

The feeding of the five-thousand was followed by the crowds wanting to make Jesus a king (John 6:15ⁱ). Jesus sent the disciples across the lake without Him, and then He escaped the crowds by going up into the mountain. Later that night, He came walking on the lake to the disciples. They were in another storm that kept them from their destination. Peter tried to walk out on the water to Jesus, but his eyes went from Jesus to the waves. He started to sink, and Jesus had to rescue him. Upon reaching their destination the crowds again gathered around Jesus. He told them they wanted to be fed physically but not spiritually (John 6:26ⁱⁱ). That was the end of the ministry in Galilee. After some hard sayings from Jesus, the crowds left Him. From there Jesus went on into the Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon, Caesarea Philippi, and the Decapolis. Luke skips over the trip to Tyre and Sidon and moves to the events at Caesarea Philippi.

¹⁸ Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" ¹⁹ And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen."

Luke 9:18,19 Only Luke tells us that Jesus was alone praying when this took place. Luke has mentioned this habit of prayer several times. It is an important point. We struggle spending time in prayer because our old nature does not like it. We prefer to do what we want, when we want, the way we want. Prayer that listens to God is prayer that directs our day in His ways instead of our own. That is usually costly in time and energy. No wonder, then, that we struggle to be still and listen. We can shoot off our requests, but to be still and know He is God is an effort (Psalm 46:10ⁱⁱⁱ). It was key to Jesus' ministry.

Jesus asked the disciples to tell Him who people say that He is. Herod asked the question in verse 9^{iv}. The miracle of the feeding of the five-thousand answered the question. He is Jehovah Jireh, God the Provider (Genesis 22:8^v, 14^{vi}). He creates at will.

Some thought He was John the Baptist. That is a strange idea because their lives had been contemporaneous. Did they think John's spirit jumped into Jesus' body? Others said He was Elijah. That made more sense, as Elijah raised the dead (1 Kings 17:21^{vii}), performed miracles, and was to come before the Messiah and make the way for Him (Malachi 4:5^{viii}). That was John the Baptist's role (Matthew 11:13,14^{ix}). Others thought one of the prophets had risen from the dead. Islam thinks Jesus was a prophet. Many Jews today have come to that conclusion. Another gospel adds the suggestion of Jeremiah. Jesus did weep in several accounts and Jeremiah was the weeping prophet (John 11:35^x).

²⁰ Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Luke 9:20 Jesus asked the disciples who *they* say He is. Peter's answer, "The Christ of God!" means God's Messiah. That statement is loaded with all the content of the Messianic predictions, the virgin birth, God with us (Isaiah 7:14^{xi}), the light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6^{xii}), the suffering servant of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:5,6^{xiii}), the sacrificial atonement through His death, all the names of Isaiah 9:6^{xiv}, and one day the One who reigns forever on David's throne, and who judges mankind on the final day.

Christ of God literally means God's anointed. The ones who were anointed with oil were the priests and kings. Jesus is God's king priest. In other words, He is the final answer to man's rebellion. **He is the solution that will satisfy both God's love and His justice.**

How do people today answer the question of who Jesus is? In C.S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity* he debunked the most common answers to the question, which is that "He was a good moral teacher." He writes, *I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "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 the 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 with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*

If you understand the Gospel writers in their Jewish context, there is no doubt they believed He is the Messiah of God and Savior of the world. The other response skeptics like to use is that over time the disciples distorted the message and gradually came to the wrong conclusion, one that Jesus' never taught. That implies the gospel writers made up the sayings of Jesus or distorted them. That means they are liars. It also implies that Jesus had no discernment in choosing those who would convey His message and that He failed to make it clear to those He lived with for three years. How morally enlightened could He have been if that was the case? The charge is illogical.

Prayer had directed Jesus to the right question that would prepare the disciples for the final year of ministry. They first said what people thought. Then they had to answer for themselves. This meant they had to be prepared to contradict the public and take a stand. Was He the Messiah, or wasn't He? The declaration was made and now it would be challenged and confirmed by the resurrection, which would prepare them for His departure.

