

Transfiguration of Our Lord

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 34:1-12

The Death of Moses

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 And the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, 6 and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. 7 Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. 8 And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. 9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10 And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

34:1-4 The Lord may have granted Moses a onetime, unlimited view of the land as well as a onetime view into the future of Israel’s occupation. (TLSB)

34:1 *Moses climbed Mount Nebo.* In obedience to the Lord’s command in 32:48–52. (CSB)

The mountain traditionally identified as Mount Nebo is located about twelve miles east of where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea, and rises more than 2600 feet above sea level. The Dead Sea is the lowest spot in the world, 1300 feet below sea level. What a dramatic view of this land that Moses long to see all his life! (PBC)

as far as Dan – To see as far north as Dan or far west as the Mediterranean would have required a supernatural gift from the Lord. (PBC)

34:4 *I let you see it* – By inviting Moses to view the extent of the land, the Lord showed one last act of kindness to this special leader of His people. But maybe it was more than that. Biblical precept, as well as later Roman law, let a man “view” land he was about to possess. Perhaps this was the Lord’s way of giving Moses a legal guarantee that the men and women he led for so long would really inherit the land, though he would die before it happened. (PBC)

The Lord had a far better promised land in mind for Moses. The writer to the Hebrews included Moses on his last list of believers throughout the OT era – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others. “All these people were still living by faith when they died,” the author wrote. (PBC)

They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth... they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13,16). (PBC)

you shall not go over there – While Moses had done many great things for God and by God’s help in leading the Israelites, but there was an incompleteness about his work. Moses had struck the rock twice instead of once like God had told him when water was needed in the desert. There are consequences for sin and this was the price that Moses paid.

Moses was allowed to stand in the Promised Land at Christ’s transfiguration, however (Mt 17:1–8). (TLSB)

34:5 *servant of the LORD*. A special title used to refer to those whom the Lord, as the Great King, has taken into his service; they serve as members of God’s royal administration. For example, it was used especially of Abraham (Ge 26:24), Moses (Ex 14:31), Joshua (Jos 24:29), David (2Sa 7:5), the prophets (2Ki 9:7), Israel collectively (Isa 41:8), and even a foreign king the Lord used to carry out his purposes (Jer 25:9). See notes on Ex 14:31; Isa 42:1–4. (CSB)

The final measure of Moses’ long life was that he was the Lord’s servant. Moses was in good company. Abraham (Gen 26:24), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), David (2 Sam 7:5), the prophets (2 Kings 9:7), and Paul (Romans 1:1) were also called the Lord’s servants. (PBC)

34:6 *no one knows the place of his burial* – Its exact location was not revealed. From the letter of Jude, v.9, we know that the archangel Michael contended with the devil for the body of Moses. (Kretzmann)

LXX takes the verb impersonally (“they buried”), and some Jewish commentators, believe angels were involved in the burial. Unlike Elijah, Moses was not bodily translated into heaven. His burial by the Lord has been interpreted to mean that his lifeless body was immune to decay (cf Jude). Aphrahat says, “Two goodly benefits did his Lord accomplish for Moses in not making known his tomb to the children of Israel. He rejoiced that his adversaries should not know it, and cast forth his bones from his tomb; and in the second place, that the children of his should not know it, and make his tomb a place of worship.” (TLSB)

34:7 *a hundred and twenty years old*. Moses lived well beyond eighty years. His 120 years divides neatly into three forty-year spans: the first, in Egypt as a young man in Pharaoh’s household; the second, in Midian shepherding his father-in-law’s flocks; the third, in the wilderness leading Israel to the edge of Canaan (Exodus 7:7; Acts 7:23-30) (PBC)

eye was undimmed – Moses is described as having such vigor that his eyes were not dim and the appearance of his face had not changed when he died in his one hundred and twentieth year. This is recounted as an outstanding miracle, since it is written that the rest of the fathers, as Isaac, Jacob, Eli, and others, had dimming eyes because of old age;² and to the present day those who are a little more advanced in age fail in eyesight and appearance. (Leupold)

Until his death, Moses was blessed by the Lord with the stamina and vigor to lead God’s people. (TLSB)

34:8 *Israel wept*. Most commentators, Jewish and Christian, agree that Joshua wrote this chapter and added it as a sort of postscript to the five books of Moses. (PBC)

34:9 *Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit* – Just as the Lord called Moses and the Holy Spirit sanctified him for the Lord’s work through the Word, now the Holy Spirit would sanctify Joshua to lead God’s people. (TLSB)

laid his hands on him – Signified the public and final transfer of authority to Joshua. Cyril of Jerusalem: “In the days of Moses, the Spirit was given by laying on of hands.... And on you also, who are about to be baptized, shall His grace come” (NPNF 2 7:122). (TLSB)

34:10 *no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses.* See note on 18:15. (CSB)

face to face. See Nu 12:8 and note. (CSB)

This Moses very great and special. But he still needed Joshua to complete the trip to the Promised Land. And he needed Jesus (the second Joshua) to come and make the trip to heaven complete. On Transfiguration Sunday we see Moses again face-to-face with God and this time can see the completion (death and resurrection) of Jesus’ ministry. That completion will allow all of us to one day see God face-to-face as made our exodus from this earth.

34:12 *there has not arisen a prophet since.* Until Jesus came, no one was superior to Moses. See Heb 3:1–6, where Moses the “servant” (Heb 3:5) is contrasted with Christ the “son” (Heb 3:6). (CSB)

During the entire wilderness journey. Only one prophet is greater than Moses, by his own testimony, namely, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. Through His life, suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation He earned for us the eternal redemption from the power of death and hell. (Kretzmann)

Moses’ service was unique because he enjoyed a more intimate relationship with the Lord than any OT prophet before or after him. No other prophet could claim what Moses claimed: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friends (Exodus 33:11). Moses’ service was unequalled also because he performed more miraculous signs by the Lord’s power than an OT prophet before or after him. (PBC)

Ch 34 The conclusion of Dt signals a transition in leadership from Moses to Joshua, a transition from the oral communication of the Word to the written communication of the Word, a transition from the wilderness wanderings to the eventual occupation of the Promised Land. Moses’ final messages to the people include both warnings (in the words of a song) and promises (in the words of a blessing). The promises in Moses’ blessing point to the One “counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Heb 3:3), namely Christ, because while Moses was a faithful servant of God who spoke God’s Word, Christ is Son of God (Heb 3:6), whom God appointed heir of all things (Heb 1:2). “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:17). Although Moses disqualified himself from entering the Promised Land because of his disobedience, God allowed him to see firsthand the fulfillment of all Scripture, for Moses and us, at Christ’s transfiguration. • Father, when I close my eyes in death, awaken me to behold Your glory and see You face-to-face, through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 3:1-6

esus Greater Than Moses

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2 who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. 3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4 (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6 but Christ is faithful over

God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

3:1–4:13 An exposition of Ps 95:7–11, stressing Christ's superiority over Moses and warning against disobedience and unbelief. (CSB)

Steadily the author has been advancing the argument that Jesus is superior to anyone and anything. Now he turns to the OT figure most significant in Jewish history and thought. It is very difficult for a Jew to think of anyone greater than Moses. Even the NT refers to Moses' greatness, mentioned him some 80 times, more often than any other OT figure. But great as Moses was Jesus was far greater. As a result, to forsake Jesus would bring results far more terrible than to forsake Moses. What a warning for those Jewish readers being tempted by persecution to do just that. (PBC)

3:1 *holy brothers* – All people God the Father has adopted through faith in His Word (Jn 1:12–13). No one can, by his own power, make himself holy. But God calls people to share in His gift of holiness (cf 1Pt 1:15). (TLSB)

heavenly calling. The invitation that comes from heaven and leads to heaven. (CSB)

SOFTLY and gently the apostle draws them to Christ by calling them “holy” and, as it were, flattering them. Here he teaches us that we should not preach Christ with fury or with a tempest of words. Indeed, Christ can be preached in no other way than peacefully and calmly. For roaring talk pertains to the Law, as has been pictured in Ex. 20:18, where the hearers were terrified by the sound of the trumpet, the darkness of the mountain, and the fire of the lightning. Likewise in 1 Kings 19:11 ff., where, after the wind, after the earthquake, and after the fire, there came “a still small voice,” and there the Lord was. Therefore the Law should be revealed with thunderbolts to those who are foolish and stiff-necked, but the Gospel should be presented gently to those who are terrified and humbled. Therefore Is. 42:1, 3 says about Christ: “Behold, My Servant.... A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not quench”; that is, He will prefer to console the timid and the afflicted. (Luther)

consider Jesus – Serious attention was necessary; careful, constant study of Jesus. The use of the personal name immediately focuses attention on His work on earth, the mission God became man in order to fulfill. (PBC)

apostle. Means “one who is sent” (see notes on Mk 6:30; 1Co 1:1). Jesus repeatedly spoke of himself as having been sent into the world by the Father (e.g., Mt 10:40; 15:24; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48; Jn 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36–38; 6:38). He is the supreme apostle, the one from whom all other apostleship flows. (CSB)

high priest of our confession – A new way of speaking, but one that comes from a Hebrew idiom and expresses the matter with remarkable fitness, since our whole work is a confession, as Ps. 96:6 says: “Confession and beauty are before Him” (that is, in His church), “holiness and magnificence are in His sanctification.” And Ps. 111:3: “Confession and magnificence are His work.” The meaning of these verses is expressed in Ps. 145:5: “They will speak of the magnificence of the glory of Thy holiness, and will tell Thy wondrous works,” which states that everything they say and do is praise, confession, magnificence, and sanctification, with which they praise, confess, glorify, and sanctify Thee. Yet all this is Thy work in them, as Ps. 8:2 says: “Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings Thou hast fashioned praise.” Likewise Is. 43:21: “This people I have formed for Myself; they will declare My praise.” Therefore Christ has on the cross the title King of the Jews, that is, of the confessors. This confession is understood as a confession not only of sins but also of praise. Indeed, the confession of sins and of praise is one and the same confession, unless it is the confession of those Jews who are named for Judas Iscariot, that is, the confession of those who are despaired of [צָרָה, that is, wages]. For that is the true confession

with which a man gives the glory to God with regard to righteousness, wisdom, virtue, and all works but gives nothing to himself except sin, foolishness, and weakness, and that with a true mouth, heart, and work. And in this statement the apostle distinguishes confessions, yes, even possessions. For with respect to the world it would be appropriate to say that God is Lord or King of lands, rivers, cities, beasts, etc. For such possessions do not consist in confessions or words but in things. Furthermore, the synagogue also had its own confession, namely, that of Moses, because it dealt with the physical wonders by which it was redeemed from the weakness, poverty, and toil of Egypt. Therefore the apostle speaks of “our,” that is, a new confession, because we believe, declare, and confess other wonders, namely, redemption from spiritual weakness, toil, and poverty. Therefore Moses is the apostle of their confession, but Christ is the Apostle of our confession. Therefore Chrysostom interprets “of our confession” to mean “of our faith.” Yet in his interpretation there seems to be a metonymy, that is, the use of one thing for that of another associated with it, namely, of “faith” for its own work, which is confession, just as the grammarians take “Mars” as a term for war, “Minerva” as a term for the arts. (Luther)

