

Commentary on Luke's Gospel

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SECTION 3 Continued (5.1-9.50).

3). Jesus is Revealed As The Messiah Who Has Come With Power (8.19-9.36).

In this third part of Section 3 Jesus is Revealed as the glorious Messiah Who has come with power but will be involved in suffering and death (8.19-9.36). It may be analysed as follows:

- a He no longer owns responsibility to His own family who do not believe in Him, and are on the outside (His own do not recognise Him) (8.19-21).
- b He is revealed as the One Who is from above by quelling the storm, revealing His power and authority over nature (8.22-25).
- c He delivers the demoniac of a legion of demons, revealing His power and authority over the spirit world, and His ability to deliver from legions (8.26-39).
- d He raises the dead, revealing His power and authority over death (8.30-56).
- c He sends out His power to preach and to heal through the twelve, giving them power and authority over all demons, coming under threat from Herod (9.1-10).
- b He is revealed as the One Who is from above by providing a miraculous sacramental meal, revealing again His power over nature and His power to feed men's inner beings (9.11-17).
- a He is confessed as Messiah by His followers, and revealed as such by being transfigured before, them revealing Who His true Father is, but at the same time He warns that He has come to suffer (9.18-36).

Note how in 'a' His natural family do not acknowledge Him while in the parallel His spiritual family and His Father do. In 'b' He reveals His power over nature so as to protect His own, in the parallel He reveals His power over nature so as to feed His own. In neither case is it for His own benefit. It is for theirs. In 'c' He delivers the demoniac from the tyranny of evil spirits, and in the parallel His disciples go out to deliver people from the same tyranny. Central over all is that He is the Giver of Life, and Lord over Death.

Jesus' Own Family Do Not Receive Him: The Son of Man Is Rejected (8.19-21).

We have already considered these verses in connection with the previous part, but reintroduce them here because they also form the commencement of this new part. Here His own family remain 'on the outside'. They are not ready to receive Him. They act as a warning that Jesus will not be accepted by everyone. In view of what chapter 9 contains of a continual threat of death this must be seen as significant.

8.19 'And there came to him his mother and brethren, and they could not come at him for the crowd.'

Mark 3.21 tells us that they came because they thought that He was 'beside Himself'. Luke leaves that fact to be inferred. He had had much to do with Jesus' mother and therefore was sympathetic in His treatment of her. However the tale had to be told. And he does make it clear that they had not come to join the crowd in order to hear Him. Rather they wanted to 'come at Him'. Their purpose was not to approach Him in the cause of the Kingly Rule of God, but rather as basically agreeing with the people of His home town in their negative verdict against Him (4.28-30).

8.20 'And it was told him, "Your mother and your brethren are standing outside, desiring to see you.'

The emphasis is put on the fact that they were 'standing outside'. Someone then came and informed Jesus that His family were 'outside' wanting to see Him. 'He came to His own, and

His own received Him not' (John 1.11). Jesus knew very well why they wanted to see Him, and that it would therefore be unwise for Him to see them. He was here for those who were on the inside. As Messiah He would respond to those who followed the Messiah.

8.21 'But he answered and said to them, "My mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God, and do it." '

So He replied that the ones who had a right to His attention now were not His earthly family, but His 'heavenly' family, those who heard the word of God and did it, those who responded to Him as Messiah. This undoubtedly included those mentioned in verses 1-3. Now that He had begun His ministry family ties were broken. All His efforts must now be concentrated on His future task with no outside interference. The indication was that now if they were to have a part in Him they too must become followers.

And from this point on up to the end of this part Luke turns the attention in the proclamation of the Kingly Rule of God towards an emphasis on the Messiahship of Jesus, as symbolically rejected by Israel, but revealed to those who are chosen. As such The Kingly Rule of God though His Messiah is revealed by His power over nature, His power over evil spirits, His power to remove uncleanness, His power over death, and His revealed right to establish and feed a new community, a new Israel. And yet in contrast we are also warned that it was to be a Messiahship of suffering.

Jesus Is Revealed As Lord of Wind and Waves (8.22-25).

We first come to three incidents which reveal the folly of His mother and brothers. Each reveals His compassionate power as in His manhood He is revealed as Lord of Creation. In the first He stills the storm and there is a calm. In the second He removes the evil spirits that are causing a storm in the demoniac, so that he ends up seated calmly at the feet of Jesus. And in the third He quietens the storm in the father's heart over his dead daughter, by raising her from the dead, while at the same time calming the storm in the woman with heavy bleeding by healing her and removing her uncleanness. He is 'given dominion over the works of His hands, and all things are put under His feet' (Psalm 8.6)

In this first incident Luke wants his readers to recognise that Jesus is the One Who 'rules the power of the sea. When its waves rise You still them' (Psalm 89.9), words previously spoken of God Himself. In other words that as the God-sent Messiah (which will be made clear shortly, and to which this is leading up) He has divine power and authority, even over nature itself.

There may also be behind it the indication by a visual display that Jesus has come in order to quieten a troubled world. In Psalm 65.5-6 we read, 'Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at earth's farthest bounds are afraid at your signs', which combines the ideas of a situation like this and the subjugation of the peoples of the world. The restless, uncontrollable seas are regularly seen as a picture of the nations. The same idea occurs in Daniel 7.2-3; Revelation 13.1. Compare also Isaiah 57.20, 'the wicked are like the troubled sea, they find no rest'. But Jesus had come to give rest in the midst of a troubled world. When the Apostles were later out in the world surrounded by its raging, they may well have looked back to this incident and realised that they need not fear, for the Calmer of Storms and Raging Seas was still with them.

We may analyse the passage as follows:

- a He entered into a boat, Himself and His disciples, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." And they launched forth. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy (22-23).
- b They came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, "Master, master, we perish" (24).
- c He awoke, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and they ceased, and

- there was a calm (24b).
- b And He said to them, “Where is your faith?”
 - a And being afraid they marvelled, saying one to another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?” (25).

Note that in ‘a’ they are in peril from the wind and the water and in the parallel He commands the winds and the water. In ‘b’ His disciples plead with Him, while in the parallel He asks them where their faith is. And central is His power revealed in bringing about the calm.

8.22 ‘Now it came about on one of those days, that he entered into a boat, himself and his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” And they launched forth.’

Luke gives us the bare details necessary as a context. His whole concentration is on presenting what happened with as little superfluous comment as possible. Thus he simply tells us that Jesus embarked on a boat, taking His disciples with Him in order to cross the lake.

8.23 ‘But as they sailed he fell asleep. And there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy.’

As they sailed on, Jesus was lying in the boat exhausted from His labours, and fell asleep. In a boat such as this there would be a special seat at the stern which was the place of honour for any distinguished person aboard, where there would be a cushion and possibly a carpet. This was the place occupied by the exhausted Jesus. And then there arose a vicious storm the consequence of which was that the boat was filling with water and was in danger of sinking along with all on board. They were ‘in jeopardy’. Such storms were frequent on the Lake of Galilee because of the mountains and ravines surrounding the Lake, and the cold air of the mountains in contrast with the heat which hovered over the lake which was well below sea level. This at times caused and funnelled sudden strong winds onto the Lake. But these were experienced fishermen, and were used to storms at sea, especially on this sea which they had been sailing on for years. The situation had to be pretty bad for them to panic. The impression given by the story is that Jesus had expected just this situation. He had a lesson to teach His disciples.

8.24a ‘And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, “Master, master, we perish.”

Desperately aware that they could sink at any moment they fought their way though the wind and rain to where Jesus was and awoke Him, crying, “Master, master, we perish.” They felt that hope had almost gone.

‘Master, master.’ The words are chosen carefully. They are speaking to the Master of the world.

8.24b ‘And he awoke, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and they ceased, and there was a calm.’

In response Jesus awoke, and then He rebuked the wind and the raging water, with the result that their raging ceased. And ‘there was a calm’.

The rebuking of the seas by God was a picture common in the Old Testament. It was a picture of total control. It was saying that here was One Who could control Himself and could control the elements. He had no fear of the wind or the sea, batter as they would, for He knew they would obey His will. This is not just a miracle, it is a portrayal of the One Who is Lord of all, of One Who rules the power of the sea (Psalm 89.9; 93.4). For He was the One Who had first spoken to the waters and had caused them to divide and to produce the dry land (Genesis 1.6, 9-10).

‘He rebuked the wind and the raging of the water.’ The rebuking of the waters is a common

description of God's activity. For such rebuking of the waters compare Psalm 106.9, 'He rebuked the Red Sea also and it was dried up'; Isaiah 50.2, 'Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea'; Nahum 1.4, 'The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry ---.' In each case it is the voice of the Creator speaking to His creation as He did in Genesis 1, 'rebuking' the waters and bringing about His will. In none of these cases is there the suggestion of any demonic element, or of battle. Even inanimate nature immediately responds to His voice because of Who He is. For the idea of God bringing about a great calm see Psalm 107.29, 'He makes the storm a calm, so that its waves are still'. Compare also Jonah 1.12.

Now here we have the Son of God, and the same thing occurs. The raging waters obey His word. We can hardly fail to see in this a demonstration of deity. He is Master of the elements, Master of wind and waves. And He wants His disciples to know it. He wants them to come to recognise Who He really is. They will need to know it in the future.

And yet in view of its juxtaposition with the account of the raging demoniac which follows, who also comes to a position of calm, sitting at Jesus' feet and in his right mind we may probably be intended to see in this storm a deliberate attempt by the Devil to be rid of Jesus (compare Job 1.19). He still thought he could do it. The Devil had still not quite caught on as to Who Jesus was (and never did to the end).

8.25 'And he said to them, "Where is your faith?" And being afraid they marvelled, saying one to another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"'

Jesus then turned to His disciples and asked, "Where is your faith?" Now under all normal circumstances that would be an unreasonable question. No man has a right to expect that God will protect him in all circumstances. It only becomes reasonable if we see that He is indicating that they should have known that as the Messiah He could not die until He had completed His work, and that as His chosen Apostles they too were safe, because God had chosen them and yet had a work for them all to do. He was awaking them to the fact that as yet they did not really appreciate the privilege that was theirs to such an extent that they were immortal until God withdrew His hand. Jesus had that confidence. They would need to have it too.

But they were amazed and filled with wonder. Never before had they seen anything like it, a man who could make the wind and waves obey Him and do His will. There is, however, no need to see Jesus as seeing the wind and waves as 'quasi-personal' (any more than God did in the Old Testament). It is simply a way of indicating that all Creation obeys His word and does His will. All of creation does His bidding.

Jesus Reveals His Authority Over The Legion of Demons That Possessed the Gadarene Demoniac (8.26-39).

Disembarking from the boat in the country of the Gerasenes, fresh from His triumph at sea, Jesus is confronted with another 'storm' in the person of a man possessed by many militant evil spirits who had rendered him naked and mad. The whole countryside feared him, and when they could they bound him with chains and fetters. But he was so strong under the evil influence that he could break the fetters and escape to live among the tombs. It would seem that this would be a severe test of Jesus' power and authority.

It may well be that Luke intended us to see in this narrative an illustration of Gentiles being delivered 'from the power of Satan to God' (Acts 26.18). The man is depicted as under Satan's control, he comes to Jesus and confesses Him as the Son of the Most High God, Jesus then removes what is unclean from him, and he ends up sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind having been 'saved' (verse 36 literally), at which he confesses Jesus before men.

This is not to doubt its historicity. In this regard it should be noted that Jesus performed a

large number of miracles and exorcisms. There was therefore a wide selection from which the writers could select, and they regularly made their selection on the basis that the examples they chose also had another lesson to teach.

Note On Evil Spirits/Demons.

The incident we are now about to examine raises again the question as to the existence of evil spirits. But this is something never doubted anywhere in the Bible. It is not constantly stressed or over-emphasised, but there is the clear indication of evil power at work behind the scenes from Genesis 3 onwards (compare Job 1-2; Daniel 10; Zechariah 3), right through to Revelation. That Jesus Himself believed in Satan 'the Adversary' (the Devil, 'the Accuser') there can be no doubt (4.1-13; 10.18; 13.16; 22.31; Matthew 4.10; 12.26; 13.39; 25.41; Mark 3.23, 26; 4.15; John 8.44). Indeed it was to destroy the works of the Devil that Jesus came (1 John 3.8). He constantly overcame him. And if Satan exists we can be sure that other evil spirits exist also.

The growth of monotheism hindered the ability of these evil spirits to affect mankind for when men ceased seeking to worship them through the worship of the gods (Deuteronomy 32.16-17; 1 Corinthians 10.20), or to seek to influence them or to contact them through the occult, their effectiveness was largely nullified. But their readiness, when given the opportunity, to enter and control men is evidenced throughout history. The twentieth century saw a rise of spirit possession in Western countries precisely because men and women once more opened themselves to such evil influences in their search for new (and dangerous) 'amusements', and the twenty first century may yet see further growth as people indulge in the occult in various ways, but in Africa and the East such possession has always been well known and evidenced. There they do not scoff at the idea of evil spirits, even the educated.

Such activity must not be over-exaggerated. The Gospels distinguish sickness and lunacy from spirit possession (4.40; 7.21, 22; Matthew 4.23-24; 8.16; 10.8; Mark 6.13), and Jesus only casts out evil spirits in clear cut cases. He did not believe that they affected every man, or even most men, by entry and possession, nor did He see them as the prime cause of disease except in rare cases, although it is made clear that Christians do 'wrestle' with evil powers in heavenly places, often without knowing it for they triumph through Christ (Ephesians 6.12). There did appear to be a rise in spirit possession in the days of Jesus, but this may well rather be because His presence drew them out and brought them to the fore. At other times they could carry on undisturbed, preferring not to be brought to notice. It is noteworthy that Jesus did not lay hands on men possessed by evil spirits. He dealt with them by a word of command. (A lesson to be well learned by any who deal in such things).

Men possessed by evil spirits may behave in strange, extreme ways and the spirits can to some extent control their actions and even speak through them in different voices. But not all who behave in strange ways do so because they are demon possessed. Mental problems can produce what appear to be similar reactions and a distinction was in fact made between the 'lunatic' and the 'spirit-possessed' (Matthew 4.24). Nor do all demon possessed people obviously behave outwardly in strange ways.

The fact that such evil spirits were personal comes out in that they recognised Jesus for Whom He was, showed fear, were aware of God's purpose for them, and spoke and cried out. They can probably, however, only enter people when they in some way open themselves to them. This can especially occur when people dabble in fortune telling, astrological influences, seeking the spirit world, witchcraft, idol worship, blanking the mind, attending gatherings where spirits are to be engaged and so on. These things are constantly condemned in the Bible. See for example Exodus 22.18; Leviticus 19.26, 31; 20.27; Deuteronomy 18.10-12; Isaiah 8.19. While large numbers who indulge in such things do not become possessed, it is an ever present danger. Medical science cannot deal with such cases, which require exorcism through the power of Christ.

End of note.

Having this in view we now move on to look at an extreme case of spirit possession dealt with by Jesus which revealed His total mastery over the spirit world.

We may analyse this passage as follows:

- They arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is over against Galilee (26).
- b When He was come forth on the land, there met Him a certain man out of the city, who had demons, and for a long time he had worn no clothes, and abode not in any house, but in the tombs (27).
- c When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, torment me not” (28).
- d For He was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man (29a).
- e For oftentimes it had seized him, and he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, and breaking the bands asunder, he was driven of the demon into the deserts (29b).
- f Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”, for many demons were entered into him, and they entreated Him that He would not command them to depart into the abyss (30-31)
- g There was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain, and they entreated him that He would give them leave to enter into them. And He gave them leave. (32)
- f And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep into the lake, and were drowned (33).
- e When those who fed them saw what had come about, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man, from whom the demons were gone out, sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus, and they were afraid (34-35).
- d Those who saw it told them how he who was possessed with demons was made whole (36).
- c And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes round about asked him to depart from them, for they were gripped with great fear, and he entered into a boat, and returned (37).
- b But the man from whom the demons were gone out prayed him that he might be with him. But he sent him away, saying, “Return to your house, and declare how great things God has done for you” (38-39a).
- a He went his way, publishing throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him (39b).

Note that in ‘a’ they arrive in the country of the Gerasenes, and in the parallel the healed man publishes abroad there all that Jesus has done for him. In ‘b’ the demoniac had been naked and alone, not wanting company or dwelling in any house, and in the parallel he wants to be with Jesus, but Jesus tells him to go back and live in his house as a testimony to what God has done. In ‘c’ the man is afraid of Jesus, recognising Him as the ‘Son of the Most High God’, and in the parallel the people are afraid of Jesus and want Him to leave. In ‘d’ Jesus commands the unclean spirit to come out of the man, and in the parallel those who saw it testify as to how it happened. In ‘e’ we are told of the distraught state of the man before he is healed and in the parallel the evil spirits have gone out and the man is sitting clothed and in his right mind. In ‘f’ the evil spirits plead not to be sent to the Abyss and in the parallel they end up in the sea. In ‘g’ Jesus gives them permission to enter the swine. The central position of this last demonstrates that this is seen as important. Unclean demons are depicted as only fit for unclean pigs. The Jews looked on pigs with abhorrence. They were one of those creatures listed as ‘unclean. Thus this was a rebuke to those who kept pigs in one time ‘Jewish’ territory in open defiance against God (the territory had once been ruled by the Jews), it was an

indication of God's desire to cleanse the land by removing all uncleanness from it, and it was especially an indication of God's opinion of evil spirits. They are only fit for 'unclean' pigs.

8.26 'And they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is over against Galilee.'

