrast, Herod sits puzzled about news of Jesus; Jesus' disciples do not. Part of the tangle in Herod's mind grows out of his execution of John; no such tangle exists in the minds of the Twelve. Instead, through Peter's words, they express a straightforward, though yet incomplete, grasp that Jesus is the Messiah, the one whom they and their fellow citizens have been expecting for a very long time. Although they do not yet comprehend all that Jesus' messiahship may mean, they possess a firm first knowledge that will bind them to Jesus with an ironclad chain, even in the face of the most horrific persecution and death itself.

What Jesus announces, of course, illumines their minds about how his messiahship will play out. He will suffer and die. The sharp incongruity of this concept with the Twelve's prior understanding shows up in their strong protest, voiced by Peter, that Matthew and Mark record (see Matt. 16:22–23; Mark 8:32–33). To bring the Twelve under control, and especially Peter, Jesus adopts remarkably strong language, implying that any misunderstanding carries a satanic quality: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33). Luke does not report these words, but allows Jesus' prediction of his death to stand without challenge. For Luke, evidently the chief missteps of the disciples are that "they understood not this saying" and, perhaps worse, "they feared to ask him" (9:45). In the end, a correct comprehension of who he is will come to stand at the base of their testimony about him (see Acts 2:22–36).

The two titles that appear in these verses, "The Christ of God" and "The Son of man" (9:20, 22), both of which uncover aspects of his identity, initially seem very different. The expression "the Christ of God," or God's Messiah, bears the sense that the Messiah draws his authority and mission from God. This messiahship does not arise from some human commissioning (see 10:22; also the Notes on 3:2 and 4:18, and the Analysis following 3:21–22). And our testimony of its reality, as we learn from Matthew, comes from a celestial-borne revelation (see Matt. 16:17).

The second expression, "the Son of man," is more enigmatic and difficult to solve. For most scholars, this title, which occurs regularly in the book of Ezekiel and at Daniel 7:13–14 and 8:17, grows out of the Aramaic phrase

*bar 'enōsh* (“son of man”) and simply points to a human being. Thus, on this view, the origin of the title goes back to the Old Testament prophets and means little more than a mortal person. And whatever additional, special meaning the phrase holds for Jesus is imparted by him into it.<sup>60</sup> But an ancient record that comes from Moses through Joseph Smith sheds an unexpected light on this matter. In this text we learn that ancient titles for God consist of expressions that describe his attributes. Among them are “Man of Counsel” and “Endless and Eternal” (Moses 7:35). But the title that ties to “Son of Man” is “Man of Holiness.” In fact, the key passage reads, “Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge” (Moses 6:55). Hence, the title “Son of Man” is originally tied to a sense of celestial holiness derived from God and is unabashedly applied to Jesus Christ in his role as judge. What is not clear is whether the title “Son of Man” carries beyond the generation of Moses as a known title for the future Messiah. Its omission in the Old Testament suggests that it does not.

Two other omissions face a reader of Luke’s verses. The first is the omission of Peter’s protest, a topic treated above. The second is just as puzzling and concerns the omission of the accounts from Mark 6:45–8:26, including Jesus’ sayings about defilement and “the tradition of the elders” (see Mark 7:1–23; Matt. 15:1–20), his healing of the Syrophenician woman (see Mark 7:24–30; Matt. 15:21–28), and the story of Jesus feeding the four thousand (see Mark 8:1–10; Matt. 15:32–39). To be sure, scholars of the Gospels have noted that Luke apparently avoids duplicate stories, such as the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand.<sup>61</sup> But other omissions seemingly make little sense, if Luke indeed is adopting much from Mark. For example, in a later passage, Luke records a brief confrontation between Jesus and a group of Pharisees at a dinner party over the issue of defilement (see 11:37–41). In this light, it is difficult to understand why Luke does not include Jesus’ long critique of the Pharisaic defilement rules that Mark reports, unless he gauges his one brief report of Jesus’ judgments to be sufficient (see Mark 7:1–23).

In a second instance, Jesus heals a blind man in the town of Bethsaida (see Mark 8:23–26). Luke does not record this notable story, an odd circumstance if Luke is a physician, unless, again, he views the account of Jesus

---

60. *TDNT*, 8:406–8, 420–53; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:208–11, 584–85, 779–80; James D. G. Dunn, “Christology,” in *ABD*, 1:981–82.

61. Marshall, *Luke*, 364; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:81, 770.

healing the blind man near Jericho as an adequate illustration of such powers (see 18:35–43; also 7:22). A third example concerns the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman, a Gentile. Both Matthew and Mark repeat this account, but Luke does not. Why not? In other passages, Luke shows an unabashed interest in reporting Jesus’ interaction with women and with Gentiles. Further, if he is a physician, such a healing will certainly draw his attention. But it does not. One is left to wonder whether he sees the healing of the Gergesene demoniac as ample evidence of Jesus’ power among Gentiles, particularly because this story ties nicely to the coming mission of the Seventy among Gentiles, whereas the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman exhibits no such connection beyond itself (see 8:26–39; 10:1–12, 17–20).

The sum is that Luke’s omissions may fit a pattern, given the interests that are manifest in what he preserves and emphasizes elsewhere, a pattern of abbreviating or omitting when a story does not augment his portrait of the Savior. Hence, either Luke is not aware of Mark’s Gospel, which seems impossible in light of his opening statement (see 1:1), or he chooses at points not to follow that account.<sup>62</sup> Whatever the case, by arranging the stories as he does, Luke drives forward the emphatic points about Jesus’ true identity and its unfolding disclosure to the Twelve, keeping his focus on their experiences with Jesus that bring illumination.<sup>63</sup>

## DISCIPLESHIP

### (9:23–27)

(Compare Matt. 16:24–28; Mark 8:34–9:1)

#### King James Translation

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

#### New Rendition

23 And he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses himself or suffers loss?

62. Plummer, *Luke*, 245–46.

63. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:770–71.

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 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.

26 “For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him, when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels. 27 But I say to you truthfully, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

## Notes

**9:23 *If any man will come after me:*** Jesus rings the bell of discipleship. His next instruction will center on how we become true followers (see 14:27; John 12:25–26; also D&C 93:1).

***let him deny himself:*** All discipleship begins with this requirement, expressed only here in the New Testament.<sup>64</sup> The verb (Greek *arneomai*), in the imperative, also carries the senses “to refuse” or “to say no,”<sup>65</sup> that is, requiring self-discipline and self-denial.<sup>66</sup> The general character of Jesus’ principle underlines that he is aiming his words at more than Peter and the Twelve—“he said to them all.”

***take up his cross:*** Jesus’ appeal to an instrument of death is striking in light of his prediction of his demise in the prior statement (see 9:22). At this point, the Twelve surely do not grasp the allusion, known only to Jesus, about how he will die. There is more: Jesus also strikes the note of inevitability. When a condemned prisoner hefts the cross, or rather the cross-beam, he or she starts on a path that inevitably leads to the place of execution and death. Just as a prisoner, by taking up the cross, begins a journey that leads to an inevitable end, so the disciple, when truly following the Savior, begins a pattern of life that carries to an inevitable end, that of life in “the kingdom of God” (9:27). This person follows Jesus “in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable” (D&C 88:133). To this understanding can be affixed the notions that Jesus also teaches his followers that they may experience suffering, as he will suffer, and even death (see D&C 98:14; 112:14; the Notes on 14:27 and 18:22).<sup>67</sup>

***daily:*** Only Luke preserves this expression, indicating that a person’s discipleship does not expire, or wax and wane. Constancy is key.

64. Marshall, *Luke*, 373.

65. *TDNT*, 1:469–71; *TLNT*, 1:199–205.

66. David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* 43 (May 2013): 41–44.

67. *TDNT*, 7:577–79; 9:607; Marshall, *Luke*, 373.

**follow:** The present imperative of the verb (Greek *akoloutheō*) bears the meaning “to follow continuously,” without stopping.<sup>68</sup>

**9:24 *whosoever will save his life:*** The sense of the Greek verbs is “wills to save” (Greek *thelō* and *sōzō*),<sup>69</sup> emphasizing a person’s will or strong desire to gain the best from life strictly for himself or herself (see the Note on 16:8; the Analysis on 16:1–12).<sup>70</sup>

**shall lose it:** The Joseph Smith Translation changes this expression so that the tenor of the saying is reversed: “must be willing to lose it for my sake” (JST 9:24). Hence, instead of a person, who seeks to save his or her life, losing it, that person rather will save it, under a condition set by Jesus (see the Note on 14:26). Moreover, it is a person’s willingness that forms the cornerstone ingredient (see the Note on 17:33).

**whosoever will lose his life for my sake:** Again the Joseph Smith Translation adjusts this saying, allowing the distinct emphasis to rest on a person’s willingness to surrender life at the Savior’s behest: “whosoever will be willing to lose his life for my sake” (JST 9:24; see D&C 98:13–15; 103:27–28).

**9:25 *if he gain the whole world:*** Readers’ minds might run to Herod Antipas, whom Luke features a few verses earlier (see 9:7–9). More than this, Jesus’ cautioning words here fit with stories unique to Luke’s Gospel that show Jesus’ interest in commenting on the value of property, including the parables of the prodigal son and the unjust steward (see 15:11–16:13). At the end of these words, the Joseph Smith Translation adds an expression that focuses precisely on Jesus, making his saying Christocentric, that is, a clear reference to himself. The positive implication is that a person of wealth can find salvation, but only if he or she receives the Savior: “if he gain the whole world, and yet he receive not [Jesus] whom God hath ordained” (JST 9:25; see the Note on 18:27). Incidentally, here we find a plain statement about Jesus’ ordination at the hands of his Father (see the Notes on 3:2 and 4:18, and the Analysis on 3:21–22). In the end, Jesus’ statement sharply contrasts the lust for worldly possessions and the craving that specifically seeks the Savior.

**and lose himself:** The Joseph Smith Translation makes the loss more dire: “and he lose his own soul” (JST 9:25). Thus, the stakes involved in our response to Jesus are eternal in nature.