Priests in the OT offered sacrifices, but they also revealed God’s will through their teaching. In the NT, God sent apostles to speak on His behalf. Jesus is the High Priest and Apostle who fully reveals God’s will and fulfills both testaments. (TLSB)

The joint title “the apostle and high priest” also focuses on that work of the God-man Christ. Apostle used only here of Jesus in the NT, involves the thought of mission, referring to one who is commissioned for something. God had sent His Son as the authorized envoy to speak for Him and carry out His will. High priest refers to the sacrificial nature of His mission as we have already seen in 2:17 and will see again later in greater detail. (PBC)

3:2 A comparison of Christ and Moses, both of whom were sent by the Father to lead his people—the one to lead them from bondage under Pharaoh to the promised land, the other to lead them from bondage under the devil (2:14–15) to the Sabbath-rest promised to those who believe (4:3, 9). The Sabbath-rest may be heaven, though many hold that it refers primarily to the salvation-rest of Christ’s redemption. The analogy focuses on faithful stewardship. (CSB)

Jesus’ superiority to Moses was not a matter of faithfulness. Both were faithful in carrying out their assigned tasks. In Numbers 12:7 God Himself said of Moses, “He is faithful in all my house,” Moses poured out his life in service to the house of Israel, God’s chosen OT people. He even offered to have his name blotted out of God’s book in exchange for them. Nor can anyone doubt Jesus’ faithfulness to the one who had commissioned Him apostle and high priest. In John 17:4 on Maundy Thursday evening He could say to His Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave Me to do.” (PBC)

appointed him – The Father’s will is that His Son should reveal the fullness of His grace (cf Ac 3:20). (TLSB)

just as Moses – Greatest OT example of a faithful leader. But Jesus surpasses Moses as the faithful leader in worship and in life. (TLSB)

God’s house – People of Israel, the household of faith in Moses’ time. (TLSB)

3:3 *the builder ... has greater honor than the house.* Jesus is the actual builder of the house (or household), whereas Moses was simply a part of it. (CSB)

The creator has more honor than what is created, because what is created depends on the creator for existence. Jesus is the creator of Moses and Israel and is worthy of more honor. Luth: “Whatever Moses

ordered at God's command he did only in view of the Christ who was to come. Thus the people were to be prepared for the personal rule of Christ, who was to dwell among them as in His own house.... Moses and the priesthood count for nothing, compared with Christ. They are under obligation; and since He is the true Lord, they must hand over the keys to Him and serve Him" (AE 13:305). (TLSB)

The point of comparison was not faithfulness, but position. No one would give to any house, no matter how grandiosely built and furnished, more honor than that given to the builder. Moses was only part of the house of Israel. Jesus as God was the builder of that house, just as He is the builder of everything. (PBC)

3:4 *every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.* Jesus is here equated with God, making it beyond question that Christ is greater than Moses. (CSB)

All creation owes its being and daily life to God. (TLSB)

3:5-6 *a servant in all God's house ... a son over God's house.* The superiority of Christ over Moses is shown in two comparisons: (1) Moses was a servant, whereas Christ is a son, and (2) Moses was in God's house, i.e., a part of it, whereas Christ is over God's house. (CSB)

This phrase refers not to some slave who serves because he has to, but to a free servant who serves because he wants to. He was a faithful servant as shown by the refrain running through Exodus, "According to all the Lord commanded, , so did he" His greatest service was testifying to what would be said in the future. In John 5:46 Jesus explained what this meant when He told the Jew of His day, "If you believed in Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about me." (PBC)

The house spoken of is described in Ephesians 2:20-21 as the "household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord." All believers of OT and NT are part of this glorious house, built on and ruled by the Son. (PBC)

3:5 *testify to the things that were to be spoken* – Again one sees a Hebraic way of speaking. For in this way God calls His Word and His preachers witnesses. Ps. 81:8 says: "Hear, O My people, and I will call you to witness." The Latin language cannot express this verb adequately with one word. But the meaning is this, that in the future I will speak a Word in your [singular] midst or among you [plural]. (For the Hebrew has "I will call to witness in you.") This Word will not be a manifestation of things at hand, but it will be a testimony of things not seen. Therefore it is necessary for you to hear what you will not be able to see or grasp. For thus Christ says in John 3:11: "Truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony." For in this passage (Ps. 81:8) both verbs, namely, "hear" and "I will call to witness," are used independently. This means that you shall be the hearer, and I will be the Preacher. For what Christ has said about heaven and the life to come is grasped only by hearing, since it transcends not only all understanding, be it ever so deep, but also all capability of desiring, be it ever so extensive. Therefore the testimony of the Lord is the Word of faith, hidden wisdom; it is understood by children. Is. 53:1 also calls it something that is heard. There we read: "Lord, who has believed what we have heard?" This means the Word we cause to be heard by preaching the Gospel. (Luther)

And surely the Word of God is most appropriately called a testimony. For just as in legal disputes whatever judgment is passed on the basis of the reports of witnesses is arrived at by hearing alone and believed because of faith, since it cannot be known in any other way, neither by perception nor by reason, so the Gospel is received in no other way than by hearing. And for this reason the apostles are called witnesses of Christ, as Is. 43:10 states: "Truly you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My servant

whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He.” Thus Ps. 122:4 also says: “To that place did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, Israel a testimony.” In my opinion this ought to have been translated as follows: “To that place did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord as a testimony to Israel.” For since the Hebrew has “to Israel,” or “for Israel,” in the dative, and “testimony,” in the ablative case, it should, according to our texts, be taken as “for a testimony,” as Christ says in Matt. 10:18: “You will be brought before kings and governors for My sake, as a testimony before them and the Gentiles.” The same thing is now true when the apostle says that Moses was “a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later,” that is, to be a witness of God in the things that were spoken through the angels. (Luther)

A servant does the will of the master without necessarily knowing what the master has in mind. But God the Father makes the fullness of His will known through Jesus the Son (cf Jn 15:15). (TLSB)

3:6 *Christ...over God's house* – Jesus knows the will of the Father and speaks with His full authority. (TLSB)

we are his house. The house is made up of God's people, his household (see Eph 2:19; 1Pe 2:5). (CSB)

We share in all the blessings that God wills to give us. With Jesus the Son, we are heirs of the Father (cf Rm 8:17). (TLSB)

Chrysostom says: “He who sorrows in tribulations, he who falls, does not glory; he who is ashamed, he who hides himself, has no confidence.” From this it is clear that “glory” is used here for glorying or boasting, which the Greek text also has, namely, καύχημα. For in Greek “glory” is called δόξα, which means opinion, renown, glory among us. Therefore κενοδοξία means “empty glory.” Thus the Hebrew word כְּבוֹד means “glory,” and גָּאָר means “glorying.” Thus Ps. 24:8 says: “Who is this King of glory,” that is, כְּבוֹד. And in Ps. 89:17 we read: “For Thou art the glory (that is, גָּאָר, or “glorying”) of their strength,” which means “Thou art their strength, of which they glory.” But these words are confused in a strange manner, even though there is no small difference in the matter itself. For “glorying” is taken more in an active sense, but “glory” is taken in a passive sense. For “glory” is the opinion of us, that is, the opinion of others about us; but “glorying” is our opinion about ourselves. If it is in ourselves, it is empty; but if it is about us in Christ, it is genuine, as the apostle says in 2 Cor. 10:17: “Let him who glories, glory in the Lord.” Therefore we accept Chrysostom's distinction between “confidence” and “glory” in our hope. According to him, “confidence” is characteristic of one who has the courage to take up the cross of Christ, just as diffidence is characteristic of one who flees from the cross of Christ and is ashamed of it. “Glory,” on the other hand, is characteristic of one who makes progress and triumphs; but complaining or sadness is characteristic of one who fails and falls down. Thus Rom. 5:3 says: “We glory in tribulations.” But the apostle says this here because he had called us the house that Christ “builds” (Heb. 3:4, 6). The construction, however, is nothing else than tension, pressure, and in every way the cross and the sufferings that are in Christ. Therefore he wants us to know that if we are to be built and constructed, we need firm confidence and the glory of hope in Him, lest we fail and suffer worse destruction while the building takes place. (Luther)

if, indeed, we hold fast our confidence...our hope. † If we persevere in the faith and cling confidently to our hope of salvation. (CSB)

Watch out! Some have lost their place in this glorious house as the author will show directly. “Courage” is that feeling of confidence which allows words to flow freely. Such subjective courage is nothing without the objective “hope of which we boast.” The word for “boast” refers to the cause for boasting,

not the act. “Hope points out the cause and content of our boasting, lifting our eyes of faith to what we have and ever will have in that superior Christ Jesus. (PBC)

GOSPEL – Luke 9:28-36

The Transfiguration

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. 34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

The great theophany of Jesus’ transfiguration also gives a glimpse of what the Christian’s future is. As Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land, so now Jesus will lead his people to eternal glory. The second epistle of Peter reflects this application (2 Pet 1:12–15; cf. the reference to the transfiguration in 1:16–18). It speaks of the temporary nature of the body (“tent,” σκηνωμα [1:14]) and of the impending death of Peter as his “exodus/departure” (ἐξοδος [1:15]). Also in this exodus, disciples follow their Lord. Pilgrims on that path are privileged to lift up their hearts and enter into that heavenly conversation with Moses and Elijah and all the saints about the Lamb who was slain and raised again. This they do, when “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven,” they sing, “Holy, holy, holy. ... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. ...” and “O Christ, the Lamb of God. ...” (CC p. 404)

9:28 now about – egeneto – It happened that. This is a new step forward in the ministry of Jesus. He was about to start out for Jerusalem to suffer and die. – This shows a continuity in the narrative from the OT. He will finish what had been promised. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1) (CC p. 399)

