

Luke 9:51-62

Introduction: This second section of Luke will continue until 19:44. We will find fewer recorded miracles but more parables and teaching. Between 9:50 and 9:51 Jesus teaches on how to handle disputes between His followers and how to be merciful (cf. Matthew 18:15-35). This entire section reminds us of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha.

Jesus determines to go to Jerusalem—9:51-56

- 1) The final phase begins—9:51-52a ⁵¹ *Now it happened, when the days of His ascension [ἀνάληψις] (cf. used of Elijah in 2nd Kings 2:9) were being fulfilled,*
 - a) Determination—**He** (emphatic) *set [στηρίζω] His **face** to proceed to Jerusalem,* (cf. Isaiah 50:7)
 - i) This is not a literal straight shot trip to Jerusalem but His purpose, direction, and goal are firmly and clearly established.
 - ii) He knowingly faces opposition that will culminate in His death and resurrection.
 - b) Authorization—⁵² *and He sent [ἀποστέλλω] messengers ahead of Him* (lit. “before His **face**”).
 - c) This is most likely the first of three final trips to Jerusalem, probably for the Feast of Tabernacles in September on 32 AD. See the parallel passage in John 7:2-52. This is approximately 7 months before His death, resurrection, and ascension.
- 2) The disciples prepare for Jesus—9:52b-56 *And as they went along, they entered a (unknown) village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.*
 - a) Rejection—⁵³ *But they (the Samaritan villagers) did not welcome [δέχομαι] Him, because His **face** was proceeding toward Jerusalem.*
 - i) The Samaritans despised any Jew heading to Jerusalem. To go to Jerusalem to worship was to repudiate the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim. (Thomas)
 - ii) Remember that these were half-breed Jews/Gentiles from 2nd Kings 17.
 - b) Zealous retaliation—⁵⁴ *Now when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and destroy them, as also Elijah did? (cf. 2nd Kings 1:10-14; but see Luke 6:28)*
 - i) They had just see Elijah at Jesus’ Transfiguration.
 - ii) They were asking God for the wrong thing with the wrong attitude. Those who reject Christ are not the enemy; they are the mission field. John eventually learns his lesson by God’s Spirit in Acts 8:25.
 - c) Rebukes their ignorance—⁵⁵ *But having turned, He rebuked [ἐπιτιμάω] them, and said, “You^{pl} do not know from what kind of spirit you^{pl} are.*
 - i) Now is the time for patience, not judgment.
 - d) Merciful restraint—⁵⁶ *For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to rescue [σώζω].”*
- 3) *And they proceeded to another village.*

Jesus weeds out three possible disciples—9:57-61

- Chronologically this takes place before 9:51-56, just prior to John 7
- 1) The **naïve** student who is ignorant of potential alienation—9:57-58
 - a) ⁵⁷ *Now it happened, while they were proceeding along on the road, someone said to Him,*
 - i) *“Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”* (cf. Matthew 8:18-19)
 - b) ⁵⁸ *And Jesus said to him,*
 - i) *“The foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests,*
 - ii) *but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*
 - iii) “In other words, Jesus has no permanent place on earth to which He is going, to which you might follow Him. And the glorious place on earth to which you may think He is going is not at all where He is going.” (Magill)
 - c) Jesus is more than a teacher, and a disciple of Jesus is more than a student.
- 2) The **hesitant** disciple who is unwilling to make a commitment —9:59-60
 - a) ⁵⁹ *And He said to another, “Follow Me.”*
 - i) *But he said, “Lord, permit me first, having gone, to bury my father.”*
 - (1) This burial of the bones took place one year after the initial burial of the body. To not do this was to shame one’s father, indicating a lack of love.
 - b) ⁶⁰ *Jesus said to him,*
 - i) *“Permit the (spiritually) dead to bury their own (physically) dead,*
 - ii) *but as for you (emphatic), when you have gone, (thoroughly) proclaim [διαγγέλλω] the kingdom of God.”*
 - c) Jesus commands him to reorient his priorities in light of who Jesus is. Proclaiming God’s kingdom is of higher priority than family and social expectations.
- 3) The **unsuitable** disciple who is double-minded in his loyalty—9:61-62
 - a) ⁶¹ *And another also said,*
 - i) *“I will follow You, Lord,*
 - ii) *but first permit me to say good-bye to those in my house.”*
 - b) ⁶² *But Jesus said to him, “No one, after placing his hand on the plow and looking back, is fit/well-placed/well-adapted [εὐθετος] for the kingdom of God.*
 - i) Perhaps an allusion to Elisha plowing when Elijah called him to follow (1st Kings 19:19-21)
 - ii) The opportunities to look back will be numerous and the dangers of looking are exceedingly great. Israel looked back to Egypt (Exodus 16:3), and Lot’s wife looked back to Sodom (Genesis 19:26).
- 4) Surely these three men must have been a bit confused by Jesus’ response. After all, doesn’t He need more disciples? Jesus is clearly calling these men to make a full commitment NOW. The time has come in His earthly ministry for people to make that choice. People can no longer sit on the fence. Follow Christ totally or do not do so, but you **must** make a decision. Following Jesus is serious business and an all-consuming priority in terms of the constancy of one’s allegiance.
(Bock)

- 5) The issue is not simply “getting saved.” The issue is how one serves and follows Jesus effectively. If we fail in our following, He is gracious to forgive and to cleanse and to set us upright once again.

Take-home truth: What does your lifestyle reveal about your allegiance to Christ?