

Who Is This?

Once again Jesus is on the move to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God coming into our fallen world. But this time, He expands His preaching by sending the Twelve, who have been with Him from the beginning (see 8:1), to greatly multiply the effectiveness of His ministry (9:1-2). Luke has been careful to note that the disciples have been with Jesus, doing what disciples do – following, watching, learning – all that Jesus said and did among them (8:1). They have heard Him proclaiming the good news of God’s Kingdom through parables of which they were privileged to be given unique insight into their meaning (8:4-15; esp. v. 10). They have seen Him merely speak to the winds and waves and marveled as they obeyed His every Word (8:22-25). They watched as He directed and determined the destiny of demons as they cowered before His sovereign command (8:26-39). They saw His compassion as He exposed His power to an anonymous woman who had suffered for 12 years uncleanness, not only making her clean again but granting her peace with God (8:43-48). And they were astonished as they witnessed Jesus grant life itself to a young girl who had tasted the ultimate curse of the fall (8:40-42, 49-56).

Having observed the power of the King of God’s Kingdom, it is now time for a test run for the disciples to see what they have learned. After all, once Jesus pours His power upon them at Pentecost, they will, under His sovereign direction, be His primary witnesses of all Jesus has said and done to rescue mankind from their sin. Jesus begins by calling them together so that He might prepare them for what they are about to do. As the King, who is the source of all power and authority, Jesus grants them two abilities to fulfill their immediate calling: He gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (9:1).

Now, we need to take a moment to think about what Jesus gives them. First, Jesus gives them power. What is this power? Power is the ability to produce an effect. What is the goal of this power? Luke tells us it is power to direct and command demons to do what the disciples will them to do and to cure all diseases. Along with that power, Jesus transfers His sovereign authority to use that power according to His purposes. But why does Jesus give them His power and authority?

Think for a moment what these two destructive forces have done to God’s creation. Demons have wreaked havoc upon God’s beautiful creation. We can remember what Satan did to Job, even as God restrained the evil he could have brought to Job’s life, as an example of what Satan and his kingdom of demons have done to our world. As the adversary of God, he seeks to destroy all human life and spoil God’s plan for His creation. He is like a serpent who slithers

into the lives of those who are created in God's image to instill in them hopelessness and despair so that they will give up on their Creator to seek their own way that always leads to destruction.

Disease, while not a personal evil in our world, is most certainly a destructive effect which personally affects all humanity until it finally strangles life from every one of us. Disease in our world is not normal; it is not how God planned His creation to operate. It is the consequence of our sinful choice to rebel against our Creator and is a constant reminder of what we have done to the One who made us to enjoy Him forever.

When Jesus gives the disciples His power and authority over demons and diseases it is for the purpose of righting the wrongs that have spoiled God's creation. The power and authority they have been granted is to restore the creation back to God's original intention. But it is far more than that. Jesus sends them out to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. When they heal diseases or cast out demons that demonstration of God's power and authority will serve as visible evidence of both the reality and the power of God's Kingdom. But even more so, as Jesus' ambassadors, it will serve as a testimony to Jesus' true identity, who is the Source of all power and authority. It will prove for all who are touched by Jesus' power that He is in fact the Christ, the Messiah, promised by God (cf. 9:20).

As they go forward preaching the Gospel – the good news – of Jesus, the promised King who has come to bring God's Kingdom to earth, Jesus instructs them to follow a particular regimen, which they must carefully obey (vv. 3-4). Why? What do each of these items represent? There are two ways to go out into the wilderness. One way is to pack up all your gear, food, and creature comforts, which is called "camping." Some even go so far as to take a RV to a campground with all the comforts of home at their disposal. Another way to go into the wilderness would be in a survival situation where you basically have to live off the land by finding water, foraging and hunting for food, and building a shelter with what you can find in nature. Most people in that situation would not call it camping. It is the latter that Jesus is prescribing to His disciples. By doing so, Jesus is doing two things: first, He is teaching His disciples to trust Him and His Kingly power and authority to be sufficient for their every need, and second, He is going to demonstrate for them and for those who welcome them that the power that is being exercised through them is from God and not from them. Paul told the Corinthians on several occasions that God empowers the weak and helpless with His power so that we would know that the power is from Him and not from us, so that we would boast only in the LORD:

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Paul explains beautifully why he chose to preach the cross among the Corinthians who lusted for earthly power:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Everything that Jesus does is to bring glory to God. He comes not to merely make our lives here on earth easier, but to strip us of all self-reliance so that we can see that life is found only in Him. He loves you so much that He will remove all obstacles before you that are standing in your way of knowing Him, the fullness of joy. If He is life itself, the very purpose for your existence, the greatest gift He could give you is Himself.

