

The Splendour of the coming Kingdom

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our reading this morning, which is in Luke's Gospel, chapter 9. If you have one of the church Bibles, that's page 866. And we're coming back to our series in Luke's Gospel.

And we come this morning to chapter 9, which really brings us very shortly to the turning point in Luke's Gospel. Remember we said there are two main halves, they're not equal halves.

But at chapter 9, verse 51, there's a turning as Jesus begins his long journey to Jerusalem and beyond Jerusalem through the cross and his resurrection to the glory of the Father.

So Luke in these early chapters show us Jesus, the Son of the Father, coming down from the glory of heaven to reveal the glory of his kingdom to the world. And then from there, he shows us the return of the Lord to the glory of the kingdom and on the road to Jerusalem, teaching his disciples the way also to his glory.

So this is a very significant chapter. I'll explain a little later on. It's really all one piece, verses 1 to 50. But we're going to read verses 1 to 27 together this morning.

[1 : 18] And Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.

And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, take nothing for your journey, no staff, no bag, no bread, nor money, and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them. And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the Tetrarch heard about all that was happening. And he was perplexed because it was said by some that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead.

And by some that Elijah had appeared. And by others that one of the prophets of old had arisen. Herod said, John I beheaded. But who is this about whom I hear such things?

[2 : 22] And he sought to see him. On their return, the apostles told Jesus all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.

When the crowds learned it, they followed him and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God. And cured those who had need of healing. Now the day began to wear away. And the twelve came and said to him, send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging. And to get provisions. For we're here in a desolate place. But he said to them, you give them something to eat.

They said, we have no more than five loaves and two fish. Unless we're to go and buy food for all these people. For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.

And they did so. And had them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

[3 : 32] And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up. Twelve baskets of broken pieces. Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him.

And he asked them, who do the crowd say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist. But others say Elijah. And others that one of the prophets of old has arisen.

Then he said to them, but who do you say that I am? And Peter answered, the Christ of God. And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, the Son of Man must suffer many things.

And be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes. And be killed. And on the third day be raised. And he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

[4 : 44] For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. Amen.

And may God bless to us this, his word. Well, let's turn to Luke's Gospel, chapter 9, page 866, if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles.

And as I said, we're resuming our studies in Luke's Gospel. And with chapter 9, we come, as I've said, to this climax of the first part of Luke's message, which is all about the revelation of the glory of the Savior from heaven into our world.

At verse 51, if you look, you'll see that there's this decisive turning point. Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.

[5 : 51] And that's the beginning of a journey, not just to Jerusalem, but through his death and resurrection, through his ascension, back to the glory of heaven. And the rest of Luke's Gospel sees Jesus on that journey with his disciples and teaching his followers all along the way, the way of salvation for him and for them.

And so this chapter is really the climax of Jesus' revelation of what his coming kingdom means for this world. We've seen in Luke's account from the beginning the arrival and the announcement of the Savior in the world in the early chapters.

Then we've seen him showing his extraordinary authority over men in nature, diseases, demons, everything. Then most recently in chapters 7 and 8, we saw the amazement that was caused by the demonstration of his power and his authority, the wonders of his salvation in the lives of so many individual people, demonstrating that salvation means the deliverance from death itself, the reversal of death.

It means the release from all the debt of sin. It means rescue from the darkness and the dark powers of sin. And it means the removal of all the despair that the curse of sin brings into this whole world of our human lives.

But you see, Jesus wants us to be clear that his salvation is far, far wider than just something that touches the lives of individuals. Marvelous as that is, and of course, it is marvelous that he touches the lives of individuals.

[7 : 36] But the splendor of Jesus' coming kingdom is far greater than that. And Luke wants us to be certain that the salvation Jesus brings is the breaking in of a whole new world, nothing less.

It's nothing less than the glory of heaven itself coming down to take over this whole earth. And so at the climax of this stage in his story, Luke gives us in this chapter a vivid adumbration, a vivid foreshadowing, a preview of the sheer majesty, the splendor of his coming kingdom, and indeed the splendor of the glorious king himself.

If you look carefully at Luke 9, 1 to 50, you'll see that it is very carefully constructed by Luke. He's deliberately left out a lot of what Mark and Matthew include about Jesus' ministry at this point.

And he does it, I think, in order to focus and make his message exceptionally clear. David Gooding, in his very helpful book on Luke's gospel, I think shows this very helpfully, that there's a sort of mirror image pattern in this whole chapter.