ἐγένετο δέ/καὶ ἐγένετο—This is a typical Lukan expression, a Septuagintism, seldom used in Mark but frequently in Luke. It is monotonous, but with it, Luke shows continuity in the narrative from the OT. Matthew uses it following the conclusions of five discourses. It is one of the ways Luke demonstrates the biblical-historical character of the narrative: “It came to pass.” (CC p. 399)

It is fruitful to consider the transfiguration event as “an anticipatory vision of the glory of Jesus at his resurrection or his parousia.” Luke opens the scene of the transfiguration in 9:28 by saying: “And it came to pass after these words, about eight days, ...” “These words” refers not only to Peter’s confession, but also “to the prediction of the passion, death, and resurrection (v. 22) and to the attendant saying about the nature of true discipleship (vs. 23–27).” This preserves the Lukan theme that suffering must always precede glory (cf. 24:26). But even more arresting in Luke’s approach is the “eight days,” which is first introduced in the transfiguration narrative. This may well refer to the eighth day as the day of the new creation, the first day of a new week. Many early Christian communities understood Sunday as the eschatological eighth day, the day of resurrection, the day of the new creation. It is attractive to conclude that the unique Lukan parallel between the transfiguration and the resurrection suggests that Luke is

subtly tying these two passages together. In 24:1, he simply says “the first of the Sabbath,” which is Sunday. Sunday is both the first and the eighth day. (CC p. 404)

About eight days. Frequently used to indicate a week. (CSB)

Matthew and Mark have six days. Luke, however, may be using the phrase for its theological significance, for if the transfiguration is proleptic (in anticipation) of the resurrection, then this may be a reference to the new creation, to the eschatological eighth day. (CC p. 399)

ὥσει ἡμέραι ὀκτώ—This is the only place where “eight days” occurs in Luke. (The only other occurrence in the NT is Jn 20:26, where Jesus appears to Thomas eight days after the resurrection.) Matthew and Mark have six days and seem to mean a *chronological* distance from the events of the previous pericopes. Luke, however, may be using the phrase for its theological significance, for if the transfiguration is proleptic of the resurrection, then this may be a reference to the new creation, to the eschatological eighth day (cf. the comments on the number “eight” in the section “Baptism as a Rite of Passage” in the introduction and on Lk 24:1). The use of ὥσει and the loose grammatical connection of the phrase (a “hanging nominative”) are consistent with this suggestion. (CC p. 399)

after these sayings – μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους—The antecedent is all that Jesus said from 9:18 to 9:27, thus connecting the transfiguration with Peter’s confession, the passion prediction, and the disciples’ cross-bearing. (CC p. 399)

Peter, John and James. These three were also with Jesus at the healing of Jairus’s daughter (8:51) and in his last visit to Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). (CSB)

Among the first appointed as apostles (6:14), they were present also when Jairus’s daughter was raised (see note, Mk 1:19). They were recognized as leaders among the Twelve. (TLSB)

on a mountain. Although Mount Tabor is the traditional site of the Mount of Transfiguration, its distance from Caesarea Philippi (the vicinity of the last scene), its height (about 1,800 feet) and its occupation by a fortress make it unlikely. Mount Hermon fits the context much better by being both closer and higher (over 9,000 feet; see Mk 9:2). (CSB)

The setting on the mountain is significant (see comments on 6:12). The OT theme of Mt. Sinai as the place of divine revelation is brought to mind by Luke’s specific term “exodus” in 9:31. Later, Peter will refer to the mount of transfiguration as “the holy mountain” (2 Pet 1:18), again echoing Sinai language. (CC p. 402)

pray. Again Luke points out the place of prayer in an important event. (CSB)

Jesus frequently took time out to pray. This was especially true of the time preceding major events in his life. Luke makes more note of Jesus’ prayer time than do the other Gospel writers.

Lord’s purpose was to pray, to enter into intimate communion with His heavenly Father, for the purpose of getting wisdom and strength for His coming difficult work, for the Galilean ministry was drawing to a close, and the days of the Judean ministry would be short. And God revealed Himself in a remarkable manner to His Son. (Kretzmann)

9:29 *as he was praying* – ἐν τῷ προσεύχῃσθαι αὐτόν—Luke is fond of the dative of the articular infinitive with ἐν (both present and aorist infinitive). The time is contemporaneous with the main verb. The articular

infinitive is often used with the καὶ ἐγένετο construction and with αὐτόν as the subject of the infinitive. (CC p. 400)

became dazzling white – λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων—A similar expression is used of the two men who appear at the tomb (24:4; ἐσθῆτι ἀστραπούση). Here Luke adds the prefix (ἐξ) for Jesus’ appearance to distinguish his brilliance from that of the two angels in 24:4. Jesus was *extra*-gleaming white. (CC p. 400)

This linkage between the transfiguration and the resurrection is reinforced by other details. Two men appear in glory at 9:30, and there are two men at the tomb at 24:4. Luke uses the word ἐξαστράπτω, “flash like lightning” (9:29) to describe the dazzling nature of Jesus’ clothing and ἀστράπτω, “flash” (24:4), a cognate, to describe the dazzling apparel of these angels. Luke uses ἔξοδος (“exodus”) in the transfiguration narrative to predict the passion (9:31), which Jesus fulfills in Jerusalem (chapters 22–24). The account of the empty tomb with its passion statement (24:7) looks back to Galilee and specifically to the passion and resurrection prediction in this context. As Peter, John, and James entered the cloud, they were afraid (9:34). As the women entered the tomb, they were perplexed and afraid (24:2–5). (CC p. 405)

Jesus’ appearance was transformed; a divine brilliance radiated from Him. (TLSB)

9:30 *two men* – ἄνδρες δύο—Again, the same expression, along with καὶ ἰδοῦ, is used of the two men who appear at the tomb (24:4) and at the ascension (Acts 1:10). Fulfilling the OT requirement of two or three witnesses, two witnesses testify to Jesus’ appearance in glory at the transfiguration, the resurrection, and at his ascension into glory. (CC p. 400)

Moses. The premier OT prophet who served as a model for the coming Messiah. *Elijah*. Similarly connected to the advent of God’s Chosen One. (TLSB)

talking with Jesus – συνελάλουν αὐτῷ—A durative imperfect, implying that the ongoing conversation is about Jesus’ “exodus,” which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem, i.e., his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. (CC p. 400)

Moses and Elijah.† Moses, the great OT deliverer and lawgiver, and Elijah, the representative of the prophets. Moses’ work had been finished by Joshua, Elijah’s by Elisha (another form of the name Joshua). They now spoke with Jesus (whose Hebrew name was Joshua) about the “exodus” he was about to accomplish, by which he would deliver his people from the bondage of sin and bring to fulfillment the work of both Moses and Elijah (see note on 1Ki 19:16 and on Mt 17:3). (CSB)

Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας—Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets, embracing the entire OT in its testimony to the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The topic of their conversation, indeed, the ongoing topic of conversation among the whole host of heaven, is about the Lamb who would be slain and would rise again (ἔξοδος). (CC p. 400)

There are some interesting connections between these two men, their successors and Jesus. Moses and Elijah were both associated with the “Law.” Their successors (Joshua and Elisha – both whose names take the translation of “Jesus”) were more connected to Gospel. They finished the tasks of Moses and Elijah. They were imperfect humans. The perfect Christ puts the finishing touches on everything by his life death and resurrection. He is the perfect finisher. (CC p. 400)

9:31 *appeared in glory* – οἱ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ—The referents are Moses and Elijah, who appear in glory with Jesus. Elijah was taken directly into heaven (2 Kings 2), and God himself had seen to the burial of Moses (Deut 34:6). (CC p. 400)

Moses and Elijah enjoy close fellowship with God in heaven and so reflect that divine brilliance. (TLSB)

departure. Greek *exodos*, a euphemism for Jesus' approaching death. It may also link Jesus' saving death and resurrection with God's saving of his people out of Egypt. (CSB)

Lit, "exodus." Because Jesus was soon to offer His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (vv 21–22), thereby freeing His people from slavery to sin and leading them to the promised land of eternal life, this comparison to the OT exodus from Egypt is fitting. (TLSB)

ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ—The imperfect ἔλεγον continues the idea of the heavenly conversation first introduced by συνελάουν. The clause ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ clarifies τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ and shows that it is a reference to the events to take place in Jerusalem and its environs. In the LXX ἔξοδος is used to translate a variety of Hebrew words and constructions that refer to Israel's departure from Egypt, as well as to other travels. It is the title of the second book of the Torah, and since the Torah was the first part of the OT to be rendered into Greek (ca. 250 B.C.), by the time of the NT era the word would certainly bring to mind the exodus event as well as that book of the Torah. The word occurs in the LXX of Ex 19:1; 23:16; Num 33:38; 35:26; and many later OT passages. In the NT it occurs in Lk 9:31; Heb 11:22; 2 Pet 1:15. (CC p. 400)

Between these two καὶ ἐγένετο ("and it came to pass") statements, Luke places his unique material, which gives the hearer the theological significance of the transfiguration. He introduces it with a favorite phrase, καὶ ἰδοῦ ("and behold"). Only Luke uses ἔξοδος ("exodus") in the transfiguration narrative (9:31) to refer to the passion that Jesus fulfills in Jerusalem (Luke 22–24). This calls to mind the exodus of the Israelites, the greatest redemptive event in OT history. That saving deed of God was a forward-pointing prophecy of the perfect and complete salvation to be wrought in this "exodus" of Jesus. Thus Luke juxtaposes Jesus' suffering with his glory and shows that the order of the kingdom is that suffering must precede glory. Indeed, the "exodus" of Jesus embraces not only his suffering and death, but also the ensuing resurrection and ascension: (CC p. 403)

It is in this total glorification context that the "exodus" comment of Luke must be seen. For Jesus' departure points not just to his death, nor even his resurrection or ascension; but it is a departure, an exodus, that ultimately will lead to the demonstration of glorious authority (Acts 10:34–43). Thus, *the exodus refers to his departure into the whole eschatological programme that is tied to Jesus.*" (CC p. 403)