---

68. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§36–335.

69. BAGD, 355, 805–6; TDNT, 3:46, 49–50, 52; 7:990–92.

70. Morris, *Luke*, 186.

**9:26 *ashamed of me and of my words*:** Jesus takes up a similar matter elsewhere in the context of God’s all pervasive influence in earthly life (see 12:8–9).

***when he shall come in his own glory*:** Jesus clarifies that he is declaring principles as they apply to the eschaton, or end of time, the era of his Second Coming. But his words also anticipate his glory that will soon be manifest on the Mount of Transfiguration (see 9:28–36). The Joseph Smith Translation puts forward two doctrinal clarifications by substituting, first, “when he shall come in his own kingdom,” pointing to the kingdom’s celestial arrival when the Savior comes, and, second, adding “clothed in the glory of his Father,” thereby beaming light on the concept that glory ultimately derives from the Father, a concept at home in other New Testament sources (see John 7:18; 8:50; 17:22; Rom. 6:4; Heb. 1:3; 2:7). The JST phrase “in the glory of his Father” harmonizes with Matthew 16:27 and Mark 8:38, forming one of the few occasions that the JST adjusts Luke’s text to that of another Gospel (see the Note on 6:28; the Analysis on 6:20–49).

**9:27 *shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God*:** At first glance, this saying seems to pose a major problem for an interpreter. Does Jesus mean that God’s kingdom, in its millennial form, will come to earth during the lifetimes of many who are with him at this moment? This view is only one of the possibilities. All depends on the meaning of the term, “the kingdom of God.” If these words point to a more or less contemporary reality, then Jesus may have in view the manifestation of the kingdom in his transfiguration or his Atonement.<sup>71</sup> One possible meaning, not commented on by scholars, has to do with John, son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve (see 5:10; 6:14), who is doubtless present when Jesus utters these words. If the reference has to do with the Second Coming, Jesus may be thinking of John. As is known from other sources, John will not die but become a translated being, living in the mortal world until Jesus comes the second time (see John 21:20–23; 3 Ne. 28:6–8; D&C 7).<sup>72</sup>

## Analysis

The Greco-Roman world is full of disciples. Such persons owe ultimate loyalty to noted masters and teachers who carve out a way of living that

---

71. Plummer, *Luke*, 249–50, offers a listing of possible meanings, including the transfiguration, Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the events of Pentecost, the spread of the gospel message, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Second Coming.

72. Griggs, “John the Beloved,” 2:757–58.

appeals to people seeking discipline, occasionally severe, and looking for high-minded purpose in their lives. To a modest extent, such ideals come to influence later Judaism, though much less than Greco-Roman society.<sup>73</sup> Against this backdrop we measure the Savior’s requirements for his own disciples. His demands carry both tough obligations and astonishing rewards. He requires followers to heft their “cross daily” and even, possibly, to forfeit their own lives “for [Jesus’] sake” (9:23–24). To refuse will bring a banishing shame upon them when “the Son of man . . . shall come in his own glory” (9:26). Thus, to accept discipleship from Jesus, such persons in effect undertake “a one-way journey.”<sup>74</sup> But Jesus’ rewards go far beyond those that come to disciples of other masters, such as a satisfying, noble way of life. Astonishingly, those willing to follow Jesus “shall save” their lives both in this world and the next (9:24).

In a harmonic blend with the question about Jesus’ identity that persists throughout chapter 9, the Joseph Smith Translation adds a Christocentric overlay to verses 23–27, drawing the focus even more clearly on the Savior. For instance, after Jesus lays down the changeless requirement of denying oneself, he continues, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it” (9:24). The Joseph Smith Translation adjusts this saying to read, “For whosoever will save his life must be willing to lose it for my sake,” drawing a refined light onto the Savior. The issue, then, is no longer one of misguided persons losing their eternal lives by focusing intently and solely on this life. Rather, the issue concerns their willingness to surrender their lives to Jesus in a selfless act, even if that act means a loss of mortal life (see the Note on 14:26 and the Analysis on 14:25–35).

A second change leads in the same direction. According to Luke’s report, Jesus queries, “what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself . . . ?” (9:25). Although Luke does not repeat the words preserved in Matthew and Mark, “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:37), he makes this point plainly. But the Joseph Smith Translation shifts the focus entirely away from this question and onto the Savior himself by adding nine words at a key point: “what doth it

---

73. Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 164–86; William Woodthorpe Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 3d ed., rev. by G. T. Griffith (Cleveland: Meridian, 1961), 325–60; Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2d ed., vol. 2. (New York: Columbia University Press; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), 274–79, 433; Neusner, *Glory of God Is Intelligence*, 16, 19.

74. Morris, *Luke*, 186.



profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and *yet he receive him not whom God hath ordained . . . ?*” (JST 9:25; emphasis added). Not only does the added expression open the possibility that people of means can be saved but especially draws Jesus into the middle of the picture as the one who saves.

The teachings about discipleship embedded in 9:23–27 lead readers to a deeper grasp of who Jesus really is. He is not one who offers just a more disciplined way of life; he is not one who offers a more refined or robust education. Instead, he is the one who can offer an abundance of life that spills over into the life to come. Following him, learning his discipline and adopting it, will bring disciples into the breathtaking hallways and colorful, decorated rooms of eternal life, in his company. In all of this, as in the prior stories related in chapter 9, the Twelve sit as the central objects of Jesus’ teachings, even though others stand with them in his audience. For it is the Twelve who will bear the chief task of leading others to see as they see, to follow as they follow.

## TRANSFIGURATION

### (9:28–36)

(Compare Matt. 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–10)

#### King James Translation

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. 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. 30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33 And it came to pass, as they departed

#### New Rendition

28 And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, after he had taken Peter, John, and James aside, he went up to the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying the appearance of his face became different and his clothing became white, flashing like lightning. 30 And behold, two men spoke with him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, began to speak about his departure, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.

32 And Peter and those with him were overcome with sleep, but when they were awake they beheld his glory and the two men standing with him.

from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

33 And it came to pass as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here. And let us build booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,” not knowing what he was saying.

34 And as he was saying these things, a cloud came and covered them. And they became frightened as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, the Chosen One; hear him.” 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days what they had seen.

## Notes

**9:28 *eight days*:** The other two accounts record an interval of “six days” (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2). Why the discrepancy? It seems evident that Luke understands a full week to pass, including a Sabbath. The note about time may well come to him from his source, and may tie in some distant way to the high celebrations of the eighth day during the Feast of Tabernacles (see Lev. 23:36). Although Luke does not draw obvious attention here to this feast throughout these verses, he does preserve connections to the Exodus, which the feast celebrates. In a different vein, Luke offers no sense of timing in recording prior events in this chapter except the implied passage of time before the Twelve return (see 9:7–10). In fact, outside the forty days of Jesus’ fast (see 4:2) and the events of Jesus’ last days in Jerusalem (see 20:1; 22:1, 7, 14; 23:54), no notations of time’s passing appear; and no evident chronological link exists between the Transfiguration and the Passion. Further, the eight-day notation apparently does not point to the requirement of a time period of ritual preparation for non-Judeans before worshiping at the temple (see the Notes on 18:36 and especially 23:26).

***Peter and John and James:*** The order of the names, which differs in the other accounts (see Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2), may link to the time of composition of Luke’s Gospel, after the death of James, when he ceases to be important in the earthly church (see Acts 12:1–2). The same order appears in some manuscripts of the healing of Jairus’s daughter (see the Note on 8:51). In any event, these three men become “eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16).

**went up:** The verb (Greek *anabainō*) regularly points to the ascent to the holy city or to its temple (see 2:4; 18:10, 31; 19:28; Acts 3:1; 11:2; 15:2; 18:22; etc.). By implication, Jesus and the three Apostles are ascending to a place of holiness that in some way ties to and anticipates Jesus' last trip to Jerusalem—"his decease" (9:31).

**a mountain:** Elevated places are often associated with sacred events (see Ex. 3:1–4; 19:2–3, 16–20; 24:9–13; Isa. 2:2–3; 1 Ne. 11:1–6; etc.). The Greek term translated mountain (*horos*) is the place where Jesus prays (see 6:12) and whence he ascends into heaven (see Acts 1:12). Peter later describes the place of Jesus' transfiguration as "the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:18). Attempts to identify this mountain draw up two candidates. The setting for the preceding experience at Caesarea Philippi sketched in the other two reports (see Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27) leads some to see Mount Hermon as the locale, for Caesarea Philippi lies at its base, and Mount Hermon forms the highest peak in the region at an elevation of 9,230 feet.<sup>75</sup> Others, noting "an high mountain apart" (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2), look to Mount Tabor which towers over the Jezreel valley in upper Galilee and stands by itself, rising to its crest at 1,843 feet a mere six miles east of Nazareth.<sup>76</sup>

**9:29 the fashion of his countenance:** Literally, "the appearance of his face," this expression recalls the shining face of Moses (see Ex. 34:29–30).

**his raiment was white and glistering:** It is not clear whether Jesus' clothing changes colors, becoming white, or whether the radiance of his skin shines through his clothing so that it appears as radiant. Whatever the case, whiteness of clothing is characteristic of heavenly messengers in other passages (see Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10; Rev. 4:4; etc.).<sup>77</sup> The term translated "glistering" (Greek *exastraptō*) means to flash like lightning and underscores the inexpressible brilliance of his appearance.<sup>78</sup>

**9:30 two men:** Only Luke records the human-like characteristics of the two heavenly visitors (also 9:32). The same number of celestial visitors appears in the report of the women's visit to Jesus' tomb (see 24:4) and in the account of Jesus' ascension (see Acts 1:10).

**Moses and Elias:** These two individuals are associated in other ancient accounts with the appearance of the Messiah because they do not suffer

75. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 376; *DNTC*, 1:402; Plummer, *Luke*, 250–51.