So it begins in verses 1 to 9 and it ends in verses 43 to 50 with Jesus instructing his disciples about their ministry of the kingdom and what it means for them both now and in the future.

[9 : 02] And notice that the focus all the way through this chapter is on the apostles, on the disciples, on Jesus' closest followers. He's wanting to show them very clearly what his kingdom really means.

And then the very center of this whole section is on two parallel events that both focus on Jesus and in particular focus very clearly on three particular things about Jesus.

That's verses 21 to 27 and then verses 28 to 36. They focus on his true identity. Verse 20, Jesus is confessed as the Christ by Peter.

And then, of course, in verse 35, the voice from heaven tells us, this is my son, my beloved one, my chosen one. Then there's a focus on his imminent rejection. Verse 22, again, Jesus' own words about his coming suffering.

And then verse 31, Moses and Elijah are discussing with Jesus his coming departure, his exodus that's to accomplish. And then, crucially, both of these focus on his second coming.

[10:08] So, verse 27, as Jesus' very first mention in the gospel of his coming in glory. And then, of course, in verse 32, we have the three disciples on the mountain seeing Jesus transfigured in glory.

And Peter himself tells us later on in 2 Peter chapter 1 that this was a preview of Jesus' parousia, his coming, his coming in glory. And that's the center of this whole section.

And then in between, sandwiched between the central focus and those bookends of the teaching, if you like, we have two miracles, each of which gives us a glimpse, a foretaste of the glory of that world to come.

We have the feeding of the 5,000, and then we have the banishing of the demons from the young boy. So it's a very carefully ordered account. That's so very typical, isn't it, of Luke's gospel, as we've seen.

And it's a very clearly conveyed message. That this gospel and that the salvation that there is in Jesus Christ is nothing less than the breaking into our world of another world altogether.

[11:16] It's the world to come that is being revealed in Jesus. And it's being shown to be a world of majesty and power and glory and splendor and abundant life.

So the ultimate goal of Christ's salvation is so wide, it's so vast. And these verses are here to give us a foretaste of that, a glimpse of that glory, of the splendor of the coming kingdom and of its coming king.

Now, it'd be ideal, really, to look at the whole section, verses 1 to 50, together. But I know that you want lunch before tea time. So we'll just look at verses 1 to 27, the first half of it this week, and we'll come back next week.

And this really is focusing on the splendor of the coming kingdom. And actually, David Gooding, in his book, very helpfully, I think, suggests that the first half that we're looking at this morning looks at the setting up and the coming of Christ's kingdom from the perspective of this world.

And then the second half, if you like, looks at it from the perspective of the other world, the world to come, that's already in existence. It's where those who have gone before us, Moses, Elijah, and so on, where they are in the presence of God, and where they see our history from outside as it's unfolding.

[12:32] And I think that's quite a helpful suggestion. So you might want to just keep that in your mind. Well, let's focus then, first of all, this morning on verses 1 to 9, where the mission of the kingdom is shown to be nothing less than the proclamation of the world to come.

The proclamation of the world to come. And that is seen in the challenge of a supernatural ministry. The entire nationwide ministry of the apostles throughout Israel at this time is summarized, if you look at verse 6, in just one verse.

But it's very clear that it filled the whole nation. The gospel went everywhere, we're told. And Luke's focus in this passage, though, is on Jesus' briefing and Jesus' explanation of the significance of that ministry in verses 1 to 5.

And it was very clearly a supernatural ministry. What's called the gospel in verse 6, the good news of the kingdom, is, in verse 2, the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

And the good news of the kingdom was nothing less than the full expectation of the glorious return of the Lord himself to this earth.

[13:48] To be the king of his people, to end their exile and to restore Israel forever. And so to usher in the whole era of the new heavens and the new earth.

There is nothing less than that that is promised in the Old Testament prophets. It's the coming of a new age. It's the world to come. That's what the prophets spoke of.

And we saw earlier on that John the Baptist quoted from Isaiah chapter 52 so very clearly about Jesus' arrival. He spoke about the good news. He spoke about the return of the Lord to Zion.

When all of the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. And so the apostles' mission here is to be the mission of those beautiful feet on the mountains of Israel.

Announcing the good news of the return of the king. The return of the Lord. And to usher in that covenant of everlasting peace. The end of darkness. The end of death.