Landing on the east side of the Lake of Galilee they arrived in 'the country of the Gerasenes'. Differing manuscripts and versions have different names for the area in mind, probably mainly because of the later difficulty of identification - Gerasenes, Gergesenes, Gadarenes, Gergustenes. Gerasa was a well known city thirty miles inland, (and must thus probably be ruled out, although they may have owned land in the area) and Gadara was six miles inland, although the land between Gadara and the sea was known as 'the country of the Gadarenes'. Both Gerasa and Gadara were included in 'The Ten Towns' (Decapolis), and Matthew actually identifies the place as 'the country of the Gadarenes' because that was relatively well known and the incident took place in the area around Gadara. Luke, following Mark, may well have had in mind the small coastal town now known as Kersa or Kursi which is in that area (thus now Kerasenes). Near that town is a fairly steep slope within forty metres of the shore, and the cave tombs can still be seen.

The whole region was known as the Ten Towns (Decapolis) because it was originally a place where ten major towns formed an alliance for mutual protection. It was semi-independent and ruled itself, although being loosely connected to the Province of Syria. It was predominantly Gentile but had been conquered by the Macabbees and now also contained a relatively small Jewish population. It may have been Jesus' intention to proclaim the coming Kingly Rule of God to the Jews in the area, although in the event He did not do so. More likely His intention was mainly to take a respite from the huge crowds that He could not avoid when on Jewish territory.

8.27 'And when he was come forth on the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had demons, and for a long time he had worn no clothes, and abode not in any house, but in the tombs.'

On Jesus landing there after revealing His power on the Lake of Galilee He was met by a demon-possessed man from the town nearby. This man was a particularly bad case and was naked and living among the tombs. This would give him privacy and be undisputed territory, and the cave tombs would provide shelter. The nakedness is not unusual in cases of extreme clinical depression such as the evil spirits had caused here. Such people can have a tendency to fling their clothes off them. No one else wanted to live there apart from equally possessed people (Matthew tells us that he had at least one companion). It is stressed that he did not live in a house because later that is precisely what Jesus will tell him that he must do (39). It will be one of the signs that he was fully cured.

8.28 'And when he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, torment me not."'

When the man saw Jesus he was forced to acknowledge Him. Crying out that he had nothing in common with Jesus he addressed Him as the Son of the Most High God and begged that he might not be tormented. He was aware of the powerful authority of Jesus and of His divine power. In what was now mainly Gentile territory this was more than an ascription of Messiahship. It was an acknowledgement of deity. By acknowledging Jesus' supreme rank he hoped to avoid punishment. The Most High God was a title used by foreigners of the God of Israel, and it may well be that as a Gentile the man hoped that Jesus would not interfere with him on Gentile territory if properly addressed. Let Jesus return to His own territory leaving him unmolested. Compare here the almost similar approach taken by the evil spirits in 4.34, 41, the main difference being in the method of address. But there it was on Jewish territory.

'Son of the Most High God.' Compare Daniel 3.26; 4.2; Genesis 14.20-22; Numbers 24.16;

Isaiah 14.14; Acts 16.17. The title Most High God was also used in Jewish-Hellenistic syncretistic religion. It is, however used in the Psalms nineteen times to indicate the supremacy of God, so that it may simply signify their recognition of Jesus' total supremacy.

8.29 'For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him, and he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, and breaking the bands asunder, he was driven of the demon into the deserts.'

The reason for his cry was because Jesus was persistently calling on the unclean spirit to come out of the man. We are now told a little more of what the unclean spirit had done to the man. It had regularly seized him and made him violent, so that when caught he was bound and fettered and kept under guard. But through its supernatural strength he was able to break the fetters, at which the demon drove him into the wilderness so that they would be away from men. They did not like being restrained. They wanted wild freedom.

'The unclean spirit.' Note the equation of 'demons' (a Greek term) with 'unclean spirits'. They are 'unclean' in contrast with the 'cleanness' or purity of God. An 'unclean spirit' is a spirit which hates God and all things to do with God, and shrinks from His presence. Its very behaviour is unclean. And it further rendered this man 'unclean' in Jewish eyes by his dwelling among the tombs. The man is specifically identified as demon possessed. It is probable that he was a Gentile (Consider his close proximity to pig farms, abhorrent to orthodox Jews).

8.30 'And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion", for many demons were entered into him.'

Having made His first attempt at casting out 'the evil spirit' ('was commanding' confirms a continual process which suggests that He was dealing with more than one) Jesus was now made aware that He was confronting something much more powerful than just one evil spirit. So He asked its name. Basically He was asking, 'Who are you?' The evil spirit had no alternative but to answer for it recognised Jesus' authority. The reply was, 'Legion.' Possessing the man was an army of evil spirits. The reply was part evasion. They felt that unity was strength and that they must stick together in their defiance. It was probably also an attempt at intimidation. 'We are an army'. They were fighting for their survival, and knew it.

We note that it is at this stage that the verbs become plural. Jesus had at first supposed that He was dealing with one evil spirit. Now He finds that He is against an army. This brings out the realities of the situation which would not have arisen had this been only lunacy.

By now Jesus had recognised that He was dealing with the unusual situation of a plurality of evil spirits and His request had therefore been in order to discover exactly with whom or what He was dealing. He had directed His question to the man but it was essentially to the evil spirits.

It is not likely that Jesus was using a technique for obtaining power over them. He already had that power. For the question 'what is your name?' compare Genesis 32.27-29; Judges 13.17-18. It can hardly be true that God needed Jacob's name in order to get power over him and certain that Jacob did not ask God's name for that reason. And Manoah's request was in order to honour his visitor. The asking of the name in the latter two cases was in order to find out who or what they were dealing with. The whole point about Jesus was that He did not need to use the usual exorcising techniques, but He did need to know what He was dealing with.

In reply they said, 'Legion.' Knowing, in the face of His authority, that they were forced to speak they replied evasively and probably with the aim of intimidating Jesus into leaving them alone. They wanted Him to know that they were powerful and would not be giving in without a fight. They were aware that His exertions of power were exhausting to His human

frame (6.19; Mark 5.30), and they wanted Him to realise that this particular exorcism would require much power. He would do better to leave them alone. After all this was Gentile territory. Let Him get back to the Jews. Godly men who have engaged in exorcism have testified to the fact that it was very exhausting, (and they had never had to face anything like this). But the spirits were underestimating Jesus.

‘Legion.’ Was the man giving Legion as a name because he was in a state of confusion, aware of the forces possessing him? Or was he simply indicating the multiplicity of names of the evil spirits, hinting that they could not give them all for they were so many, and at the same time indicating how long it would take to deal with them? It may well have been an attempt to persuade Jesus to withdraw. We must recognise that the evil spirits were not omniscient, and probably thought that they could somehow forestall Jesus. Possibly they could see He was exhausted (He had been labouring hard and His sleep in the boat had been broken). They had no doubt been perturbed to find Him here at all so unexpectedly. The word ‘legion’ was the name given to a Roman regiment of between four thousand and six thousand men. Strictly it indicated six thousand, but it was unusual for a legion to have its full complement. Thus the indication here is of possession by ‘thousands’ of evil spirits. Note that ‘legion’ is a Latin word. It would not have been introduced unless it had actually been said, although having been said it may have been introduced so as to quietly indicate that God would in His own time deal with the legions of Rome. It was a way by which Jesus’ deliverance of His people from the power of Rome could be indicated without being treasonable.

8.31 ‘And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss.’

Jesus’ persistence in seeking to cast them out was being effective, and now that He knew the detail of what possessed the man they knew that they could not hide themselves any longer. So they did the next best thing and pleaded that at least they might be spared ‘the Abyss’ (abusson = ‘bottomless, boundless’). This was the name of the place where evil spirits were imprisoned until the final days (Revelation 9.1, 2, 11; 11.7; 17.8; 20.1, 3; Compare 1 Peter 3.19; 2 Peter 2.4; Jude 1.6).

Jesus is said to have descended into the Abyss, mentioned in Romans 10.7, but there it simply referred to the boundless world of the departed. However, in Revelation the Abyss is that part of the world of the departed which is the prison of evil spirits (compare 2 Peter 2.4; Jude 1.6). ‘Abyss’ is also related to Sumerian apsu, the sea. This is confirmed by the fact that the Septuagint (LXX) translated ‘the deep’ (tehom) of Genesis 1.2; 7.11; 8.2 as the ‘Abyss’, paralleling the two (compare also Job 38.16; Psalm 33.7; 42.7; 77.16; Isaiah 51.10; Ezekiel 26.19; Jonah 2.5). Ironically therefore it may be that we are to see that the final end of these particular evil spirits was the Abyss after all, for they were later swallowed up by the sea. But note that they did acknowledge Jesus’ right to command what He wanted. They acknowledged it of men did not.

8.32 ‘Now there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain, and they entreated him that he would give them leave to enter into them. And he gave them leave.’

Nearby was a large herd of pigs. The evil spirits would be aware that to One connected with the God of Israel pigs were ‘unclean’ creatures. Thus they sought permission to enter the pigs, and Jesus gave them permission. Perhaps they felt that once there they would be relatively safe from the God of Israel to Whom pigs were unclean. We must consider it quite possible that they thought that they had now tricked Jesus into leaving them alone. They were out of His territory.

But Jesus was perfectly satisfied. This would prevent them entering some other human being (something those who grumbled about it overlooked). It would also be evidence to the man and to eyewitnesses that the man himself had been released. It is also possible that Jesus in His manhood did not actually know what the final reaction would be. There was no outward

indication of what would happen, and it is doubtful if the evil spirits were expecting it.

Or perhaps it was done with the deliberate intention (without their realising it) of consigning the evil spirits to the Abyss. It would be to be rid of the evil spirits without them causing trouble elsewhere (when they left the man they would necessarily seek to go somewhere, compare 11.24).

8.33 ‘And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep into the lake, and were drowned.’

The reaction was instantaneous. The evil spirits entered the swine. But animals are more conscious of such evil influences than people are (compare Balaam’s ass, and the fact that dogs are often said to whimper in the presence of mysterious influences). Thus the pigs, seeking to escape the evil influences, immediately raced down a slope into the sea and were drowned. Even the unclean pigs could not stand the evil spirits. The idea may be that the evil spirits had gone to the Abyss after all. But at least they were no longer around in order to possess men.

The evil spirits had thus failed in their attempts to save themselves, but the progression of their campaign is interesting. Firstly, on His commanding them to go they had indicated that they had nothing in common with Him. He was the Son of the Most High God, Lord of another world. It was not yet time for Him to come and torment them. Let Him leave them alone. Perhaps also they thought that the exposure of His name, which He sought to keep from the people, would ‘frighten Him off’. Then they informed Him that they were an army, a Legion. There were many of them and they were ready to resist. Then as they recognised His insistence and their helplessness they pleaded not to be sent to the Abyss. Then they suggested that they could enter the pigs. Once there they would be ‘out of His territory’ in an unclean place. And finally they went to the Abyss, still struggling. Their defeat was total.

We have already considered why Jesus allowed the evil spirits to go into the pigs. It was a rebuke to those who kept pigs in what was once ‘Jewish’ territory in open disobedience against God (it had once been ruled by the Jews), it was an indication of God’s desire to cleanse the land by removing all uncleanness, it consigned the evil spirits to the sea, and it was especially an indication of God’s opinion of evil spirits. They were only fit for ‘unclean’ pigs.

Some have asked whether this slaughter of the swine could be justified. But to One Who had such authority anything was surely justified that He decided was best and necessary for the delivery of the man (it is a position where the arguer cannot win. If Jesus was in a position to give this permission to evil spirits then He is above our criticism, if He did not then the question does not arise). And we should note that it was not Jesus but the pigs possessed by the evil spirits who were responsible for the damage. And they had not intended the pigs to drown. Besides being such a large herd He would know that they belonged to a wealthy man who, while he would suffer financially, would not be unduly harmed. (And in the end as Lord of creation they were His anyway).

8.34 ‘And when those who fed them saw what had come about, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country.’

When those who were watching over the pigs saw what had happened they ‘fled’. What they had seen had been too much for them. And, as they no doubt went to inform the owners, they told everyone around what had happened.

8.35 ‘And they went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man, from whom the demons were gone out, sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus, and they were afraid.’

Then many came out to see for themselves what had happened, and they came to Jesus and, recognising that the raging demoniac of whom they had been so afraid was now sitting quietly

listening to Jesus' teaching, clothed and in his right mind, they were filled with awe and dread. Who was this Jewish prophet Who could do such things? And why was He here?

'Clothed.' He had been home, the first time for a long time, and was now wearing his own clothes. Or it may be that someone had lent him a robe. He was now acceptable. We are reminded how God clothed the sinful pair in Eden. There too God had come to their aid.

8.36 'And those who saw it told them how he who was possessed with demons was made whole.'

They were then informed by eyewitnesses of the whole story of what had happened. Note how it is stressed that the man was made whole ('was saved'). He was a new man.

8.37 'And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes round about asked him to depart from them, for they were gripped with great fear, and he entered into a boat, and returned.'

The inhabitants of the country of the Gerasenes, who were largely Gentiles, were unanimous in pleading with the Jewish prophet to leave their country, for they were awestricken and fearful. This was not something that they either understood or were used to. He was a Jewish prophet. He had no message for them. And they feared what He might do next. Furthermore they probably blamed Jesus for what had happened to the pigs. They would know that to a Jewish prophet pigs would be unclean. Possibly they were afraid that He was about to carry out a campaign against their other pigs in an attempt to cleanse the whole area.

We have become used to the crowds welcoming Jesus but this is a warning that it will not always be so if He goes against their self-interests. We can compare how all His home town rejected Him and cast Him out (4.28-30), and how in 9.53 the Samaritans would not receive Him because He was fixedly going to Jerusalem. Here then is rejection by Jews, Gentiles and Samaritans when they did not like the way that He chose.

8.38-39a 'But the man from whom the demons were gone out prayed him that he might be with him. But he sent him away, saying, "Return to your house, and declare how great things God has done for you."'

There was one, however, who did not reject Him. The man who had been released from the evil spirits then requested Jesus that he might come with Him and His disciples, and follow Him. But Jesus told him rather to go back to his home and there be a witness to what great things the God of Israel had done for him. His presence, living in his own home which once he had shunned, would be a continual reminder to all there of the power of the God of Israel to deliver. While they would not listen to Jesus as a Jewish prophet, they would listen to this man whose background they knew, and more so once Jesus was gone. It would be a preparation of the area for when Jesus had risen and the Good News came to them.

Why Jesus would not allow him to accompany Him we are not told. Perhaps it was because he was a Gentile and it was not yet time for an open welcoming of Gentiles who had had no connection with Judaism, among the people of God. (Consider what a problem the conversion of Cornelius caused in Acts 1--11). Perhaps because he was not seen as having the background which would enable him to be a teacher. The preparation by Jesus of His disciples demanded a certain amount of pre-knowledge gained in Jewish teaching and knowledge of the Scriptures. And besides the man had had a few blank years in his life. It would take time for him to make them up. Perhaps Jesus knew that he needed time to sort himself out, and that meanwhile he could do better work for God in his homeland. Perhaps it was out of consideration of his family who had been without their son for so long. And perhaps Jesus had in mind preparation of Decapolis for when the Gospel came to them. We do not know the answer but we can be sure that Jesus had a good reason for His decision.

But He did give him a ministry and a mission. He was to go back to his home in Decapolis and tell men about what God had done for him and how He had had compassion on him. And his

message would be that the God of Israel was merciful and all-powerful, even to a Gentile such as he, and that it was Jesus, the famed prophet of Galilee Who had made him whole. What had happened here brings to mind what Jesus had said to the people of Nazareth, about a prophet of God going among the Gentiles to heal (4.25-27). So when Jewish Christian preachers later arrived with the message of the Gospel they would no doubt find a welcome from this man and his hearers, and ready ground prepared for their message.

He could allow this man to speak freely because there was no danger here in his spreading the message, for it would be among Gentiles where there were no excited crowds ever ready to cause an insurrection. There was no expectation of a Messiah here which could result in the message being wrongly interpreted. Nor would it draw crowds around Jesus seeking the spectacular, for Jesus was moving on.

Later, before the siege of Jerusalem, the Christians in Jerusalem would flee to Pella. That also was one of the Ten Towns (Decapolis). And perhaps they too would find a more welcome reception because of this man's words.

8.39b 'And he went his way, publishing throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him.'

The man obediently went on his way, and told everywhere what Jesus had done for him. So the spread of the Good News among the Gentiles was already commencing in seed form. Note the paralleling of the command 'tell what God has done' with the fulfilment 'what Jesus had done'. Luke intends us to recognise that they indicated the same.

Jesus Raises the Dead, Revealing His Power and Authority Over Death (8.30-56).

Having been rejected by His own family, and having revealed His power and authority by quelling the storm and raging sea, and by dealing with a legion of evil spirits, Jesus was now about to enter a new realm, the realm of death itself. Nature, the spirit world and death are to be seen as under His control. Only man resists Him. In what follows Jesus goes to the aid of a young twelve year old girl who has died, and raises her from the dead.

But there is a subsidiary story. This reveals a woman who was continually ceremonially 'unclean' because of a flow of blood from within her which she had had for twelve years. She too was dying, and she had been dying for twelve years. And she found no hope anywhere until the day when she came to Jesus and found that He could make the unclean clean.

We could head this section Two Desperate People At The End of Twelve Years. Both were connected with the number twelve, the number of Israel. The daughter had lived from conception for twelve years and was now dying. The woman had had a blood flow for twelve years and she was cut off from the Temple and the people by uncleanness. Both were in their own way representative of the people of God, dead in sin and unclean before God.

But in order to confirm the lesson lying behind this we need to go to a passage in Ezekiel 16. There Jerusalem was likened to a baby, cast out at birth covered in the blood flow of its mother, whom God had commanded 'in her blood' to live (verse 6). He then betrothed her to Himself, but she remained naked (it is not a natural picture). And when she came to an age for love (i.e. about twelve years of age) He wiped the blood from her (verse 9). So either the idea is that for twelve years she had been covered in vaginal blood, or that she was once again covered in blood because of her menstruation, seen as connecting back to her first condition. And now she was His to be restored by His mercy to full glory. It would seem that this is the lesson behind both the child whom God will make to live, and the woman with a flow of blood for twelve years which will be made clean. The two together reveal that Jesus (the Bridegroom - 2.19) has come to make clean and give life to His people so as to betroth them to Himself.

