

**Peter's Declaration that Jesus is the Christ**

***9:18 And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?"***

***9:19 They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again."***

***9:20 And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."***

The climax of this section is in Luke 9:20 where Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ of God. Although in the Book of Luke, Peter's confession immediately follows the feeding of the 5000, much had transpired between Luke 9:17 and Luke 9:18. Matthew (Matt. 14:22-16:12), Mark (Mk. 6:45-8:26), and John (Jn. 6) fill in the details. We can only speculate as to why Luke left so much information out, but it appears that he has been setting the stage to answer this question of Jesus' identity (Lk. 5:21; 7:20, 49; 8:25; 9:7), and the stories in the other gospels didn't serve this purpose. In fact, so much information would direct the reader away from the force of his argument.

In the parallel passage in Matthew 16 it tells us that Jesus and the disciples went to the district of Caesarea Philippi. There were two places named Caesarea: Caesarea Philippi and another Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. Caesarea Philippi was about 25 miles north of Lake Galilee in an isolated area near the foot of Mount Hermon on the southern border of modern day Lebanon. It sits upon a 1,150 foot high terrace that overlooks a fertile valley. On a clear day Cana and Nazareth can be seen from it. It has one of the largest springs feeding the Jordan River. It was originally called Panias after the god, Pan, but was renamed Caesarea Philippi by Philip the tetrarch who "rebuilt and beautified the town, calling it Caesarea as a compliment to Augustus, and adding his own name to distinguish it from Caesarea on the coast of Sharon" (ISBE). The inhabitants were mostly Gentile and it marks the northernmost extent of Jesus' ministry.

A cave near Caesarea Philippi is said to be the birthplace of the god, Pan, the god of the wilderness, shepherds, and hunters. The district was littered with the temples of the Syrian gods, and there was a great white marble temple that was dedicated to the worship of Caesar. Oddly, it was here, instead of the Holy City (Jerusalem), that Jesus chose to ask the disciples who they thought He was. If Jesus was trying to contrast Himself to the glory and splendor of the world's religions, He found the perfect place to do so.

About two years had passed since Jesus began His public ministry and only about 8 or 9 months remained until He would be crucified. Jesus was praying alone away from the crowds, but it is obvious that the disciples and others were nearby (Lk. 9:18; Mk. 8:34). It was at that time that Jesus asked His disciples two questions: one question was who *the world* thought He was; the other was who *they* thought He was.

By chapter 9 the readers of The Gospel of Luke should have a clear understanding of who Jesus is for Luke has been telling them since chapter 1.

## Luke 1:

- 1:32-33-**An angel** testified who Jesus was when He told Mary, "He will be great and will be called the *Son of the Most High*; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." He said to her, "the holy Child shall be called *the Son of God*" (1:35).
- 1:69- **Zacharias** spoke prophetically about Jesus saying that in Him, God has "raised up *a horn of salvation* for us in the house of David His servant."

## Luke 2:

- Luke 2:10-11- **Angels** told the shepherds: "today in the city of David there has been born for you a *Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*"
- Luke 2:25-32 - **Simeon** had been told by God that he would not see death before he had seen *the Lord's Christ*. Upon seeing the infant Jesus he proclaimed, "my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

## Luke 3:

- Luke 3:16-17- **John the Baptist** said of Christ, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."
- Luke 3:21-22- Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened, and **the Holy Spirit descended upon Him** in bodily form like a dove. Then **a voice came out of heaven**, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

## Luke 4:

- Luke 4:3- **Satan** identified Jesus as the Son of God: "If You are *the Son of God*, tell this stone to become bread."
- Luke 4:17-21- **Jesus** identified Himself as the Anointed One prophesied in the Book of Isaiah: "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because *He anointed Me* to preach the gospel to the poor"
- Luke 4:33-34 -A **demon** testified that Jesus was "*the Holy One of God!*"
- Luke 4:41 - **Demons** identified Jesus as "*the Son of God!*"

## Luke 6

- Luke 6:5- **Jesus** said He is "Lord of the Sabbath."

