



## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

### *Christ Looks to Jerusalem*

Sermon Notes

**Luke 9:51-56**

**August 12, 2012**

**<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> And they went on to another village.**

- Just over sixteen months ago, we began our study of the Gospel According to Luke. And in the first sermon in this book (April 3, 2011), we examined six characteristics of the third Gospel:

1. Jesus Christ is the Son of Man
2. Jesus Christ is the Fulfillment of the Messianic Promises of the Old Testament
3. Christ Has Come to Seek and Save the Lost
4. The Centrality of the Holy Spirit in God’s Redemptive Plan
5. The Gospel is Hope for the Whole World (Jews and Gentiles) [and Outcasts]
6. God’s Sovereign Hand in Redemption History

- For the purposes of our study this morning, however, I would like to focus our attention on the sixth of these characteristics; namely, that **in the Gospel of Luke, we so clearly see God’s sovereign hand in the redemption of His people.**
  - Yet, Luke also makes it clear in His Gospel that **the cross was at the center of the Gospel message.**

- In Luke 24, Jesus makes it clear that it was “necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory...” and that all these things had to occur in order that “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”
- Therefore, Luke presents Christ **not as an innocent victim, but a purposeful Savior.**
- But as we have examined the Gospel of Luke over the past nearly year and a half, we have only seen a few veiled references to Christ’s crucifixion. For, up until now, Luke has mainly focused on **coming**, detailing the announcement and preparation for His birth through angels and then John the Baptist. We also learn of his baptism, temptation in the wilderness, gathering of disciples, and His Galilean ministry. In all of this, Luke is clearly demonstrating Christ’s fulfillment of the Father’s plan, and the Old Testament shadows and type, through His life and works.
  - However, this morning, in one short verse, the entire theme of Luke’s Gospel changes.

**“<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”**

- From here forward, no longer is the emphasis on our Lord’s coming, but it is now on His **going** – that is, His return to His Father.
- In the fact, the tone of Luke’s Gospel also shifts as well. Up until now, Christ has enjoyed relative popularity and fame. He has healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, and fed the hungry. As a result, the crowds have followed him and sought Him.
- Yet, now, as Christ turns His face to Jerusalem, things are about to change. In fact, opposition will slowly begin to build, beginning here in Samaria, as Christ gets closer to Jerusalem – and that fateful Passover.
- Furthermore, no longer will Christ’s ministry center in Galilee, for He is now heading south to Judea, and ultimately, to Jerusalem.

<p><b>I. The Resolve of Christ</b>  <b>II. The Rejection of Christ</b>  <b>III. The Mercy of Christ</b></p>
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## I. The Resolve of Christ

<sup>51</sup> *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

- Luke begins by writing, “When the days drew near...”
  - The word here translated, “drew near” is the Greek word (*sumplayraho*) which means “to be fulfilled,” or “completed.”
  - In other words, “When the days of the completion and fulfillment of God’s plan were approaching...”
  - The King James Version translates this phrase in a familiar way, “**And it came to pass...**” Echoing the beginning of the Luke 2 birth narrative as well as the unfolding of the Redemption story.
- The Luke states, “When the days drew near *for him to be taken up*...”
  - The word translated *the days drew near*, is actually a noun (“the days of his receiving up”), and only occurs here in the New Testament.
  - In this phrase, many believe Luke is referring to the Ascension of Jesus Christ. This is entirely possible, as the verb form of this noun is used of the Ascension of Christ elsewhere in the New Testament.
    - However, it does seem that a reference simply to the Ascension here would be perhaps too limiting. The reason for this is because in light of all of the Gospels, the phrase “*for Him to be taken up*” can very well refer to the glory of Christ in His crucifixion, for he was “lifted up” in perfect obedience to His Father’s will.

John 3:14-15: <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

- Just as some scholars see the phrase “for him to be taken up...” as a reference to the Ascension, others view it as a subtle reference to Elijah. This is also possible, since we know that Jesus was certainly the Elijah-type promised in the Old Testament (explicitly in Malachi).
- Not only this, but Luke 9:51 comes shortly after the great Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah stood as witnesses of Christ’s glory before Peter, James, and John.