We may analyse the passage as follows:

- a Jesus returned, the crowds welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him (40).

- **b** A man named Jairus came, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went the crowds thronged him (41-42).
- **c** And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, who had spent all her living on physicians, and could not be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His robe, and immediately the issue of her blood stanchd (43-44).
- **d** Jesus said, "Who is it who touched me?" And when all denied, Peter said, and those who were with him, "Master, the crowd press you and crush you" (45).
- **e** But Jesus said, "Some one did touch me, for I perceived that power had gone forth from me" (46).
- **f** And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before Him declared in the presence of all the people for what reason she touched Him, and how she was healed immediately (47).
- **g** And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you whole, go in peace" (48).
- **f** While He yet spoke, there comes one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher" (49).
- **e** But Jesus hearing it, answered him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she shall be made whole" (50).
- **d** 'And when He came to the house, He did not allow any man to enter in with Him, except Peter, and John, and James, and the father of the maiden and her mother (51).
- **c** And all were weeping, and bewailing her. But He said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead, but sleeps." And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead' (52-53).
- **b** But He, taking her by the hand, called, saying, "Maiden, arise." And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately, and He commanded that something be given her to eat' (54-55).
- **a** And her parents were amazed, but He charged them to tell no man what had been done (56).

Note that in 'a' we have two attitudes towards Jesus, the crowds welcoming, and in the parallel the parents amazed. In 'b' Jairus pleads with Jesus because his daughter is dying, and in the parallel Jesus raises her to life. In 'c' the woman comes to Jesus in a hopeless condition, and in the parallel the crowds think that the case of the daughter is hopeless. In 'd' Peter and the others are witnesses to the fact that Jesus has not been touched, and in the parallel Peter and others are to be witnesses to what will happen to the child. In 'e' Jesus declares that someone has been made whole, and in the parallel that the girl will also be made whole. In 'f' the woman comes to Jesus and declares how she has been made whole, while in the parallel the servants come and declare that it is too late, 'the daughter' is dead and cannot be made whole. In 'g' Jesus declares that the 'Daughter' has been made whole because of her faith, the implication being that therefore the other daughter too will be made whole.

8.40 'And as Jesus returned, the crowds welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.'

Jesus arrives back from His rejection among the Gerasenes and find Himself welcomed by the crowds in Galilee, for they were all there waiting for Him.

8.41 'And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him to come to his house,'

As Jesus responded to their welcome a man came and fell at His feet. He was a ruler of the synagogue and He begged Jesus 'to come to his house'. Perhaps Luke here has in mind another whose servant was dying, and whose master did not require Jesus to come to his house because of his great faith (7.1-10). There the elders of the synagogue had supported his case, but here it was the ruler of the synagogue himself. In the submission of this man to Jesus we see the important lesson that if only the Synagogue will submit to Jesus, its offspring will

live. And it is also made clear to the readers that at this stage the people's synagogues welcomed Jesus. Yet with this important man went doubting faith. He did not have the faith of the Gentile centurion.

So Jairus falls down at Jesus' feet. The synagogue submits to the Prophet. Luke calls him the Ruler of the Synagogue, Mark calls him the official who had the charge of the arrangements for the synagogue services. It was in fact possible to combine both posts.

8.42 'For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as he went the crowds thronged him.'

This man came to Jesus and told Him that his daughter who was twelve years of age, and thus on the verge of adult life, was dying. So Jesus went with him. But the crowds were thronging Him and delaying Him.

8.43-44 'And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, who had spent all her living on physicians, and could not be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his robe, and immediately the issue of her blood stanchd.'

And in that crowd was a woman who ought not to have been there, for she was permanently ritually unclean (Leviticus 15.25). She had a flow of vaginal blood that never stopped flowing. She had spent a fortune on doctors, and now she was in poverty and all hope had gone. But she had heard of Jesus, and no doubt disguised, crept into the crowd around Him. She knew that what she was about to do was unforgivable. For when she touched this prophet she would be making Him ritually unclean, together with all the people around her who touched her as well. Religiously she was human dynamite. But her desperation overrode everything else and quietly and surreptitiously she made her way through the crowd and touched Him. 'She only touched the hem of His garment, as to His side she stole, amidst the crowd that gathered around Him, and straightway she was whole.' (She may in fact have touched one of the tassels that every Jewish man had on his garment - Numbers 15.38). And immediately she sensed the change in her. For the first time in years the flow had dried up. She was healed.

'A woman having an issue of blood twelve years.' Compare the previous verse, 'an only daughter of about twelve years of age'. This suggests a deliberate emphasis on the number twelve which is a number regularly representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel was both dying like the daughter and unclean like the woman. We can compare here Ezekiel 16.6, 9 mentioned above where Jerusalem is depicted as being like a child covered with blood from conception to marriageable age, i.e. about twelve years. But Jesus was here both to cleanse and to restore to life if only she would respond.

8.45 'And Jesus said, "Who is it that touched me?" And when all denied, Peter said, and those who were with him, "Master, the crowd press you and crush you."

And then to her horror, for she had thought herself unnoticed, the prophet turned round and asked, "Who touched Me?" Everyone else denied it, and Peter turned to Jesus and said, "But Master, the crowds are thronging you and crushing you. How can you ask, Who touched Me?"

8.46 'But Jesus said, "Some one did touch me, for I perceived that power had gone forth from me."'

Then Jesus said, 'Yes, but someone did touch Me, for I felt power go out from Me.' Knowing that that was so He was not willing for the person to go away without what had happened to them being brought home. This was actually important for her. It was necessary for her to recognise that she had not been healed by a good luck charm or the equivalent, but by the personal power of Jesus because of her faith (compare 6.19).

8.47 'And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people for what reason she touched him, and how she was healed immediately.'

And the woman, recognising that this prophet knew the truth, and that she could no longer in conscience remain hidden, came and fell at His feet, trembling with fear. And she declared openly before all the people what she had done, and why she had done it, and how she had immediately been made completely whole. Perhaps she feared that in His anger He would reverse the process. But Jesus immediately set her mind at peace.

8.48 ‘And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you whole, go in peace.” ’

And Jesus looked at her and said, “Daughter, your faith has made you whole, go in peace.” He wanted her to know that it was because of her faith in Him that her sin was forgiven (go in peace) and she was whole.

‘Your faith has made you whole.’ As she had reached out to God through Him in faith she had been made whole. She had been ‘saved’. He wanted her to know that He was not just some relic that was seen as containing special superstitious powers, but that God had reached out to her personally through Him. That is indeed how all men can be made whole. Then He assured her that her curse had been removed once for all. Once again Jesus has demonstrated that He has power to cleanse the ‘unclean’ without Himself being rendered unclean (compare on 1.42). He is the Holy One of God.

‘Go in peace.’ A recognised way of giving assurance (e.g. Exodus 4.18; 1 Samuel 1.17; 29.7; 2 Samuel 15.9; Luke 7.50; Acts 16.36).

So this woman who had been unclean for twelve years, can be seen as a picture of God’s people of whom Isaiah says, ‘we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like menstrual rags’ (Isaiah 64.6), whom the Bridegroom has come to claim for Himself as depicted in Ezekiel 16. God’s people are being offered another chance as Ezekiel promised would happen in the last days (Ezekiel 16.60-63). We can compare here the sinful woman in 7.36-50. She too had been a picture of adulterous Israel.

8.49 ‘While he yet spoke, there comes one from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying, “Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.” ’

But with the climax came the anticlimax. In the midst of the joy which followed the healing a messenger came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house to inform them that it was too late. One ‘Daughter’ had been wonderfully healed. The other daughter was dead.

8.50 ‘But Jesus hearing it, answered him, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe, and she shall be made whole.” ’

But Jesus turned to Jairus and told him, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe, and she shall be made whole.” Jairus had just seen an example of this, a ‘Daughter’ who had believed and had been made whole (verse 48). Let him recognise that this was also a symbol of what was intended for his daughter too. It is clear from what is said below that he only partially believed (the centurion had not been amazed when his servant was healed, only grateful, but he was amazed). But he had at least had sufficient faith to come to Jesus in the first place. Jesus always saw that as sufficient faith. He does not measure our faith, He responds to it.

8.51 ‘And when he came to the house, he did not allow any man to enter in with him, except Peter, and John, and James, and the father of the maiden and her mother.’

When they came to the house Jesus excluded from it all but Peter, John and James, and the parents. He did not want what He was about to do to be in the public domain. The selection of the three was a clear indication that something quite remarkable was going to happen. They were the three that He always chose at such times (compare 9.28; Mark 14.33). They shared His most intimate moments when something unique about Himself was to be revealed. (Note how Luke has switched James and John around and paired Peter and John ready for Acts).

8.52 ‘And all were weeping, and bewailing her. But he said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead,

but sleeps.” ’

Meanwhile the professional mourners were going about their business, and all the relatives were joining in. It was in fact polite to make grief public and noisy. It was seen as expressing their love and concern for those who remained and for the one who died. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead, but sleeps.” Compare here John 11.11-14. But had she really only been asleep He would not have excluded all but the three chosen disciples. His point here was rather that when He was present that was all death was, a sleep. Death is often spoken of in the New Testament as sleep for this reason. For those who die in Christ do not die, they only sleep (1 Thessalonians 4.13-14).

8.53 ‘And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.’

But all knew that He was wrong. They knew that there was no doubt about her condition. And they laughed scornfully. Some prophet, this one, they may have thought.

8.54 ‘But he, taking her by the hand, called, saying, “Maiden, arise.” ’

But Jesus took her hand and called to her, saying “Maiden, arise.” The taking of the hand was in order to enable her to sit up. She was given life by the command. By the graciousness of God this young child on the verge of womanhood was restored to life. As Ezekiel 16, mentioned above, demonstrates, she was a picture of God’s people being given another opportunity of receiving life.

8.55 ‘And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately, and he commanded that something be given her to eat.’

And her life came back into her. Notice the wording. Jesus summoned back her spirit and her life returned. And she immediately rose up, and Jesus then commanded that she be given something to eat. In front of the father’s startled and hopeless gaze the impossible had taken place. His daughter had been dead, and now she was alive again. He could hardly believe it for joy. The command to give something to eat was evidence that she was really alive. Jesus would give similar evidence to prove His own resurrection (24.41-43). It also gave them something to concentrate their minds on so as to relieve the tensions.

8.56 ‘And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no man what had been done.’

Indeed both parents were amazed. They had not really expected Jesus to raise her. But they had had faith enough to let Him come. These two are a message to us all. Not all of us can have the centurion’s faith, but we may find the doubting faith of these two a little easier to achieve. And Jesus then told them to tell no one what had been done. Jesus did not want to start an insurrection, caused as a result of what He had done by the arousing the volatile crowds (Jewish crowds were usually volatile where religion was concerned), nor did He want crowds gathering to see signs and wonders (anymore than already did). This silence is implicit in the way that He had restricted those present to the parents and the three disciples. But the fact that He did include the three demonstrates that it was intended that they would be able to witness to it eventually.

It may, of course, be that He simply meant ‘do not tell anyone immediately’ so that He could slip away without a fuss, but similar occurrences elsewhere suggest that He hated such publicity. He wanted people to seek Him because of the word which He preached, not because of ‘signs’.

In this quiet way did Jesus reveal that He was the Lord of life, and illustrate how one day He will say, “Arise”, so that those who are in the tombs will hear His voice and will arise, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done wrong to the resurrection of judgment (John 5.28-29).

Chapter 9. Jesus The Messiah.

We have seen above how Jesus, the One rejected by His own family, has, in a place situated between Jews and Gentiles in the midst of the Sea of Galilee, revealed His power over stormy seas, and thus over all the nations, and how in Gentile territory He has revealed His power over the legions of the spirit world that held the Gentiles in thrall, and how in Jewish territory He has revealed His power over death itself, a power that held the Jews, and all men, in thrall. Now He sends out His emissaries in order to exercise that power. They are given power and authority over all demons, and over diseases, and sent to proclaim the Kingly Rule of God, to bring men into subjection to God, and to heal the sick. The exercise of His authority and ministry of salvation (very much a Lucan word) continues. Through His Apostles He is 'opening their eyes, turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God' (Acts 26.18). But from this moment danger is seen to loom in the person of Herod (9.9). The increase of His ministry results in an increase in danger.

There is unquestionably here a clear turning point in the ministry of Jesus. For from this time on He has suffering and death in mind for Himself (9.22) and martyrdom for His followers (9.23-26). And the remainder of the Gospel will proceed with His face set towards Jerusalem in order for Him to be 'received up' (9.51). It is now that He establishes a covenant community (9.12-17 compare Matthew 16.18), with that in view. Here we have Luke's equivalent to John 6. For in John 6 Jesus fed the crowds and then proclaimed the fact that it pointed to His coming death in terms of His body offered and His blood shed, so much so that many of His disciple withdraw themselves from His company (John 6.66), and His disciples were faced with a stark choice (John 6.67) in which they revealed that they know that He was the Holy One of God. There too His coming death has become prominent immediately after the feeding of the crowds. Here there is the hint of death in the attitude of Herod.

The Mission of the Twelve (9.1-11).

Having focused on revealing Himself for what He is Jesus now sends out the twelve to proclaim the Kingly Rule of God and with authority, granted by Him, to cast out evil spirits and heal. He is very much acting as God's official representative with an authority given by God.

The purpose of Jesus in selecting out twelve Apostles had been for this very purpose (it is why He called them Apostles - those sent forth) as He had initially indicated when He chose Peter. He had chosen them in order that they might become fishers of men. Now the time had come for their initial venture. It was not to be a long one, but would give them a taste of what was to come. And it would ensure the wider spreading of the fact that the Kingly Rule of God was now here.

But it would also bring into view the opposition. The passage may be analysed as follows:

a And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases, and He sent them forth to preach the Kingly Rule of God, and to heal the sick (1-2).

b And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money, nor have two coats, and into whatever house you enter, there abide, and from there depart (3-4).

c And as many as do not receive you, when you depart from that city, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them (5).

d And they departed, and went throughout the villages, preaching the good news, and healing everywhere (6).

c Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead, and by some, that Elijah had appeared, and by others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, "John I

beheaded, but who is this, about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him (7-9).

b And the apostles, when they were returned, declared to him what things they had done. And He took them, and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida (10).

a But the crowds perceiving it followed Him, and He welcomed them, and spoke to them of the Kingly Rule of God, and those who had need of healing He cured (11).

Note that in ‘a’ the twelve are sent to proclaim the Kingly Rule of God and heal, and in the parallel Jesus proclaims the Kingly Rule of God and heals. In ‘b’ He describes the conditions they are to follow on their journey, and in the parallel they describe what they have done on their journey. In ‘c’ He tells them what to do about those who do not receive them, and in the parallel we have a prime example of one who did not receive God’s messengers. Central to all is the proclamation of the Good News everywhere.

9.1 ‘And he called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.’

Having called the twelve together for a briefing Jesus grants them power and authority (note the twofold provision) over all demons and to cure diseases. Here He acts on His own initiative in the giving of power and authority. It is His power and authority that will go with them. Previously the Roman centurion was confident that Jesus could send His power and authority over a distance (Luke 7.1-10), but even he may have quailed at the thought of His sending His power and authority through twelve men all at the same time. It is in stark contrast to when Moses (Numbers 11.24-30) and Elijah’s (2 Kings 2.9-10) power was passed on. There they obeyed God and God acted independently of them to bring about the passing on of their ‘spirit’, and Elijah did not even know whether it would happen. But Jesus is here revealed as unique. He has total control over God’s authority and power, and dispenses it as He will. This explains why Judas was able to perform signs and wonders. Jesus had sent His own power and authority through him.

9.2 ‘And he sent them forth to preach the Kingly Rule of God, and to heal the sick.’

And having received His authority and power they are sent out to:

- Proclaim that men were now to respond to God and His Kingly Rule over them.
- To heal the sick in order to demonstrate that that Kingly Rule was now here.

The purpose of the two together, the preaching and the healing, appears to be so as to emphasise that the promises of the Old Testament were in process of fulfilment. The good tidings were being proclaimed. The captives were being delivered. He wanted men and women to know that God’s day had arrived. The eagerly anticipated ‘good times’ were here. It was the acceptable year of the Lord (4.19).

It would appear that Jesus now saw His Apostles as sufficiently equipped for this venture as a result of what they had seen and heard, but it would be a new experience for them which would make them have to think through what they now believed. For they would now have to consider very seriously what was most important in Jesus’ message and would have to formulate it in such a way as to pass it on. There is nothing like having to teach others for making people think through what they believe. The student can waffle as he likes as he argues with his fellow students, but the messenger has to consider his words because of their effect on others, and has to make them clear. He has to think through his message. And this would be especially so as they would be faced up with continual questions as the context reveals (‘is He John the Baptist risen from the dead? Is He Elijah? Is He a resuscitated prophet?). It would make them have to sort things out in their own minds, so much so that even if we had not been told that it had happened we would have had to assume it. Jesus would not have been a very good trainer of men if He had not insisted on some such practical experience from which they would learn valuable lessons.

It is noteworthy that this took place before Caesarea Philippi where He challenged them as to Who He was. Among other things this was part of the preparation for His question there. Jesus was clearly prepared for them to make mistakes as they went along, as they inevitably would, although He had no doubt coached them carefully on what should be their central message. This was, however, all part of their training. Without it their advance would have been even slower than it was. And they would certainly after this be much more attentive to Jesus' teaching in the future, so as to be ready for their next venture. There is nothing like having to answer difficult questions to make a man more determined to learn, and to pinpoint to him what he needs to know.