76. Gus W. Van Beek, "Tabor, Mount," in *IDB*, 4:508–9; Rafael Frankel, "Tabor, Mount," in *ABD*, 6:304–5; "The Land Jesus Knew, Part 1," *Ensign* (December 1982): 43, quoting Spencer W. Kimball.

77. Marshall, *Luke*, 383.

78. *BAGD*, 273.

death, Moses being taken by the Lord and Elijah riding a whirlwind into heaven (see Deut. 34:5–6; Alma 45:19; 2 Kgs. 2:11; Mal. 4:5).<sup>79</sup> They may be the messengers of Revelation 11:3 who bear the powers of Elijah and Moses (see Rev. 11:6).<sup>80</sup> More than this, they come to the mount with their bodies intact, though in a translated state, allowing them to restore priesthood keys, or rights, by the laying on of hands, for the gathering of Israel and the authorized performance of priesthood ordinances.<sup>81</sup> It is these two who later appear to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836, and restore priesthood keys (see D&C 110:11, 13–16). Significantly, the Joseph Smith Translation identifies the Elias in Mark 9:3 as John the Baptist, adding a third visiting personality (see JST Mark 9:3).

**9:31 *appeared in glory*:** The reference to glory, preserved only by Luke, points here to Moses and Elijah, but includes the Savior as well (“they saw his glory”—9:32), underscoring the common celestial bonds of Jesus and the visitors, as both Peter and John affirm elsewhere (see John 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:17).

***spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*:** Only Luke preserves the gist of the conversation between the transfigured Jesus and the two visitors. The term translated “decease” (Greek *exodos*) forms an indirect allusion to the Israelite Exodus but, in this context, means departure. By extension, it also refers to his death and, most likely, to his Atonement, as the Joseph Smith Translation underlines when it replaces the words “his decease” with the expression “his death, and also his resurrection” (JST 9:31).<sup>82</sup> As Luke notes, the discussion on the mount includes Jerusalem; no solid reason exists to suppose that Luke adds this detail only in light of what eventually happens to the Savior, but rather it is Jesus himself who links Jerusalem to his final days. Very soon, Jesus will turn himself toward Jerusalem, knowing full well what this action will bring (see 9:51).

**9:32 *heavy with sleep*:** The time must be night, as in the case of events at Gethsemane when the disciples cannot stay awake (see 22:45–46; Matt. 26:40, 43; Mark 14:37, 40). If it is daytime, then we must reckon with the possibility that the intensity of the spiritual experience causes their fatigue

79. Plummer, *Luke*, 251; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:799–800.

80. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, with Introduction, Notes and Indices also the Greek Text and English Translation*, The International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920), 1:280–82, 284–85; *TDNT*, 2:938–39.

81. *TPJS*, 172, 337; Franklin D. Day, “Elijah: LDS Sources,” in *EM*, 2:450–51; Werblow-sky, “Elijah: Ancient Sources,” 2:451–52; Andrew C. Skinner, “Moses,” in *EM*, 2:959.

82. BAGD, 276; *TDNT*, 5:103–8; Marshall, *Luke*, 384–85.

(see Ezek. 3:15; Moses 1:9–10; JS–H 1:20, 48). Because of their drowsiness, they apparently do not hear all of the conversation between the Savior and the visitors.

**9:33 *Master*:** This form of address (Greek *epistatēs*) is unique to Luke’s Gospel and appears throughout as a term of respect, chiefly on the lips of his followers (see 8:24, 45; 9:49; 17:13), perhaps the equivalent of *rabbi* (see the Note on 5:5). The word may also carry the sense that the disciples do not yet fully grasp who Jesus is, continuing an important theme of this chapter.<sup>83</sup>

***three tabernacles*:** Some commentators express puzzlement over Peter’s suggestion of erecting three booths or tents unless there is a possible connection to the Feast of Tabernacles, which the notice of the eight days may point to, underscoring connections to the Exodus (see the Note on 9:28).<sup>84</sup>

***not knowing what he said*:** Luke’s notation likely forms his attempt to understand why Peter suggests erecting three tents, much as Mark notes that Peter’s suggestion grows out of an engulfing fear (see Mark 9:6). But Peter says nothing about why he utters what he does, though his sleepiness may be a factor (see 9:32). Instead, we stand on firmer ground by assuming that Peter grasps some of what is occurring around him and that his suggestion is reasonable. If so, then Peter wants to erect three booths wherein he and his two fellow disciples can sit with one of the glorified persons and there receive instruction and blessing. Such a conclusion is warranted in part because, from the other Gospels, we learn that one tent is for Jesus, “and one for Moses, and one for Elias” (Matt. 17:4; Mark 9:5). Moreover, we who read these reports, although we “have not yet received” the full account of what happens on the mount (D&C 63:21), know that (1) the disciples, during the experience, are allowed to see the earth in its future transfigured state (see D&C 63:21), and (2) the disciples receive keys from Jesus and the two visitors,<sup>85</sup> plainly indicating that they do more than simply behold in wonder the Savior and his two visitors.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the experience is much richer for the three disciples than Luke and his two fellow Gospel writers report. This fact opens the real possibility that Luke does not know the whole story about other events, including Jesus’ multiple trips to Jerusalem, the salting of the large catch of fish, and his stay with Zacchaeus the tax collector (see the Notes on 5:6, 11; 9:22; 19:5).

---

83. Green, *Luke*, 383.

84. *TDNT*, 7:379–80; Marshall, *Luke*, 386; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:801; Green, *Luke*, 383.

85. *TPJS*, 153.

86. Dale C. Mouritsen, “Mount of Transfiguration,” in *EM*, 2:968–69.

**9:34 *there came a cloud, and overshadowed them:*** The Greek verb *episkiazō* occurs twice in Luke’s Gospel and means “to shade” or “to cover” (see Ex. 40:34). In the first occurrence, it carries the sense “to protect” in the angel’s words to Mary: “the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (see the Note on 1:35; also LXX Ps. 90:4; 139:7 [= Ps. 91:4; 140:7]).<sup>87</sup> When the verb “to cover” describes the cloud shading the desert sanctuary, it also conveys a sense of holiness because Moses is not allowed in “the tent of the congregation” at the cloud’s presence (Ex. 40:34–35). Such holiness is also implicit in the verb’s appearance in Mary’s story and in this account of the Apostles’ experience on the mount, conveying a sense of God’s towering majesty that overshadows them in their humility. In another vein, the cloud that covers the mount must be shining because it casts the shadows of the men to the ground (see 2 Sam. 22:10; Ps. 18:9, where a shadow is under God’s feet).<sup>88</sup> This observation points to a nighttime experience.

***they feared as they entered into the cloud:*** This sentence points to more than the cloud simply enveloping the disciples but rather to the disciples marching into the cloud, probably by invitation. Their fear is understandable, not knowing what might happen to them within a brightly radiant and radiating mist. In contrast, Mark’s account notes their fear earlier in the experience, motivating them to propose erecting the three booths (see Mark 9:6).

**9:35 *a voice:*** The same term (Greek *phōnē*) occurs in 3:4 and, in that passage, heralds a special era, a new dispensation (also D&C 1:1; Moses 6:27, 50–51; see the Note on 3:4). Although the voice may be proclaiming something similar here, it now personally identifies who the Savior really is and how he is related to the God of heaven, just as the voice announces at his baptism (see 3:22). But the disciples are not present for the earlier announcement, and the voice heard on the mount utters a truth strictly for their benefit. As a threesome, they become first-rank witnesses of Jesus’ majesty, precisely in accord with the law that requires two or three witnesses to establish any matter (see Deut. 19:15).

***This is:*** At the baptism, the voice spoke directly to Jesus, “Thou art,” making the revelation a highly personal experience (see the Note on 3:22). Here the words are addressed to the disciples, effectively answering the question of Herod Antipas, “who is this?” (9:9). Furthermore, the expression “this is” stands in a grammatical continuum with “I am,”<sup>89</sup> and this

87. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 657; BAGD, 298; TDNT, 7:399–400.

88. TDNT, 6:627.

89. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §325d; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §277.

couplet forms a connection to Jesus' role as the God of the Old Testament (see Ex. 3:14), much as the phrase "thou art" does (see 4:34, 41; the Notes on 3:22 and 22:70).

**beloved:** Although 2 Peter 1:17 preserves the reading "beloved," the earliest texts of Luke's Gospel read "chosen," meaning chosen from more than one option (Greek *eklelegmenos*, participle of *eklegomai* in  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  [manuscripts from the early third century held in the Chester Beatty Library and the Vatican Library, respectively]; see a form of the same verb in 6:13 and 10:42; also Isa. 42:1; Moses 4:2)<sup>90</sup> rather than "beloved" (see 3:22; 20:13; the Notes on 18:7; 23:35; 24:26). The clear implication points to the moment that the Father chooses Jesus (see Moses 4:1–3; Abr. 3:27).

**hear him:** The audible, divine voice regularly pierces the expectant silence of those who seek for God. For "God's thunderous voice is shaking heaven and earth, and man does not hear the faintest sound."<sup>91</sup> The three disciples hear and are commanded to listen to the voice of God's son, as if it were God's own voice, mirroring other such occasions (see 3 Ne. 11:7; JS-H 1:17).

**9:36 *Jesus was found alone:*** Luke's summary of the experience billows with two meanings. First, although Jesus now appears to be alone, he is not, as the disciples learn in breathtaking fashion. For he enjoys the support of and communion with the unseen divine world. Second, following any spiritual manifestation, recipients of such manifestations always find themselves back in the hard realities of this world, facing the need to go on, yet with deeper convictions that God is somehow connected to events that they experience.

**told no man:** According to the other accounts, it is Jesus who instructs the disciples not to disclose what they experience on the mount until after the resurrection (see Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9). In typical fashion, Luke reports the resulting confidentiality rather than the reason for it.