Eventually everyone must answer the question. Who do you say Jesus was and is presently? A lunatic? A now dead misguided rabbi? A fraud? Or is He who He declared Himself to be, the way, the truth, and the life and the only way to God (John 14:6^{xv})?

²¹ *And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,* Luke 9:21 If the public believed that Jesus was the Messiah, thousands of people would have come to follow Him and to fight for a physical kingdom. The results would have been a lot of dead bodies, wives without husbands, and children without fathers. There was already enough of that. The public did not understand the spiritual kingdom would come before the physical kingdom. It would have also most likely have meant the early death of the disciples. Jesus was training them to advance the spiritual kingdom. They would be martyred soon enough. That is why Jesus strictly charged and commanded them not to tell anyone. Jesus was forceful about this issue because He knew God's timing and it had not yet come. He did not want to see needless death and suffering over a misunderstanding of what He had come to do.

What did He mean by being killed and rising? These words sounded nonsensical to the disciples. If Jesus is the Messiah, then He will reign on the throne of David forever (Isaiah 9:7^{xvi}). Maybe they thought Jesus was speaking in a parable. But it was very literal. The fact that He warned them ahead of time should have helped them when it came to pass to understand it was all a part of God's plan.

²² saying, *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”* Luke 9:22 Jesus started to explain to them where their view of the Messiah was in error. He had come to die to conquer death. What is the Roman occupation compared to our enemy, death? What is a short time of suffering compared to the eternal salvation of all who will respond to Jesus' invitation to have life (Romans 8:18^{xvii})? The disciples must have been shocked by His words. One minute He affirmed He is the Messiah, and the next He says that He will suffer and die. One minute they are thinking of reigning with Him, and the next they are wondering if they will die with Him. Jesus did not want people to get their hopes set on the wrong things and then doubt all they had seen because it did not turn out as they expected. Even with this warning, they holed up in the upper room, fearful and dejected.

We can have our false expectations as well, whether it is from false teachers or our own misunderstanding of the Word. Then when things don't turn out like we had believed they should, we start to doubt our faith and wonder where God is. We neglected to see that it has been granted to us on behalf of Christ not only to believe on His name, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29^{xviii}). We skipped over the verse that said that it is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22^{xix}). **We may not understand the hand of God, but we can trust His heart.** Trials build our character. Unbelievers go through similar troubles, but for them it either brings them to faith or it is seen as meaningless suffering with nothing gained.

Jesus' suffering meant the salvation of the world. Our suffering teaches us patience, endurance, and builds our character (Romans 5:3-5^{xx}). It is so needful that James tells us to count it all joy when we face trials of many kinds (James 1:2-4^{xxi}). Knowing this does not make the difficulty easier, but it does give us hope and courage. In many cases it helps us more speedily get through to the other side of our trials. Jesus has warned us too. He said, ^{33b} *“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33b We can take heart in our tribulation knowing Jesus has the victory for us and will see us through. We'll be better for it!

²³ *And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* Luke 9:23 This is Jesus' invitation to all people. If you want to be a follower of Jesus, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him. Jesus goes on to explain that trying to save your life for your own pleasures and goals will end in losing life. That is to claim your time as yours to spend as you will. It is when everything revolves around you and your desires. **“Would save is rather ‘wills to save’.** *It points to the attitude of one who puts his emphasis on getting the best out of life for himself.”* Leon Morris - Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Luke.

To deny yourself is to yield the throne of your life to Jesus and die to self-centeredness. It is to give Him control and let Him direct your use of time and energy. It is to find pleasure in doing His will and living for the goals He sets rather than self-indulgence. It is when your life revolves around Him. Jesus is defining true discipleship. Being a disciple was not just for the first century.

I once thought that this meant that we were not to find pleasure in anything but Him. It is the way of the ascetic, avoiding any pleasure. He had to show me that I should enjoy nature and all His good gifts if I realize they come from His hand and see His

goodness in those gifts (1 Timothy 6:17^{xxii}). The temptation is to put the enjoyment of those gifts above the Giver. We must always check our hearts' focus.