But there will always those who refuse to welcome Jesus. And when they do, Jesus tells the Twelve to leave them and shake off the dust from their feet (**v. 5**). This is symbol of the judgment of God that not even the dust of their can go forward with the Kingdom of God. Instead, they are to erase all connections rebels might gain from enjoyment in God's Kingdom as a testimony to when God will banish all who reject His Son into Hell.

In **v. 6**, Luke simply tells us that what Jesus has commissioned them to do, they did. Once again, the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is going forward and Satan's kingdom is being shaken. The rippling effects of demons being cast out, diseases being healed, and the Gospel being proclaimed has caused Satan's allies to take notice. One such ally is represented by Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee (**v. 7**). Luke reports that he was perplexed wondering who this might be (**v. 7**). While Luke doesn't record the death of John by the evil and lawless hands of Herod, you can read about it in **Matt. 14:1-12** and **Mark 6:14-29**. Herod had thought he had squashed all his opposition and yet the preaching of the Kingdom of God continues. His advisors warned him that the prophet he beheaded might have been raised from

the dead (v. 7), or it could be the promised coming of Elijah (cf. **Mal. 3:1; Mk. 6:14-15**), or one of the prophets of old like Moses (cf. **Deut. 18:15**), Isaiah, or Jeremiah (cf. **Matt. 16:14**).

Herod's world must have been greatly disturbed for him to look at what the disciples of Jesus were doing and think such a visitation from God's representatives had fallen upon him. If he thinks it could possibly be John, risen from the dead, knowing what he did in trying to stop the Word of God, Herod must be beside himself. We must wonder what his intention was in wanting to see Jesus (v. 9). Was it, like his father, Herod the Great, to have Jesus killed (cf. **Matt. 2:16-18**)? We know that in **Luke 13** that Jesus is warned that Herod wants to kill Him (**13:31**). Could it be that Herod simply wants to trifle with Jesus as when he requests Jesus to show him a miracle (**23:8**)?

While Herod appears to be so discombobulated that he is grasping for any possible answer to who Jesus is, there is some truth in the answers he comes up with. In a few short days, both Moses and Elijah will once again appear on the earth and they will give testimony to Peter, John, and James that Jesus is in fact the Christ of God (cf. **9:28-30**). But when Peter attempts to hold onto the glory days of the past, Moses and Elijah depart because all that is necessary for the world to hear is standing right in front of them. As they stood there wondering where Moses and Elijah were, suddenly the glory cloud of God surrounded them as it did on Mt. Sinai, when Moses appeared before God (**Ex. 19:9, 16-20**) or as it did when fire rained down upon the earth and consumed Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel (**1 Ki. 18:38**), but there was no one left but Jesus. Who is this? Peter must have wondered if they were somehow handicapped without Moses and Elijah. Surely that was God's promise that they would return at the end of the age and make all things right again. What are they going to do now that these great prophets of old have left them? If only the glory days of the past would come again and God's people would be free. But then, in the midst of their confusion, the voice of God spoke, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!" (**9:35**).

Has the world ever heard such good news? Has such a melody of words ever been spoken sweeter than these? God Himself confirms for Peter that his earlier confession was exactly right – Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God. He is promised One who fills full all that Moses and Elijah pointed forward to, all that John prepared for, all who Israel had longed for not only in the consolation of Israel, but in the consolation of the whole world. He is in one word – the Gospel – the good news from God and He has come to spread God's Kingdom into human hearts who have been prepared by God to hear Him and to hold fast to every word that proceeds from the mouth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen! – SDG-