## Analysis

Rising almost without peer as a defining moment in the Savior's mortal life, the transfiguration ushers the three Apostles—and Luke's readers—into the unseen world that constantly envelopes Jesus and is briefly uncovered, for instance, in the earlier temptations account. But the contrasts with the temptations cannot be more sharply drawn. In that earlier experience, the devil

90. BAGD, 241–42; TDNT, 4:172.

91. Heschel, *Prophets*, 189.

privately and menacingly challenges Jesus' authority and power, promising him an exalted earthly stature that will assure results for his messianic ministry—if he will worship him. In the later incident, in the company of three trusted companions, Jesus is disclosed for who he is, the beloved Son who wraps within himself God's work from ages past, all represented in the reverential approach of Moses and Elijah, who themselves stand for the ancient, sacred interaction between God and his people that the law and the prophets enshrine.

The fact that other scriptural accounts refer back to the transfiguration underscores its importance as a momentous decoding disclosure. For Jesus stands before the Apostles as he really is—pure, celestial, venerated. Peter, writing decades after the event, declares in undying astonishment that he and the other two are “eyewitnesses of [the Savior's] majesty.” They behold as “he received from God the Father honour and glory,” an unparalleled moment in Peter's memory “when there came . . . a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved son” (2 Pet. 1:16–17). But this is not all.

The Savior himself draws attention to this grand event in a revelation to Joseph Smith late in August 1831. In noting the unspeakable rewards that await the faithful, he declares that they “shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount” (D&C 63:20–21).<sup>92</sup> Plainly, the experience of the three Apostles embraces a stunning vision of the eventual transfiguration of the earth, a vision that the New Testament Gospels do not report. Although matters are not fully clear, the vision granted to the three includes much else, for the Savior observes that we have not yet received “the fulness” of what happens “upon the mount” (D&C 63:21). Clearly, readers of the Gospels live with abbreviated accounts.

Enough is preserved, however, to conclude that the experience is orchestrated, in large measure, for the benefit of the three Apostles. Even though it likely occurs at night, and the three therefore struggle against sleep (see 9:32), the fact that Jesus invites them to accompany him onto the mount illumines the first clue about the intended audience—these three men. Further, that the Apostles are allowed to overhear the conversation between Jesus and the visitors rolls out the second tip. For the three Apostles, the content of the discussion is open to them. But their obligation to

---

92. *TPJS*, 13: “they saw the glory of the Lord when he showed the transfiguration of the earth on the mount.”



keep matters quiet among themselves following the experience does show its special, sacred nature (see 9:36). Third, the erection of the three booths evidently allows the three Apostles to sit with and receive private and personal instruction from Jesus and the visitors. Such an experience will leave an indelible impression on the three. Finally, the voice of witness that the Apostles hear from the bright cloud comes specifically to them, enlarging their view. This aspect, as noted, is so memorable that it arises as Peter's emphatic point in his later correspondence (see 2 Pet. 1:16–18).

We must also reckon that the experience is also for the Savior's benefit. We learn from a later saying that he anticipates his suffering and death with apprehension: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened [distressed] till it be accomplished" (12:50). In this connection, Talmage writes that for Jesus the transfiguration "was strengthening and encouraging. The prospect of the experiences immediately ahead must naturally have been depressing and disheartening in the extreme. . . . He had reached the verge of the valley of the shadow of death; and the human part of His nature called for refreshing."<sup>93</sup> The transfiguration provides that refreshing.

Latter-day Saints carry a distinctive view of the extended purposes for the coming of Moses and Elijah. According to Matthew, on the earlier occasion of Peter's confession—"Thou art the Christ"—Jesus promises that he "will give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven" so that "whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). This promise is fulfilled when Moses and Elijah arrive. Although the transfer of keys does not appear in the Gospel records, it lies just below the surface. Malachi earlier prophesies that, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," God "will send you Elijah the prophet" who "shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:5–6). This welding of generations, past with present, comes through celestial binding powers, the very powers that Jesus promises to confer on Peter. This conferral occurs when the "Savior, Moses, and Elias [Elijah], gave keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount."<sup>94</sup>

For his part, Moses evidently confers on the three Apostles the same authority that he confers on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple: "Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys

---

93. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 373.

94. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1959–65), 3:387.

of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth” (D&C 110:11). In an entirely different vein, Elijah arrives to “deliver the keys of the Priesthood, in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness” because “he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the Priesthood.”<sup>95</sup> Therefore, on the mount the Apostles receive the “power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth.”<sup>96</sup>

The possibility of other visitors coming to the mount surges forward in the language of the Joseph Smith Translation. In Mark 9:4 the text reads, “there appeared unto them [the three Apostles] Elias with Moses.” The Joseph Smith Translation adds to this sentence: “there appeared unto them Elias with Moses, or in other words, John the Baptist and Moses” (JST Mark 9:3). On this reading, Elijah and Moses are not the only visitors to the Savior and the Apostles. At least the deceased John, in his spirit state, comes as well. In his later words to the three, Jesus hints that this is so: “they have done unto him whatsoever they listed,” an evident reference to John’s execution (Matt. 17:12; Mark 9:13).

In particular, the presence of Moses invites us to see connections to the Israelite Exodus. As the notes above point out, the overlay of the Feast of Tabernacles is more than subtle. For seven days in the autumn, this festival celebrates the days of the Exodus (see Lev. 23:34, 36, 39, 42; Num. 29:12–34).<sup>97</sup> The reference to the eighth day, tied to this festival (see 9:28; Lev. 23:39; Num. 29:35), brings forward the first link. A second tie is visible in the three tabernacles that Peter proposes to erect (see 9:33), because those who celebrate this festival are to “dwell in booths” throughout the celebration (Lev. 23:42). The third connection consists of the cloud. The cloud that accompanies the Israelite wanderers, of course, serves as a guide (see Ex. 13:21–22; 14:19; Num. 9:17). But the cloud becomes more than that. The cloud also covers God, and thus discloses his actual presence, when he is among his people: “the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud” (Ex. 16:10); “the Lord descended in the cloud” (Ex. 34:5); “the Lord came down in a cloud” (Num. 11:25). In addition, the cloud regularly rests on the sanctuary, underscoring its holy character: for example, “the Lord

---

95. *TPJS*, 172; also 323, 336–38.

96. *TPJS*, 337.

97. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 371; James C. Vanderkam, “Calendars: Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish,” in *ABD*, 1:816; Green, *Luke*, 377–79, 383.

came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle” (Num. 12:5); “the cloud covered the tabernacle” (Num. 9:15); “the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle” (Num. 9:22). All such observations hint that the appearance of the glowing cloud on the mount confers a sense of sacredness not only on events there but also on the place itself.

## HEALING THE POSSESSED BOY (9:37–42)

(Compare Matt. 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29)

### King James Translation

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. 39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. 40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

### New Rendition

37 And it came to pass on the next day, after they came down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 And behold, a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. And it throws him into convulsions so that he foams; and it scarcely leaves him, wearing him out. 40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”

41 And answering, Jesus said, “Oh faithless and perverted generation, how long will I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” 42 And while he was yet coming, the demon tore at him and convulsed him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and returned him to his father.

### Notes

**9:37 on the next day:** The notation about time differs among manuscripts—some say “during the day”—but they all point to the day following the night on the mount.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 390; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:807.

**when they were come down from the hill:** Luke does not include Jesus' discussion of the popular expectations about Elijah and the coming suffering of the Son of Man (see Matt. 17:10–13; Mark 9:11–13), possibly because his report on Jesus' conversation about "his decease" covers much of the ground (9:31). Rather, by omitting these words, Luke's summarizing line deftly joins the revelation of who Jesus is, that resides in the transfiguration, and the disclosure of him as the one who can offer deliverance, as it is manifest in the story of the afflicted boy.

**9:38 cried out:** Both the determination and the desperation of the father are captured in the verb (Greek *boaō*) that frequently carries the meaning of crying to God for help.<sup>99</sup>

**I beseech thee:** The quotation of the father's words emphasizes the depth of his despair both because of his son's unremedied affliction and because certain "disciples" (9:40), perhaps including some of the Apostles who remain behind, are unable to aid him. The same verb (Greek *deomai*) describes his earlier plea to the disciples (see 9:40).

**only child:** The term (Greek *monogenēs*) is translated elsewhere as "only begotten" (see John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Heb. 11:17; 1 John 4:9). Because of the larger context of disclosing who Jesus is, the term may point subtly to him, though its other occurrences in Luke seemingly do not (see 7:12; 8:42).

**9:39 a spirit taketh him:** The father characterizes the force that overcomes his son as "a spirit" rather than a demon. But the effect is the same because the Greek term *daimonion* occurs in 9:42, as does "unclean spirit." We may see in the father's words a common expression among Jesus' contemporaries about how they describe demonic possession. The verb "to take" (Greek *lambanō*) appears only here and in one passage in the book of Acts in a hostile sense (see Acts 2:23). It is regularly translated as "to receive" (see 11:10; 19:12; Acts 1:8; 2:33; 3:5; 8:15; etc.) or as "to take," often with special meaning (see 6:4; 9:16; 20:28, 29; 22:17, 19; Acts 1:20; 16:3; etc.).

**it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him:** In the view of most scholars, the description here and in 9:42 fits epilepsy rather than demon possession.<sup>100</sup> But to readily classify the illness as epilepsy "without further ado . . . may be a trifle too confident."<sup>101</sup> In either case, whether demon possession or epilepsy, Jesus will show his healing power over the boy's affliction. The father comes to the right person.

99. TDNT, 1:625–26.

100. Marshall, *Luke*, 391; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:808; Johnson, *Luke*, 158.

101. Morris, *Luke*, 190.

**9:40 *thy disciples*:** The identity of these followers remains unclear. But in the father's mind, they belong to Jesus. Does their number include any of the Twelve? The other accounts of this story do not shed light on this question, nor does Jesus when he fulminates against a "faithless and perverse generation" (9:41). The other reports record Jesus as affirming that such healings come about only through faith and prayer (see Matt. 17:20–21; Mark 9:29).

***they could not*:** The groping powerlessness of these disciples will stand in sharp contrast to the pulsating, vibrant power of Jesus (see 9:42), another aspect of uncovering who he really is.