To take up one's cross means you realize you are on your way to your death. When the Roman ruler said, "Put the cross on the man!", that man was on his way to his execution. In other words, understand that this is to the death. There is no turning back (Luke 9:62^{xxiii}). It will not be easy, and in fact, you will be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1^{xxiv}). I want to say again that this does not mean you will not experience joy. This path brings greater joy than the world can offer (John 17:13^{xxv}). It is deeper, richer, and eternal. But it comes with persecution and self-denial.

The last requirement is to daily follow Jesus. That means to daily go, do, and say what He directs. We deny our right to say what we want because we are carrying the cross of discipleship. We choose not to go where we want because we have directions from our Master. He leads us by His Word and His Holy Spirit. Our old nature often balks at His directions because we don't understand what He is doing, and we think we have a better idea or that we have a different desire or plan for the day. The disciple holds his or her plans loosely and welcomes God's change of direction.

This is an area in which we often struggle. I'm task oriented. I know what I want to accomplish for Jesus today. So, when God interjects a big change, I often get frustrated that I can't get accomplished what I wanted to do for Jesus. When you put it that way it becomes clear that I'm trying to please God in the way I want instead of letting Him lead. I must tell myself, "Let go and let God." I have to remind myself that I just want His will and He can take care of anything I thought had to be done.

²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Luke 9:24 This is why the invitation is so important. We can go our own way and find a lot of temporal pleasures and try to avoid pain. Good luck avoiding pain. And in the end, we will find we lost what we were after. How sad. It has been compared to climbing a tall ladder to get to the top of a building and upon reaching the top finding it was the wrong building.

The Christian must realize that he is given life, not to keep it for himself, but to spend it for others; not to husband its flame, but to burn himself out for Christ and for men. Barclay, The Gospel of Luke, the Daily Study Bible, 1967 St Andrews Press- The life of self-denial following Jesus has richer pleasures now, purpose in the pain, strength from above to finish the fight, and eternal pleasure of the best kind forever (Psalm 16:11^{xxvi}). Just like the previous passage told the disciples clearly that Jesus would be killed and rise from the dead, so He now lays out the eternal truth of the great decision in life. Save your life and find you lost it or lose your life for His sake and truly find it. Paul said that to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21^{xxvii}). What could be more exciting than letting Jesus live in and through you? What could be more fulfilling than living out what you were created to be and do?

I don't want to sugar coat discipleship. There will be persecution (2 Timothy 3:12^{xxviii}). You will lose friends over this. Sometimes we lose our jobs over it. We may lose our finances and worldly security because of it. Jesus warns us in numerous passages that it is not easy and often is quite painful, but it is worth it! It gains for us an incomparable reward that far outweighs the cost (2 Corinthians 4:17^{xxix}).

²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? Luke 9:25 I have met very wealthy people in my lifetime. They struggle with the

same things most people do. They wish their marriage relationship was better. They worry about losing their wealth. They have the additional burden of not knowing who has befriended them simply for personal gain. We look from the outside and see the beautiful home and nice cars and toys, but if we were to look inside the home at night we would find their hearts are burdened like anyone else. **Wealth and/or fame can never fill the void in the human heart. In many cases it only makes it bigger.** That is why we hear of the suicides of some of the most famous people. They always think a little more will satisfy, but it never does. We can devote our lives to wealth and fame and in the end find we have forfeited ourselves. We miss the very purpose for which we were created, to know God and enjoy Him forever.

There is nothing wrong with wealth if it is kept in its place. There is nothing wrong with fame if it doesn't go to one's head. It is when we exalt those things above Christ instead of using them for His glory that we come up empty. We must never forget that before long we will leave all behind, and in a generation, no one will remember us.