9.3 'And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money, nor have two coats."'

They were to go out as they were, not seeking out extra provisions, whether staff or bag or bread or money. Nor were they to take a change of tunic. The emphasis is on going as they are and relying on what God will give them and not looking for material supports of any kind. Thus those who normally carried staves were allowed to take them. They were not being told to throw them away (see Mark 6.8). The point was that they were not to make special preparations for the journey.

We can imagine as Jesus gave His instructions that someone asked, 'what shall I do with my staff then? and that Jesus replied, 'If you already have one then take it with you', something which Peter remembered (compare how in 22.38 Jesus would later command them to take swords and then said two was enough. It was not the swords that counted but the idea behind them. Here it was the idea of seeking out a staff as a special support on their journey that was forbidden, not the actual possession of a staff). What was important was that they were to prove the reliability of God's promises as contained in 22.12-31. They were learning the lesson of total reliance on God and that they must in no way depend upon themselves. They were to discover that if they sought God and His righteousness, all these things would be added to them. There may also have been the idea of suggesting the pressing urgency of the mission. 'You must act speedily, there is no time for preparations' (compare 4.42-43; Matthew 10.23).

A further point may have been that Jesus did not want them to be seen as travelling mendicants or 'professional' preachers, with their begging bags. He wanted them to be welcomed as fellow-countrymen and guests, and as not being financially superior to anyone. (Even the poorest had one tunic).

9.4 "And into whatever house you enter, there abide, and from there depart."

Whenever they were offered hospitality in a place they were to remain there the whole time that they were there. It was God's provision for them and must not be despised. They were to accept what was given to them by God, not seek to better things for themselves. Having bed and board let them be content with it.

9.5 "And as many as do not receive you, when you depart from that city, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them."

But where none in a town would receive them, when they left that town they should shake the dust of the town from their feet (just as pious Jews did when they left Gentile territory, although for a different ritual reason). That action would stand as a testimony to that town's rejection of God and would declare that they were cut off from the new Israel and were outsiders like the Gentiles. It would count against them in the Judgment. So their going forth was with both mercy and judgment. For those who received them, mercy, For those who would not receive them, judgment.

9.6 'And they departed, and went throughout the villages, preaching the good news, and healing everywhere.'

Thus they went on their way, and went through the villages preaching the Good News of the presence of the Kingly Rule of God, and the need for response to it, and along with their preaching they ‘healed everywhere’. The Old Testament promises were in process of fulfilment. The blind were seeing, the deaf were hearing, the dumb were speaking, the lame were walking (Isaiah 35.5-6). The Apostles, some of whom had listened to both John the Baptist and Jesus preaching on repentance and forgiveness, would know in general what to preach. And as the Kingly Rule of God had been central in Jesus preaching they would know well what He had taught. They were thus not short of material. Their problem would arise when they were asked the kind of question that appears in the next verse. Otherwise they were sufficiently equipped for an elementary ministry, and would learn hugely from it.

9.7-8 ‘Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead, and by some, that Elijah had appeared, and by others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.’

The news of these activities inevitably reached Herod through his spies, and it had also become a talking point everywhere. He was very perplexed because of the rumours that were spreading about. Some were saying that his old adversary John the Baptist was risen from the dead, possibly seeing it as a vindication of John and looking venomously at Herod. Others declared confidently that Elijah had appeared. Elijah was very much an expected figure on the basis of Malachi 4.5. Still others said that it was one of the other prophets (compare Matthew 16.14). The return of Isaiah and Jeremiah is anticipated in extra-Biblical Jewish literature, for example in 2 Esdras 2.18, suggesting that this was a part of Jewish tradition. Note the neat distinction between those who had been raised, and Elijah, who had never died but had simply been taken up into Heaven. This is all preparing us for 9.19-20. It also lets us know what kind of questions the Apostles would have to face on their mission.

This is the first notice that we have in Luke of the fact that John is dead. The next verse will tell us how he died.

9.9 ‘And Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this, about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.’

It is not surprising that the rumours struck Herod’s conscience. The statement is partly Luke’s way of letting us know how John died without taking the attention off Jesus. But it also indicates that now Jesus Himself is in danger. Herod was clearly worried. And rightly so. The king was still subject to his conscience. The other Gospels tell us that in the end he was persuaded that it must be John who had risen from the dead (Mark 6.16). Such is the tyranny of conscience. In fact he probably argued himself in and out of such a position as he fought with his conscience, sometimes believing it and emphatically stating it, and sometimes managing to dismiss the idea out of hand. Fighting with our consciences is something that we are all familiar with at times. We must remember here that the group had a means of obtaining information about what was happening at court through Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward.

‘Sought to see Him.’ This must be seen as ominous. It can be compared with how Jesus’ family had also sought Him out for the wrong purposes. Had Herod wanted to see Him out of interest he would have had no difficulty, for up to this point Jesus had hardly kept Himself hidden. It therefore suggests that Herod’s aim was belligerent, and this is later confirmed in 13.31, which is in turn directly connected with His death in Jerusalem. This explains why Jesus now moves out of Herod’s territory into the territory of Herod Philip, north of the Sea of Galilee (9.10). And it also accounts for Jesus now making clear to His Apostles that He is here to suffer and die (9.22), and why He also makes clear to the following crowds that to follow Him could lead to martyrdom (9.23-26). And why He then sets His face towards Jerusalem because it is time for Him to be received up (9.51).

So we know from this why it was that Jesus moved northward. He must not perish outside Jerusalem (see 13.31) but the time was not yet. We are not told what steps Herod took in order to see the fulfilment of his wish, but it would be granted to him in the end, when God's time was ripe (23.8).

9.10 'And the apostles, when they were returned, declared to him what things they had done. And he took them, and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida.'

When the apostles returned from their mission they reported back on what they had done. The statement 'what things they had done' is general and should not be analysed. It is a catch-all phrase. They shared everything with Him. Then Jesus took them and moved northwards to Bethsaida Julius in the territory of Herod Philip. Mark 6.31 tells us that it was in order to enable the disciples to recuperate. Luke seems to hint at the fact that it was because of Herod (verse 9 - had He wanted Herod to find Him He would have remained in Galilee. He was probably well informed on what was happening in Herod's court through Joanna - 8.2).

9.11 'But the crowds perceiving it followed him, and he welcomed them, and spoke to them of the Kingly Rule of God, and those who had need of healing he cured.'

But those among the crowds whose hearts had been deeply stirred were aware of His move and followed Him. And when He saw them, in spite of His aim to rest Himself and His disciples, He graciously welcomed them. He recognised that they were as sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6.34). And He proclaimed to them about the Kingly Rule of God, and healed those who had come for healing.

Jesus Feeds The Seeking Crowds (9.12-17).

The wider nature of Jesus' mission having been revealed by the sending out of the Apostles to preach, Jesus now demonstrates to the Apostles their further responsibility. In the light of the establishment of a new covenant community they are to 'feed' the people. Thus He arranges for the miraculous provision of food in a similar way to Elisha before Him (2 Kings 4.42-44). But it is necessarily here in greater abundance, for He is the greater than Elijah. He is the Messiah of God (9.20) and the Bread of Life (John 6.35). It comes as the guarantee that He is able to meet the needs of all His people as the Bread of Life, dispensed through His Apostles. What He has brought is not only for His own disciples. It is offered to all who will follow Him. It gains even more in significance with the threat of death hanging over Him, a threat also made clear in John 6, where the threat of death is also linked to the Judaisers (who are in league with the Herodians - Mark 3.6).

It is no accident that Luke puts this covenant meal immediately before their recognition of His Messiahship, and the commencement of His set purpose to go to Jerusalem. It is because of what the meal symbolises in the formation of a 'new Israel' that He is going there. Matthew makes clear the same point when he tells us that Jesus declared, 'on this rock I will build my new covenant community (church)' (Matthew 16.18). But Luke wants his readers to see it as applying to all believers, both Jew and Gentile.

The passage may be analysed as follows:

- a The day began to wear away, and the twelve came, and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the villages and country round about, and lodge, and get provisions, for we are here in a desert place" (12).
- But He said to them, "You give them to eat." And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless we should go and buy food for all this people" (13)
- For they were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." And they did so, and made them all sit down (14-15).
- He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them,

- and broke, and gave to the disciples to set before the great crowd (16).
- They ate, and were all filled. And there was taken up that which remained over to them of broken pieces, twelve baskets (17).

Note that in 'a' the disciples make clear that it is impossible to feed the multitude of people and in the parallel that they did all eat and were filled. In 'b' He tells the disciples to feed the people, but they demur, and in the parallel they feed the people because of His provision. Central to the whole was the great size of the crowd.

9.12 'And the day began to wear away, and the twelve came, and said to him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the villages and country round about, and lodge, and get provisions, for we are here in a desert place." '

The crowds had come flocking to the wilderness near Bethsaida Julius, to the north of the Sea of Galilee. They were a long way from their homes and many had brought no food, or those who had had already long eaten it, so that it became apparent to the disciples that the crowds were hungry and would need food. To them the logical conclusion was that the crowds be advised to go and find themselves food in the villages round about, and they suggested to Jesus that, as it was after noon (when the day began to wear away), they be despatched for that purpose.

The account is simplified (as all such accounts must be). We are given no details of the discussions that took place between the disciples, and then the different comments made by them to Jesus as they gathered round Him in their quandary, or what He said to some of them (which appear in the other Gospels). We are simply given the bare bones of the matter, and the final most obvious suggestion.

9.13a 'But he said to them, "You give them to eat." '

Jesus' reply was, 'You give to them to eat.' (The 'you' is emphasised). Compare Mark 6.37. Jesus had a number of lessons that He wanted to bring home to His disciples, and the first was their responsibility for 'feeding' the people, especially when He was gone (compare John 21.15-17).

We must take this statement at face value. His Apostles had now experienced what it was like to perform miracles of healing. They knew now that they were fully a part of His present mission. And He hoped that they knew that He was the Messiah. In that case, Jesus is asking, why did they not exercise their new found power and authority by doing as Elisha's servant had done (2 Kings 4.42-44), and feeding the crowd with whatever food they had? Note how His command to them is very similar to that of Elisha to the man who brought the loaves. There Elisha had given his command and Elisha's deputy had fed the four hundred at Elisha's command. Jesus wanted His disciples to do the same, acting as His deputies.

(In LXX Elisha says, 'dote tow laow' - 'give to the people'. Here Jesus says 'dote autois' - 'give to them'. LXX then uses esthio while Jesus uses phagein, but it should be noted that LXX then has phagomai in verse 43 where 'the Lord' says they shall eat. Luke may well have been distinguishing Jesus from Elisha by deliberately using the verb 'the Lord' used. And besides, while Luke does use a Greek text similar to LXX his quotations do not always by any means square with LXX, thus his version might have here used phagomai, which is synonymous with esthio).

But their faith was as yet insufficient for them to be willing to obey Him, and He had this confirmed when they began to speak of going and buying food. If only they had gone ahead distributing what little they had, what a blessing it would have been to them as it multiplied. But they still had much to learn, and they missed the opportunity.

This would not be the only time when Jesus told them to do something, and then let the matter drop when they proved to be obtuse (compare the swords - 22.36-38). But when they did fail to

respond Jesus knew what in the end He intended to do, and from it would come important lessons. (That they were at this time spiritually blind to the possibilities is forcibly brought out in Mark 8.14-21). These include:

- That His disciples might see their own future in terms of meeting the needs of men and women. They must 'give them to eat'. Having initially opened their ministry in their recent mission, it would continue to be their responsibility to provide both physical and spiritual sustenance to the people, in the same way as He provided it to the Apostles. With regard to the physical side they would in fact seek to carry this out literally in Acts (see Acts 2.44-47; 4.32-37). And the church has rightly continued to see one of its functions as providing for the physical needs of the needy. But the equal importance of their ministering to the spiritual side also soon came home to them. They later knew that they were not to allow 'serving tables' to prevent their preaching of the word (Acts 6.1-3).
- That they might realise that He was now here as the Messiah to spread a table before those who looked to Him (compare Isaiah 25.6 and extratestamental literature). He wanted them to see Him as the source of true provision for all men's needs. And this would in the end be ministered through His Apostles and those whom they appointed.
- That they might appreciate that He was here among them as a second Moses, the one who gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Moses had been with the multitude in the wilderness, and had fed them 'from Heaven'. Jesus was now here among them in the wilderness to give better bread than Moses gave them, the true Bread which has come down from Heaven to give life to the world (John 6.33).
- That they might recognise that He was here among men in order to establish a new covenant, something symbolised by this covenant meal. A new covenant community was in process of formation, and this is what this meal symbolised. He emphasised this again shortly afterwards (Matthew 16.18). It would be composed of all those who came in faith to Him for provision, expressing their need, including this crowd who had been willing to go so far out of their way to be here, which in itself expressed their faith. In 22.19 the breaking of the bread would expand to symbolise His body. Here He was symbolising the fact that He could feed their souls (John 6.35). From this meal therefore all were to learn that if they would be spiritually fed it must be through Jesus Christ, and that He had sufficient and to spare in order to do this.
- That they may know that He was among men in order to feed their inner beings (see John 6), something which in the end only He could do, and he would shortly make clear that this would be through His death (John 6.51-58). But His main aim was that this physical provision might be seen by them as an acted out parable similar to those of the prophets whereby they would recognise that He was offering to feed their souls. It was a display of quiet power that evidenced His limitless resources.
- If they learned their lesson from it never again would the Apostles, or the other disciples, see any situation as impossible for Him to deal with.

9.13b 'And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless we should go and buy food for all this people." '

The disciples blankly missed their opportunity, and He did not press it. Instead of obeying Him (they fell short of the obedience of Elisha's servant) they pointed to what resources they had. They had five loaves and two fishes. As far as they were concerned in their state at that time that was insufficient.

The predominance in the passage of significant numbers stresses that the numbers were not only genuine (they were in proportion to each other) but also symbolic. Five in Israel is ever the number of covenant. This helps to bring out that this was to be a covenant meal, and that they were to learn that in the covenant they had sufficient provision for all their need. As well as the five indicating covenant the combination of five and two making seven indicated

sufficiency of divine provision. These would then be supplied to five thousand men in groups of fifty, indicating a covenant community divided up in covenant fashion.

But the disciples were thinking ‘practically’. So they pointed out that this tiny meal (they would be small round barley loaves) could hardly begin to feed the crowd. The thought that they should obey Jesus does not even seem to have crossed their minds. They were still very much ‘half blind’ (see Mark 8.24 which deliberately pictured how the Apostles were at that time). They simply emphasised to Jesus the fact of the total inadequacy of supply. It is doubtful, in fact, if they had any other intention than that. They probably did not expect Jesus to do anything about it either. Their dull response would bring home to Jesus how far they still had to go in recognising their calling.

9.14a ‘For they were about five thousand men.’

The full situation, revealing the reason for the dilemma, is then laid out. This tiny amount of food would have to be sufficient for five thousand grown men (to say nothing of women and children). Five thousand was a round number signifying the covenant community. In terms of symbolism what followed would teach that Jesus would continually feed His people in that new community. But in practical terms at this stage it indicated a small round barley loaf to every thousand men, an impossible situation.

9.14b ‘And he said to his disciples, “Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each.” ’

But they were now to learn that with Jesus nothing was impossible, and that He had within Him the resources sufficient for every situation. So He told them to seat the people down in covenant groups of fifty, resulting in about a hundred groups. This would enable them to ensure that none were overlooked. In view of the clear connection of this feeding with 1 Kings 17.14-16 and 2 Kings 4.42-44 there may just have been in His mind here 1 Kings 18.4, 13 where Obadiah split a hundred of God’s prophets into groups of fifty and hid them in a cave where he could feed them with bread and water, the idea being that these people were similarly enjoying His protection.

‘In companies (klisia).’ The word originally meant a hut or tent, and then a couch, and then came to mean those who laid on such, and thus eventually a group gathered to dine lying on couches (a couch group). Here therefore it indicated a group ready to eat.

9.15 ‘And they did so, and made them all sit down.’

The disciples did as they were told and made the crowds sit down. That was at least one thing that they felt that they could do.

9.16 ‘And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and broke, and gave to the disciples to set before the great crowd.’

Then Jesus, as though He was sat at the head of the table, took the bread and the fish, and looking up to Heaven blessed them and broke them and gave them to the disciples indicating that they distribute them to the crowds.

This was an indication to all that this provision came from the Father, to Whom they should be grateful. It was an action of supreme confidence and authority. The Creator was making provision for His own. The looking up to Heaven went beyond the normal giving of thanks (compare John 17.1; Mark 7.34). Jesus was indicating His source of supply and His dependence on His Father. By ‘blessing them’ Luke probably mean that He said over them a blessing. It was normal at such times to say something like, ‘Blessed are you, Oh Father, Lord of Heaven and earth ----’ followed by a prayer He then proceeded to hand bread and fish to the disciples, and to their astonishment it kept on coming. And this continued until all were satisfied. We may probably assume that other disciples helped with the distribution.

This whole process would later be seen, although not at the time, as an act of self-revelation of

His Messiahship, for Luke later gives other examples of the same action with bread when Jesus is revealing Himself to disciples (24.30-31, 35; 24.42-43 - note here both the bread and the fish, compare John 21.13). As with many other of His actions Jesus had in mind the future understanding of His disciples.

(We should note that Luke has carefully avoided using forms of words specifically identifying it with the Lord's supper).

9.17 'And they ate, and were all filled. And there was taken up that which remained over to them of broken pieces, twelve baskets.'