**9:41 *O faithless and perverse generation*:** These strong words are addressed both to those who try unsuccessfully to cast the demon from the boy, and to the father ("Bring thy son hither") who grows not only demandingly impatient but also lacks faith in the disciples' abilities. Jesus' declaration echoes Moses' song wherein he characterizes those of his generation as perverted and faithless (see Deut. 32:5, 20).<sup>102</sup>

***how long shall I be with you . . . ?*:** The question brims with pointers to Jesus' abbreviated mortal life, cut off by his crucifixion, and to his conversation on the mount about his "decease" (9:31). But it also discloses a fundamental misunderstanding about him that hovers in the gathered crowd—they do not see him as he really is. Jesus' words evidently point to mere curiosity as the motivation for the crowd's gathering rather than to a genuine interest in what he ultimately represents and what he requires of his followers.<sup>103</sup> In a word, they do not know who he is, and they seem not to care.

***Bring thy son*:** The sense of the verb is to lead the son to Jesus (Greek *prosagō*), implying that he is able to walk, whereas Mark reports that the son is carried to him (Greek verb *pherō*), implying that he is unable to come on his own (see Mark 9:20).<sup>104</sup> This difference is notable, especially if Luke, perhaps a physician, knows Mark's version of the story. For a physician will readily note a patient's lack of mobility (see the Introduction, V.B).

**9:42 *the devil threw him down, and tare him*:** The term is properly "demon" (Greek *daimonion*). In an act of ferocious aggression, the demon attacks the child for the last time, perhaps in a bid to show its persistent power before being expelled by Jesus. That Jesus can immediately control a hostile representative of the dark, unseen world, and the disciples cannot,

102. Marshall, *Luke*, 391–92.

103. Morris, *Luke*, 191.

104. BAGD, 718, 862–63.

inserts one more piece into the growing mosaic of his true identity. That said, those who carry his commission, as the Twelve and Seventy do, and exercise faith, will bear power over such creatures (see 10:17–19).

**Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit:** Luke repeats the same verb (Greek *epitimaō*)<sup>105</sup> when Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and calms the wind on the lake (see 4:39; 8:24). Demons and unclean spirits also appear in the story of the Gergesene demoniac (see 8:27, 29). In a feature that raises again the question of Luke's dependence on Mark, Luke omits the extended conversation between Jesus and the father wherein the father rehearses his son's affliction, an odd omission because of the noteworthy sketch of the boy's physical and mental symptoms (see Mark 9:21–24).

**delivered him again to his father:** Though the verb differs here from that in the story of the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Greek *apodidōmi* versus *didōmi*), the compassionate gestures are not to be missed (see 7:15).

## Analysis

As in other parts of chapter 9, the question of Jesus' true identity pushes its way to the forefront, dancing enticingly across the actions and words that Luke preserves. In a comparison with Mark's account, Luke omits much, if he is following it. Luke's version compacts the story of the healing and rolls it tightly and intimately with the Transfiguration,<sup>106</sup> thus folding the revelation of Jesus' glory into the deliverance of the boy so that his divine nature becomes visible to those who will see it, not just to the three Apostles.

If Luke is indeed borrowing from Mark, he abbreviates his report rather severely, as noted. This observation alone raises serious questions about Luke's dependence, particularly in reporting the healing of the boy. Each of the elements that appears in Mark and does not stand in Luke distracts from Luke's evident purpose of disclosing who Jesus really is. For instance, Luke does not include Jesus' discussion about Elijah's coming and the suffering of the Son of Man while he and the three Apostles descend from the mount (see Mark 9:11–13). In his abbreviating way, Luke therefore lays aside a brief story that seemingly turns readers aside from his main interest in Jesus' identity. Similarly, he does not include Jesus' conversation with the father about the boy's symptoms (see Mark 9:21–24), an odd touch if Luke is a physician and an odd touch if he is following Mark. But in writing a shorter account, Luke moves the story directly and quickly to its end

---

105. BAGD, 303.

106. Marshall, *Luke*, 389.

wherein Jesus, in a compassionate act, shows his vibrant power over the stubborn, controlling demon, further illustrating the divine aspects that grace Jesus' words and deeds, particularly when contrasted with the disciples' clouded lack of power to drive out the demon.

The form of the story touches on the question whether Luke is a physician. If he is following Mark's account, the answer to the question is no. How so? As a first example, in Mark's version, we read that the boy is carried to Jesus, as if he is unable to walk to him on his own (see Mark 9:20). Such a detail will interest a physician, for it says much about a patient. In a second instance, the father's description of his son's symptoms, present in Mark's report (see Mark 9:21–24), does not appear in Luke's story. Its absence is strange if Luke indeed is a physician, but only if he knows this story from Mark and shortens it.

The identity of the disciples who fail to control the aggressive demon afflicting the boy remains an issue because they remain anonymous. That their number includes some of the Twelve is very possible, even probable. If so, why the failure? Such creatures have succumbed to their powers in recent weeks during their missions (see 9:1, 6, 10). But something is now amiss. Jesus' words in the other reports about the need for faith and prayer point to "some failure in their spiritual life,"<sup>107</sup> and perhaps more (see Matt. 17:20–21; Mark 9:29).<sup>108</sup> But it is a situation that can and will be remedied.

## SECOND PREDICTION OF DEATH (9:43–45)

(Compare Matt. 17:22–23; Mark 9:30–32)

### King James Translation

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands

### New Rendition

43 And all were amazed at the majesty of God.

And while everyone wondered at all the things he was doing, he said to his disciples, 44 "Keep these words in mind: the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men." 45 But they did

107. Morris, *Luke*, 190.

108. Matt. 17:21, which mentions fasting, does not appear in some early manuscripts.

of men. 45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying. not understand this saying; and it was hidden from them so that they did not understand it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

## Notes

**9:43 *they were all amazed:*** The verb (Greek *ekplēssō*) appears in the imperfect tense, signaling the lingering impression of the miracle.<sup>109</sup> The entire crowd—“much people” (9:37)—is touched by what occurs, as well it should. But people’s amazement at the healing of the boy stands in contrast to how deeply they would be impressed by the stunning events on the mount only a few hours before. They witness but one miracle among many. Even so, the crowd and especially the father become eyewitnesses of this miracle. They form a group with “shared recollections” (see 4:32, 36; 5:26; the Note on 4:14). Their story of this moment will become a part of the integrated record of Jesus’ ministry, along with those of the Twelve (see 5:9; 8:56; 10:23–24; 20:26).<sup>110</sup>

***while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did:*** Luke conveys a sense that the gathered throng knows of Jesus’ other works, perhaps by rumor or from acquaintances, as earlier statements affirm (see 4:23, 37; 5:15; 7:17; 8:1). The expression “all things” may point to all that Jesus has done to this point in his ministry, forming a summary of sorts.<sup>111</sup>

***he said unto his disciples:*** The value that Jesus places on the Twelve and other close followers rises to the surface in these words. For he plainly pulls them aside for special instruction. His following words are not for the multitude, clearly hinting that he discerns different groups in his audience.

**9:44 *Let these sayings sink down into your ears:*** The Greek text is more emphatic than even this vivid translation. The pronoun “you” is emphatic and the verb (Greek *tithēmi*), which means fundamentally “to put” or “to set,”<sup>112</sup> appears in the imperative mood, leading to a literal translation, “Put these sayings into your ears!” A reasonable rendering might be, “Lay up these words of mine deep within you,”<sup>113</sup> a translation that agrees in spirit with the Joseph Smith Translation: “Let these sayings sink down into your

109. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §327.

110. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 93–132, 146–49, 313–14.

111. Marshall, *Luke*, 393.

112. BAGD, 823–24.

113. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:812.



hearts” (JST 9:44). Importantly, Rainer Riesner demonstrates that this expression likely refers to a command of Jesus that the disciples memorize what he says.<sup>114</sup>

***Son of man shall be delivered:*** This expression forms the second of six prophecies of Jesus’ suffering (see 12:50; 22:37; the Notes on 9:22; 17:25; 18:32–33; 22:15) and links first and foremost to his betrayal and arrest, for the verb (Greek *paradidōmi*) appears elsewhere with these senses (see 18:32; 20:20; 22:4, 6, 21, 22, 48; 24:20; Acts 3:13). The verb here conveys the idea of the rough, physical handling of a prisoner, as the word “hands” indicates.<sup>115</sup> Luke lets this much stand, not writing of Jesus’ execution and resurrection as the other reports do (see Matt. 17:23; Mark 9:31). The angel who speaks to the women at the tomb may be referring to this prophecy (see the Notes on 9:18 and 24:6–7).

***the hands of men:*** The term “hands” draws up an image of the punishing treatment that Jesus will experience at his betrayal and arrest. The vivid contrast between “men” in this passage and the divine visitors at the Transfiguration jumps out at readers. Those whom Jesus has in mind will be hostile and seek his death, not knowing who he is, whereas the celestial visitors of the night before approach him with reverential deference, knowing his true identity.

***9:45 they understood not:*** Even though Jesus has just commanded his followers to take in and digest his prophecy, their dulled grasp instead typifies a common response to his frightening words about their shared future (see 18:34). At this point, of course, they do not enjoy the advantages of hindsight, which will stand behind their enlightened views following the resurrection (see Acts 2:29–33; 3:12–15).

***it was hid from them:*** Luke’s note, written only by him, lifts much of the responsibility for the disciples’ obtuseness away from them, leaving them rinsed clean of any charge of being willfully blind.

***they feared:*** Fear is a customary human response to unexpected, sudden manifestations of divine power (see 1:65; 2:9; 5:10, 26; 7:16; 8:35, 37). It also characterizes the response of disciples, as in this case (see 8:25; 9:34).<sup>116</sup> Here, the disciples’ fear becomes enfeebling and prevents them from asking other, elucidating questions, an odd response in light of the experience

114. Cited in Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 284.

115. BAGD, 619–20; Brown, “Arrest,” 170–75.

116. Welch, “Miracles, *Maleficium*, and *Maiestas* in the Trial of Jesus,” 349–83.

of the three Apostles overhearing the discussion on the mount between Jesus and the two visitors about “his decease” (9:31), except that they are under obligation not to talk about the experience (see 9:36; Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9–10).

