

Ministry Going to Jerusalem and Lessons on Discipleship

Looking into the Face of Jesus
The Life of Christ, 2: Pages 13-26
Manuscript: Lesson Plan 59

Introduction

The text for this lesson is Luke 9:51–62 and John 7:1–10.

The context we find ourselves in is that it was time for Jesus to head to Judea (Luke 9:51; Matthew 19:1). We are in Christ's last six months of living on earth as a man.

A question that we ask ourselves at this point is: What is required to be a disciple of Christ? Is there ever a time when the Lord would say, "Yes, I understand. That is important, so go take care of it first"? Today, we are going to study two different texts and review one.

The Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)

(Read John 7:1–9).

The Feast of Booths was one of the three major feasts of the Jews. Can you name the others? Feast of Unleavened Bread/Passover, which occurred around March/April (Exodus 12–15); Feast of Weeks/Pentecost, celebrating the culmination of the Exodus at Mount Sinai and occurred seven weeks and one day after the Passover (Exodus 34:22).

The Laws regarding the Feast of Booths are found in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16. It was a week-long feast. It occurred around late September to mid-October. The purpose of the Feast of Booths was to remember the giving of the Law and to renew the covenant made between Israel and the Lord (Deuteronomy 31:10–13).

Do you remember Jesus' brothers names? They are found in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. What does this text tell you about them? They were telling Jesus, "Look, if you want to be a celebrity, you have to get exposure." Even they did not believe in Him. Jesus' response to His brothers was to explain that they could go, but it would be too dangerous for Him. Did Jesus say He would or would not go to this feast? He would not go.

What did Jesus say was the reason the world hated Him? He testified of them that their deeds were evil. Why does the world hate Jesus today?

Let us look at Jesus' actions. (Read John 7:10). What did Jesus actually do? Did Jesus lie to His brothers? How do you explain Jesus' words versus His actions? It could be He was not going in the same manner as His brothers suggested—as a flamboyant miracle worker. More than likely, He meant that He was not going up "YET"—at the same time and same way as His brothers in the caravan. Actually, the KJV and the NIV put the word "yet" in their versions because some of the Greek manuscripts include the word "yet." How did Jesus go to the Feast of Booths? Privately. Why? Remember, people were out to destroy Him (John 7:1).

Jesus Traveling to Jerusalem

(Read Luke 9:51–56).

Luke tells of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem. He did not take the normal route (down the eastern bank of the Jordan river); He decided to go through Samaria. But they did not receive Him, probably because they knew He was going to worship in Jerusalem.

James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven. Do you think they actually could? If they could not, they thought they could. Jesus' response was that He came to save, not to destroy. Also, His instructions were to go to another city if they were not received in one city (Matthew 10:23). We could learn a lot from this. Do not take rejection personally. Just keep moving and working for the Lord.

Teaching about Discipleship

(Read Luke 9:57–62).

The impulsive candidate said to Jesus, "I will follow You wherever You go." Look at the Lord's response in Luke 9:58; remember, the Lord knew his heart. What was the Lord trying to say to the potential disciple? He was telling him to count the cost! The Lord knew what was ahead of Him over the next six months. He wanted this disciple to understand the sacrifice. We too do not ever need to forget the sacrifice.

Then there was the indecisive candidate. The Lord declared, "Follow me." But the response was, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." This request sounds reasonable, right? In that culture, the obligation to bury your parent took precedence over just about everything, even religious ceremonies and services. This was a religious, social, and family obligation of this man. Jesus said, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead" (Luke 9:60).

Whom was Jesus referring to when He said let the "dead" bury "their own dead"—the first dead (physical) or the spiritually dead? Jesus was using the word "dead" in two senses: "Allow the spiritually dead to bury the physically dead" (see Ephesians 2:1; 1 Timothy 5:6; 1 John 3:14). Was Jesus being harsh in His response? Burials took place immediately in those days—the same day if possible, but ceremonies lasted about a week. Christ was passing by; if the man was going to come, it was going to be then. It is possible that the man's father was not yet dead. This was an obligation to wait and perform, but it was not more important than following Jesus.

Remember, Jesus knew the man's heart. The issue was the man said that he wanted to do that first. This excuse has been used forever. "I will, Lord, but let me first. . ." When a decision needs to be made between conflicting duties, Christ says, if we want to be His disciple, we will always first do what He has commanded us.

Finally, there was the indefinite candidate. This candidate's response was to let him first say farewell to those at his home. In eastern countries, farewells could take days, weeks, or months. Again, remember, the Lord was just passing by; He was not going to be there tomorrow. Think about what the man's family was going to do when he told them he was leaving to follow this man named Jesus. Do you not think they would try to talk him out of following Him? We need to also remember that the Lord knew his heart as well. Jesus' response tells

us about what Jesus saw in the man's heart (Luke 9:62). What did Jesus try to tell the man? He must free himself from his old life. He could not be attached to his family, friends, old successes, old ways, and he could not turn back to his old ways and still follow Jesus.

Here are some lessons learned. Jesus was not being harsh in His words; He knew their hearts and their challenges. Think about what Christ just taught about discipleship. Count the cost. What has discipleship cost you? Put God first. What is coming between you and God? Do not turn back. What/who from your old life is trying to pull you back? We could learn a lot from this.

Conclusion

We do not know whether these men followed Jesus or not. We are not told. How will you write the ending of your story? Do you just want to be a would-be disciple, or are you going to be a true disciple who understands the cost, puts God first, and never turns back?

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