Though Jesus' identity had been unveiled in Luke's gospel, the Jews in Jesus' day were at a loss to figure out who He was. They never questioned Jesus' miraculous power. No one accused Him of being a magician. They couldn't. There were too many people who had been healed, freed from demons, or raised from the dead to think He used trickery. The testimonies of thousands were available to anybody who wondered if the miracles were real. But they were blind to what the miracles meant. The most they were willing to say was that Jesus was a prophet – perhaps John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet who had risen again.

The apostles held a much higher view of Jesus. They believed that He had the words of life and there was no one else to go to (Jn. 6:68). They had called Him Lord and teacher. However, now, for the first time, contrary to popular belief and political correctness, they gave a clear, precise statement affirming that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, "the Christ *of God*."

It is important to note that the word "God" in verse 20 is a genitive of possession in Greek. It points out that Christ is *God's* Christ. No human chose Jesus to be the Messiah; Jesus didn't decide that He wanted to become the Messiah. Rather, He is *God's* Anointed, *God's* Chosen One. The testimony of Scripture confirms this everywhere. Hebrews 1:9 says *God* anointed Him "with the oil of gladness." In Luke 2:26 it says of Simeon, "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen *the Lord's* Christ." In Luke 4:18 Jesus said, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because *He* anointed Me." Even the unbelieving Jews understood that the Messiah was God's Messiah; at Christ's crucifixion the people shouted, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is *the Christ of God, His Chosen One*" (Lk. 23:35). To reject Jesus as Messiah is to reject the One whom God had chosen.

One might think that the apostles had come to know who Jesus was because they had spent so much time with Him. However, Jesus makes it clear that it was God who opened their eyes. In Matthew 16:17 Jesus said to Peter, "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." "Flesh and blood" is an idiom that refers to human weakness. Peter did not come to know who Jesus was through his own ability; it was the Father who revealed to him that Jesus was the Christ. In John 6:44 Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Likewise, Matthew 11:27 says, "No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son *and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*." People cannot know Jesus unless He is revealed to them by God. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "the world through its wisdom did not come to know God." "The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14). No one apart from God's intervention can know spiritual truth. 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." And 2 Corinthians 4:6 makes it clear that we are saved because "God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

***9:21 But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,***

If the Father revealed to the apostles that Jesus was the Christ, one would think that they would go out and proclaim the good news that the Messiah had come; however, Jesus tells them not to tell this to anyone (9:21). The reason for silence is given in verse 22.

***9:22 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 up on the third day."***

God's plans for the Messiah were contrary to the disciples' thinking of what the Messiah would be; they assumed that Jesus would usher in the kingdom and the reign of Christ would begin, but the Messiah

must first suffer and die. To proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah at this time would be premature, for they themselves did not understand what would come to pass.

Verse 22 makes it clear that the cross could not be avoided; Jesus said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things. . . ." Although Jesus' actions were passive, His death was actively directed by the Father. Isaiah 53:10 says, "the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering." Likewise, in Zechariah 13:7 God awakens His sword to slay the Messiah: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered." Jesus' death was not an accident; it was a divine necessity. But so was the resurrection. Jesus must be raised on the third day. It would not be until after the resurrection that the disciples would come to understand what must take place; then the time would come when they would be told to be Jesus' witnesses and to preach the gospel to all creation.

### **Taking Up The Cross**

***9:23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.***

Jesus' definition of messiahship has irrevocable "consequences for the lives of the disciples when they follow the suffering Son of Man" (Edwards, 275; Marshall, 371). If one shares the life of Jesus, he will pattern his life after Jesus' life; he will share in His sufferings. In John 15:18-20 Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. . . . A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. . ." Faith entails affirming the truth of Jesus' messiahship, but it also entails acting upon the truth in daily discipleship (Edwards, 275).

Jesus began by saying, "If anyone wishes to come after Me." This is not an invitation to a higher form of Christian living or a greater commitment after salvation. This is an invitation to salvation.

Salvation is described by three commands:

- (1) deny oneself
- (2) take up one's cross
- (3) follow Jesus.