## Analysis

This second of the Savior’s three predictions of his fate runs shorter in Luke’s hands than in Matthew’s and Mark’s, not featuring Jesus’ saying about his eventual execution and elevation from the dead (see Matt. 17:23; Mark 9:31). Moreover, Luke clearly places the prediction on the same day that Jesus, with the three Apostles, descends from the mount and heals the boy, lifting it out of the vague, disconnected Galilean setting painted by the other reports and pinning it palpably onto the grand tapestry of the Transfiguration (see Matt. 17:22; Mark 9:30). By doing so, Luke frames the Transfiguration between two important prophecies of Jesus’ divine fate (see 9:22, 44), conferring on them the clarifying meaning that only the Transfiguration can bestow, with its stunning revelation of Jesus’ glory and the rehearsal of his approaching “decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (9:31). And the prophecies are only for his closest disciples (see the Note on 18:31), unveiling as they do his ultimate end: “his death, and also his resurrection” (JST 9:31).

But the disciples do not grasp the import and meaning of Jesus’ words, even after he pulls them aside for a private discussion and asks them to try to understand (see 9:43–44). They yet lack the frightening experience of watching authorities arrest their Master and physically force him to the home of the high priest (see 22:54); they yet lack the wrenching experience of seeing him hang on a cross and die (see 23:48–49); they yet lack the exhilarating, elevating experience of beholding him as a resurrected being now freed from death (see 24:36–43). In a word, they lack the perspective that will come only when they and Jesus walk to Jerusalem for the last time and together face events there.

Once again, in these short verses, Luke leads us, his readers, to behold the common, strong thread woven through chapter 9: the question, Who is this Jesus? To be sure, we know the outcome of Jesus’ prediction of his betrayal and arrest; we know the rest of the story. But through Luke’s narrative we can identify with the disciples’ lack of comprehension and can even understand the fear that keeps them from asking questions about what Jesus utters on this occasion.

**WHO SHALL BE GREATEST?****(9:46–48)**

(Compare Matt. 18:1–5; Mark 9:33–37)

**King James Translation**

46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

**New Rendition**

46 And an argument arose among them as to who of them would be the greatest. 47 And Jesus, knowing the thought of their heart, and taking hold of a child, placed him beside him. 48 And he said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is greatest.”

**Notes**

**9:46 *which of them should be greatest:*** The surrounding context of Jesus’ true identity sets off this question all the more sharply, indicating that the Twelve and others do not yet comprehend who Jesus really is, nor grasp clearly how they relate to his majesty.

**9:47 *Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart:*** The Savior takes the initiative for resolving the disciples’ question. It begins with his divine understanding of their concerns, even if unspoken to him (see also 5:22; 8:46). His initiating response here contrasts with his measured inaction over the disciples’ prior unspoken query about his looming arrest; he leaves that one unresolved for the moment (see 9:44–45).

***took a child:*** This vivid verb (Greek *epilambanomai*) bears the sense of grasping firmly, because Jesus lifts the child beside him.<sup>117</sup> The verb can carry both a positive meaning, as when Jesus heals a man with dropsy (see 14:4), and a hostile sense, as when authorities seek occasion to arrest him (see 20:20, 26). The child (Greek *paidion*) is seven years old or younger.<sup>118</sup>

***set him by him:*** Mark writes that Jesus took the child “in his arms” (Mark 9:36). Luke implies the same loving action. In addition, Jesus places the child in a position of honor, at his side. The Joseph Smith Translation renders the scene a little differently: “took a child, and set him in the midst” (JST 9:47).

117. BAGD, 295; *TDNT*, 4:9.

118. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1287; *TDNT*, 5:638.

**9:48 *Whosoever shall receive this child:*** In a visual and audible manner that the disciples will readily recall, Jesus answers the issue that seems to rise naturally among them about who “should be greatest” (9:46). That he turns their attention to a child rather than a facet of the natural world when settling this sort of question draws their minds to the enormously high value that he places on children (see 18:15–17).<sup>119</sup> Further, Jesus underscores the sanctity of the home and the important relationships between children and parents (see the Notes on 4:38; 18:20).<sup>120</sup>

***in my name:*** This phrase can be rendered “on the basis of my name,” plainly pointing to the expected and proper action of a disciple who follows Jesus. That is, as he receives a child, so they are to do, imitating him.<sup>121</sup>

***receiveth me:*** One condition of discipleship, that of imitating the Master, concerns the proper reception of and attitude toward others, here visually represented by a child. In language that recalls John’s Gospel, such a reception of others leads a disciple to receive the Savior and his Father in an acceptable fashion (see John 13:20; the Notes on 10:16, 21–22). Disciples who respond in this manner then become guides on the pathway for others to come to and receive him: “He that heareth you heareth me” (10:16; see the Note on 10:8).

***receiveth him that sent me:*** Acceptance of Jesus, on the conditions that he sets, leads not just to him but to the heavenly one who sent him, drawing the disciple into a celestial relationship that brims with eternal possibilities. The verb “sent” (Greek *apostellō*) has to do with sending a formal representative.<sup>122</sup> It appears in a number of important passages, including the account of Gabriel’s appearance to Zacharias (see 1:19, 26) and Jesus’ dramatic announcement in Nazareth (see 4:18). It also ties to the noun *apostle* (see the Notes on 4:18 and 9:2).

***he that is least among you all, the same shall be great:*** At first glance, it appears that Jesus is making a point unrelated to what he has just declared, for he has been talking about the path that a disciple follows to come to God. But in fact he brings his answer full circle to meet the disciples’ original question about greatness (see 9:46). His answer evidently carries two harmonious meanings. First, the disciple who serves those who are least

---

119. Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 146–48; M. Gawain Wells, “The Savior and the Children in 3 Nephi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 62–73.

120. Balla, *Child-Parent Relationship*, 121, n. 17.

121. *TDNT*, 5:277; Marshall, *Luke*, 396–97.

122. *TDNT*, 1:398–406.

among them, represented by the child, becomes great—in Jesus’ eyes—through that service. Second, the child is the least among the gathered followers, and Jesus expects his disciples to be as the child, forgetting their dreams of grandeur and, only in this manner, becoming great.<sup>123</sup>

### Analysis

The disciples’ question about their perceived importance runs in the opposite direction from the real significance of the Savior as unveiled at the Transfiguration. In effect, the query about who they are resolves itself by asking, in this context, who he is. Yet, even though a wide gulf stands between them and him in this matter, he responds to their dilemma with respect, and with a visual aid. He knows that they do not yet fully grasp who he is and what he represents both in the here and now, and in eternity. And what he points out about discipleship will bring them closer to a deeper understanding of him. In a word, he seizes a teaching moment, patiently instructing them and moving them to a clearer insight about what it means to follow him.

To be sure, the Savior shows concern about how people jostle one another for positions of honor and esteem, as his sturdy lecture about this topic at a Sabbath-ending dinner party illustrates (see 14:8–14). But here he busies himself with ultimate, celestial dimensions of a person’s position, doing so plainly within the confines of what it means to be a disciple. At base, for Jesus’ disciples, personal position is to mean nothing. Instead, the meaning and value of discipleship, of their relationship with him, grows most robustly out of the disciples’ interaction with others, particularly with others who enjoy no worldly importance in this life. To drive home this point, Jesus holds up a child, a representative of the helpless and unimportant.<sup>124</sup> If a person who seeks to be a disciple will receive such persons as Jesus does, and in his welcoming name, then that person receives Jesus. There is more. Discipleship in this case does not merely clothe the follower in the garment of the Master, so to speak. Discipleship brings the devotee stunningly to “him that sent” the Savior, to the one who commissions him, to God himself. Moreover, when a disciple comes to this elevating moment, that person becomes a conduit for others who seek the same: “He that heareth you heareth me” (10:16).

---

123. Marshall, *Luke*, 397–98.

124. Morris, *Luke*, 192.

Perhaps most notably, Jesus begins his teaching moment with a child. Why? The disciples’ memory of the child, of course, will serve as a vibrant visual aid, bringing Jesus’ words easily to mind. But the lesson runs deeper. In the eyes of those present, Jesus heaps high value onto children by beginning his discussion as he does, that is, by physically placing the child next to himself. Not only does the child represent the weak and vulnerable, but the child especially represents other children. And a disciple begins to move meaningfully toward “him that sent” the Savior by receiving and respecting children as he does. This is precisely the point of the Risen Jesus’ interaction with children during his New World visit. He elevates them and bestows his exalting esteem on them in the eyes of all who behold, including parents and family members.

## SECOND LESSON ON DISCIPLESHIP (9:49–50) (Compare Mark 9:38–41)

### King James Translation

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

### New Rendition

49 And John answering said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him, for he does not follow with us.” 50 And Jesus said to him, “Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you.”

### Notes

**9:49 *John answered:*** This person is John son of Zebedee and brother of James. Only here and in 9:54, a remark by him and his brother James, do we find words preserved from him. In this case, John answers Jesus’ prior words, in effect saying that his teaching about discipleship surely does not apply in every instance.<sup>125</sup>

***one casting out devils in thy name:*** The exorcist remains unnamed, but plainly he is associated with the wider group of disciples during past weeks and months. McConkie judges that the person bears “the authority of the

---

125. Morris, *Luke*, 193.

priesthood,” though he does not stand within the Twelve (see the Note on 11:19).<sup>126</sup>

***he followeth not with us:*** For whatever reason, the unnamed disciple is not a member of the larger entourage that now follows Jesus, including the Twelve. It is unclear why this person leaves the group of followers, and his absence may only be temporary.