This "exodus" is the topic of conversation between Moses and Elijah, i.e., it is the conversation of heaven that now continues on the mount of transfiguration. While much of the OT looks back to the exodus from Egypt as the great salvation event for Israel, many other passages look forward to a new and greater exodus that God promised to bring to pass. This new/second exodus theme is especially prominent in Isaiah (e.g., Is 11:11–16; 43:16–20; 51:9–11). Strikingly, even the pagan Gentile nations who were Israel's mortal enemies will be reconciled to her and to God and will participate in this new redemptive event (Is 11:11–16). Just as the first exodus was laden with baptismal overtones, as St. Paul expounds in 1 Cor 10:1–5, so also is the new exodus. In the first exodus the water was the means of death; in it the Egyptian foes drowned. The new exodus also involves death—the death of Christ—and those baptized into Christ die to sin as they die with Christ (Rom 6:1–5; Col 2:11–13). But in the new exodus God will pour out water to sustain his people in the arid desert of this world (Is 43:16–20), and this outpouring of water is accompanied by his outpouring of his Spirit on his people (Is 44:3; cf. Pentecost). The Father's words at Jesus' Baptism (Lk 3:22) are now echoed at his transfiguration (9:35). By means of the new exodus God will vanquish the primordial serpent, Satan, and redeem his people (Is 51:9–11). The

fulfillment of all these themes can be seen in the depiction of Jesus' "exodus" in Luke-Acts. (CC pp 403-404)

9:32 *Peter and those who were with him* – ὁ δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ—Only Peter is mentioned by name to highlight his role in the narrative. Peter is set apart by Luke in a number of different episodes (cf. Lk 22:31–34; 24:12, 34). (CC p. 400)

heavy with sleep. Perhaps the event was at night. (CSB)

Apparently, Jesus prayed for a long time. (TLSB)

saw his glory. Because they were sleeping when Jesus' appearance was transfigured, the disciples saw His radiance and brilliant clothing only after awakening. (TLSB)

9:33 *master* – ἐπιστάτα—This title is only found in Luke's gospel. See comments at 5:5. (CC p. 400)

that we are here – καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι—εἶναι is placed at the end of the sentence to emphasize Peter's interpretation of this moment: to be present on the mountain with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in glory is good. (CC p. 400)

three tents. Temporary structures to prolong the visit of the three important persons: lawgiver, prophet and Messiah. The idea was not appropriate, however, because Jesus had a work to finish in his few remaining days on earth. (CSB)

Temporary shelters. Peter wanted to prolong the mountaintop experience. (TLSB)

These were temporary structures used in the OT celebrations. Peter uses them to stay in this "zone" of great feeling. He forgot that life goes in the plain and not in some cloistered place.

ποιήσωμεν σκηνάς τρεῖς, μίαν σοὶ καὶ μίαν Μωϋσεὶ καὶ μίαν Ἠλίᾳ—It is not clear whether σκηνή here means something like the OT tabernacle or the kind of shelters made of branches in which the Jews stayed for seven days during Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated Israel's life under God in the wilderness. In any case, Peter wants to preserve the glory by building tabernacles for each of the three main participants. He is a true theologian of glory at this moment. He focuses on the heavenly glory but does not want to face the suffering that will and must precede it: the cross comes before the resurrection. But Peter does not want to move to what lies beyond this extraordinary revelation. (CC pp. 400-401)

not knowing what he said – μὴ εἰδὼς ὃ λέγει—Luke rightly reports that Peter does not know what he is saying. He does not understand the order of the kingdom—suffering must precede glory. (CC p. 401)

Peter did not understand the situation or the reason for the appearance of Moses and Elijah. (TLSB)

9:34 *a cloud came* – ἐγένετο νεφέλη καὶ ἐπεσκίαζεν αὐτούς— In the OT, clouds often were evidence of the presence of God. Examples include theophanies such as the pillar of cloud during the exodus (Ex 13:21-22; 14:19-31; 33:9-10; 40:36-37), the cloud on Mt Sinai (Ex 19:16), and clouds over and in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38) and the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). A similar expression is used at the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:35) to signal the presence of God. The overshadowing presence of God testifies both to the incarnation and exaltation. (CC p. 401)

entered the cloud – ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν τῷ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν νεφέλην—Who entered into the cloud? Only Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, or also the three disciples along with them? Some manuscripts (ϕ⁴⁵ ^{A D W} Θ Ψ M^{1.13} 33 M sy^h sa) read ἐκείνους (“those”) instead αὐτοὺς (“they”); this clarifies the ambiguity by saying only Jesus, Moses, and Elijah entered the cloud. The oldest manuscript, ϕ⁷⁵, has neither word! The more difficult reading is αὐτοὺς, including the disciples in the cloud. Thus their fear comes from entering into the holy presence of God. (CC p. 401)

9:35 *my Chosen One*. Or “the Chosen One,” related to a Palestinian Jewish title found in Dead Sea Scrolls literature, and possibly echoing Isa 42:1. See 23:35. (CSB)

The Father affirms that Jesus is His Son, appointed before the creation of the world to bear the world’s sins on the cross. (TLSB)

ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος—The perfect passive participle ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, used as a title for Jesus, shows that he is the Son who from all eternity has been chosen to accomplish the plan of salvation. The beloved Son (cf. Jesus’ baptism) is also the Chosen One. The words here are a clear repetition of Ps 2:7 and the Father’s words at Jesus’ baptism; they also refer to Jesus as Israel reduced to one, the Suffering Servant of Is 42:1. It is the eternal plan of God that Jesus suffer rejection and crucifixion and be exalted to glory, seen momentarily here and consummated at the resurrection. Clearly, Luke sees Jesus here as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the Chosen One, the true Israel, whose “exodus” is about to be accomplished in Jerusalem. (CC p. 401)

listen to him – αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε—ἀκούετε is a present imperative. The phrase could be translated “continue *always* to listen to him!” Cf. Deut 18:15–20. On ἀκούω as a technical term for catechumens, see comments at Lk 5:1; the Sermon on the Plain (6:27, 47, 49); the parable of the sower (8:8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18); and Jesus’ discussion of the new kinship (8:21). Deuteronomy stresses the necessity of listening to God, and in particular Deut 18:15–20 mandates listening to the new Prophet God will raise up. (CC p. 401)

Echoes Dt 18:19 and confirms that Jesus is the long-expected prophet like Moses. (TLSB)

A voice from the cloud commands the disciples, “This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him!” The words of the angels to the women (24:5) presuppose the command of 9:35: my Son, the Chosen One, he is the living one; listen to him; remember his words! The identification of Jesus as the new Moses and the new Elisha was made in the feeding of the five thousand (9:10–17); it is now confirmed here with these words from Deut 18:15: “Listen to him!” Now that the eschatological prophet promised by Moses has arrived, the disciples are to heed his words. This is both a statement of Christology and a command to Jesus’ followers to hear his teaching as the final revelation from God. (CC p. 405)

9:36 *kept silent* – Jesus was not the military conqueror that the people expected. Therefore, revealing the transfiguration at this time could only lead to misunderstanding. Only in the light of Easter and Pentecost did the meaning of this mountaintop experience come clear (cf 2 Peter 1:16-212) (TLSB)

The confession by Peter that Jesus is the Christ was a great moment. From that moment of clarity, things will become more and more clouded as the disciples will follow Jesus with increasing incomprehension. The passion prediction and call to cross-bearing was enough to create some confusion. The transfiguration sealed it. Their silence confirms their misunderstanding. So from 9:1 to 9:36, there is a progression from openness to complete silence: “And they were silent and reported to no one in those days anything of what they had seen” (9:36). This is the messianic passion secret (see comments on 9:18–22). As Jesus teaches concerning this messianic passion, death, and resurrection, he also gives the

command to keep silent (9:21). The disciples obey (9:36). Some things are not yet fully in the open. His hour will come, as will the new day when the disciples shall once again preach. (CC p. 405)

9:28–36 Through the transfiguration, Jesus allows His disciples to catch a glimpse of the glory that will again be His after His resurrection. Like Peter, we, too, like to prolong “mountaintop experiences,” leaving the toil and trouble of the world behind. However, Jesus has not called us out of the world, but rather to overcome it. Accordingly, He lifts us up and strengthens us when we are challenged, reminding us that He has already overcome the world for us. • “ ’Tis good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain; But since Thou bidst us leave the mount, Come with us to the plain.” Amen. (LSB 414:5) (TLSB)

The Healing of a Boy With an Evil Spirit

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. 40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” 41 Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” 42 While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

The core of this miracle is framed by references to the *great crowd* (ὄχλος πολύς) that meets Jesus as he comes down from the mount of transfiguration (9:37) and the response of astonishment at the majesty of God by *all* (πάντες) who witness the casting out of the demon (9:43a). Another frame may be the majesty of Jesus’ transfiguration, witnessed only by the three apostles, and the majesty of God revealed through Jesus’ miracle, witnessed by all (9:43). (CC p. 407)

This is more than just another miracle in which Jesus casts out a demon. It is the first of a series of passages (9:37–50) in which Jesus’ disciples are portrayed as unaware of the meaning of Jesus’ actions because of a lack of faith. This continues the theme introduced in the transfiguration when Peter did not know what he was saying when he proposed building booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. As Jesus’ Galilean ministry comes to a close and the time of instruction about the passion begins, the disciples move from the clarity of Peter’s confession into muddled confusion. This will be further evident in the disciples’ response to Jesus’ second prediction of his passion (9:43b–45), their argument among themselves as to who is the greatest (9:46–48), and their inability to discern who stands with them against Satan (9:49–50). (CC p. 407)

Luke combines his delight in showing details that portray Jesus as the compassionate healer with his theme of the disciples’ incomprehension at the ministry of Jesus. The hearer recalls a similar act of compassion in the raising of the widow’s son at Nain. Luke urges the hearer to recall that moment by using similar language in his time framework in 9:37 (7:11: ἐν τῇ ἑξῆς, “soon afterward”) and by calling the boy “only begotten” in 9:38 (7:12: μονογενῆς υἱός, “only-begotten son”). Vivid descriptions of the boy’s illness (foaming at the mouth) and little expressions of Jesus’ tenderness (he “gave him back to his father” after healing him) show once again that Jesus’ ministry is a demonstration of God’s *mercy*, and not his wrath. Luke even recalls the programmatic section of Jesus’ healing (4:31–43) by describing the astonishment of the crowds at his power over demons (9:43a) with the same word he used for Capernaum’s astonishment at Jesus’ teaching (4:32; ἐκπλήσσομαι). Luke’s choice of ἐκπλήσσομαι, “be astonished,” calls to the reader’s attention the themes of Jesus’ Galilean ministry: people’s astonishment at his teaching (4:32) and his miracles (9:43a), with teaching taking precedence over miracles. (CC pp. 407-408)