And the result was that from those five loaves and two fishes that great crowd was fed, with twelve basketfuls remaining over and to spare. The 'twelve' indicated continued sufficiency for the new Israel. We may compare the jar of meal and the cruse of oil in the time of Elijah, 'the jar of meal shall not be spent and the cruse of oil shall not fail until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth' (1 Kings 17.14-16). And so it was with the bread and the fishes, they were not spent until all were filled.

The term for 'basket' could denote the wicker basket (kophinos) carried regularly by Jews, and for which they were well known, so that they could take their own provisions with them wherever they went, undefiled by the world. Such baskets were indeed a popular joke among Gentiles. From where did the baskets come? They probably belonged to the disciples, although previously being empty. It should be noted that the broken pieces would not have been gathered from the grass. Poor people did not throw away food. What was put in the baskets was what was left over after the distribution. It was gathered so as to be eaten later by the disciples.

One significance of the twelve basketfuls left over was that God's supply was not only for the present but continued into the future. There was sufficient for the twelve tribes of Israel to go on being fed by Him.

It should be noted that taking the account at face value it is undoubtedly indicating that a remarkable miracle took place. The logistics are expressed in such a way as to bring this out. Whatever explanations others may find, the writers saw this as a miracle of provision. And we may also assume that they saw in it the guarantee that the Lord would from now on 'feed' His people. The account appears in all four Gospels, coming from eyewitnesses, and demonstrating how important it was seen to be. Either they were telling lies, or it happened.

Note on Other Explanations.

Necessarily Atheists and Agnostics and those who deny the possibility of miracles cannot accept that it happened like this, but we should note that by doing so they go against the evidence. Rather than accept the truth they weave fairy stories. For in order to give an explanation that is what they have to do, ignore the evidence and what is written, and spin their own threads of gold. For the sake of completeness and to assist those who are troubled by such things we will consider one or two of these explanations.

1). The first is that what happened was that a young boy brought his dinner and gave it to Jesus who then told the disciples to share it with the crowds, and that those in the crowds were so moved by His action and the action of the little boy that they all shared their food that they had brought with them with others (or something similar). It is a nice idea. But it clearly goes contrary to what the four accounts say. And it ignores how long the crowds had already been away from home. They were not out on a picnic. Nor can we understand why if this was what happened a hint of the fact is not supplied by at least one of the eyewitnesses as a wonderful picture of the influence of Jesus. And certainly it would be strange that such a trivial happening as it would then be should be treated as so important by all four Gospel writers.

2). That what happened was that Jesus divided up the loaves into minute amounts which were

then given to the crowds as a 'token Messianic meal' and that this gave them such an uplift that their hearts were satisfied and they were 'filled' and therefore did not for a while notice their hunger. This still requires us to drastically reduce the numbers involved, or increase the food available, and it is also to assume that the 'meal' had a significance not made apparent in the first three Gospels. If this was what happened it is strange that the lesson to be drawn from it was totally ignored and that it was interpreted as just physical. It would also leave everyone still hungry and as much in danger of fainting as before.

3). That the story is simply an invention based on what Elijah did in 2 Kings 4.42-44. But if this were the case its importance as revealed by its presence in all four Gospels, in different presentations, is inexplicable. There is no avoiding the fact that all four considered the event extremely important and on the whole gave basically the same picture.

End of note.

Up to this point Luke has made constant use of Mark, but now he deliberately omits Mark 6.45-8.26. This may partly have been because Luke did not want to introduce the clear but rather reluctant movement towards the Gentiles that it contained (especially with regard to the Syro-phoenician woman). For Luke the Gentiles have been in mind from the beginning, and it may be that he did not want any indication of reluctance in the matter. For Luke the major movement towards the Gentiles will come in Acts 10-11. Meanwhile he wants it to be recognised that there has been no bar to them.

But it may also have to do with Luke's presentation of his material. Having outlined the different indications of Jesus' 'other world' powers, stilling the storm defeating a legion of evil spirits, and raising the dead, he leads on to the preaching of the Apostles going out in the same power and this is then intimately connected with the question, 'Who is He?'. Who is this One Who does such things and sends out His emissaries to the world in this way? It is the question that is on everyone's lips. And it a question which puts Him in danger. As with John 6 Luke wants to follow the covenant meal with a recognition of the looming danger of the cross.

So this then results in Jesus privately calling His disciples to one side and results in a unique covenant meal which is deliberately stated to be 'in the wilderness', and the question then arises for the second time, but this time more personally to His own followers, 'Who am I'? And the answer is then given. He is 'the Christ of God'.

So on the one hand the world is left hanging in the air, while on the other hand the disciples are brought into unique fellowship with Him and then learn the intimate secret of His coming death. In this sequence Mark 6.45-8.26 would only be an unnecessary intrusion.

But following the covenant meal it is unquestionable that death is in the air. For not only does Jesus begin to prepare His Apostles for His death, but He also gives a clear warning of the possibility of death to all who follow Him. What follows can be interpreted in no other way.

Peter As The Representative of the Apostles Declares Jesus to Be the Messiah (9.18-22).

The Gospel of Luke began with a clear revelations of Jesus as Son of the Most High and as Messiah (1.32, 35; 2.11, 30). A similar idea had been conveyed in the Temptation story where 'Son of God' is prominent and in Jesus' quotation at Nazareth (4.18-19). It has also been declared in veiled fashion in His descriptions of Himself as Son of Man, and Bridegroom, and in many of His actions and references. But now He recognises that it is time to see how far His Apostles have understood. It is one thing for us to look back and see how clearly Jesus had made it known, quite another for that small group of the 'humble poor' to recognise that they were deeply involved in the work of the Messiah come from God. And this was what Jesus was now about to put to the test. Were they aware of Who He really was? Depending on their answer, of which He was probably already cognisant, His aim being to face them with it, from this point on all would change.

- a As He was praying apart, the disciples were with Him, and He asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answering said, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again.”
- b And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
- c And Peter answering said, “The Christ of God”.
- b But He charged them, and commanded them to tell this to no man.
- a Saying, “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

Note that in ‘a’ we have what the crowds say, reference to John who has been executed, and the sentence ends with a resurrection. In the parallel we have what Jesus says and what the leaders of the Jews say (by rejecting Him), reference to Jesus Who will be executed, and the sentence ends with the resurrection. In ‘b’ the question is put as to Who He is, and in the parallel He charges them not to tell anyone. Central to the whole in ‘c’ is Peter’s statement that He is ‘the Messiah of God.’

9.18-19 ‘And it came about, as he was praying apart, the disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answering said, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again.”

After a time spent in prayer with His disciples, although apart from His disciples (it is significant for His uniqueness that we never read of Him praying together with them), Jesus turned to His disciples who were with Him and asked them what the crowds were saying about Him. This may indicate that He was calling on their knowledge gained on their recent mission, but it may equally simply be a thought provoker leading in to His next question, a question which will hint that He expects better from them than He will receive from the crowds.

Their reply to His first question is in accordance with 9.7-9. It is significant in that it is clear that He had managed to prevent the idea getting around that He was the Messiah. That was the last thing that He wanted volatile Jewish crowds to think, for they had completely the wrong idea about the Messiah, and could quickly have been aroused to fanaticism. John in fact tells us that special ideas had arisen after the feeding of the five thousand when the crowds had begun to think that He was ‘the Prophet who is to come into the world’ and had then thought in terms of making Him a king (John 6.14-15). That had been difficult enough. But He had been able to dampen such ideas down. How much worse it would have been if they had actually thought that He was the Messiah. But His behaviour and His preaching had clearly dampened down that idea (hence the puzzlement of John the Baptist)

9.20 ‘And he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

And then came the crucial question that would determine what was to happen from now on. ‘But who do you (all of you) say that I am?’ We can sense the tenseness that was in the air as He awaited their reply. The Apostles had now had plenty of opportunity of hearing and observing. They had been out proclaiming that the Kingly Rule of God was here. But what was their view of Him? Were they too still restricted to the views of the crowds? It was inevitable that at some stage such a question would arise.

9.20b ‘And Peter answering said, “The Christ of God”.’

We can imagine the moment of silence as they all looked at each other. Dare they tell Him what they had been thinking? And then Peter blurted out on behalf of all what they had been saying among themselves. ‘You are the Christ of God.’ To Luke, a Gentile, this was the equivalent of ‘you are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ (Matthew 16.16), for he was not deeply limited by Jewish ideas about the Messiah. He was saying that He was the ‘Anointed One come from God’, not only the Messiah but more than the Messiah. In a similar situation in John Peter declares ‘You are the Holy One of God’ (John 6.69). All are saying the same

thing. They must all be seen in the light of what the voice at Jesus' baptism had said, of Messianic descriptions, and of the higher level of descriptions given to Jesus in the previous chapters. He is uniquely the One sent from God, not only the Messiah but an exalted Messiah, One beyond their expectations and outside their reckoning, supremely holy to God.

In these circumstances Peter is regularly the one who blurts things out. He was always the one who could not hold himself back. And the other disciples regularly looked to him to bail them out. But he is never appointed officially as leader. In Acts the twelve are deliberately seen as working as a unit even though Peter is the chief spokesman.

9.21 'But he charged them, and commanded them to tell this to no man,'

Then Jesus commanded them not to spread around the fact that He was the Messiah. It was good that they knew, but it was better kept to themselves for it might mislead the crowds into the wrong expectations. And from now on He began to emphasise Himself as the Son of Man, and as following the path of the son of man in Daniel 7, the path of suffering that would lead to the Crown.

9.22 'Saying, "The Son of man must (it is necessary) suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."'

Now He feels it important to make clear to them the deeper truths concerning His coming. They must recognise once and for all that He was not here to lead them to victory against the Romans. He was here to suffer many things, as the Son of man had suffered in Daniel 7 (as 'the saints of the Most High') under the depredations of the beasts, which represented empires like Rome. And this must be so because godly people must always suffer (Acts 14.22). Let them consider the Psalms. Let them consider what had happened to the prophets. Let them consider the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 50 & 53. It was the nature of the world that those who followed God would suffer (compare Hebrews 11). And thus He, Who as the Son of Man was representative man, must also 'suffer many things' including scorn, rejection, tears, scourgings and death. (Compare 17.25; 22.15; 24.7, 26, 46; Mark 9.12; 10.45; John 3.14; 10.15, 17; Acts 1.3; 3.18; Hebrews 2.18; 5.8; 9.26; 13.12; 1 Peter 2.21, 23; 3.18; 4.1)

'And be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes.' The elders were the prominent lay people on the Council (7.3; 20.1; 22.52, 66; Mark 11.27; 14.43, 53; 15.1), the chief priests were the hierarchy who regulated Temple affairs, and the scribes were the Teachers of the Law (5.21, 30; 6.7). He was already rejected by many of them and He recognised that it was to be expected that almost all of them would turn against Him (Psalm 118 (LXX 117).22), for He knew what was in man (John 2.25), and He was hardly ensuring His popularity by tearing down their structures and their hypocrisy. He was no different in this respect than the previous prophets. He was here to be 'rejected' (literally 'rejected after scrutiny with regard to office') by the great Jewish religious leaders of the day, as the great prophets had always been, and necessarily must be (compare 6.23; 13.33-34; 20.10-12; Mark 12.5; Matthew 23.35, 37). In His view this was inevitable. Had He not Himself declared, 'Woe to you when all men speak well of you'? (6.26). It was of false prophets that men spoke well (6.26). They had rejected Jeremiah. Would they not do the same to Him?

We can consider here God's complaint against the Jewish leaders in Jeremiah 2.8, of whom He says, "the priests did not say 'where is the Lord' and they that handle the Law knew Me not." They had long ago turned against God. Compare in this regard Jeremiah 18.18 where Jeremiah too was rejected by those who handled the Law and 20.1-2 where he was smitten by 'the priest who was the chief officer in the house of the Lord'. See also Jeremiah 26.7-8, 11 where 'the priests and the prophets' sought his death. Jeremiah would be especially significant to Jesus as he too prophesied the destruction of the Temple (Jeremiah 7.14), calling it a 'den of robbers' (Jeremiah 7.11). And now a greater than Jeremiah was here saying the same things. So it would be nothing new for the religious leaders of Israel to condemn such a prophet 'for

the sake of the nation' (John 18.14). This rejection by the Jewish leaders is further based on the pattern of such Scriptures as Zechariah 11 where the true shepherd who had fed the flock was rejected by the false shepherds of Judah and Israel, and was dismissed for thirty pieces of silver, the value of a slave, which he cast to the potter in the house of the Lord as a sign that it was rejected by him and was insufficient. Thus rejection by the elders, and chief priests and scribes must not be seen as anything unusual.

'And be killed.' He had no doubts about what lay ahead. It is not really surprising that Jesus saw His future in terms of suffering. He had witnessed what had happened to John the Baptist (9.7, 9), He knew of the growing antagonism against Him (6.11; Mark 3.6, 22), He knew of the career of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 51.4-11; 52.13-53.12, and of the Smitten Shepherd in Zechariah 13.7 (consider John 10.11). He knew of the references to the suffering of the godly in the Psalms (e.g. 22; 118.10 on) and He knew that the Son of Man in Daniel as the representative of God's people would come out of suffering into the presence of God, as 'the beasts' attacked the true people of God (Daniel 7.13-14 with verse 22 and verses 25-27). He had no Messianic delusions. Unlike the disciples He knew what was in store. And He knew that His death was necessary so that He could be a 'ransom for many' (Mark 10.45)

Strictly speaking the disciples should also have been prepared for this, but like us they had the ability to make words mean what they wanted them to mean. Some of them had been disciples of John the Baptist, and they had been shocked when he had met a violent end. Then they had been told that the Bridegroom was to be 'snatched away' from them (2.20), and then they would fast. It had further been inferred that the temple of His body would be destroyed, and in three days raised again (John 2.19). And Jesus had clearly stated that He was giving His flesh for the life of the world (John 6.51) and that men would 'eat and drink' of Him (John 6.56), a clear reference to His being put to death according to Old Testament passages such as Psalm 14.4; 53.4; Micah 3.3; Isaiah 49.26; Zechariah 9.15 LXX; compare Matthew 23.30. But in the way men have they had refused to accept the unpalatable truth and had ignored it. Now they were being faced up with it in a way that they could not ignore.

Interestingly we have here an evidence of how carefully the actual words of Jesus were preserved. It would have been so easy to alter it to read 'crucified', especially in the light of verse 23 (and see 24.7) and the fact that crucifixion was the normal death under the Romans for high treason, but they did not.

'And the third day be raised up.' But on the third day He would rise again. He may not have intended 'the third day' literally. 'Three days' indicated a relatively short period of time and could mean 'within days' (compare the 'three days journey', a standard phrase in the Pentateuch indicating a shortish journey compared with the longer 'seven days journey' - Genesis 30.36; Exodus 3.18; 5.3; 8.27; Numbers 10.33; 33.8; Jonah 3.3).

This idea of a third day resurrection is finally taken from Hosea 6.1-2 (Luke, like Matthew, interprets the 'three days' of Mark as 'the third day') interpreted in the light of the suffering Servant of Isaiah. It was initially spoken of Israel, (God's vine). But Jesus was here as in Himself representing the true Israel, the true Vine (John 15.1). As the Servant He was Israel (Isaiah 49.3). Thus he could apply it to Himself.

Note the context in Hosea. God will wait 'in His place' until Israel acknowledge their guilt and seek His face, and in their distress seek Him and say, 'come let us return to the Lord'. But this will not be until 'He has torn that He may heal them, He has stricken and will bind them up'. These last words could well have been spoken looking at the Servant. For as Isaiah has made clear (53.3-5) this was what first had be played out on the One Who has come as the representative of Israel. We have here a clear picture of the Servant in Isaiah 53. It is in Him finally that He has torn them, it is in Him that He has stricken them, for He has borne for them all that they should have faced. And the result will be a reviving and a raising up on the third day, first for Him (Isaiah 53.10, 12) and then for them. For He will have gone before

them in order to be a guilt offering and make it possible for all. It could all only be because their representative had first gone through it for them that they could enjoy it.

So as the One Who saw Himself as suffering for Israel, in their place as their representative, Jesus also saw Himself as being raised again like them, on the third day.

Indeed the fact is that the Servant's task could only be fulfilled by resurrection. How else could He see His offspring, prolong His days and receive the spoils of victory (Isaiah 53.10, 12)? (Compare also 52.13-15). And how else could the Son of Man come triumphantly out of suffering into the presence of the Ancient of Days to receive the everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7.13-14)? And unless He was raised how could the Holy One 'not see corruption' (Psalm 16.10)? Resurrection was required as God's vindication in a suffering world (Isaiah 26.19). And it is also constantly implied by such statements as 9.24-26. All this was clear from the Scriptures (18.31).

That Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man is almost indisputable. The title was of no interest to the early church, only ever being used by Stephen, for they did not understand it and were at a loss what to make of it. After the resurrection it was the titles of Messiah and Lord which were clearly applied to Him. Its constant appearance on the lips of Jesus can therefore only really be due to the fact that it was well recognised that He used it in preference to other titles. And this is especially so in view of the fact that it is so applied in all four Gospels without exception, and almost always on His lips.

Note on Daniel 7.13-14.

In the Book of Daniel the empires (e.g. 7.23) of the Mediterranean world are likened to rapacious beasts because their behaviour is seen as like that of beasts who conquer and ravage and destroy (Daniel 7.1-8; 8.1-14). These beasts also represent their kings (7.17), and their horns represent later kings and kingdoms (e.g. 8.20-23). In contrast the people of God are seen as a 'son of man' (7.13-14 with verses 18, 25-27). In their obedience to God they are human in contrast with the bestial empires. Because they are God's people they will be subject to suffering and tribulation (7.25). But finally they will triumph when 'the thrones are placed' (7.9) and their kingly representative (7.13) will come on the clouds of heaven into the presence of God, 'the Ancient of Days', to receive the everlasting dominion and glory and kingdom (7.13-14 compare 7.27).