The Greek verb tenses demonstrate that the third command (following Jesus) emerges from the first two (Bock, 852). We follow Jesus by denying oneself and dying to oneself daily.

Self-love is a normal human trait; however, self-love cannot co-exist with commitment to Christ. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself." The word "deny" literally means "to disown something." It's used to describe refusing association with someone. Jesus is demanding that His followers disown themselves, that they refuse association with themselves. But more than that, they must die daily.

Crucifixion was a well-known means of execution in Jesus' day. "More than 100 years before Jesus came to the world, King Alexander Jannaeus crucified 800 rebels in Jerusalem while he was feasting in public. Antiochus Epiphanes crucified many Jews for a revolt that followed the death of Herod of the Great. The proconsul Varus crucified 2,000 Jews. It is said that the Romans crucified 30,000 Jews in Palestine during the era around the life of Jesus" (MacArthur, Luke 9:23-26). Thus, when Jesus said, "Take up your cross," the disciples only thought of one thing: horrible suffering, dehumanization, shame, and death. They understood that Jesus was demanding the total giving of one's life as the cost for following Him.

Although "carrying one's cross" could very well include enduring physical suffering, rejection, persecution, and even death, the addition of the word "daily" shows that Jesus was speaking metaphorically. Bearing the cross reinforces the idea of self-denial and submission. A follower of Jesus must die daily; that is, he must die to self in every act and thought that is not according to the will of God. The gospel is not just a call to forsake sin; it's a call to kill self.

**9:24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."**

Verse 24 reinforces what Jesus said in verse 23. There are two types of people. There is the person who wishes to preserve his life by avoiding self-denial and taking up the cross; this person will lose his life in the age to come. The other person is willing to give up everything for Christ's sake; this person will paradoxically preserve his life. Paul said, "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31) and in 2 Timothy 2:11 he said, "if we died with Him, we will also live with Him."

"Losing one's life" is another way of saying that it will cost you everything to gain eternal life. In Matthew 13:44-46 Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes *and sells all that he has* and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, *he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*"

**9:25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"**

Jesus asks a rhetorical question in verse 25 that describes the risk of not responding to His invitation in verse 23. His question involves hyperbole (it is impossible for anyone to literally possess the entire world). But Jesus is asking, what if you had everything that the world has? What would you have? The answer, of course, is that you would have nothing that would surpass knowing Christ. What is the advantage of gaining all the honors and prestige, the accolades, the riches and material benefits, the power and pleasures of the whole world if in the end *you yourself* are lost?

The word "forfeit" refers to suffering loss, "whether through paying a fine, losing in a game, or failing in a business deal" (Bock, 855). "The risk is greater in holding on to one's life than in giving it over to God for Christ's sake" (Bock, 855).

**9:26 "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 of the holy angels."**

Verse 26 explains how one forfeits life (verse 25). Shame is one of the strongest feelings we have. It is rooted in our love of having a reputation before others; shame causes us to avoid anything that threatens to lower our status. If someone loves the world they will seek the approval of the world. Since the world hates Christ, association with Christ and His word are an embarrassment; they are something to be ashamed of embracing. What they do not realize is that their shame has disastrous results. Jesus' invitation for the sinner to come to Him will be rescinded when the Day of Judgment comes. Any hope of salvation will be lost. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33, "If you confess Me before men, I'll confess you before My Father who is in heaven. But if you deny Me before men, I'll deny you."

The mention of the Son of Man coming in glory is a reference to Jesus' Second Coming. It alludes to Daniel 7:13-14 where "one like a Son of Man" is given the authority as the eschatological judge. There it says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

In 2 Timothy 1:12 Paul said, "*I am not ashamed*; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." Peter said in 1 Peter 4:16, "if anyone suffers as a Christian, *let him not be ashamed*, but let him in that name glorify God." Unbelievers want nothing to do with Christ; He is an embarrassment. In contrast, believers glory in His association with them. When we show that Jesus is gloriously more valuable than pleasures and the approval of man, we will be rewarded with Jesus not being ashamed of calling us brethren (Heb. 2:10-11).