9:37 *the next day* – ἡ ἐξῆς ἡμέρα—“The next *day*” is similar to the expression in 7:11 but with ἡμέρα (day) added. (CC p. 406)

Transfiguration likely occurred late at night (accounting for the sleepiness of the disciples). After daybreak, they descended. (TLSB)

come down from the mountain – κατελθόντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους—The genitive absolute with the prepositional phrase of location connects this pericope with the transfiguration and the reference to the mountain in 9:28. (CC p. 406)

9:38 *only child* – μονογενής—The widow of Nain’s son was also described as her only begotten (7:12), and the daughter of Jairus was his μονογενής (8:42). (CC p. 406)

Out of the crowd, as it drew near, one man came forward and cried to Him with a loud voice, in a pitiful prayer. He wanted Jesus to look upon his only son, with a view to helping him. (Kretzmann)

9:39 *A spirit seizes him*. This evil spirit was causing seizures (Mt 17:15) and a speechless condition (Mk 9:17). Evil spirits were responsible for many kinds of affliction. (CSB)

Though the symptoms described here seem to match epilepsy, Luke clearly attributes this boy’s suffering to a demon. Both may have afflicted him. (TLSB)

κράζει καὶ σπαράσσει—The subject of the verbs “cry” and “convulse” is the unclean spirit, not the boy. (CC p. 406)

convulses him – συντριβόν—This modifies ἀποχωρεῖ and describes simultaneous action: in the process of departing from the boy, the unclean spirit crushes him. (CC p. 406)

The demon, meanwhile, would distort and tear him until froth would appear at the mouth, and even after bruising the child fiercely, he would barely withdraw for a time. It was a case of severe epilepsy and lunacy caused by an evil spirit. (Kretzmann)

9:40 *they could not* – The poor father had pleaded with the disciples that had remained in the valley whether they could help in this emergency, but they had not been able. (Kretzmann)

9:41 *twisted generation* – διεστραμμένη—This word occurs once more in Luke (23:2), when Jesus is accused by the Sanhedrin before Pilate of perverting the nation (διαστρέφοντα τὸ ἔθνος). (CC p. 406)

But the new element here is the disciples’ failure and Jesus’ words about it. From this point on, the disciples will be cast in a rather dubious light. Their eyes will not be opened (see comments on 2:30) to the meaning of it all until after the resurrection in Luke 24. Jesus’ declaration that they are part of an “unbelieving and perverted generation” (9:41) is an appropriate introduction to the picture of the disciples in the rest of the gospel. “Generation” (γενεά) was used for those who reject Jesus and his salvation in 7:31 (see comments there). It refers to a *kind* of people: unbelieving, twisted. Here the focus is on the disciples’ lack of faith in the power Jesus gave them to cast out demons (cf. 9:1–6). This is a lack of faith in the Gospel that frees people from the oppression of the evil one. *But now the passion is part of the picture. The Messiah frees through his death.* The disciples’ dim understanding and weakness in faith result in their inability to do the miraculous works they could do before. Jesus has but a brief time (9:41b) in which to prepare them to be apostles of the *crucified* one. (CC p. 408)

The cry of Jesus at this point: O unbelieving and perverse generation; people that have no faith and consistently go the wrong way! How long must I be with you and tolerate you? includes the people as a whole, also the father of the boy and, in a way, the disciples, as He told them afterwards. That was characteristic of the chosen people of God at that time: they were rejecting the Messiah of their salvation or following false leads and hopes in their dream of a temporal kingdom. Jesus then commanded the boy to be brought to Him. (Kretzmann)

Jesus repeatedly rebuked people's lack of faith with such terms (7:31; 11:29–32; cf Ac 2:40) because they failed to fully recognize Jesus' identity. (TLSB)

9:42 *while he was coming* – ἔτι δὲ προσερχομένου αὐτοῦ—The antecedent of αὐτοῦ is the boy: “and while he (the boy with the demon) was still approaching.” (CC p. 406)

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit – ἐπετίμησεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ—Jesus also “rebuked” an unclean spirit and a fever after the sermon in Nazareth (4:35, 39; see note on 4:35). The “legion” of demons in the Gerasene demoniac was also called an “unclean spirit” (8:29) in identical terms, but a different verb is used there for Jesus' command. (CC p. 406)

Jesus relieved the boy of all his suffering, both physical and mental. (TLSB)

healed the boy – ἰάσατο—The casting out of a demon is considered by the evangelist to be a healing. This conforms with Jesus' view that sickness and demon possession are both forms of bondage to evil and that the purpose of his ministry is to release people from all consequences of sin (4:18–19). (CC p. 406)

The power of the evil spirit also in this case, as in all, goes only so far as Jesus permits it. For Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. (Kretzmann)

9:37–42 On the way down from the transfiguration, Jesus rescues a demon-possessed boy. Like the disciples who appear in this episode, we, too, exhibit weakness of faith. Thankfully, Jesus does not simply rebuke such failures and then fall silent. Rather, He responds in compassion and forgiveness as well, and so rescues us from unbelief and the menacing power of Satan. • Lord Jesus, keep me strong in faith, that neither fear of death nor the threats of the adversary divert my eyes from You and the glories of Your Gospel promises. Amen. (TLSB)

9:43 *all were astonished* – ἐξεπλήσσοντο—This occurs only two other times in Luke: when Jesus' parents are astonished to find him alone in the temple at age twelve (2:48) and when the people of Capernaum are astonished at his teaching because his word was with authority (4:32). Here, a miraculous cure astonishes. (CC p. 407)

majesty of God – μεγαλειότητι—This rare word occurs only here in the gospels. (Elsewhere in the NT it is in Acts 19:27, where it refers to the magnificence of the great goddess Artemis, and in 2 Pet 1:16 of the majesty of Jesus.) BAGD notes: “*grandeur, sublimity, majesty*; in our lit. only of a divinity or of divine attributes” (CC p. 407)

Mighty acts of God are visible in the healing works of Jesus. (TLSB)

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 44 “Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of

men.” 45 But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

marveling – πάντων δὲ θαυμαζόντων—The second passion prediction begins as all who witnessed the healing of the epileptic were marvelling at Jesus’ deeds. (CC p. 409)

everything he was doing – ἐπὶ πάνσιν οἷς ἐποίει—These are the mighty acts of Jesus, which include the previous healing. The imperfect ἐποίει indicates the ongoing character of these mighty deeds. The double use of πάντων/πάνσιν links all the people’s marveling with all the works Jesus has done. οἷς is dative by attraction to πάνσιν. (CC p. 409)

9:44 Another prediction of Jesus’ coming death (see note on v. 22), an indication of how it will be brought about (see 22:21). (CSB)

let these words sink into your ears – θέσθε ὑμεῖς εἰς τὰ ὠτα ὑμῶν—This expression is reminiscent of Ex 17:14 (LXX) and of the use of τίθημι with “heart” (Lk 1:66; 21:14; Acts 5:4) and “spirit” (Acts 19:21). ὑμεῖς is emphatic. On the whole, it is a solemn and urgent appeal. (CC p. 409)

Luke’s narrative indicates no change in the location between 9:43a and 9:43b. The transition is smooth, with all being astounded at the majesty of God in 9:43a and all marveling at the mighty works of Jesus in 9:43b. But the focus shifts markedly onto the disciples. Moreover, the *structure* of the second passion prediction is framed by marveling in 9:43b and incomprehension and fear in 9:45. (CC pp. 409-410)

τοὺς λόγους τούτους—Both λόγος and ῥῆμα (Lk 9:45) are used as technical words for the passion. (CC p. 409)

The second passion prediction follows quickly upon Jesus’ first prediction in 9:22. The introductory statement is typically Lukan and heightens the significance of this second prediction: “You—put these words into your ears.” The passion prediction is short and truncated. Luke has only the words “for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men” (9:44). Luke here leaves out the fact that Jesus will be killed (cf. Mt 17:23; Mk 9:31) and will rise after three days. This increases the suspense and misunderstanding. In 9:45 Luke heightens the messianic passion secret first commanded by Jesus in 9:21–22. *It is the disciples’ inability to understand that Luke accents in this second prediction.* The necessity of suffering, death, and resurrection in God’s plan is hidden from them, and they do not perceive it. (CC p. 410)

hands of men – εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων—The referent here is not explicit, but the first passion prediction referred to rejection by the elders, chief priests, and scribes (9:22), and the third passion prediction will speak of his being delivered over to the Gentiles (ἔθνεσιν; 18:32). (CC p. 409)

“To be delivered” (παραδίδοσθαι; 9:44) is part of the vocabulary of the passion and could even be considered a technical term for Jesus’ *betrayal*, suffering, and death. This is especially significant since παραδίωμι, “deliver, betray,” became incorporated into the church’s formal liturgical language. Paul includes it in 1 Cor 11:23 (παρεδίδοτο, a passive that suggests the ultimate agency of God). The context of the Last Supper was the betrayal of Jesus into the hands of sinful men. Luke uses this significant term in his passion predictions (9:44; 18:32), in the plots of the Jewish religious authorities and Judas to put Jesus to death (20:20; 22:4, 6), in predictions of the disciples’ “passion” in the church (21:12, 16), in Jesus’ recognition of his destiny during the Last Supper (22:21–22), in the actual entrance into the passion with Jesus’ arrest (22:48) and crucifixion (23:25), and in reflections about what was prophesied and what took place in Jesus’ passion (24:7, 20). A simple “remembrance” of Luke’s use of παραδίωμι would

recall for the hearer the passion of Jesus and the charges that were filed against him leading to his passion. In 9:44 it is a prediction of the arrest and trial in Luke 22–23. (CC pp. 410-411)

Or, “handed over,” “betrayed.” Refers to His arrest, trial, and execution. (TLSB)

9:45 *they did not understand* – ἠγνόουν τὸ ῥήμα τοῦτο—They did not understand the word about the passion. The same expression for the passion is repeated at the end of the verse (περὶ τοῦ ῥήματος τούτου). Cf. 18:34; 24:8, 11. (CC p. 409)

concealed – ἦν παρακεκαλυμμένον—The passive voice implies God as the subject. This indicates divine action. God hid this understanding of the passion from them. (CC p. 409)

Only after the resurrection would God’s plan of salvation become clear to the disciples (cf 24:44–47). (TLSB)

they might not perceive it – ἵνα μὴ αἰσθωνται—This is used as a synonym of ἠγνόουν, “to understand not.” It is a purpose clause, “in order that they might not comprehend it.” (CC p. 409)