As Himself the representative of the people of God Jesus takes to Himself the designation 'the Son of Man' and so aligns Himself with their suffering prior to everlasting glory. Thus the Son of Man is One Who comes out of earthly suffering and will enter in triumph into the presence of God to be crowned and glorified.

(End of note).

'It is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer.' Jesus' life was very much determined by the divine necessity. 'It was necessary' for Him to be in His Father's house (2.49). 'It was necessary' for Him to proclaim the Kingly Rule of God (4.43). His every step was determined by the divine necessity (13.33). But above all it was necessary for Him to suffer (17.25; 24.7). For it was through His suffering that His purposes would be accomplished.

Jesus Now Challenges All Who Are Following Him About To Crystallise Their Behaviour By Following Him Fully (9.23-27).

These words, while universally recognised as a definition of the Christian life, are placed by Luke in the context of the hour. Herod is seen as a dark cloud on the horizon, so much so that Jesus has felt it sensible to move out of his territory, the Scribes and Pharisees are in discussions with the Herodians about how to deal with Jesus and His followers (6.11 with Mark 3.6). All is threatening. Jesus therefore now warns His followers of what might be the immediate consequences of following Him, and sets it against the background of eternity.

Furthermore, the Apostles having recognised Him for something of what He is, a new phase now begins in His ministry. Thus He recognises that He must bring all who are still following Him about to an appreciation about the future. They must make a decision as to whether they will turn from Him, or whether they will follow Him fully, and they must do it in the light of the realities.

Many have already gone away (John 6.66). It is time for the remainder to face up to what continuing to follow Him will involve. And in the light of the growing enmity against Him (5.35; 6.11; 9.9) He could only do it by facing them up with the possible consequences. He wanted them to recognise that in spite of the feeding of the five thousand the future was to be no picnic. Indeed it might lead them to a cross.

This passage may be analysed as follows:

- a And he said to all, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
- b For whoever would save his life shall lose it, but whoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”
- c For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self?”
- b “For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.”
- a “But I tell you of a truth, There are some of them who stand here, who will in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingly Rule of God.”

We note that ‘a’ speaks of a daily dying, all must taste of death, while in the parallel He promises that not all will ‘taste of death’ until they see the Kingly Rule of God. In ‘b’ we have those who are ready to lose their lives for His sake, and thus save them, and in the parallel the contrast of the one who is not willing to confess Christ and who thus loses all. And central to the whole is the question as to what profit there is in gaining the whole world and then losing their own ‘soul’.

The verses that follow are intense with a recognition of the seriousness of the situation with which Jesus is facing them. Compared with what He has previously taught they are a revelation and warning of something new.

9.23a ‘And he said to all,’

‘He said to all.’ This is the indication in Luke that all who are following are now included in what follows, not just the twelve. In Mark the words that follow are introduced by, ‘and He called to Him the multitude with His disciples, and said to them’. These and the following words must therefore be seen in the light of general teaching to the wider group of followers, and not as specifically connected with what He has told His disciples. It was general teaching aimed at bringing all to a final decision.

9.23b “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow (present tense: ‘go on following’) me.”

Jesus first challenge here was this, and it was a vivid one. Were they willing from now on to deny themselves and take up their crosses daily and go on following Him? For if they wanted to come after Him, that was what would be required of them. Jesus here chose the most vivid picture that He could think of, a picture that was constantly displayed before Jews because it was constantly a penalty carried out on insurrectionists.

There was not a town in Galilee which had not seen the soldiers arrive, arrest one or more of their sons, lay across their backs the crosspiece on which they would be suspended, and then drag them off to die horribly. It was the ultimate in self-sacrifice. And once a man took up his

cross all knew that he was saying goodbye to his past life for ever. He was saying goodbye to everything. He was walking the hard way which demanded of him (compare Matthew 7.13-14). And he had committed himself to that from the moment that he became an insurrectionist. There is indeed a sense in which it was at that first moment of choice that he had taken up the cross. It is in fact tempting to think that when those brave, if rather foolhardy, men secretly joined up with the insurrectionists they jested to each other that they were 'taking up their crosses', for they would know that that was what lay in store for them if they were caught.

Jesus had seen an especially vivid example of this in his younger days when Judas the Galilean had roused the people of Galilee against the Roman census in 6 AD, raiding the local arsenal at Sepphoris, not far from Nazareth, and leading a band of brave men to their deaths. The result had been a multiplicity of crucifixions along the roadsides, the razing of Sepphoris to the ground and the sale of its inhabitants into slavery, something which Jesus and His contemporaries would never have forgotten.

And that is what the man who followed Christ had to recognise. He was called on to face up to the same ultimate choice as those men, and that was to follow Him to the utmost, without any regard for himself. He must even be prepared to follow Him to death. (In the light of what they had recently been told this would have a special significance to the Apostles).

The emphasis here was on daily commitment of the most extreme kind. The point was that each one who would come after Him must be prepared to turn his back on himself, and his own ways and his own desires, and his own chosen road, and to daily walk the way of the cross, picking up his cross anew each day so as to walk in His way in total self-sacrifice. He must choose daily to walk in the way of Christ, rather than his own way (see Isaiah 53.6), however painful it might be. He wanted them to recognise that this was what was involved in following Him. The mention of the cross was to speak of the most dreadful suffering known to men of that day. All had seen the Roman crosses set up by the roadside as a warning to criminals and rebels. All had seen the men who hung there in agony and the suffering involved. They must therefore even be prepared for that. It was a demand for total self-surrender and commitment, and a warning that it might include death.

Later this statement would be given a slightly different emphasis by being interpreted in terms of a spiritual dying to the self, and a living only for Christ through His resurrection life (compare Romans 6.3, 11), but here in its initial form it is stark in its reality, and refers to actually being ready to go out into life each day with the intention of turning their back on all the old ways and living wholly for Christ, recognising that any day death might be a possibility because of their choice. In view of the growing antagonism Jesus did not want them to be unaware of what might await them. And thus He tells them that they must live their lives in the light of impending death. They were to take seriously the words, 'in the midst of life we are in death'.

9.24 "For whoever would save his life shall lose it, but whoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

On the other hand He pointed out that there was really only one choice, for the alternative was not really a choice. Not to respond would be equally fatal. For the one who shunned this dying daily to self and such a possibility of martyrdom, and thereby sought to save His life for himself, would unquestionably finally lose it. This was the challenge of the last days.

But the one who did, for Christ's sake, actually lose his life by giving it up to Christ to be solely lived for His purposes, and indeed to die for Him if necessary, would in fact then save it. For he would in the final day be raised with Him (see John 6.39, 40, 44). We may rightly spiritualise it, but in a violent world it was a genuine option and the mention of the cross had an ominous significance.

The choice He offered was certainly not an easy one for anyone, and especially not for the well-to-do and the influential. By openly following Jesus they might easily cut themselves off from the spheres of influence and power and be degraded and set aside by those in authority. No one knew where his choice would lead him. He might be committing political suicide. And it might even lead to death. It was a choice with which those who thought to follow Christ would then constantly be faced, and in some places still are. But as Jesus wanted each to recognise, the alternative was in the end to lose everything. So while to opt for Christ carried with it the possibility of suffering, persecution, and death but with the guarantee of eternal life, to opt against Him was to opt for final destruction.

9.25 “For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self?”

So He puts to those who were following Him (and to us) the ultimate challenge. Of what advantage is there for anyone to gain the whole world at the expense of eternal life? Men have stood astride their world many times in history, and they have received much glory, but in the end all have died, and perished. Not one is alive today. And thus ultimately they have lost all. They may be names in the history books, but their names are not written in Heaven. Are they, asks Jesus, gainers or losers? But to the one who comes to Him He gives eternal life. By giving up what they cannot finally keep, they gain what they cannot lose. In return, however, they must be ready to lay their lives on the line for Him, and to follow Him utterly. This is a constant theme in the New Testament (John 3.17, 19; 1 Corinthians 1.18-31; 2 Corinthians 4.18; Galatians 2.20; 2 Peter 1.4; 1 John 2.15-16).

9.26 “For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.”

The decision for each was as to whether to take up a position as one who belongs to Christ, or as one who turns away from Christ. That was the choice that lay before them. Would they receive and glory in His words, and bravely acknowledge them before men, and thus be honoured by Him before His Father, or would they be ashamed of them, and when challenged withdraw from honouring them? But before deciding let them remember that anyone who was ashamed of Jesus Christ and His words, and turned from them and refused to follow them, would find that when they did in the end face the judgment in the time to come, Jesus Christ would be ashamed of them, ‘when He comes in His own glory and in the glory of the Father and in the glory of the holy angels’.

This last phrase speaks of Him coming as Judge (John 5.22, 27, note in the latter verse the connection with the Son of Man). Judges have always arrived with great pomp and ceremony so as to establish their prestige and reveal their importance. It is the same here. The Judge will arrive in His glory, and He will be backed by the glory of the Father, and by the glory of the holy angels. (Just like a Roman judge would appear in splendour, backed by the glory of the emperor and of his splendid acolytes, and even of the legions which finally established his authority, see Acts 25.23).

In this regard we must recognise that when the Son of Man was to come to God’s throne to receive authority He was to receive not only Kingship but Judgeship (Daniel 7.13-14). Thus when He returns He will not only welcome and reward His elect (Matthew 24.29-31; Mark 13.27), but will also call those who have continued to oppose Him or ignore Him into judgment (25.31-46).

Here was a new revelation. One was coming Who would appear in glory and would call them to account. And then they would be judged by what their response had been to Jesus and His words. His Apostles and close followers, who had regularly heard Him speak of Himself as the Son of Man would recognise immediately that He was here speaking of Himself. Others might think more vaguely of the Messiah, the Davidic king, who was to go up to God to receive His kingdom (Daniel 7.13). But those who recognised that it meant Jesus would also recognise that

it could only come in this way because He had died, as He had told them. That was the only way in which He could come from heaven in glory. His death was necessary before He could enjoy His throne. And then all would be judged by how they had responded to Jesus.

So responding to Jesus and His word is seen here to be everything, as He has already made clear in 6.46-49. The difference is that here a new motive is introduced, and that is the judgment we all await when the Messiah comes in His glory. This is the first of a number of indications that He will one day appear in this way in glory, both in His own glory and in His Father's glory, accompanied by holy angels (17.24, 30; 21.27). It is an extension of the picture in Daniel 7.13-14. Having gone to the throne of God to receive His kingship He will one day return in the glory thus received, sharing in the glory of God, and calling all to account as the glorious Judge of all the world.

By this He reveals that His death and resurrection when they occur will not be the end of the matter. They will result in His glorious enthronement and finally in the revelation of His glory and power on earth as Judge, as the Scripture has revealed.

9.27 "But I tell you of a truth, There are some of them who stand here, who will in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingly Rule of God."

But He wants to nerve them for what lies ahead, and so He assures them that in spite of the necessary warning final victory is certain. Whatever the future may hold they have His guarantee that some of those present will be alive to see the triumph of the Kingly Rule of God. Some will certainly survive.

We must recognise in this that He is aware that He is speaking to many who will be bewildered at what He has been saying. They are finding it difficult to understand. The beautiful parables have been replaced by the harshest of demands. So He is assuring them that while death might lie ahead for some who proclaim His words, and hardship for all, they can be certain that the Kingly Rule of God will come before all have experienced death. This guarantee of triumph gives therefore the assurance of success, and guarantees that all who believe in Him, both living and dead, are sure of entering His eternal Kingly Rule because of its certainty of success (compare here 23.42-43 where it is also true for the dying thief).

This very promise is a further indication that 'the last days' are here. They must therefore learn to live in the light of these last days. It is not intended to be a discussion of end time theology, it is in order to nerve them for the future and to bring home the importance of bravely proclaiming His word until His Kingly Rule is established. The last days still continue and we too are called to a similar dedication.

His words are, however, ambiguous. On the one hand they can suggest, as we have seen above, that there will be those who survive to observe the coming of the Kingly Rule of God on earth, and that therefore the enemies of Christ will not prevail. Luke appears to emphasise this side of it by making it the last in a series of verses about facing the threat of death and judgment. On the other they can be seen as simply an indication that the Kingly Rule of God will come on earth within the lifetime of many of those present, the latter being a time marker, and this would seem to be mainly Mark's emphasis when he divides it off from the preceding verses, and attaches it to the following ones. Mark also appears to emphasise its close connection with the Transfiguration. Both angles are in fact true. Persecution would not wipe out the followers of Jesus, and many did survive until the visible coming in power of the Kingly Rule of God at Pentecost and beyond.

'Some who stand here.' There may be a pointed suggestion here that not all who are listening will see the coming of His Kingly Rule, not necessarily because they have died but because they have turned back and no longer walk with Him. They have faced up to His offered choice and have gone sorrowfully away. They will miss seeing His Kingly Rule come with power.

Or it may simply be an indication that while inevitably some will die naturally others will be alive. Whichever way we take it we must not try to analyse the ‘some’, it could be few or many. Jesus in His manhood knew that He did not have full knowledge of all that lay ahead. But what He did know was that among those who were now with Him were the ones through whom the word was to spread throughout the world establishing the Kingly Rule of God.

There are in fact other interpretations of the verse which we will now list along with the above:

- **1). That Jesus is saying that in spite of the persecution that is coming, they can be sure that some will survive through to their seeing the establishment of the Kingly Rule of God on earth, and that thus His purpose will not fail. This is therefore warning of rough times ahead but is a guarantee of the success of what He has come to do, and provides the assurance that both living and dead believers will have their part in it, some on earth, and in the end all by resurrection.**
- **2). That Jesus is saying that the Kingly Rule of God will be seen being powerfully established on earth before all present have died, something which was fulfilled at Pentecost and after (Acts 1.3; 2.1-4 fulfilling Luke 24.49; 8.12; 14.22; 19.8) and then specifically by Paul’s presence in Rome (Acts 28.31).**
- **3). That Jesus is saying that before all have died they will see God’s Kingly Rule revealed by His Judgment on His enemies, as a result of the Son of Man coming in kingly power, and that this was fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem (some even make the son of man Titus, arguing that the phrase simply means ‘man’). This would tie in with the continual warnings of the fate of Jerusalem 13.35; 19.41-44; 21.6, but suffers from making into a negative what would appear to be a gloriously positive statement.**
- **4). That Jesus is saying that the Parousia will occur before all have died, and that He was therefore mistaken. But as this does not tie in with His affirmation that He did not know the time of His Parousia (Mark 13.32) it is unlikely. He could not say both).**
- **5). That Jesus is saying that some among them, but not all, will not die without first seeing the Kingly Rule of God established in power in their hearts by being born of the Spirit (John 3.2), resulting in their willingness to follow Him in spite of all, and seeing Him as ‘coming in His kingly power’ into their hearts. (This stresses ‘They will not die until --’). Others who were present would die still in their sins.**
- **6). That the verse is to be seen as contrasting with verse 26 which speaks of those who will be ashamed of Him. Some will be ashamed of Him, but others will see the Kingly Rule of God and respond to it from their hearts as in 5).**
- **7). That it was fulfilled in the Transfiguration in which Jesus was seen to manifest Himself as coming in His Kingly Rule to ‘some’, that is to the three and to Moses and Elijah.**

Perhaps then we should analyse the words more closely seeing them from the point of view of our wider background. What then have they to say to us?

Here firstly we must recognise that He here wants us to see that He is not just referring to some vague, far off promises. What He is promising is something that will come within the lifetime of some present. That there were in fact some standing there who would not taste of death until they ‘saw the Kingly Rule of God’ (in Mark is added ‘coming with power’).

What then does it mean to ‘see the Kingly Rule of God’ or to ‘see the Kingly Rule of God coming with power’?

In neither case is there a suggestion of a glorious appearing. The thought is rather of His presence and power. What He wants to assure them of is the fact that though He must die and rise again before it occurs, that will not affect the fact that the Kingly Rule of God will come with power within their lifetime’s experience. Acts will in fact be the proof that this was so.

For there the Kingly Rule of God comes with power, beginning at Jerusalem and finally being established in Rome. As Jesus says in 24.49, they are to 'stay in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high', the Kingly Rule of God will be manifested in power.

In considering the interpretation we must bear in mind that there are a number of differing aspects revealed concerning the coming of the Kingly Rule of God. These include:

- 1). Its presence among them even at that time. The Kingly Rule of God is in or among them (17.21). It can come to each one as he responds to Christ.
- 2). Its establishment by the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, resulting in His enthronement on God's throne, as described in Daniel 7.13-14, and as declared as having happened in Matthew 28.19 and Acts 2.36. This would then be revealed on earth, and 'seen' by His sending of the Holy Spirit in power.
- 3) Its revelation in glory and judgment when that enthronement will be brought home to those on earth who have rejected it by His glorious appearing.

It is the second of these that is in mind here.

Further Note on 9.27 (for those who wish to go into more detail).

These words in 9.27 have caused a great deal of discussion, especially in view of the parallel verses in Matthew 16.28 and Mark 9.1. The basic question is, what did Jesus mean when He spoke of seeing 'the Kingly Rule of God' here in Luke, which must be paralleled with seeing 'the Kingly Rule of God coming in power' in Mark 9.1, and seeing 'the Son of Man coming in His Kingly Rule' in Matthew 16.28. Note especially that the emphasis is on His 'coming in His Kingly Rule' and on that Kingly Rule 'coming in power'. It is not on His 'coming in glory'. The thief on the cross would also say, 'Remember me when you come in your Kingly Rule' (23.42), only to be informed that he would be with Him that day in Paradise (the abode of the godly dead), the inference being that he would shortly experience His Kingly Rule.

