**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 21** Luke 9:1-17 Jesus Sends and Empowers!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 117-120.
3. Miracles were a sign that Jesus had sent the apostles and was working through them. How should we determine if the ministry of a person is authentic today?
4. Read Luke 9:1-9. Jesus Sends out the Twelve!

Luke 9:1-9 describes the apostles’ pre-Pentecost taste of the miraculous ministering power, the "greater works, “that would characterize their ministry after Christ was gone. It was a dress rehearsal for the post-Pentecost gospel ministry of the Twelve,[[1]](#endnote-1) and as such it reveals the principles of gospel Ministry necessary to fulfill Christ's greater commission (cf.24:46,47). It came at the end of Jesus ‘Galilean ministry, when he brought the Twelve together and sent them on a brief preaching tour, effectively completing Galilee's "season of grace.” Some of the specific directives were applicable for the tour only, but the principles are universal.

**Empowerment** (v.1)

Luke explicitly records the apostles' empowerment for ministry: “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” (v. 1). “Power” here denotes capacity, energy, force. “Authority" is the right to use it. In a solemn instant the apostles were endowed with both, and that must have been a heady experience. Life provides fleeting experiences of power. It may begin for a toddler when he first gets his little hands on the remote control to the family television. Suddenly he can turn the world on, and off—make adults appear and disappear. In fact, with that little black box in hand, he seems to control the whole household. Power!

Or do you remember the day you passed your driver's test, sat alone behind the wheel of the family car, turned the ignition key, and felt the engine come to life? You felt like you were in control! Or consider the thrill of turning the key in the corporate suite.

But this is all kindergarten when compared to the rush the apostles experienced when given “power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” This was Jesus' power.   
They possessed the power of the sender.[[2]](#endnote-2) The immediate context leaves no doubt as to the range of their power. They had ability to deliver people's souls from demons just as Jesus had done with the demoniac in the region of the Gerasenes, sending foul spirits to the Abyss and rendering the man “clothed and in his right mind” (8:35). They possessed the power to heal human bodies as Jesus had just done with the woman with the hemorrhage. Such power! Kingdom power. God's power. This was even more remarkable because of who they were.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Focus on Luke 9:1-6. Jesus sent the Twelve Apostles out to essentially do what He alone had been doing.
2. What were the two tasks He assigned to them?
3. What does it man to ‘preach the kingdom of God’?
4. What instructions did Jesus give them?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Why do you think Jesus wanted them to go out without taking any ‘worldly supplies?’ What biblical principle do you learn from this?
6. (Personal Question) How will you apply the above principle to your life?
7. What do you learn from the following?

Isaiah 41:13

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalm 121:1-2

John 15:5

Isaiah 40:29

1. Verses 4 and 5 state, “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that town, as a testimony against them.”

* Why did Jesus tell them to make such a strong rebuke for rejection?
* Read Matthew 10:11-15 and Acts 13:49-52. Do we have a principle in both Jesus’ instructions and Paul’s actions? Explain your answer.

The command to “shake the dust off your feet” appears only four times in the New Testament. In each case the command is spoken by Jesus to His disciples when He sent them out two by two (Matthew 10:14; Luke 9:5). In Mark 6:11 Jesus says, “And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” In the Matthew 10 account, Jesus clarifies His meaning: “Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town” (verse 15).

Shaking the dust off one’s feet conveys the same idea as our modern phrase “I wash my hands of it.” Shaking the dust off the feet is a symbolic indication that one has done all that can be done in a situation and therefore carries no further responsibility for it. In the scriptural examples, Jesus was telling His disciples that they were to preach the gospel to everyone. Where they were received with joy, they should stay and teach. But where their message was rejected, they had no further responsibility. They were free to walk away with a clear conscience, knowing they had done all they could do. Shaking the dust off their feet was, in effect, saying that those who rejected God’s truth would not be allowed to hinder the furtherance of the gospel. Even the dust of those cities that rejected the Lord was an abomination and would not be allowed to cling to the feet of God’s messengers.