Luke’s description of the disciples’ state upon hearing this is severe: “But they did not understand this word, and it was hidden from them in order that they might not comprehend it, and they were afraid to ask him concerning this word” (9:45). There are three different but related elements to this response. First, the disciples did not understand this word about the passion. The passion—the offense of the cross—is the *cause* of their misunderstanding. Second, it was hidden from them in order that they might not comprehend it. *God hid it. God intends that they not understand the word about the passion at this point.* When the hour comes and the new day dawns, their eyes will be opened and all will be revealed. The third part of this verse gives a further reason for their continuing in ignorance: they were afraid to ask him to clarify this saying. It is unclear whether they are afraid of more rebukes from Jesus (cf. 9:21, 41) or afraid to hear more of the shocking content of this new element in his words. In any case, the order of the kingdom, suffering preceding glory (24:26), is a mystery for them and so scandalous that it causes them to stumble into a state of confusion. (CC p. 411)

Luke subtly shows where such misunderstanding will lead by following the description of this incomprehension and fear with the first of two arguments among the disciples as to which of them is the greatest. These petty arguments are in stark contrast to Jesus’ call for his followers to take up the cross and follow him. Only after the resurrection will the disciples gain the understanding that will enable them to embrace the cross. (CC p. 412)

afraid. Reason unclear. Plainly, it was not a pleasant topic. (TLSB)

9:43–45 Jesus once more predicts His suffering and death, and once more the disciples fail to understand Him. Blinded by our own misplaced priorities, we may likewise fail to discern God’s ways and plans for our lives. But Jesus remains with us every step of the way. With Him as our guide, we cannot be lost. • “Jesus, lead Thou on Till our rest is won. Heav’nly leader, still direct us, Still support, console, protect us, Till we safely stand In our fatherland.” Amen. (LSB 718:5) (TLSB)

Who Will Be the Greatest?

46 An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. **47** But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side **48** and said to them, **“Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.”**

The reader is jarred by the movement from the disciples' incomprehension and fear at Jesus' second passion prediction (19:44–45) to the argument about who is the greatest among them. How could the disciples fight over an issue so foreign to the kingdom Jesus teaches and brings, especially after Peter had confessed that Jesus is the Messiah and after Jesus had appeared in glory before three of them in the transfiguration? Perhaps the prominence of Peter—or of Peter, James, and John, the only ones privileged to witness the transfiguration—sparked the controversy. Remarkably, a similar sequence occurs after the institution of the Lord's Supper. Immediately after Jesus has given his body and blood in bread and wine, the disciples quarrel about the same thing: “An argument also happened among them—the issue of who of them seems to be greatest” (22:24). The only possible explanation for such juxtapositions is that the disciples are completely at a loss as to the meaning of Jesus' passion for the coming of the kingdom. All fallen people by nature pursue a theology of glory, which seeks greatness without suffering, and are repulsed by the theology of the cross, which affirms that the order in God's kingdom is suffering before glory and the cross before the resurrection. Instead of seeing the passion as the culmination of the theme of the Great Reversal, where the glory of greatness comes only through humble service, the disciples testify to their obtuseness by trying to assert their own “greatness.” (CC pp. 413-414)

9:46 *an argument arose* – διαλογισμός—The meaning here is “argument” or “dispute,” but it is translated “thought” to remind the reader of a recurring theme; see textual note on 9:47 below. (CC p. 413)

them. The disciples, particularly the apostles. (TLSB)

which ... would be the greatest. A subject that arose on a number of occasions (see 22:24; see also Mk 10:35–45). (CSB)

The disciples were expecting an earthly kingdom in which they might occupy positions of power and prestige. They began to argue about leadership positions. (TLSB)

μείζων—As often in NT Greek, the comparative form stands for the superlative, hence “greatest.” The same expression is used in 22:24. (CC p. 413)

Just how great the spiritual denseness of the disciples was even at that time, appears from this incident. For while Jesus was concerned about the work of salvation, about the woe and weal of the whole world, the apostles were bickering, in petty jealousy, about rank in their own midst. There was a regular altercation about the question in their circle on this trifling matter. (Kretzmann)

9:47 *Jesus knowing the reasoning* – εἰδὼς τὸν διαλογισμὸν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν—A recurring theme in Luke is that Jesus knows the thoughts (διαλογισμοί) of others in fulfillment of the prophecy about him in 2:35. The “thoughts” in these verses are always symptomatic of a lack of faith in Jesus. See textual note and commentary at 2:35 and 5:21–22. (CC p. 413)

Jesus knew the apostles' argument, even without hearing every word, and understood the thinking behind it. (TLSB)

took a child – The Master took a little child and placed it beside Him as He was standing in their midst, telling them that by receiving this little child they would receive Him, and therefore also Him that sent Him. The little and insignificant in the eyes of the world is great in the eyes of Jesus, if there is faith to be found. (Kretzmann)

9:48 *receives...child...in my name* – πῖ τῷ ὀνόματί μου—A similar phrase is repeated in the next verse (9:49), where John refers to someone outside Jesus’ circle of disciples casting out demons “in your name” (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου). (CC p. 413)

Children are of relatively little importance from a functional point of view; they do not know much and cannot do much. (TLSB)

“My Name” – On account of Jesus and in conformity with His teaching. When Christians love and value a person because Jesus loves and values that person, they are fulfilling what Jesus commands here. (TLSB)

who is least ... is the one who is great. A person will become great as he sincerely and unpretentiously looks away from self to revere God. (CSB)

God’s value system differs from those of the world. The believer who serves and helps others is greater in God’s eyes than the influential person who seems so important in the world’s eyes. (TLSB)

9:46–48 Jesus corrects a misunderstanding about the nature of His kingdom, clarifying that true greatness comes from faith and service. We are just as mistaken when we think, as the disciples did, that our value comes from social position or material abundance. Instead, the grace manifested in Jesus’ sacrificial death establishes our value. By the power of God’s Spirit, our humble service produces things great in His eyes.
• O Lord, grant me humility, that, being strengthened by Your Word and following the example of Your service to others, I might please You in all that I do and say. Amen. (TLSB)

Anyone Not Against Us Is For Us

49 John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.” **50** But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.”

9:49–50 Despite appearances, 9:49–50 belongs with the report of this argument. Structurally 9:46–48 is divided into a discussion by the disciples about who is the greatest (9:46) and Jesus’ response (9:47–48). The key word linking the two verses is μέγας, “great,” with the comparative (as a superlative) μείζων in 9:46 and μέγας in the final emphatic position (9:48). The ensuing two verses (9:49–50) seem to go in a different direction, with John’s report about someone casting out demons in Jesus’ name, the disciples’ attempt to prevent him (9:49), and Jesus’ response (9:50). The key word linking those two verses is κωλύω, “to prevent” (ἐκωλύομεν in 9:49 and μὴ κωλύετε in 9:50). (CC pp. 413-414)

But “answering” (ἀποκριθεὶς), the first word of 9:49, strongly implies a connection between these two two-verse passage. John’s statement about someone outside the Twelve casting out demons in the name of Jesus is a *response* to Jesus’ statement about greatness. (CC p. 414)

For Jesus, greatness has nothing to do with any inherent quality the disciples might see in themselves, nor with their status as office-bearers, so a debate about who is greatest is absurd. Just as God alone is good (18:19), so also God alone confers greatness, and he does so purely by his grace in his Son, whom he had just declared to be great in the glory of the transfiguration. To illustrate how greatness comes by grace via the Great Reversal, Jesus has a child stand beside him. Children admire those greater than themselves, but very few would pick a child as the epitome of greatness. Jesus instructs his disciples to demonstrate their understanding of “greatness in the kingdom” by welcoming a child in Jesus’ name. The child represents complete helplessness, a perfect representative of the “least among all you” (9:47), and therefore great. Children are great because, according to human standards, they are the least likely to be counted great and

the least likely to further the kingdom of God. Greatness for Jesus is the opposite of greatness for the still-ignorant disciples and for the world. (CC pp. 414-415)

The incident that John reports to Jesus applies this truth. According to the disciples' view of greatness, only a select few are honored to be chosen (perhaps by their own worthiness or merit, they might imagine) and sent by Jesus to preach the kingdom and cast out demons (9:1–6). Only those who are as great as the disciples themselves are great (in their own eyes) should be permitted to do works the disciples were sent to do (9:1–6). However, with this attitude the disciples come dangerously close to the haughty arrogance of the Pharisees. The Pharisees condemned Jesus for doing good on a Sabbath (6:6–11), and now the disciples condemn a man for doing good simply because he was not part of their elite group. (CC p. 415)

The ability of the disciples to exorcise *depends directly* on the power of Jesus, which is theirs by *faith* (cf. 9:40–41), not by status. Also others may have power over the evil one when they legitimately (in the faith) use the *name* of Jesus in their exorcisms. Here is the other link between 9:46–48 and 9:49–50: the child received in the *name* of Jesus (9:48; ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου) and the one who exorcises in the *name* of Jesus (9:49; ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου). The *name* of Jesus is the basis for considering persons great and for receiving them in the fellowship. When the disciples receive a child—or this unknown exorcist—in Jesus' name, they receive Jesus, and therefore they also receive the Father, who sent Jesus (τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με; cf. 10:16). The disciples need to be thinking about who truly is with them, serving under the name of Jesus, and not about who of them is the greatest. Nor should they discriminate against servants of Jesus who do not meet the disciples' own criteria for the “rights and privileges” of the office when Jesus himself approves of those servants. (CC p. 415)

“Receive” (δέχομαι) has a technical meaning for welcoming messengers of the Gospel. In both the commissioning of the Twelve (9:5) and of the seventy(-two) (10:8, 10), Jesus prepares them for the possibility of either reception or rejection. Between these two commissionings are these two examples that illustrate Jesus' instructions. In 9:48, receiving a child in Jesus' name is the same as receiving Jesus and the Father who sent him. δέχομαι (“receive”) is repeated four times, and ἐμέ (“me”) is placed in the emphatic position to signal that Jesus is the one who is being received. In 9:52–53, the people of Samaria do not receive Jesus because he had set his face to go to Jerusalem. Acceptance or rejection of Jesus and his disciples is a major Lukan theme. In Acts the apostolic church in Jerusalem will need to remember this teaching of Jesus in 9:47–53 as new missions begin through the efforts of the “least” like Philip and Stephen and Paul. (CC p. 415-416)

9:49 *master* – ἐπιστάτα—This title is only found in Luke's gospel. See comments at 5:5. (CC p. 413)

casting out demons. Using the powerful name of Jesus, an unidentified person was exorcising demons from people. (TLSB)

tried to stop him – ἐκωλύομεν—“We tried to prevent” is a conative imperfect. The same force is carried over into the present imperative in the next verse. μὴ κωλύετε, “Do not try to prevent ...” (CC p. 413)

The disciples were protecting their exclusive status with Jesus. (TLSB)

does not follow us. Jesus shifts the pronoun to “you” in v. 50, which may mean that the man had a relationship to Jesus of which the disciples were unaware. (CSB)

9:50 *whoever is not against you is for you.* Spoken in the context of opposition to the disciples' work (cf. 11:23, set in a different context). (CSB)

Jesus rebukes the disciples again for squabbling over leadership in the Church, to the neglect of serving people. Order and organization are important, yet we must not lose sight of why they exist—to dispense God’s mercy. Cf Nu 11:24–30. (TLSB)

9:49–50 Jesus admonishes His disciples for poor attitudes about ministry. Like the apostles, we may keep certain privileges and opportunities for ourselves. That impulse, however, runs contrary to God’s mercy, which He would share with all people, not just those in our preferred circle. Thankfully, Jesus left the comfort of heaven to stand with us, bear our burdens, and deliver us from evil. • Lord, preserve us from that selfish impulse that would inhibit Your mercy and the proclamation of Your name. Help us to see that You desire the salvation of all people, that we acknowledge and put to appropriate use the gifts of others. Amen. (TLSB)

Samaritan Village Rejects Jesus

51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 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?” 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village.