We can gain further understanding into the meaning of these words in Matthew 16.28 by comparing them with Jesus' words at His trial. There in Matthew 26.64 He said to Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders who were present at His trial, (in reply to the question as to whether He was the Messiah, the Son of God), '*From now on* you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power (i.e. God) and coming on the clouds of Heaven' (compare Mark 14.62). In other words a crisis point has now been reached when all will change. They may stand to try Him this day but 'from now on' they will see that He is the Messiah, for He will manifest Himself in the way described. This was clearly intended to have present significance for His hearers, and as something that would be made apparent almost immediately, for it was stated as being 'from now on'. And it would be understood by them in the light of their question which was whether He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Thus He was saying that 'from now on' His Messiahship would be manifested (this explains their jeers at the cross because they thought that they had made a fool of Him and His promises - Mark 15.32; Matthew 27.42-43).

But how would it be manifested? The mention of 'sitting on the right hand of power' would immediately turn their thoughts to Psalm 110.1, 'You sit at my right hand' (quoted in Matthew 22.44). 'The right hand of power' is a synonym for 'the right hand of God', 'power' being used, as was customary with the Jews, to avoid the use of the word 'God', which they sought to avoid. Thus it was referring to the establishment of His kingship.

The words 'coming on the clouds of Heaven' would remind them of Daniel 7.12-13 'there came with the clouds of heaven (to the throne of God) one like a son of man'. Here then Jesus speaks of His receiving Kingly Rule at the throne of God as something shortly to happen ('from now on, from the present time'), and their 'seeing' it in the working out of its effects.

Neither of these references would suggest to his listeners a coming to earth in glory (they were

not present when that was spoken of). They would see it as something taking place in Heaven as described in Daniel 7. Both would therefore be seen by them as signifying that His claim was that He would be crowned as God's chosen king in Heaven at 'God's right hand', and in the latter case after coming to the throne of God on the clouds of heaven. The 'sitting at the right hand of God' indicates His coronation and the 'coming with the clouds of heaven' is, according to Daniel 7.13, His coming to the throne of God as a divine figure in order to receive everlasting dominion.

Furthermore we note again that it is something that Jesus told them they would see, not at some time in the future, but 'from now on, or from the present time'. This might permit a short delay, but not one of any length of time. Their 'seeing it' does not necessarily mean that they will actually visibly observe the enthronement, but that they will observe its effects and be faced with the fact that it has happened, by seeing it in some way manifested on earth. In other words His enthronement as king would be made apparent to them in what would shortly follow. Clearly then there He spoke of His enthronement and its after effects as an event about to happen and to be evidenced on earth. We must therefore see Matthew 16.28 in that light as well.

That being so 'see the Son of Man coming in His Kingly Rule' signifies His enthronement at the right hand of God as He came before Him 'in the clouds of heaven' (signifying a heavenly connection) and we should note that in Matthew it is specifically stated by Jesus as having occurred at His resurrection, for He says there 'all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'. He had come to His Father and had received kingly rule. This would result in the going out of the disciples to 'disciple all nations' (Matthew 28.18-19), something certainly 'seen' by the leading Jewish authorities (Matthew 26.64) and also by the disciples (Matthew 16.28), apart of course from Judas.

Furthermore in Acts 2.34-36 Peter used Psalm 110.1 'sit on My right hand' to indicate the enthronement of Jesus as 'both Lord and Messiah' at that time and directly connects it with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.33). As far as he is concerned he 'saw' the Son of Man coming in His Kingly Power as a result of His enthronement at God's right hand at Pentecost.

What then are we to make of Luke 9. 27; Mark 9.1; Matthew 16.28 seen together?

Firstly we should note that the emphasis is on the coming of 'the Kingly Rule of God' in 'power' (dunamis) (or in Matthew 'His Kingly Rule'). There is no thought of the 'glory' which is elsewhere always emphasised when His final coming is baldly stated (Matthew 16.27; 19.28; 24.27, 30; Mark 8.38; 10.37; 13.26; Luke 21.27).

Secondly we should remember that Jesus speaks of the Kingly Rule of God as 'drawing near' and as something available to His hearers. In response to the question as to when the Kingly Rule of God will come, He said it was 'among or within them' (17.21). From the time of John the Baptist 'the Good News of the Kingly Rule of God is preached and every man presses (enters violently) into it' (16.16; Matthew 11.12). Men were even then being made 'disciples to the Kingly Rule of heaven' (Matthew 13.52). They must receive the Kingly Rule of God like a little child if they were to enter (Mark 10.15). The good seed in the parable were the 'sons of the Kingly Rule' (Matthew 13.38). As Jesus said, 'if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the Kingly Rule of God come upon you' (Matthew 12.27). Thus it was present at that time as well as something to be experienced in the future at the end time. To Jesus therefore the Kingly Rule of God was, as a result of His coming, an ever present reality, both in the present and in the future. Its revelation in power is not therefore necessarily the same thing as its revelation in glory. Its revelation in power took place when Jesus was raised and enthroned, and sent His Holy Spirit to make it effective on earth. Its revelation in glory will take place some time in the future.

Thirdly we should note that this word of Jesus is placed before the Transfiguration scene in each Gospel and connected with it specifically by a time reference e.g. 'about eight days after' or 'after six days'. Thus it was clearly seen as having some connection with the Transfiguration.

In the light of what we have seen earlier it is probable therefore that we are to see it as fulfilled in three ways, each interconnected.

- 1). It found its first partial fulfilment in the Transfiguration. There the majesty and glory of the King, hidden from the world, was revealed to His own, supported by those two pillars of God, who represented the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah, who had proclaimed His word and whose ministry and word He was to bring to fulfilment. The Kingly Rule of God was seen on the mountain in embryo with its manifested power and glory, for the Transfiguration foreshadowed both the resurrection and exaltation of Christ to God's right hand brought about with power (Romans 1.4; Philippians 3.10) and His second coming in glory. Some see in this a sufficient fulfilment, for it was a unique and incredible experience for those who witnessed it, and indeed for us all. It included 'some standing here'.
- 2). It found further fulfilment when Jesus, having been raised to God's right hand, appeared to His disciples to inform them that He had received from God 'all authority -- in heaven and earth' (Matthew 28.18) and would send them out to 'make disciples' of the nations, with 'signs' (of power) following (Mark 16.15-18). Indeed He promised them that shortly they would receive 'power (dunamis) from on High' (24.49 compare Acts 1.8). The Kingly Rule of God would have come with power. This too was experienced by 'some standing here'.
- 3). It found its complete fulfilment when the King, having risen, sat down at God's right hand (Acts 2.34-35) and received and poured out the Holy Spirit on God's people at Pentecost (Acts 2.33), empowering them to go out throughout the known world with 'power' (dunamis) (Acts 1.7; 1.8; 3.12; 4.7; 4.33; 6.8) preaching the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God where He was proclaimed both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2.36), and performing 'miracles' (signs) before the people (Acts 4.16, 22; 6.8; 8.6). Then indeed all saw the Kingly Rule of God 'coming in power' (see 1 Corinthians 4.19-20), they saw the Son of Man, having received His dominion, coming in His Kingly Rule (Acts 7.56). For within forty years there appeared to be Christians everywhere. (And the chief priests and scribes saw it as well).

To the objection made by a few that the verse says only that '*some* standing here' would see it we would suggest that if the words were spoken to a crowd of any size it was always likely that some would die before the event, as Judas certainly did before 2) and 3). If it is referred to the Transfiguration only '*some*' did see it (the three). For what Jesus was simply trying to say was that it would not be long delayed. It would be in the lifetime of some, but not necessarily all.

End of note.

Jesus Is Transfigured Before The Three In The Mountain (9.28-36).

The Apostles having now recognised that Jesus is the Messiah, He determines to reveal to the three chosen by Him from among them something more of what that means. He wants them to recognise that He is not just a scion of the house of David, but One Who shares the splendour and glory of God (John 17.5), One Who is greater than Moses and Elijah and all the prophets (compare 20.10-12), to whom both Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, bear witness. He is truly God's Son, God's Chosen One.

The consequence is that while they are in the mountain the fullness of His glory shines from His mortal body, and they behold His glory (John 1.14), and as a cloud covers them, God

again testifies to Him as He had done at His baptism, that He is His Son, His chosen One.

It should be noted that this is the high point of the revelation of Him as Messiah, in total contrast to His family's view of Him. Since that false view we have seen His power over wind and waves, His power over a legion of evil spirits, His power over uncleanness and death, His power to feed the covenant community with bread from Heaven. Now we have the final revelation of His glory.

The passage can be analysed as follows:

- a About eight days after these sayings, He took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray.
- b And as He was praying, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling.
- c And behold, there talked with Him two men, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.
- d Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory, and the two men who stood with him.
- c As they were parting from him, Peter said to "Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tents, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah", not knowing what he said.
- b And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my chosen, hear you him."
- a And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone. And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen.

Note that in 'a' He takes them up into the mountain to pray, and in the parallel He is left alone with them, and when they had descended they told no one of what had happened. In 'b' He was transfigured before them, being revealed in glorious light, and in the parallel He is revealed as God's Son, His chosen. In 'c' Moses and Elijah appear in glory and discuss His coming death and in the parallel Peter wants to build tents for each of them. In 'd' and centrally the three behold His glory.

9.28 'And it happened about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray.'

It will be noted that Luke has changed 'after six days' to 'about eight days after'. There is no problem with this mathematically for six whole days could, when taking into account part days, (which was quite normal), be the equivalent of 'eight days'. But we may ask, why the alteration? It will be noted that Luke has twice previously referred to an eight day period, once in 1. 59 when they came to circumcise John the Baptist on the eighth day, at which point he was to be named, and once in 2.21 where we read, 'and when eight days were fulfilled for circumcising Him they called His name Jesus'. Each eight day period resulted in a naming. Perhaps the thought here then is that eight days after the declaration of Him as Messiah (verse 20), or eight days after the first revelation of the fact that He will come in His glory (verse 26), He is revealed in His glory and named by God as His Son and Chosen One, indicating sealing following a kind of 'birth'. 'These sayings' could certainly be seen as including Peter's declaration of faith and what followed, and even more certainly contain the declaration about His coming in glory.

In the course of this sealing He took Peter and John and James with Him up into a mountain to pray. We can compare how Moses previously took Joshua with him when he too went into a mountain to see the glory of God and to pray, and to receive from God His revelation in the Law. Here then is the preparation for a new revelation from God. Interestingly each time

Jesus takes these three apart it is in order that they might hear significant words, firstly in the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter ('child arise'), secondly here ('this is My Son, My Chosen, listen to Him'), and thirdly in Gethsemane, ('Father' if you are willing, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless not My will but Yours be done'). The first reveal His power as the Resurrection and the Life (John 11.25), the second His true Sonship and Destiny (3.22; John 1.14, 18), and the third His obedience unto death (compare Philippians 2.8; Hebrews 10.5-10), all central to His work.

9.29 'And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling.'

His ostensible purpose in taking them up with Him was in order to pray (verse 28), but as He prayed a great transformation took place in Him. His face shone and His clothing became white and dazzling, and His Apostles were there privileged to see something of the glory of God, of the glory of which He had emptied Himself (John 17.5), and of the glory in which one day He would come again (verse 26). Here it was confirmed to them that He was indeed more than human. He was on 'the divine side of reality'. When Moses went into the mountain his face had shone with God's reflected glory, but here the Greater than Moses shone with His own glory. The fact that His clothes also shone (revealing something of the glory that now lay beneath them?) demonstrates that this was a very different situation than that of Moses. Moses bore a reflected glory, Jesus one that was intrinsic (compare 24.4). Here was a revelation that He was more than just human.

9.30-31 'And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory, and spoke of his exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.'

Then appeared two men with Him, one was Moses and the other was Elijah. Both appeared in glory, and they spoke of His 'exodus' which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Moses clearly represented the Law and Elijah the prophets, both testifying to Jesus. But both were also those whose likeness was to come again in the persons of the Prophet (Deuteronomy 18.15; John 1.21) and the coming Elijah (Malachi 4.5; Matthew 11.14). They were seen as the supreme witnesses of God in the last days. Thus this was an indication that it was now 'the last days' (compare Acts 2.17; 1 Corinthians 10.11; Hebrews 1.2; 1 Peter 1.20; 4.7).

And here they testified to Jesus' 'exodus'. This clearly included the thought of His death (compare 2 Peter 1.15), for it was to be fulfilled at Jerusalem, but in such a way as to link it with the resurrection (a departure) and in order to indicate that it was introducing a new deliverance, a new Exodus, when Jesus would take with Him in His Exodus all His redeemed people. Jesus would lead many sons to glory (Hebrews 2.10), something symbolised by the firstfruits of the resurrection that occurred when He rose (Matthew 27.52). They joined Him in His Exodus. This 'Exodus' was the talking point of these two great prophets. This was the talking point of Heaven. The death of Jesus was seen as central in deliverance, and through His death many would be delivered (Mark 10.45). And it was not to be seen as a tragedy, but as an accomplishment, a fulfilling. It was to be His triumph. This 'fulfilling' may refer to His fulfilling the purposes of God as revealed in the Scriptures (24.25-27), or to His fulfilling of His destiny (compare its use in Acts 12.25; 13.25; 14.26), or indeed both.

'Moses and Elijah.' As already suggested these are representative of the great end time figures who were to come, the great Prophet 'like Moses' of Deuteronomy 18.15 (as interpreted by the Jews) and the great coming Elijah (Malachi 4.5). They also represented the great source of God's Instruction, Moses the one whom Judaism exalted above all others, and Elijah the great wonder-worker, who was also often seen as representing all the prophets. The one was the founder of the covenant God made with His people, the other the one who had preserved it when it was at low ebb (only 'seven thousand' were left). Both had died mysteriously, one to be buried by God the other to be carried up to Heaven. They were central to Israel's thinking. And here they were taking their stand with Jesus, and bearing witness to His necessary death

and coming Salvation.

‘Fulfilled at Jerusalem.’ Prior to its clear rejection in the second part of Acts Luke centres on Jerusalem. To the Gentiles it was the source of Judaism, and from transformed Judaism Jesus arose. It was the place where God carried out His great plan of salvation for all the world (although in the end outside its walls - Hebrews 13.12). In this discussion really begins Jesus setting of His face towards Jerusalem which is made explicit in 9.51.

9.32 ‘Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they were fully awake (or ‘having remained awake’), they saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him.’

But meanwhile Peter and the others were heavy with sleep, as they would also be in Gethsemane (22.45-46; Mark 14.37, 40, 41), a deliberate pointer to their weakness as mere men in the face of the revelation of the divine. They were learning their insufficiency in the things of God. But at what was happening they were awakened, and once they were fully awake they saw the glory of Jesus and the two who stood with Him. Their eyes were opened to see His glory (2 Corinthians 4.4-6).

Or the verb may signify that somehow they managed to stay awake, which is the usual meaning of the verb. The idea is probably that, while they saw all, their senses were dulled. It is possibly an attempt to explain Peter’s rather foolish statement.

9.33 ‘And it came about that as they were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three booths, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah”, not knowing what he said.’

The splendour of the scene so disoriented Peter that when he saw Moses and Elijah departing he cried out in disarray, “Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three booths, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” The reference to booths might have had in mind what was done on the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) when booths were built for the seven day feast, a feast of joyous celebration of harvest, and of expectancy for the coming year, and having eschatological significance (Zechariah 14.16). He may have been thinking of setting up a permanent divine revelation here on the mountain, (men have always loved holy mountains). Or it may have been an attempt to prevent the two leaving by offering shelter so that they could continue with them for a while. This is suggested by the context, ‘as they were parting from Him’. Or his intention might have been to hide the unbearable glory. Or possibly he hoped that by retaining Moses and Elijah, both figures who testified to Jesus, together with Jesus Himself in His glory, people might come and worship there and come to a deeper knowledge of Who Jesus was, in the same way as they had. What a source of revelation that would be, Jesus, Moses and Elijah. All the religious questions that people had could be solved by impeccable sources. Whichever way it was it is clear that Peter recognised the huge value to him and his fellow disciples of what they were seeing and experiencing, to such an extent that he did not want it to end. Perhaps also he saw it as a way of keeping Jesus safe from the suffering He had mentioned. But we are specifically told that he did not know what he was doing. (He did not know what he was talking about). For by his intended actions he was putting Moses and Elijah on a par with Jesus, and that could not be, as God now made clear Peter was as impetuous as ever.

Again we have one of those indications of the genuineness of the story. No one in the early church would have invented something like this about Peter (compare Mark 9.4-6; Matthew 17.4).

9.34 ‘And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud.’

And even while he was speaking a cloud came down and overshadowed ‘them’. This ‘them’

may indicate the three glorious figures (Mark says that God spoke out of the cloud), or it may include all being enveloped by God (Mark can be interpreted in this way). This descent of the cloud had happened also on Mount Sinai, (compare Exodus 24.15-16), and it had indicated the presence of the living God, there to speak with Moses. Here then God had enclosed the three with His divine presence. And here He was bearing testimony to Jesus from the cloud to the disciples (see 2 Peter 1.16-18).

9.35 ‘ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my chosen, hear you him.”’

And from the cloud came a voice, declaring that Jesus was His Son and His chosen One, His Son (Psalm 2.7; John 1.14, 18) and His Anointed Servant (Isaiah 42.1). Note how God takes the attention off Moses and Elijah and concentrates it on Jesus. They are not to regard the others as of primary importance but to concentrate on Him as the One to Whom Moses and Elijah had borne witness, the One Who had brought ultimate truth. He was essentially the One to Whom they had to listen, for He had come from His Father’s presence as a Light into the world (John 8.12). He is a greater than Moses and the Law. He is greater than Moses or Elijah as representative of all the prophets. He is God’s final Word. In the words ‘listen to Him’ there is a reflection of Deuteronomy 18.15. He is God’s final Voice.

9.36 ‘And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone. And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen.’

And then all was quiet and they found themselves alone with Jesus. And so profound was the experience that they told no one about it at the time. They stored it up in their hearts, to be revealed when the time was ripe. They had seen what could not be uttered.