- Yet, the late Leon Morris was most likely correct, when he stated that, “Whatever the truth in this (that is, to the interpretation of the phrase “for Him to be taken up,” Luke will have in mind the consummation of Jesus’ work in the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and session at God’s right hand (cf. 22:69). But first in this sequence is the cross...”

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- For, Luke continues, “<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, *he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*”

- In this short phrase, we learn of the profound obedience, resolve, and courage of our Lord.
- Christ knew exactly what was going to happen to Him, but He knew there was no other way to fulfill the Father’s plan, except through the Cross.

John Gill writes, “and though he knew what he was to meet with and endure; that he should bear the sins of his people, the curse of the law, and wrath of God; that he should have many enemies, men and devils to grapple with, and undergo a painful, shameful, and accursed death; yet none of these things moved him, he was resolutely bent on going thither, and accordingly prepared for his journey.”

- Christ not only knew that there was no other way except through the cross, but He also knew that **no one else could do this except Him.**
  - This is a critical point that we must understand – no one except Christ could save us from the judgment that is due us because of our sins.
  - In other words, our only hope is Christ.

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- Today we live in a time of great uncertainty, especially in terms of our economy. If we have learned anything from the difficult economic times over the past nearly four years, it is that we must be very prudent and pragmatic with our money and our investments. In fact, it would be foolish for us to invest all we had in one company, regardless of how strong its fundamentals may appear. In other words, we should never “put all of our eggs in one basket.”
  - Yet, when it comes to our hope for eternity, we must not ever use this type of “pragmatic” logic. In other words, **Christ is our only hope, and we must realize that everything with respect to our eternal well-being depends completely upon Him and His work.**

- Indeed, when Christ “fixed His face to Jerusalem,” He knew that the hope of the entire world rested squarely on His shoulders. No one else could have accomplished what He was purposing to do.
- The words of Christ also echo the words of the great prophet Isaiah, in one of his Suffering Servant passages:

Isaiah 50:6-7: “<sup>6</sup> I gave my back to those who strike,  
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;  
I hid not my face  
from disgrace and spitting.

<sup>7</sup> But the Lord GOD helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like a flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.”

- Once Christ fixed His face to Jerusalem, He never looked back.

## II. The Rejection of Christ

<sup>52</sup> *And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.* <sup>53</sup> *But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.*

- After “Jesus fixed His face to Jerusalem,” Luke writes that “**he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.**”
  - The point here was that Jesus sent some messengers, likely some of His apostles, ahead of him to make arrangements for lodging, food, etc., as Jesus and His band of disciples prepared to make the two-to-three day journey south to Jerusalem.
  - When Jews traveled from Galilee to Judea, or from Judea to Galilee, they almost always chose a route that bypassed Samaria and crossed east of the Jordan River through Perea. If they were traveling from Galilee to Judea, they would then cross back over the Jordan River at Jericho and then into Judea.
  - This journey would add an additional one to two days to a journey that would last about two to three days directly through Samaria.



- The Assyrians then deported all Israelites of influence and promise and filled the land of the Northern Kingdom with foreigners who worshipped other gods.
- These foreigners then intermarried with the remaining Israelites, mixing the foreign, idolatrous religions with the worship of Yahweh (2 Kings 17:25-33; 41).
- When the Jews (from Judah) returned from Babylonian exile under Ezra and Nehemiah, they first sought to rebuild the Temple that had been destroyed and had laid desolate for 70 years. According to Ezra 4:1-2, the Samaritans offered assistance, but the Jews rejected their service (Ezra 4:3).
  - Because of this, the Samaritans deeply resented the Jews and the two groups became hated enemies (Ezra 4:4; Nehemiah 4:1-3).
  - As the Samaritans were prohibited from worshipping at the Temple in Jerusalem, they established their own “rival” temple on Mount Gerazim in about 400 B.C.
  - At the end of the 2nd Century, B.C. (during the intertestamental period) the temple at Mount Gerizim was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler in Judea.
  - By the 1st Century, the Samaritans had developed their own religious heritage that they based on the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (the Pentateuch). In other words, they did not view the entire Old Testament as canonical, only the Torah.
- During the time of Jesus, the Jews still viewed the Samaritans as a group of wayward, unclean half-breeds.
- According to the apocryphal, intertestamental book Ecclesiasticus, the Jews referred to the Samaritans as “the stupid people living at Shechem” (50:25-26).