One hundred and eighty years after the death of Charlemagne, about the year 1000, officials of the Emperor Otho opened the great king's tomb, where in addition to incredible treasures they saw an amazing sight—the skeletal remains of King Charlemagne seated on a throne, his crown still on his skull, a copy of the Gospels lying in his lap with his bony finger resting on the text, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" - Hughes, Kent - Preaching the Word – Luke, Volume I: That You May Know the Truth.

²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Luke 9:26 The reality of life can't be more clearly stated. Our culture is trying to shame us into not saying the name of Jesus or bring up His words. The desire to avoid conflict and scorn can silence us. But Jesus warns that to be ashamed of Him, the One who died for us, and His words, will mean that He will be ashamed of us at His return. What a sobering warning. Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus added that if we acknowledge Jesus before others, He will acknowledge us before the Father (Matthew 10:32^{xxx}).

²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:27 Many are confused by this verse. There are two common interpretations. The first is that it is followed by the transfiguration, a foretaste of the kingdom of God. The other is that it is referring to Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out and the church began. Mark 9:1^{xxxi} adds "in power". They will not die until the kingdom comes in power. The end of this Gospel tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on high (24:49^{xxxii}). That was Pentecost (Acts 1:8^{xxxiii}). These cross-references lead me to believe that is what Jesus meant.

Jesus had just spoken of the day we stand before the Father and He either confesses knowing us or denies knowing us. While this could refer to the Lord's return, I believe it is more likely simply saying when we "taste (experience) of death". Thus, Jesus encouragement of not dying before they see the kingdom, in other words of being filled with the Spirit and having the power to confess Him before men with our lives. Jesus equated "see the kingdom" with being "born-again" when He spoke with Nicodemus (John 3:3^{xxxiv}). In that context, Jesus' words would have comforted those who feared Jesus would be ashamed of them before the Father, as they would have the power to acknowledge Him before they die because of the power of the Holy Spirit in them. We

should take that comfort as well. If you yield to the Holy Spirit, there will be many times in your life when you confess Jesus before men with your life and words.

Our passage today challenges us to be honest about who we are living for and who we believe Jesus to be. If He is our Creator and the giver of all we have, He is worthy of our complete devotion. Who do you believe that He is?

Questions

- 1 What was Jesus doing just before He popped the question?
- 2 What were the public's answers?
- 3 What was Peter's answer? What does it imply?
- 4 What are the logically plausible answers today?
- 5 Why not tell people who He is?
- 6 What can we learn from Jesus warning?
- 7 What does it mean to take up one's cross?
- 8 What does it mean to follow Jesus?
- 9 In what ways do we deny or confess Jesus?
- 10 What does verse 27 mean?

ⁱ **John 6:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

ⁱⁱ **John 6:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Psalms 46:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

^{iv} **Luke 9:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

^v **Genesis 22:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

^{vi} **Genesis 22:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

^{vii} **1 Kings 17:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again."

^{viii} **Malachi 4:5 (ESV)**

⁵ "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

^{ix} **Matthew 11:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴ and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

^x **John 11:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ Jesus wept.

^{xi} **Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

^{xii} **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

^{xiii} **Isaiah 53:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

^{xiv} **Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)**

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

^{xv} **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xvi} **Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

^{xvii} **Romans 8:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

^{xviii} **Philippians 1:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

^{xix} **Acts 14:22 (ESV)**

²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

^{xx} **Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)**

³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

^{xxi} **James 1:2-4 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

^{xxii} **1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

^{xxiii} **Luke 9:62 (ESV)**

⁶² Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

^{xxiv} **Romans 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

^{xxv} **John 17:13 (ESV)**

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

^{xxvi} **Psalms 16:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

^{xxvii} **Philippians 1:21 (ESV)**

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

^{xxviii} **2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

^{xxix} **2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

^{xxx} **Matthew 10:32 (ESV)**

³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,

^{xxx} **Mark 9:1 (ESV)**

¹ And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

^{xxxii} **Luke 24:49 (ESV)**

⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

^{xxxiii} **Acts 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

^{xxxiv} **John 3:3 (ESV)**

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."