There are good reasons to consider 9:51 *the* turning point of Luke’s gospel. Jesus’ death has become an explicit part of his messianic mission (9:22, 31), and now Jesus begins the journey toward his death in Jerusalem, “the place of the full manifestation of Jesus as the Christ.” The long journey to Jerusalem fulfills what Moses and Elijah discussed at the transfiguration (9:31): this *is* Jesus’ “*exodus*,” which he is about to fulfill in Jerusalem. Jesus is reenacting Israel’s exodus from Egypt and journey of going up to the Promised Land, but Jesus is doing so in perfect obedience. Even though Christ accompanied Israel on that first exodus journey (1 Cor 10:1–13), the people repeatedly fell into idolatry, grumbling, and rebellion. But now, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice for the sin of Israel—and the sin of the whole world. (CC pp. 426–427)

9:51 *when the days drew near* – ἐγένετο δέ—This phrase helps mark 9:51 as the turning point in the gospel. The focus shifts from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem extends through 19:28. (CC p. 426)

The phrase ἐγένετο δέ, “and it came to pass,” alerts the reader to something especially significant, and the combination of critical phrases in the opening articular infinitive (dependent clause) reinforces the verse’s importance. The “*days* of his being taken up” refer to that time period leading up to the *day* of his departure/ascension. “Were being fulfilled” conveys the passing of time, as if the narrator were watching the clock or marking off days on a calendar. Jesus adheres to a timetable for the climactic event. The clock is running. Jesus fulfills prophecy as he follows the Father’s schedule (cf. Acts 1:7; Gal 4:4). (CC p. 427)

for him to be taken – ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας—This typical Lukan expression (ἐν τῷ plus the infinitive with the accusative subject) describes the inexorable destiny of Jesus in Jerusalem as the *fulfillment* of the divine plan and of prophecy. The present infinitive suggests the process of the passing of days until the arrival of *the day*. Jesus’ destiny is marked by journey notices again in 13:22 and 17:11. (CC p. 426)

Refers to Jesus’ death, resurrection, and esp ascension into heaven (24:50–51; Ac 1:2, 9–11). (TLSB)

taken up – τῆς ἀναλήμψεως αὐτοῦ—In 9:31, Luke referred to the passion, resurrection, and ascension events in Jerusalem as τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ, “his exodus.” Now the events are represented by a similar image, “his being taken up,” a reference to his exaltation at the ascension, but also including his death and resurrection. Cf. ἀναλαμβάνω in Acts 1:2, 11, 22; also LXX 2 Ki 2:11. (CC p. 426)

set his face to go to Jerusalem. Lit. “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (cf. Isa 50:7). Luke emphasizes Jesus’ determination to complete his mission. This journey to Jerusalem, however, is not the one that led to his crucifixion but marks the beginning of a period of ministry in Judea, of which Jerusalem was the central city. Mk 10:1 notes this departure for Judea, which John more specifically describes as a journey to Jerusalem during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:1–10). (CSB)

Place of Jesus’ death and resurrection, which fulfill God’s plan of salvation. (TLSB)

αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστῆρισεν—This graphic description depicts Jesus turning to face Jerusalem. (CC p. 126)

“He himself set his face” alludes to Jesus’ prophetic role. For God to “set his face” *against* a person, city, or region (Jer 21:10; Ezek 13:17; 14:8; 15:7; 21:2 Ezekiel as God’s spokesman in Ezek 6:2.) is for God to show his wrath. The opposite is for God to “make his face shine on you and be gracious to you” (Num 6:25). But here Jesus “sets his face” to go to Jerusalem not to show wrath or mercy to Jerusalem, but to face and overcome all temptations and opposition that would turn him aside from traveling to the cross. Lk 9:62 balances 9:51 with a proverbial summation of what it means to “set one’s face.” The words of 9:52–61 illustrate some of the potential distractions. (CC p. 427)

OT precedents offer further illumination on the significance of the fact that Jesus “set his face.” God made Ezekiel’s forehead as hard as flint so that the prophet could endure the hostility of rebellious Israel (Ezek 3:8–9). The Suffering Servant says,

“I have not rebelled; I have not drawn back. I gave my back to the smiters, my cheeks to the pluckers. *I did not hide my face* from mockings and spit. The Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore I will not be ashamed. *Therefore, I have set my face like flint*, and I know that I will not be put to shame” (Is 50:5–7). (CC p. 427)

Jesus, the Servant, is resolutely determined to go to the cross, fully aware of the torture and humiliation involved. He trusts in eventual vindication by the Father (Is 50:8–9), and he knows that the cross is the only way to procure salvation for humanity (compare Is 50:8–9 with Rom 8:31–34). (CC p. 427)

On this journey, Jesus will pass through many towns and villages and encounter many different people. He has much to teach.

Luke is very careful to note Jesus’ audience in every instance. To each group, furthermore, Jesus speaks quite different sorts of words: to the crowd, he issues warnings and calls to conversion. To those who convert and become disciples, he gives positive instructions on discipleship. Finally, to those who resist his prophetic call, he tells parables of rejection.

Luke gives dramatic structure to these sayings by carefully alternating the audiences. Throughout the journey ... Luke has Jesus turn from one group to the other, from crowd to disciples to Pharisees. (CC p. 428)

Ever in motion toward his goal, Jesus gives revelatory instruction for others making pilgrimage from birth to death and from rebirth in Baptism to resurrection and eternal life in the new Jerusalem. (CC p. 428)

In firm resolve. Evokes numerous passages from Ezk (6:2; 13:17; 21:2) and so reinforces Luke's characterization of Jesus as God's ultimate prophet. (TLSB)

out for – τοῦ πορεύεσθαι—As part of Luke's journey vocabulary, this word signals Jesus' movement toward his goal of death and resurrection. J. Fitzmyer calls this Luke's "pregnant use of the verb *poreuesthai* ... [where] the context is one of opposition and hostility, and the implication is that his destiny is to be reached despite such opposition. Further noteworthy instances of it are to be found in the travel account in particular (9:51, 52, 53, 56, 57; 10:38; 13:33; 17:11; 19:12) though its use is not confined to this section" (*Luke I–IX*, 168–69; see pp. 164–71 on Luke's geographical perspective). (CC p. 126)

Jerusalem – εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ—Jerusalem is the goal of the journey and the place of destiny. (CC p. 426)

9:52 *sent messengers* – ἀπέστειλεν ἀγγέλους πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ—This is a practical necessity because of the size of the group. But the wording also points to Jesus as the Prophet like Moses (cf. Ex 23:20). Luke 9 ends as it began (9:2), with Jesus sending out the disciples to prepare for his mission. (CC p. 429)

As Jesus begins to journey to Jerusalem, he meets rejection in a village of Samaria. Except for Mt 10:5, only Luke among the synoptic gospels refers to Samaria and the Samaritans (9:52; 10:33; 17:11, 16). This could reflect Luke's later concern for the Samaritan mission, the second stage of the sequence in Acts. Hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans at the time of Jesus, and although the natural route for pilgrims from Galilee to Jerusalem was through Samaria, many travelers would bypass Samaria by going south on the eastern side of the Jordan. Jesus deliberately passes through Samaria in his journey to Jerusalem. There must be preparation for the journey so that Jesus might be received hospitably (ὡς ἐτοιμάσαι αὐτῷ, "in order to prepare for him"; 9:52). Although it does not explicitly say that the messengers were sent preaching the kingdom of God (as were the Twelve and the seventy[-two], "the principle of 10:16 would apply to them," namely, that "the one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me; and the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me." The language of commissioning (ἀπέστειλεν, "sent"; 9:52), hospitality or rejection (οὐκ ἐδέξαντο, "they did not receive"; 9:53), and journey (ἐπορεύθησαν, "journeyed"; 9:56) is repeated here. (CC p. 430)

Likely sent to proclaim the kingdom and call for repentance. On that understanding these envoys anticipate the upcoming appointment and sending of the Seventy-two (10:1-16). (TLSB)

who went and entered – πορευθέντες—See comments at 9:51. Immediately following the announcement that Jesus must now journey to Jerusalem, the evangelist shows movement toward that goal. The language of journey (πορεύομαι) is repeated at 9:53, 56, 57. (CC p. 429)

village of the Samaritans. Samaritans were particularly hostile to Jews who were on their way to observe religious festivals in Jerusalem. It was at least a three-day journey from Galilee to Jerusalem through Samaria, and Samaritans refused overnight shelter for the pilgrims. Because of this antipathy, Jews traveling between Galilee and Jerusalem frequently went on the east side of the Jordan River. (CSB)

This is the only place that Luke, who has special concern for Samaritans, records their hostility. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

Unfortunately, those sent by Jesus to the Samaritans had no success. (TLSB)

9:53 *face set toward Jerusalem* – The Samaritans, obviously, would rather see Jesus heading for Mount Gerizim than for Jerusalem. This difference on where to worship comes up in Jesus conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἦν πορευόμενον εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ—Luke uses journey language to reiterate Jesus’ destiny in Jerusalem. Regarding “face,” see the commentary on 9:51. “Face” is used with “journey” (LXX πορεύομαι, reflecting פָּנָיו) in 2 Sam 17:11.