Embedded within this symbolic gesture was the implication that God also saw the dust-shaking and would judge people accordingly. There was a spiritual significance to a disciple of Jesus shaking the dust off his feet. It was a statement of finality about people who had been given the truth and who had rejected it. On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas put Jesus’ words into practice. They had been preaching in Pisidian Antioch, but some of the Jewish leaders of that city stirred up persecution against the missionaries and had them expelled from the region. “So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium” (Acts 13:51). Antioch may not have welcomed the gospel as they should have, but that didn’t keep the message from spreading to other areas. Paul and Barnabas had done all they were sent to do, and the responsibility was now on the shoulders of those in Antioch. The apostles had proclaimed truth boldly. Some had accepted it eagerly; some had rejected it with violence. The apostles were not responsible for the Antiochians’ level of acceptance, only for their own obedience to God.

There are situations in our lives where God calls us to stand firm, proclaim truth, and give patient testimony. Sometimes we need to continue until we see the results of that testimony. Other times God gives us the freedom to move on. We figuratively “shake the dust off our feet” when, under the Holy Spirit’s direction, we surrender those people to the Lord and emotionally let go. We have the freedom then to move into the next phase of ministry. Jesus’ instruction to “shake the dust off our feet” reminds us that we are only responsible for our obedience to God, not for the results of that obedience.[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. Focus on Luke 9:7-9. Herod is perplexed by Jesus. Who is He? Who were some people calling Jesus?
2. From the following texts, who does Jesus either say or imply that He is and who did others (John, Thomas, Paul and Peter) write that He was?

John 10:30-33

Exodus 3:12-15; John 8:54-59

John 1:1, 14, 18

John 20:28; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1

C. S. Lewis in his book Mere Christianity writes the following: “I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him [Jesus Christ]: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to” (Macmillan, 1952, p. 55–56).

So, who did Jesus claim to be? Who does the Bible say He is? First, He is God in the flesh. Jesus said in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” At first glance, this might not seem to be a claim to be God. However, look at the Jews’ reaction to His statement. They tried to stone Him “for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God” (John 10:33). The Jews understood Jesus’ statement as a claim to be God. In the following verses, Jesus never corrects the Jews or attempts to clarify His statement. He never says, “I did not claim to be God.” When Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), He truly was claiming equality with God.

In John 8:58 Jesus claims pre-existence, an attribute of God: “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” In response to this statement, the Jews again took up stones to stone Jesus (John 8:59). In claiming pre-existence, Jesus applied a name for God to Himself—I AM (see Exodus 3:14). The Jews rejected Jesus’ identity as God Incarnate, but they understood exactly what He was saying.

Other biblical clues that Jesus is God in the flesh include John 1:1, which says, “The Word was God,” coupled with John 1:14, which says, “The Word became flesh.” Thomas the disciple declared to Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28), Jesus does not correct him. The apostle Paul describes Jesus as “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). The apostle Peter says the same, calling Jesus “our God and Savior” (2 Peter 1:1).

God the Father bears witness of Jesus’ identity as well: “But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom’” (Hebrews 1:8; cf. Psalm 45:6). Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 9:6 announce the deity of Christ: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (emphasis added).

Why is the question of Jesus’ identity so important? Why does it matter whether Jesus is God? Several reasons:

* As C. S. Lewis pointed out, if Jesus is not God, then Jesus is the worst of liars and untrustworthy in every way.
* If Jesus is not God, then the apostles would likewise have been liars.
* Jesus had to be God because the Messiah was promised to be the “Holy One” (Psalm 16:5, NASB). Since no one on earth is righteous before God (Psalm 53:1; 143:2), God Himself had to enter the world as a human.
* If Jesus is not God, His death would have been insufficient to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Only God Himself could provide an infinite, eternally valuable sacrifice (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
* God is the only Savior (Hosea 13:4; cf. 1 Timothy 2:3). If Jesus is to be the Savior, then He must be God.
* Jesus had to be both God and man. As God, Jesus could satisfy God’s wrath. As a man, Jesus had the capability of dying. As the God-man, Jesus is the perfect Mediator between heaven and earth (1 Timothy 2:5). Salvation is available only through faith in Jesus Christ. As He proclaimed, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).[[5]](#endnote-5)

1. (Personal Questions): Who do you say Jesus is? If He is truly Lord and God, how should this change the way we listen to His Word and respond to it?
2. Read Luke 9:10-17 along with Mark 6:30-44. Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand!

