

Knowing Jesus and Being Known by Him (Luke 9:18-27)

1. The Confession of Peter and Jesus' Approaching Death (v.18-22)

Luke has intentionally arranged his gospel narrative account to answer the question: "Who is Jesus?" (1:4; 8:25; 9:9). Jesus presents this question in two statements: "Who do the crowds say that I am?" (v.18), and "Who do you (twelve) say I am?" (v.20).

Who do the crowds say I am? (v.18):

The public consensus is that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or "another prophet of old" (9:7-8, 19).

A. *John the Baptist* (v.19a):

- John the Baptist was the most common response from people. Jesus and John, however, came from different families with different, though overlapping missions.
- Although many came to see John, more encountered Jesus. How could Jesus be John if he was beheaded?

B. *Elijah* (v.19b):

- No OT personality had as much expectation and anticipation as Elijah. Both Elijah and Jesus had overlapping elements to their ministry, as they were prophets, performed miracles, and included Gentiles.
- Elijah was carried into heaven (2 Kgs. 2:11) and expected to return before the terrible day of the Lord (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). Luke has already included Elijah/Elisha's typologies and motifs in his narrative (7:11-17; 9:10-17).

C. *One of the "prophets of old"* (v.19c):

- The Jews were waiting for the prophet Moses spoke about (Deut. 18:15, 18).

Who do you say that I am? (v.20)

- Jesus speaks to the disciples in the emphatic plural. Each of the Synoptics has a slightly different response: You are "the Messiah" (Mk. 8:9), you are "The Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).
- Peter called Jesus "the Messiah" or "anointed One." He is the first person (8:28) to make this confession. The disciples have witnessed Jesus' miracles, participated in Jesus' ministry of liberation (4:17-18), and have come a "long way" since their perplexity on the sea of Galilee (8:25).

How did Peter know that Jesus was the Messiah? The Father revealed it to him presumably in response to Jesus' prayer (Matt. 16:17; 9:18):

- He prayed at His baptism (Lk. 3:21), probably before He called the first disciples (Lk. 4:42), and when He chose the Twelve (6:12).

Jesus commands and sternly charges them to tell this revelation to no one (v.21). Why?

A. *They do not understand what He is saying:*

- They do not have the whole gospel, which includes the cross, death, resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ.

B. *They have the wrong understanding of the Messiah and Suffering Servant:*

- If Rome is prematurely agitated, or the people make incorrect assumptions, it may complicate Jesus' mission.
- The OT does not develop a systematic doctrine of the Messiah. The absolute use of "Messiah" is only found in Dan. 9:26. There was a messianic concept of an eschatological king. The Messiah would be perfect and chosen by God from eternity,

through Whom God would deliver Israel from her enemies and cause her to live in peace and tranquility.

- They knew that God would raise a prophet like Moses from among his brothers (Deut. 18:18-20), a mighty king would come from the royal city of David (Mic. 5:2), His kingdom would endure and rule "on the throne of David" forever (Isa. 9:7; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:4).
- Contrary to popular notions, neither the servant of YHWH nor the Son of Man concepts in the OT are associated with Messianic expectations, including expiatory suffering.
- Even when Jesus was raised from the dead, they wondered when it would be time to "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts. 1:6).

There are five elements to the suffering motif: (1) The divine "must" (Zech. 12:10; Lk. 24:26, 46) governs every part. (2) He "will suffer many things." (3) He'll be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes." (4) He must "be killed." (5) He will be raised to life on the third day as the first fruits of the resurrection, which all believers will share (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

2. The Cost of Discipleship (v.23)

Three verbs are present in v.23 ("deny, take, follow") and are imperatives (commands).

A. He must deny himself (v.23a):

- As a disciple of Jesus Christ, there are pursuits, pleasures, and advancements that he must refuse because they hinder God's will of command (what is revealed in Scripture).
 - Some may be sinful and immediately evident, and as a result, are to be refused.
 - Others may not be sinful intrinsically but hinder and entangle them in their Christian walk and witness (8:14).
- Every element of the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ is to be funneled through a redemptive-historical hermeneutic. He must know what God says in its proper context and submit to it willingly and joyfully.

B. He must take up his cross daily (v.23b):

- As a disciple of Jesus Christ, he must be willing to suffer hardships for the cause of Christ.
- The cross was a vile instrument of cruelty, pain, dehumanization, and shame.
- Unfortunately, many Christians have never been able to "rejoice, being counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:41; 2 Tim. 1:8, 12; 1 Pet. 4:16) because of an unwillingness to first deny themselves, and secondly, "die" to the world.
- Contextually, socio-economic-relational aspects are considered (3:7-9; 6:27-38; 8:21).

C. He must follow Jesus (v.23c):

- As a disciple of Jesus Christ, he must follow (present tense) Jesus. This walk is marked by integrity, purity, faithfulness, and humble service wrought from a heart devoted to the glory of God. What marks him distinctively are his intentions, motives, and lifestyle.
- This kind of discipleship includes a renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:1-2) and conformity to the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Caution of Worldliness and Rejecting Jesus (v.24-27)

- Jesus warns of the consequences of habitual denunciation of Him and worldly pursuits: rejection by Him and eternal damnation. To be ashamed of Christ is:
 - To shrink back from the exclusivity of the gospel, to refuse to render Him the honor due, to renounce Him before men (idolatry of man), and to live in unbelief, doubting He will honor those who commit all to Him. Ultimately, it is the sin of ingratitude.
- Those who are ashamed of Jesus in this life, He will be ashamed of them in the next (v.26).