***9:50 he that is not against us is for us:*** The earliest manuscripts (P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>) and many others read “you” (plural) instead of “us” for both pronouns. On the surface, the principle that Jesus expresses goes beyond that of strict discipleship, embracing an inclusive view of allies. But if the person is really a disciple and bears Jesus’ authorization and power, although not one of the Twelve, then Jesus’ words frame a lesson to the Twelve about other believers who can and will assist in shouldering the burdens of the kingdom (see the Notes on 9:1, 60, and 10:2). In effect, Jesus is offering a view of how his church will function, with many sharing responsibility.<sup>127</sup> In this connection, the Joseph Smith Translation adds a relevant piece to Matthew’s report about certain “children” who stand against Beelzebul’s power, saying that they “cast out devils by the Spirit of God, for unto them is given power over devils” (JST Matt. 12:23).<sup>128</sup> Luke’s report of Jesus’ saying in the Beelzebul controversy, “He that is not with me is against me” (11:23), which appears to cut against his principle in this passage, “he that is not against us is for us,” instead points to the test that disciples should apply to themselves rather than to others (see also 2 Ne. 10:16).<sup>129</sup>

## Analysis

The exchange between John and the Savior, initiated by John’s reply to Jesus’ teaching on discipleship (see 9:48), immediately raises the prospect of a broader, authorized group of disciples who are already functioning in Jesus’ name and possess his powers. The Gospel rehearses the calling and empowering of the Twelve as well as that of the Seventy (see 6:13–16; 9:1–5; 10:1–11). However, neither Luke nor the other Gospel writers recount the explicit authorization of others, except at 9:60: “go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” These verses intriguingly point to this possibility as well.

126. McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:417.

127. *TDNT*, 4:445; Bultmann, *History*, 25, sees Jesus’ saying as a later creation by early Christians because, in his view, it fits only in the nascent church.

128. McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:269.

129. Plummer, *Luke*, 259–60; Morris, *Luke*, 194.

Exorcism, or the casting out of evil spirits, engages Jesus’ energies and power, as the plethora of reports demonstrates. And Jesus points to this action as one that faces his authorized servants, for to the Twelve he “gave . . . power and authority over all devils” (9:1), and the Seventy report that “even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” (10:17). Hence, a natural conclusion is that, largely unreported by the evangelists, Jesus is authorizing other disciples to begin their work and this scene frames his lesson to the Twelve about a shared responsibility. Such a conclusion about an apparent omission, if there is one, should not be surprising. Why not? Because, to turn to a different topic, none of the Gospel accounts report what Jesus does during the time that his body lies in the tomb, though other sources do. This lapse, coupled with others such as the omission of Jesus’ multiple trips to Jerusalem, forms omissions of major proportions (see 1 Pet. 3:18–20; 4:6; the Notes on 4:18; 9:22; 22:9; 11:21–22; the Introduction II.G and III.B).<sup>130</sup>

## TURNING TOWARD JERUSALEM (9:51–56)

(Compare Matt. 19:1–2; Mark 10:1)

### King James Translation

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly 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 his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55 But he turned, and rebuked them,

### New Rendition

51 And it came to pass when the days of his ascension were approaching, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers before him. And having gone ahead they entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for him. 53 And they did not welcome him, because he was going to Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw, they said, “Lord, do you want us to order fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” 55 And turning around, he rebuked them. 56 And they went to another village.

<sup>130</sup>. D&C 138; *TDNT*, 2:424; 6:577–78; “The Gospel of Nicodemus,” in *NTA*, 1:470–81; Brown, Holzapfel, and Pheysey, *Beholding Salvation*, 90–93.



and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

## Notes

**9:51 *the time*:** Literally, “the days,” a term that embraces a critical or shaping moment that points both backward to what has happened so far, and forward to important events yet to come, much as “after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived” and “the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee” (1:24; 19:43; also 2:6; 5:35; 21:6; 23:29; the Note on 17:22).<sup>131</sup>

***was come*:** The verb (Greek *symplērōō*) means “to fill completely” and has to do with the fulfillment of God’s plan, specifically occurring within time as measured to humans and thus placing salvation within this world.<sup>132</sup> By writing this verb, Luke underlines in bright tones the significance of this moment in the Savior’s ministry.

***received up*:** The term is a noun (Greek *analēmpsis*), appearing only here in the New Testament and meaning a “taking up.” It can refer to Jesus’ death, but it also points to his ascension to glory, as its verb indicates in other contexts (see Acts 1:2, 11, 22; 1 Tim. 3:16).<sup>133</sup> Literally speaking, both the noun and the verb point to another person taking Jesus up, namely, his Father, rather than Jesus exalting himself.

***he steadfastly set his face*:** The verb (Greek *stērizō*) has to do with fixing or establishing (see 16:26; 22:32) and points to Jesus’ own unshakeable decision now to turn his attention toward Jerusalem and what awaits him there (see 9:57; 10:38; 13:22; 14:25; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 28).<sup>134</sup> Another meaning, linked to the Old Testament expression “set his face,” has to do with the impending judgment on any city that Jesus’ arrival will inaugurate (see 19:41–44; 21:20–24; 23:27–31).<sup>135</sup>

**9:52 *sent messengers*:** The Greek verb *apostellō* stands in the simple past (aorist) tense, suggesting that Jesus sends this group out on one specific

131. *TDNT*, 2:944–46, 951–53; *TDOT*, 6:21, 30–31.

132. *TDNT*, 6:308–9.

133. *TDNT*, 4:7–9.

134. *TDNT*, 7:656; *TLNT*, 3:294; Marshall, *Luke*, 405.

135. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke–Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 93–105.

occasion.<sup>136</sup> Jesus earlier sends the Twelve and will soon send the Seventy as his commissioned agents (see 9:2; 10:1). But the individuals noted in this verse, although bearing his commission as the verb shows (see the Notes on 4:18 and 9:2), seem not to carry a preaching and healing responsibility but one of preparing the way for the coming one, “to make ready for him,” much as John is to do (see 3:4–6; the Notes on 6:13; 11:49).<sup>137</sup> Thus, their advance announcement will bring crowds to him that might not otherwise come, all part of Jesus’ missionary strategy. Luke’s note in the present passage demonstrates Jesus’ sensitivity that the arrival of a large group of travelers in a town will strain resources without prior notification. Notably, in the modern era, it is those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood who are commissioned to go “before you to make appointments, and to prepare the way . . . this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church” (D&C 84:107–8), following exactly the pattern established here by Jesus.

***entered into a village of the Samaritans:*** Evidently, Luke understands that Jesus and his entourage are traveling in the area where Galilee and Samaria run together, perhaps south of the locale known in Old Testament times as the Jezreel Valley, in the general region of Esdraelon (see 17:11).<sup>138</sup>

**9:53 *they did not receive him:*** The ancient animosity between Jews and Samaritans lurks in these words. At the very least, the memory of the Jewish destruction of the Samaritan temple in 128 BC and the ravaging of the Samaritan countryside two decades later keep Samaritans at a distance from Jews.<sup>139</sup>

***as though he would go to Jerusalem:*** Although it is not clear how the Samaritan villagers come to know Jesus’ plan, his now-public intent to go to Jerusalem tells them that he values the capital city and its temple more than he values the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, a bone of contention as the snappy words of the Samaritan woman indicate: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain [Mount Gerizim]; and ye [Jews] say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:20).

**9:54 *James and John:*** Those who respond most vocally to the snub are the two brothers. John, of course, previously displays his dislike of a perceived competitor (see 9:49). Although Luke does not say why the brothers jump immediately into the fray—they are called the “sons of thunder”

---

136. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1856; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §1)318).

137. Plummer, *Luke*, 262.

138. Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, maps 217, 221, 230, 231, 237.

139. Brown and Holzapfel, *Lost 500 Years*, 127–133.

elsewhere (see Mark 3:17)—they likely represent the attitudes of the other disciples who have taken offense, as John does earlier: “we forbid him” (9:49). But Jesus displays no prejudice against Samaritans and has already disclosed his willingness to minister even among Gentiles, as his boat trip into Gergesene territory demonstrates to the disciples (see 8:26–39).

***wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven:*** Apparently the disciples remember the previous lesson about stepping beyond what their Master may wish (see 9:50) and, now properly, seek his permission to take drastic action, accepting the principle that they ask and do his will in important matters. Their language recalls that of 2 Kings 1:10, 12.

***even as Elias did:*** The words of the disciples virtually quote the words of Elijah at 2 Kings 1:10 and 1:12. Some early manuscripts omit these words, including the earliest,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ . If the words are authentic, the brothers who accompany Jesus onto the mount still bear the lingering, bright impressions of meeting Elijah there (see 9:30).

***9:55 he turned:*** Although one may see in Jesus’ act merely a “conventional” mannerism in similar situations (see 22:61; 23:28),<sup>141</sup> Luke’s notation can just as well point to an eyewitness’s recollection of that moment (see 10:23; 14:25; 18:40; 22:61; 23:28; the Notes on 7:9 and 7:44).

***rebuked them:*** For the second time in this chapter, Jesus issues a rebuke, the prior instance being aimed at an aggressive unclean spirit (see 9:42). Luke also records Jesus’ rebukes of a woman’s illness and a storm (see 4:39; 8:24). In this last instance, the rebuke has to do with right actions by those who see themselves as his disciples.

***and said:*** Most early manuscripts omit these words as well as Jesus’ next statement and the first sentence in 9:56. Hence, commentators generally view them as a later scribal addition. Indeed, the meaning of the saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,” is difficult to grasp. However, Marcion, a Christian teacher who falls out of favor in the second century, repeats these words, and those that follow immediately in 9:56, in his version of Luke’s Gospel. Their presence in Marcion’s early text should caution us against quickly dismissing these words as a later scribe’s additions.<sup>142</sup>

***9:56 the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them:*** Whether these words are original or not, they do mirror Jesus’ words spoken to Zacchaeus, the tax collector in Jericho: “the Son of man is come to

140. Plummer, *Luke*, 264.

141. Marshall, *Luke*, 407.

142. Marshall, *Luke*, 407–8.

seek and to save that which was lost” (19:10). Hence, they breathe the spirit of Jesus’ teachings.