**The Sufficiency of Christ**

The feeding of the five thousand is a major turning point in Jesus' life because in Luke, and also in the other three Gospels, it marks the apex and conclusion of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Here Galilee's privileged opportunity, its season of grace, concludes. From here Jesus' ministry would move to the coastal cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Caesarea Philippi, and then to the Trans-Jordan, and finally down to Judea and Jerusalem. The feeding of the five thousand is also crucial in Luke's account because it immediately follows Herod's question about Jesus: “Who is this about whom I hear such things?” (v. 9). This great miracle is a **primary revelation** of the person of Christ and, as we will see, a dramatization of his vast sufficiency.

Luke's brief introduction to the context of the miracle in verses 10, 11 gives us little more than the bare facts. Mark's account is more graphic, telling us that when the Twelve returned from their preaching mission, “The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. ‘For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat” (Mark 6:30,31). Evidently by the time their reports ended, and probably even during their telling, the apostles were being “peopled to death” by those who had experienced their great ministries. The press was so great that they could not find time for a snack! This was wonderful but also draining on the exhausted Twelve. Ministry can be like that. As the ditty goes:

Mary had a little lamb,

'Twas given her to keep,

But then it joined the local church,

And died for lack of sleep!

At any rate, the disciples needed some time to themselves. So Jesus prescribed a retreat on the north side of the lake. Luke reveals that they withdrew to Bethsaida (v. 10), at the top of the lake near where the Jordan empties into the Sea of Galilee. The retreat was apparently in the general vicinity of Bethsaida because Luke says it was “a desolate place"(v.12), as does Mark (Mark 6:32).' There in that isolated spot they would be refreshed, but not in the way they expected.

It was about four miles to Bethsaida by direct sail and about eight miles by foot. So, when the people saw the apostles set sail toward Bethsaida, the young and the strong began to charge north along the edge of the lake. Hundreds more from the lakeshore hamlets probably joined them, calling out to their friends to come along, so that finally thousands converged on the apostles' retreat site in noisy, jostling expectation. Mark reveals, “Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them” (Mark 6:33). So much for some time away. “Welcome to Church Camp: Activities from dawn to dusk.”

Very likely there was some dismay on the apostles' part, even resentment. But not so with the Master, as Luke reports: “He welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing” (v. 11b). He preached at great length (as the Greek suggests) on the same positive kingdom theme that the apostles had been preaching. Using Old Testament exposition, original parables, and brilliant reason, he heralded the kingdom, the sovereign reign of God. He called them to kingdom living, kingdom ethics (cf. 6:20ff.), and humility and repentance. The kingdom was theirs for the taking! He invited them to enter that kingdom and did miracles to confirm that the kingdom had come (cf. 11:20).

The full bloom

of Galilean Spring.

Hearts were

joyous captives

of the King.[[6]](#endnote-6)

1. Read Mark 6:30-44 carefully.
2. Verse 34 states, “When Jesus landed an saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them.” What does this tell you about the hear of God (Psalm 103:8; Micah 7:18-19)?
3. Read John 6:35. What is the underlying, spiritual message in this feeding of the five thousand?
4. Read John 10:10 along with Ephesians 3:20-21. Mark 6:42 says, ‘They all   
   ate and were satisfied…” What is the underlying, spiritual message veiled in this verse?
5. (Personal Questions): What is the ‘bread of life’ you are eating to satisfy your soul? Is Jesus truly your Bread of Life? Are you finding complete joy and satisfaction in Christ and Christ alone? If not, what do you need to change in your life for Christ to truly be your personal Bread of Life and the One who brings you the abundant life?

1. John Nolland, *Luke 1—9:20* (Dallas: Word, 1999), 426. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 136. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Kent Hughes *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “*What does it mean to shake the dust off your feet?*” Got Questions Ministries, accessed February 17, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/shake-dust-off-feet.html] [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “*Who is Jesus Christ?*” Got Questions Ministries, accessed February 17, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/who-is-Jesus.html] [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Hughes, 338. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)