9:54 *fire to come down*. As Elijah had (2Ki 1:9–16). James and John were known as “Sons of Thunder” (Mk 3:17) (CSB)

The disciples expected that harsh judgment would come down on the Samaritans. Their request was perhaps inspired from the ministry of the prophet Elijah (2Ki 1:9–12) and also by centuries-old antagonism between Jews and Samaritans. (TLSB)

James and John misunderstand 9:5. Not only do they want to shake off the dust, but they also want to blow them away. They obviously share the ingrown hostility of their people toward Samaritans. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

For a first-century Jew, the natural enmity between the Samaritans and Jews would explain the Samaritans’ failure to receive Jesus. After all, he was journeying toward Jerusalem, which they considered to be a false place of worship. The Samaritan Pentateuch version of Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21; 12:5 specified Mt. Gerizim as the place of worship ordained by God. But the hearer of the gospel knows that Jerusalem is the city of Jesus’ passion; Jesus is rejected also in anticipation of his destiny to be rejected there. The disciples believe that the lack of hospitality showed by the Samaritans to Jesus should be countered with wrath and vengeance. They have not understood Jesus’ mission as the Messiah who is a Suffering Servant. He himself will “be baptized” with the fire of heavenly wrath (12:49–50). His mission as Messiah is one of mercy and compassion, not of condemnation (Jn 3:17). Punishment of those who reject the Gospel will come in the eschaton. Thus “he rebuked” ’ (ἐπετίμησεν) James and John, just as he had rebuked demons (Lk 4:35; 9:42), a fever (4:39), and the disciples’ speaking of an incomplete confession (9:21). Each rebuke counters hindrances to his bringing of the kingdom through his death and resurrection in Jerusalem. (CC p. 431)

9:55 *rebuked them*. Third time Jesus reproved the attitudes of His apostles (cf vv 46–50). The disciples still had much to learn about the Christ-like attitudes necessary for ministry. (TLSB)

The rebuke added between 9:55 and 9:56 in some manuscripts provides a reason for Jesus’ rebuke of James and John (similar to Mt 16:23, where Jesus calls Peter “Satan”): “You do not know of what sort of spirit you are,” implying that the judgmental attitude of James and John is inspired by the devil. (CC p. 431)

The promise of Jesus that the Gospel would reach Samaria (Acts 1:8) will soon be realized in Acts 8 through Philip’s efforts; God’s plan goes forward according to his schedule. Even though the Samaritans reject Jesus here, they are spared fire from heaven so as to be able to hear the Gospel another day. Soon Luke will report: “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee *and Samaria* had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied” (Acts 9:31). (CC p. 431)

So long as the world stands, there exists the call and opportunity to preach the Gospel to unbelievers in the hope that they will repent and be saved. Those who fail to preach the Gospel and instead utter

imprecations are of a different spirit—not the Spirit who descended on Christ at his baptism (Lk 3:21–22). While there is only weak textual support for including that thought in the addition between 9:55 and 9:56, the theology remains biblical, as John will later realize (1 Jn 3:11–24; 4:7–21; cf. also James 1:19–20; 2:1–9; 4:1–7, though the book of James may have been written by the brother of the Lord, not the apostle). The other logion in the addition, “for the Son of Man did not come to destroy souls of men, but to save,” is also weakly attested but is similar to Jn 3:17. (CC p. 431)

9:51–56 When Jesus’ overture to the Samaritans is rejected, His apostles imagine that harsh retribution is in order. Such thinking is typical, unfortunately, as age-old conflicts die hard. We may easily resort to similar bad judgment. Yet, Jesus makes peace, not only with God but also between people. In Christ, all who repent are fully reconciled to the Father. • Lord, remove all sinful division and enmity from Your Church, that we love just as You have loved us. Amen. (TLSB)

The Cost of Following Jesus

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” 59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” 61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” 62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

9:57 *As they were going.* Continuing their journey through Samaria to Jerusalem. (CSB)

πορευομένων αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ—The journey motif continues; the added expression ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ describes Jesus’ journey as being “along the way.” (CC p. 432)

These sayings of Jesus are spoken *while journeying along the way*. Jesus has begun that pilgrimage that will lead to his departure (cf. ἀπέρχη, “you go” [9:57]; ἔξοδος, “exodus” [9:31]). It makes him “homeless” on earth and distinct from the “dead” who are at home in this world. To journey with him means “departing” from all that belongs to this world (cf. ἀπελθών, “departing” [9:60]). Unlike foxes and birds, the Son of Man has no place to lay his head (see comments on 8:19–21). (CC p. 433)

I will follow you – ἀκολουθήσω—See comments at 5:11 on ἀκολουθέω as a term for discipleship. It is repeated three times in this pericope (9:57, 59, 61). (CC p. 432)

Elsewhere, Jesus always initiated the call to discipleship. (John 15:16) Remarkably, the Gospels never tell us about anyone offering to follow Jesus and then successfully becoming a disciple. In each case, Jesus seems to challenge the self-confidence. (TLSB)

9:58 *no where to lay his head* – During Jesus’ ministry, He had no home of His own. He depended on hospitality, just as the apostles did when He sent them out. (TLSB)

9:59 *bury my father.* If his father had already died, the man would have been occupied with the burial then. But evidently he wanted to wait until after his father’s death, which might have been years away. Jesus told him that the spiritually dead could bury the physically dead, and that the spiritually alive should be busy proclaiming the kingdom of God. (CSB)

9:60 *leave the dead bury their own dead* – ἀπελθών διάγγελλε—“Departing” shows that one can be in Jesus’ band of pilgrims and serve the cause of the kingdom without *literally* following his physical

presence (cf. also 8:38–39). Nevertheless, the man is to abandon his old way of life with its natural cares and priorities. “Proclaim far and wide” (BAGD s.v. διαγγέλλω, 1; cf. Rom 9:17) is used only here with “the kingdom.” (CC p. 432)

Jesus is the visitation from above, the Dawn from on high (1:78). The new era of salvation is present in him; he brings the new world of the kingdom of God. Those who enter this kingdom, this new world, are snatched and transferred out of the power of darkness (Col 1:13). To be “fit,” “suitable” for this kingdom and its proclamation entails subordinating all family ties and other worldly cares (“let the dead bury their own dead”; Lk 9:60) and focusing on the task that lies ahead (“no one having puts his hand to the plow and still looking at the things behind is fit for the kingdom of God”; 9:62). This will put Jesus’ disciples at odds with the world and will distinguish them from their own earthly families, as in 8:19–21. (CC p. 433)

The kingdom is so important that its proclamation pushed even venerated duties and traditions into the background. (TLSB)

9:61 *say farewell* – ἀποτάξασθαι—Greetings, blessings, and salutations were very important in the ancient world, particularly those spoken on the road, as one first arrives at a house, and as one takes leave of the house. Jesus overturns some of these priorities. Here he discourages a would-be disciple from going back to give his family the customary departing benediction. Examples of such departing blessings in the OT include Gen 31:55; 32:29 (MT 32:1, 30); 2 Sam 19:39 (MT 19:40); 1 Ki 8:66. In sending out the seventy (-two), Jesus will forbid them from greeting others on the road and also will offer a new greeting on arrival at the house: “Greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house’ ” (Lk 10:4–5). (CC p. 432)

Lk 9:57–62, along with 9:23–24 and 14:25–35, gives a rather stark picture of the radical nature of the call to discipleship. To take up the cross daily (9:23–24) is to proclaim *the kingdom of God* (9:60—action/function) and to be fit for *the kingdom of God* (9:62—status/being), both of which will bring rejection for the disciples. But here they follow the pattern of their Lord. Twice at the end of his Galilean ministry, before he set his face to go to Jerusalem, Jesus spoke of his rejection (9:22, 44). His rejection on the cross foreshadows the rejection of Jesus’ disciples, a theme in the journey narrative of Luke and a reality in Acts. The way of new life is not an easy, painless way. It is the way of death for the old man, in daily contrition and repentance. It requires staying on the hard road of pilgrimage that leads to the cross, through death, and finally to resurrection. It calls for an unhesitating departure from ties to the old life, even the ties to family. The family that matters, says Jesus, is the family of God (Lk 8:19–21). We may be born of human mothers into a human family, but the new birth into God’s kingdom is through Baptism, and the true family of God has Christ as its head (Jn 3:3, 5; Col 1:18). Luke does not record the responses of the three would-be disciples in this pericope, suggesting that more important than the question of whether *they* heeded Jesus’ words is the question of whether *you*—the hearer or reader of Luke’s gospel—will respond in faith and persevere on the journey with Jesus. (CC p. 433)

A third candidate for discipleship is shocked by Jesus’ demands. Clearly, following Jesus means a radical reordering of value and priorities. (TLSB)

9:62 *hand to the plow and looks back* – ἐπιβαλὼν τὴν χεῖρα ἐπ’ ἄροτρον καὶ βλέπων εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω—The first participle, ἐπιβαλὼν, is an aorist, showing that the act of setting hand to plow comes first; the second participle, βλέπων, is present, suggesting that the act of looking back is ongoing and connected to the (implied) action of plowing. The image here is vivid. One who turns his head and looks back while he is plowing the field is sure to make a crooked furrow instead of a straight one. It is hard enough to plow a straight furrow when one keeps his eyes forward and concentrates on the task at hand. (CC pp. 432–433)

is fit – εὐθετός ἐστὶν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ—One must be made “fit” for the kingdom in order to continue to journey toward the kingdom or to announce the kingdom far and wide. This involves a particular posture of having *set one’s face* (cf. Jesus in 9:51, 53) and of having left this world behind. (CC p. 433)

looks back – He is to focus on the tasks that are to be done now that are right in front of them and not get caught up in habits and rituals of the past.

It took one’s full attention to hold and press down on a plow with one hand as it cut through the earth. The plowman’s other hand held a goad for the animal pulling the plow. (TLSB)

9:57–62 In three brief exchanges with would-be disciples, Jesus shows that the cost of discipleship is high. Obviously, were it up to us to achieve our place in the kingdom of God, we would never make it. Thankfully, then, Jesus invites us and by grace makes it possible for us to become members of His eternal communion. • “O Lord, rescue us from the captivity of the sins which have oppressed us, so that we may attain the dwellings of the heavenly Jerusalem; through Jesus Christ. Amen.” (Sarum Breviary, *TLWA*, p 228). (TLSB)