*they went to another village:* Presumably, they pass on to another Samaritan settlement because they experience rejection in the first.

## Analysis

These six verses frame a major junction in Luke’s story, as the verbs and nouns in 9:51 illustrate (see the Notes on 9:51). Jerusalem now comes prominently into view as the main aim of the Savior’s ministry. Some call the next few chapters a “travel account” or “the journey.”<sup>143</sup> To this point, Jesus pursues his ministry within the tetrarchy of Galilee that Herod Antipas manages and, to the east, the tetrarchy of Gaulanitis that his brother Herod Philip rules.<sup>144</sup> Along the way, he interacts with Jews and Gentiles. Now he reaches out to Samaritans, a people holding severe differences with Jews. Before this moment, his genuine interest in them appears, first, in his rebuke of the two brothers who want to call down fire on those Samaritans who refuse to receive them and, second, in his quiet, noncensuring retreat to another village.

These markings in Jesus’ interaction with his disciples, and his example to them, frame part of the larger pattern in this chapter of revealing Jesus’ true identity and setting the proper dimensions of discipleship. Jesus’ rebuke unveils his attitude toward irresponsible ideas and acts, disclosing his refined sense for appropriate actions. He will not be a party to willful and wanton destruction in any form. Further, in the matter of discipleship, it becomes apparent that his disciples have learned that they are to check with him before they undertake any important task in his name. In a word, they are to learn his will. In their case, simply adopting some of his teachings will not do. Their wills are to line up with his.

Jerusalem already serves as an important factor in Luke’s story, standing as a destination for the Savior’s parents in the weeks following his birth and as a place for a story from his youth (see 2:22, 42), as well as the scene for one of the devil’s temptations (see 4:9). But now it looms as the terminus of Jesus’ final journey where the events of his last days will play out and where he will undertake his atoning acts. Throughout the next few chapters, the capital city is never far from Jesus’ thoughts, as Luke’s notations and Jesus’ words will demonstrate (see 12:50; 13:22, 33–34; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28).

143. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:823–27; Johnson, *Luke*, 163–64; also Plummer, *Luke*, 260–61.

144. Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, maps 223 and 231.

Lurking beneath the report tied to the Samaritan village stands the centuries-long antagonism between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus' now public intent to take his ministry to Jerusalem stirs resentment among Samaritans because they, besides intensely disliking and distrusting Jews, worship at their temple on Mount Gerizim, a small building by any account, and refuse to join in worship activities at the Jerusalem temple. The two structures, and the locales where they sit, serve as symbols of the deep division between the two peoples.<sup>145</sup> Thus, Jesus' announced plan to journey to the Jews' capital city inflames the passions of those Samaritans who learn of it. But Jesus does not retaliate. Rather, he respects their feelings and, what is more, bats down the irresponsible proposal of two disciples who want to strike back. In so doing, the Savior shows a bit more of who he is and what he represents, establishing further boundaries for those who seek to be his disciples.

With these verses, Luke turns from Mark's record and does not re-engage its materials until 18:15, omitting entirely the section in Mark 9:41–10:12, including Jesus' substantive teaching on divorce (see Mark 10:2–12). To be sure, he will repeat stories that are common to Matthew's account such as Jesus' parable of the lost sheep (see Matt. 18:10–14; Luke 15:3–7) and the parable of the great supper (see Matt. 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24). Commentators usually ascribe these reports shared by Matthew and Luke to a source called "Q," for the German term *Quelle*, which means "source." Although no one has demonstrated the existence of this source because no fragments have ever been found or attested, an enormous literature has grown up about it, both seeking to prove its existence and arguing for its nonexistence.<sup>146</sup>

For Matthew especially, and for Mark, much of what follows in Jesus' ministry takes place in Perea, "beyond Jordan," on its east bank (Matt. 19:1–2; also Mark 10:1). But in Luke's reconstruction, Jesus also continues to teach west of the Jordan River, alternately slipping between Samaritan and Galilean territory: "he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee" (17:11). In this light, Jesus keeps on preaching to Jews of the north and to Samaritans who dislike all Jews, spreading his teachings and offering

---

145. Brown and Holzapfel, *Lost 500 Years*, 127–133.

146. John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); and Mark S. Goodacre, *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2002).

his example in an effort to bind up old wounds and heal hardened hearts. Of course, his preaching travels will take him to Jews who reside on the east side of the Jordan River, as he makes his way to Jerusalem, though Luke does not specifically feature this region. Unlike the Savior’s successful efforts in the New World to put a soothing salve on a fractured society and to unite it,<sup>147</sup> here his labors seem to improve the situation only marginally. But he does not turn away from his tasks.

## SECOND LESSON ON DISCIPLESHIP (9:57–62)

(Compare Matt. 8:18–22)

### King James Translation

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

### New Rendition

57 And while they were traveling along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have dens and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” 59 And he said to another, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” 60 But he said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” 61 And another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to those at my home.” 62 But Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

### Notes

**9:57 *as they went in the way*:** Luke will keep thrumming, lightly but steadily, the rhythms of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (see 9:51; 10:38; 13:22; 14:25; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 28).

---

147. Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 131, 141–43, 160, 170.

***I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest:*** The person's expression is exactly right for one who seeks to be a disciple and, importantly, reinforces from a human point of view the standard that underlies much of what Jesus teaches.

***9:58 the Son of man hath not where to lay his head:*** Jesus' response may have surprised both the person and the other disciples. The thrust of these words has to do with unhinging oneself from this world and its usual cares. The natural world, represented by foxes and birds, takes care of its own. Humans, whose lives are subject to the vagaries of natural processes, need shelter and other aids to sustain life. But those concerns are not to stand first in a disciple's mental list of needs. In fact, for one who truly follows Jesus, "all these things shall be added unto you" (12:31). As Jesus shuns the squawking demands of this world, so should his disciples.

***suffer me first to go and bury my father:*** On the surface, the request seems reasonable and surely involves an act of deep family loyalty. The duty of burying one's kindred is strong (see Gen. 50:5) so that even priests, who must remain ritually pure, are permitted to become defiled as they deal with the burial of a relative (see Lev. 21:1–3). But Jesus' words about discipleship herald a new and higher standard of loyalty to himself and to the principles that he teaches.

***9:60 Let the dead bury their dead:*** The meaning points to the spiritually dead burying the physically dead and embraces the principle that those who do not follow Jesus become spiritually extinct and squander their chance at spiritual life: "thy brother was dead, and is alive again" (15:32; also 15:24).<sup>148</sup>

***go thou and preach:*** Three aspects appear for comment. First, a disciple is one who will act both in accord with Jesus' requirements and, specifically, with a view of reaching out to others. Second, that person will respond immediately. Third, Jesus' command frames a calling or commissioning of the person to represent him as a preacher of "the kingdom of God," carrying the same message that he does (see 4:43; 8:1, 10). Here we find the calling of a person outside the Twelve and Seventy (see the Notes on 9:50 and 10:2).<sup>149</sup> In all, the story assumes that the person has been following the Savior for a considerable time and knows exactly what to say.

***9:61 let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home:*** The verb "to bid farewell" (Greek *apotassō*) points to a formal farewell celebration, a

---

148. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 306; Marshall, *Luke*, 411.

149. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 306; *TDNT*, 4:445; McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:304.

party that Jesus does not approve of because it suggests a less than full commitment to him.<sup>150</sup> The person might be thinking that scripture sets the precedent when Elijah permits Elisha to return home to say farewell to his family members and to celebrate his calling by sharing a sacred meal (see 1 Kgs. 19:20–21). But Jesus will tighten the knot that binds a disciple to him, not allowing that person even to look back at the prior life (see 9:62). So it is with the Twelve who leave immediately on their missions (see 9:1–2).

**9:62 *hand to the plough*:** The metaphorical character of this and the earlier sayings stands out in these words. We put a hand on the plough with the intent of moving forward with vigor and purpose.

***is fit for the kingdom of God*:** The ultimate sense of Jesus' sayings in these verses emerges from these words. Discipleship, as he frames the concept, is more than following the teachings of an impressive or beloved teacher. It has to do with eternal matters; it has to do with the kingdom of God.

## Analysis

Concern for discipleship weaves itself through these lines. We are to grasp the Savior's words in the light of the three Apostles' experience on the mount who see the Savior for who he really is and thus tie their loyalty to celestial verities (see 9:28–36); we are to understand these sayings within the sharp demands on true disciples that appear in the unstinting responses of the Twelve who receive their charge and depart immediately on their missions (see 9:6). Following Jesus is not a casual matter: it demands all, but rewards all (see also 14:25–33; 18:28–30). This theme, that appears at the beginning, at the center, and at the end of chapter 9, confers a unity both on the chapter and on Jesus' enduring teaching.

Discipleship with Jesus, of course, involves a set of ultimate standards that reaches beyond even family concerns: “suffer me first to go and bury my father” (9:59). Perhaps oddly, the person who accepts the tough demands placed on disciples finds himself or herself in a sunny landscape. This scenery comes after passing through the tunnel of deciding whether to accept Jesus' requirements of discipleship and offers back the loving graces of family and friends, now wrapped in eternal bonds. But the disciple, after decision, now carries a different set of priorities, and even desires, that

---

150. *TDNT*, 8:33.



allow him or her not only to follow Jesus through thick and thin but also to reach out to others to bless them exactly as he would do. Disciples thus become imitators of Jesus in the highest, loftiest manner (see the Notes on 18:29–30; the Analysis on 9:23–27; 14:25–35; 21:1–4).

Subtly, the sayings reveal more of Jesus' true identity. He brings a message that requires hearers and readers to confront and make decisions that carry ultimate consequences, that lead to celestial realities. His is not simply a feel-good message because he is not simply a feel-good person. His celestial nature, his heavenly origin elevates his requirements for disciples to an eternal level of reality that indeed takes account of this world but ultimately diminishes its lasting importance: "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (9:58).