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Luke, then writes, “<sup>53</sup> ***But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.***”

- Here we read of the rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans.
- However, it must be noted that this was not “**personal**,” for the reason the Samaritans did not receive Christ was not because they rejected Him, per se (for it is possible they did not know of Him), but rather, it was **simply because He was going to Jerusalem.**

- According to the first century Jewish historian Josephus, the hatred that the Samaritans had for Jews was so great, that they were known to even murder pilgrims passing through from Galilee to Jerusalem.
- One of the main lessons here, though, is that the rejection of Christ by the Samaritans foreshadows our Lord's ultimate rejection **by the world**.
- Luke's thorough account of the trials and crucifixion of Christ clearly demonstrates that it was not just the Jews who were responsible for the death of our LORD, but the Romans as well. Therefore, **the entire world is culpable in the crucifixion of Christ**.

### III. The Mercy of Christ

<sup>54</sup> *And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"*<sup>55</sup> *But he turned and rebuked them.*<sup>56</sup> *And they went on to another village.*

- Luke then writes that "when his disciples James and John saw it (i.e., the rejection of Christ), they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?'"
  - To understand the rationale of James and John at this time, we must first remember that the two of them, along with Peter, had recently witnessed the Transfiguration of Christ.
  - On the Mount of Transfiguration, along with Jesus stood both Moses and Elijah, as witnesses to the glory of Christ.
  - Thus, with the image of Elijah fresh in their minds, James and John, it appears, were attempting to do exactly what the great prophet did to the messengers of the King of Israel, Ahaziah, as recorded in 2 Kings 1:2-12:

<sup>2</sup> Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness."<sup>3</sup> But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'<sup>4</sup> Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went.

<sup>5</sup> The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, "Why have you returned?"<sup>6</sup> And they said to him, "There came a man to meet us, and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'"<sup>7</sup> He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?"<sup>8</sup> They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

<sup>9</sup> Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” <sup>10</sup> But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

<sup>11</sup> Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, “O man of God, this is the king's order, ‘Come down quickly!’” <sup>12</sup> But Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

- Yet, **Luke writes that the Lord Jesus “turned and rebuked them.”** <sup>56</sup> **And they went on to another village.** NOTE: It is certainly no wonder that Jesus would refer to James and John as “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17).
- Christ’s point was clear: this was not the time for judgment, for Christ was still on a mission of mercy. The Samaritans still had time to repent, so the zeal of the disciples was misguided. Furthermore, **Christ is our Judge, not men.**

J.C. Ryle writes, “It is possible to have much zeal for Christ, and yet to exhibit it in most unholy and unchristian ways. It is possible to mean well and have good intentions, and yet to make most grievous mistakes in our actions. It is possible to fancy that we have Scripture on our side, and to support our conduct by Scriptural quotations, and yet to commit serious errors. It is clear as daylight, from this and other cases related in the Bible, that it is not enough to be zealous and *well-meaning*. Very grave faults are frequently committed with good intentions. From no quarter perhaps has the Church received so much injury as from ignorant but well-meaning men.”

- This episode also underscore one of the dominant themes in Luke’s Gospel. That is, Luke (being likely a Gentile himself) demonstrates that Christ is the Savior of the whole world, without distinction of race.
  - In fact, Luke’s genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, demonstrating that the Gospel was for the whole human race.
  - Yet, Luke’s message is not just for Gentiles, but for the outcasts of society as well (Luke 7:1-17; 14:15-23). The Gospel was available for women (even prostitutes), lepers, the demon-possessed, and tax-collectors.
  - And so, once again, the disciples were learning yet another lesson.
  - God is indeed, a God of mercy, and we are all in need of His grace - and His original disciples were no different.
- In closing, we look to another one of Luke’s books, the Book of Acts, particularly, **Acts 8:** <sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, . . . <sup>25</sup> Now when they had testified and spoken the word

of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”

- I now wonder, did John, perhaps, preach the Gospel of the risen and exalted Christ in the same village that, here in Luke 9, he wanted to destroy by fire? And, more specifically, were some of those who rejected Christ in Luke 9, in the number who received the Holy Spirit in Acts 8?
- The truth is that only God knows, and this is all that truly matters.
- What a gracious and merciful God we serve!