4). Jesus Commences The Specific Training of His Disciples Who Are Revealed As in a Lamentable Condition (9.37-50).

In this final part of Section 3, their recognition of Jesus now having been clarified, Jesus commences specific training for those who must take over His work, and we learn the lamentable condition of those on whom He has to do His work (9.37-50). (That is, lamentable in the light of what should have been).

It may be analysed as follows:

- a The disciples are unable to cast out demons and through a demon possessed boy they learn the reason for their own weakness - lack of faith (9.37-43a).
- b They learn that the Son of Man must be humbled under the hands of men but do not understand, and are not willing to ask - demonstrating lack of confidence in Him (9.43b-45).
- b They discuss their own greatness and learn that they, like Him, must not seek greatness, and must receive little children in His name, because he who is least is greatest - lack of humility (9.46-48).
- a They forbid one who casts out demons’ in Jesus name and learn the lesson that he who is not against them is with them - spiritual arrogance and lack of spiritual discernment (9.49-50).

Note that in ‘a’ they learn their own weakness in their failure to cast out evil spirits because of unbelief, and in the parallel they learn a lesson in toleration in the light of someone who is able to cast out evil spirits because he believes. In ‘b’ they are reminded of the humiliation that Jesus as the Son of Man must face, and in the parallel they learn that they too must learn to be humble.

Thus from this they learn four great lessons:

- Their need to face up to their lack of faith and obedience, (and become more constant in prayer).
- Their need to accept the necessity of Jesus’ suffering.

- Their need not to seek greatness, but to welcome little children.
- Their need to recognise when God is at work and not be arrogant and exclusive.

A Demon-possessed Boy Reveals The Disciples' Great Inadequacy And The Infinite Superiority of Jesus (9.37-43a).

The first lesson lays emphasis on the earthly mindedness and lack of faith of the disciples. With Jesus temporarily absent and otherwise absorbed they come across a particularly difficult kind of evil spirit and find themselves unable to cast it out. And from it they learn how much they have to learn, and how lacking their spiritual lives are.

- a On the next day, when they were come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him (37).
- b A man from the crowd cried, saying, "Teacher, I beseech you to look on my son, for he is my only child, and behold, a spirit takes him, and he suddenly cries out, and it tears him so that he foams, and it hardly departs from him, bruising him sorely. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, and they could not" (38-40).
- c And Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and bear with you? Bring here your son" (41).
- b And as he was yet a coming, the demon dashed him down, and tore him grievously. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father (42).
- a And they were all astonished at the majesty of God' (43a).

We note that in 'a' the great crowd come to meet Jesus after He comes down from the mountain after being transfigured, and in the parallel they are astonished at 'the majesty of God'. There is a clear implication behind the latter words of the deity of Jesus, only fully apparent in context to the one who is aware of the Transfiguration, and a contrast between 'the great crowd' (representing humanity) and 'the majesty of God', a similar comparison to that of Jesus as compared with His sleepy disciples on the Mount. In 'b' we have a description of the boy's problem and are told that the disciples could do nothing about it, and in the parallel the boy's problem is revealed by his actions, and Jesus heals the boy. In 'c', and central to the passage is Jesus' verdict on His disciples and on the world. The transition from His Father's presence in the mountain to this unbelieving and unreliable world below comes home to Him with excessive force.

9.37 'And it came about, on the next day, when they were come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.'

The connection with the Transfiguration is clearly made. As Jesus descends from the mountain with His three companions He is met by 'a great crowd'. A contrast and comparison is probably intended to be drawn between the size of the 'great crowd', seen as representing humanity, and the greatness of the majesty of God in verse 43a. On the Mount the difference between the majestic Jesus and the sleepy Apostles had been accentuated. Here the difference between the great crowd and the majesty of God is being accentuated.

9.38-40 'And behold, a man from the crowd cried, saying, "Teacher, I beseech you to look on my son, for he is my only child, and behold, a spirit takes him, and he suddenly cries out, and it tears him so that he foams, and it hardly departs from him, bruising him sorely. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, and they could not."

A man speaks to Him from the crowd. He describes how he had brought his only son to the disciples seeking help. His son was possessed by a spirit which spasmodically made the child cry out and then tore him with the result that foam came from his mouth. And this happened more often than not and caused him great distress. But despite their efforts the spirit resisted the disciples and they could not cast it out. That it was not just epilepsy comes out in what follows. A mere disease would not have resulted in failure for the disciples, nor would Jesus

have spoken it as requiring special power.

‘He is my only child.’ The man’s only child was continuing to suffer because of the failure of the disciples. Verse 41 reveals how God’s only Son was also suffering at their hands.

9.41 ‘And Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and bear with you? Bring here your son.” ’

This is Jesus’ verdict on what He has found concerning the whole generation of Israel at that time. It included the great crowd, which was in such contrast to His Father as it stood there clamouring and disputing. But it was also very much a verdict on His failing Apostles. They were the ones who should have had faith. His words suggest that Jesus felt that His disciples should have been able to deal with the matter, even without Himself, and Peter, John and James being there. He clearly considers that the disciples’ own spiritual inadequacy was to blame, and He is grieved. It is because they have been dodging their quiet times with God

‘O faithless and perverse generation.’ As Jesus looks around at them he recognises in them their whole unbelieving generation. They are all unbelieving, including His own disciples. In contrast with the glory and love He has enjoyed in the mountain this return to the world is almost unbearable. For He has had to recognise that the first problem here was that all who were there, but especially the disciples, were lacking in faith. The failure was because they were perverse in their behaviour (compare Deuteronomy 32.5, 20). And we learn from the other Gospels that this was because they did not pray enough (Mark 9.29). They did not dwell enough in their Father’s presence. They thought that they could get away with just relying on Jesus, and using Him as a crutch. They were spiritual cripples. Had they continually followed their Master’s example and spent more time in prayer they would not have failed here. We lose much through our failure to pray.

‘How long shall I be with you, and bear with you?’ Jesus had just been in His Father’s presence, enjoying the glory which had been His before He emptied Himself. What had happened here now brought home to Him the great contrast between that and His life on earth. For a brief moment we have unveiled the continual loss that Jesus must have felt at being deprived of what could have been His, and at His having to endure the contradictions of the world, and especially of His disciples, not out of self-pity, but simply because of the contradiction of it with His own divine nature. It must have sometimes been almost unbearable. When we think of His sufferings we tend to overlook the things that could continually have exasperated Him among those who loved Him, and how we must exasperate Him too.

How we view His words depends on the tone that we read into them. We are probably to see it as a little like the fond exasperation of a mother with an erring child when it has been delving in mud and dirt. It is accepted with equanimity, and a smile, but if only it would not! He would have many more exasperating experiences with His disciples yet (see verse 46).

Jesus then told the father to bring his son to Him.

9.42 ‘And as he was yet a coming, the demon dashed him down, and tore him grievously. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.’

The father’s description of his son’s problems were clearly revealed as correct when he sought to bring his son to Jesus. The evil spirit dashed him down and tore him dreadfully. It may be that it was aware that it was about to be faced up to One Whose authority it could not reject and was reluctant to meet up with Him. But Jesus would have none of it. He rebuked the unclean spirit, which had no alternative but immediately to depart. Then having healed the boy Jesus gave him back to his father.

9.43a ‘And they were all astonished at the majesty of God.’

As the crowds saw what had happened they were filled with astonishment at the wonder of

what it revealed God to be. In 2 Peter 1.16 the same word translated 'majesty' is applied to Jesus at the Transfiguration. It was also applied by idolaters to their goddess Artemis (Acts 19.27). It thus depicts glory and splendour and divinity. Luke undoubtedly intends us to connect its use here with Jesus as revealed on the mountain, while strictly applying it to God, because the crowds had not been on the mountain. Both can be seen as One in majesty.

Superficially it is tempting to see here a case of epilepsy, but it will not pass muster. Had it been epilepsy we can be sure that the disciples would have been able to heal it, and that Jesus would not have seen it as a special case needing a deeper level of spirituality. In fact Jesus makes clear that it was a particularly difficult kind of evil spirit to deal with. But it had no option but to obey Him. His act revealed the majesty of Jesus.

It Is Urgent That His Disciples Become Aware That He Will Be Delivered Up Into The Hands Of Men (9.43b-45).

This is the second warning that Jesus has given to them about what will happen to Him. He does not want them caught by surprise. He wants them to take His warning seriously.

Analysis.

- a While all were marvelling at all the things which He did, He said to His disciples (43b).
- b "Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men" (44).
- a But they understood not this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying (45).

Note that in 'a' the crowds were marvelling at what He did, and in the parallel the disciples are afraid to ask Him about what He has said. In 'b' is the central point that they must allow the fact of His coming suffering at the hands of men 'sink into their ears'. That is they must sit up and take very careful notice!

9.43b 'But while all were marvelling at all the things which he did, he said to his disciples,'

Having come down from the mountain where He has spoken with Moses and Elijah about His coming 'exodus' He wants His disciples to become more aware of it than they are. But instead all the crowds are marvelling at what He has done, and that no doubt included the disciples ('all'). So He once again takes His disciples on one side and speaks seriously with them.

9.44 "Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men."

Note the stress Jesus places on what He says. "Let these words sink into your ears." He could not have been more emphatic. And what was the message? "The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men."

The emphasis is interesting in view of His recent Transfiguration. What shame it brings on the world by implication. The glorious Son of man, God's beloved Son, is to be delivered by God into the hands of sinful, debased men. And what they will then do is assumed. Man is not seen as trustworthy, especially when dealing with pure goodness.

Strictly speaking, of course, a son of man being delivered into the hands of the sons of men should not have been ominous. Should they not treat well their own? What makes the difference is that He is 'the Son of Man', the Righteous One representing 'the holy ones of the Most High', and the assumption is made that His righteousness will therefore bring out the worst in men.

9.45 'But they understood not this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.'

But the disciples were still blinded by their own ideas. They could not believe that men would treat badly One Who did such good. Were not the crowds with Him, marvelling at His doings?

‘It was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it.’ The passive verb would normally suggest that, as with the last verse, the One spoken of is God. The idea then is that God has a purpose for not letting the truth about Jesus’ coming suffering dawn on them. Perhaps His purpose was simply in order to make them ask Jesus about it. There is no reason why they should not have done so. But seemingly they were afraid to ask Him. And God would not help them to understand it until they did.

Others consider that we must see here the hand of the Evil One. He does not want them to catch on to what is happening.

Either way their situation shows a sad lack of confidence in Him. We have already seen them condemned as unbelieving, now they fail to demonstrate an openness with Jesus. There was still much that needed doing in their hearts.

The Pride Of The Disciples Needs to be Humbled (9.46-48).

We might have expected that the news that Jesus was to suffer at the hands of the authorities would have given the disciples a great deal to discuss and to talk about, and have been very humbling. But the little heed that they took of that comes out in the fact that their discussion turned rather on which of them was the greatest. Each wanted to be top dog. Having left all to follow Him they wanted to establish their own order of merit. And each thought that they should be at or near the top.

The question of who was the greatest occurs a number of times among the disciples in a number of ways (18.14-17; 22.24-27; Matthew 18.1-4; 20.20-28 (Mark 10.35-45); 23.11-12; Mark 9.34-37). It was the natural question that men ask, for all natural men want to be great. (These arguments incidentally count against the idea that they saw Peter as their leader even when they allowed him to be their spokesman). But they had to learn that such thoughts were quite out of place for Christian disciples. To be thinking like that at all was to be in the wrong. Jesus says that the Christian disciple seeks rather to be the least, for then he becomes great in God’s eyes, and that this is especially true when it comes to dealing with little children.

Analysis.

- **a There arose a reasoning among them, which of them was the greatest (46).**
- **b When Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, He took a little child, and set him by His side, and said to them, “Whoever shall receive this little child in My name receives Me, and whoever shall receive Me receives Him who sent me (47-48a).**
- **a For he who is least among you all, the same is great (48b).**

Note that in ‘a’ the question is, who is the greatest, and in the parallel we receive the reply. But central to the whole in ‘b’ is Jesus comment about the little child.

9.46 ‘And there arose a reasoning among them, which of them was the greatest.’

It is quite clear that the disciples had not learned the lesson of their encounter with the demon-possessed boy. Instead of feeling ashamed at their failure, and buckling down to prayer and humility in the light of it, they concentrated more on estimating their own greatness. And this then led to discussions among them as to who was the greatest. We are not told what measures they used by which to decide the issue. Possibly they compared their skills in preaching, in healing, in administration and so on, or the importance of some of their converts, or the ways in which Jesus relied on them, overlooking how much of their ability came through the work of the Holy Spirit, and that they only did what it was their duty to do. They probably failed to take note of the measure that Jesus set, ‘whoever shall do and teach these least commandments, he shall be called great within the Kingly Rule of Heaven’ (Matthew 5.19), commandments which included loving their neighbour as themselves. Their

thought was rather of prestige and position. But their arguments inevitably soon came to the attention of Jesus.

9.47-48a 'But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child, and set him by his side, and said to them, "Whoever shall receive this little child in my name receives me, and whoever shall receive me receives him who sent me.'

When Jesus saw what they were thinking in their hearts, He took a little child and pointed out that the one who wanted to be great should receive such little children in His name, for true greatness consisted in serving the lowly in His name. And whichever of them received such a little child in His name was actually receiving Him, and whoever received Him received Him Who sent Him.

As often His response was indirect, but the more telling for that. His point was that by serving someone, however lowly, in His name they were serving Him, and in serving Him they were serving God, the highest service of all (compare Matthew 25.35-40). All service therefore that was truly done for His sake was 'great'. For it was serving God. And all work done out of pride was dross.

Not many people in those days looked on little children as very important. They were expected to keep their place. And as we know, later, when mothers sought to bring their children (not babies) to Jesus, the disciples would have turned them away (18.15-17; Mark 10.13-16). They would not have turned away a chief priest or a Scribe, or even a Pharisee, but to them little children were unimportant. So Jesus had then to point out that the little children whom they wanted to turn away were in fact the most important of people, for it was their hearts which were most open to the truth, and by turning them away they were turning away their best opportunity of winning men and women for Christ. But here His point is simply that greatness consists of obeying Him in what most people considered little things. Any humble task done in His name, even the receiving of a little child, makes for greatness, for the one who does the lowest task, without thinking about it or assessing it, is the greatest of all because he is then like Jesus.

9.48b 'For he who is least among you all, the same is great.'

Then He laid down one of His great maxims. 'For he who is least among you all, the same is great.' In other words, God sees as great the one who is ready to do the lowliest tasks, and the one who willingly takes the lowest place, quite unconscious of the fact that he is doing so. Then God can move Him up higher (14.10). Note that he is great, not 'the greatest'. None, even among men, are the greatest. There are no such comparisons among men whose hearts are true. Once there are such people cease to be great at all.

For men who argue about or assess their own greatness, or are too important to do the lowest task, are in His eyes the lowest of all. They are victims of the pride of life, and are not of the Father but are of the world (1 John 2.15). They have lost touch with the heart of the Father. For those who are truly great do not know that they are great, nor do they care. They simply do the Father's will.

Some see 'he who is least among you' as the child previously mentioned. In that case His point is that greatness consists in having the innocent faith and willingness of a little child. Young children will usually do anything that they are asked because they desire to please. It is only as they grow older that they become awkward. In the same way the disciple should be willing to do anything that God sets before him in the circumstances of life, without any sense of it being too menial. But the moment that we do a menial task in order to be appreciated for it we cease to be great, for greatness consists in doing all things for God and for God alone without any thought of ourselves.

We Must Learn To Assess People In God's Eyes Not By Our Own Prejudices (9.49-50).

A further example of how the Apostles were becoming too important for their own good comes out in this example. They were becoming too aware of their own status, and overlooking the fact that they must allow God to decide the status of everyone. When therefore they saw a man casting out evil spirits in the name of Jesus they forbade him, because he was not ‘one of us’. They did not stop to consider that, unlike themselves with the demon-possessed boy, this man was being successful, which indicated that God was with him (contrast Acts 19.13-17). Later the early church would have to regulate such people because of the danger of heretics. But at this time that was no danger.

9.49 ‘And John answered and said, “Master, we saw one casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us.” ’

As mentioned the disciples had seen a man casting out evil spirits in the name of Jesus even though he was not one who outwardly followed Jesus. And so they took it on themselves to forbid him, without consulting Jesus. No doubt they had thought, ‘How dare he use the name of Jesus like this. We are the only ones who are allowed to use the name of Jesus!’

9.50 ‘But Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid him, for he who is not against you is for you.” ’

But Jesus told them that they were wrong to forbid him. For if this man was being successful then it demonstrated that God was with him, and that he believed in Jesus. And such a man should therefore be encouraged, for he clearly did support them even though he was not with them. Had he not truly believed in Jesus his exorcisms would not have been successful (as the disciples had cause to know could happen).

‘He who is not against you is for you.’ Jesus is here speaking of those who were active in proclaiming the word of God and in ministry of that word, not just of anyone in general. If men truly ministered the word and were not antagonistic to Jesus and His disciples then they were clearly on the same side together. For had they not been they would have been antagonistic.

The question is sometimes posed, ‘would a man have cast out evil spirits in Jesus name while Jesus was still alive?’ The answer is undoubtedly, ‘yes’. There were many potential exorcists around in Jesus’ day, and they would always be alert to anything that could make them more successful. If they saw the disciples successfully casting out evil spirits in Jesus’ name (10.17) it is certain that some would see that as another name that they could experiment with. It is probable therefore that quite a few commenced using the name of Jesus, as did the sons of Sceva after them (Acts 19.13-14). The point here is that the man used it successfully. And Jesus’ point is that His Father would not have given success were his belief in Jesus not genuine. He was thus in his heart ‘one of them’.