[14:50] The joy of his everlasting kingdom. And their ministry was therefore giving a foretaste of these things. It's giving them a taste of the powers of the age to come as Hebrews chapter 6 verse 5 calls it.

Look at verse 2. They're banishing demons. They're banishing disease. They're banishing all darkness from the realm of the Holy One. The Lord. The glorious king who's coming to reign. They're making his path straight. And that explains you see verses 3 and 4. Because here are the emissaries of the great king who is coming to his own people.

And it's to be expected that he'll be received with joy. And that he'll be provided for gladly by the people that he comes to rule. Now alas of course as the gospel unfolds.

We'll see that Israel and indeed later the whole world refuses its rightful king. Refuses the messengers of the king. That's why later on in Luke chapter 22 verse 35 Jesus says that well now you will need to provide bags.

[15:57] You'll need to bring money and a staff and so on for yourselves. So don't be mistaken. This here in our verses is not an abiding command for all servants of the gospel throughout all the ages.

Some people have thought that. That's a total misunderstanding. But what is an abiding principle is that how Christ's messengers bearing the gospel are received by the people of this world is a vital matter.

And Jesus reiterates in verse 48 just what he says here in verse 5. That it's clear that to receive or to reject even the humblest servant of Christ the king is to receive or reject Christ himself.

That's why Hebrews chapter 6 verse 5 later on warns others much later that to taste of the heavenly gifts, to share in the glorious powers of the age to come and then to take that privilege of having been given a taste in the good news of the kingdom and to reject it, that that is to hold the Son of God in contempt, to re-crucify him.

And that can only result in final and fearful judgment. And so a response to the message of the world to come is vital. And a wrong response, verse 5, do you see, of rejecting Christ's emissaries, that is disastrous.

[17:28] Now it was not for the apostles then, nor is it for us now, to force earthly judgment upon those who reject and blaspheme Christ the king.

Jesus did not say, look at these verses, he did not say, slay them with the sword. He did not say, kill them with suicide bombs if they will not bow to me as Lord. That's very important, isn't it, for us to note today.

When people may think that any radical call to obedience to a king is like that horror of radical Islam. No, never that.

But, nevertheless, Jesus is clear that the gospel servant does wield a weapon of God's judgment. But that weapon, Jesus says, is the very message that you proclaim.

And it's the response or the lack of response to the gospel that brings the declaration of God's final judgment right into the present time, either to declare someone justified before God or condemned forever in his sight.

[18:36] That he will ultimately depart from them as they have demanded that he do. And verse 5, you see, the apostles shake the dust of their feet off as a testimony, as a sign of that terrible choice that's been made.

And it's very clear from verse 6 that all are without excuse because the witness of the gospel has gone to all the nation, everywhere it was preached. The whole nation was given a taste of the goodness of the powers of the age to come in a supernatural ministry that brought a challenge of an encounter with the true and living God and demanded a response.

And verses 7 to 9 show us the impact of this ministry. It clearly shook the whole nation, including Herod himself. He was greatly shaken. He could see, as indeed all the crowds could see, that this must be some sort of supernatural visitation from another world.

It just couldn't be explained by ordinary means. Some thought it was Elijah had come back. Or some other prophet had risen from the dead. A supernatural event. Or worst of all, for Herod certainly, that John the Baptist had come back, whom he beheaded.

Herod, of course, had beheaded John because he couldn't stand the challenge of a gospel that demanded that he repent. But how terrifying for Herod, and indeed how terrifying for any despotic ruler in our world for that matter, to discover that in fact death perhaps is not the end.

[20 : 19] And that you cannot just destroy anyone who gets in your way or anyone who challenges your rule. And that perhaps there is indeed a world beyond, and therefore perhaps there is indeed unaccounting to be given to one who is higher and greater and more powerful than you.

No wonder, verse 9, Herod is rattled. He wants to find out, what are these things? Who is this man? But you see, Herod himself had had a personal emissary from Jesus in the person of John the Baptist.

And Herod had not received him. In fact, he had silenced him and killed him. And so later, you see, in Luke's gospel we read in chapter 23 that when at last Herod did come face to face with Jesus at Jesus' trial, and Herod wanted to question him and find out all about him, we read these fateful words in Luke 23, verse 8.

Jesus made him no answer. He was silent. Jesus shook the dust from his feet at Herod.

No doubt with great sadness, just as he mourned and wept for the whole of Jerusalem in chapter 19, because of their hardness and their rejection. But Jesus said to them, because of that, the way of peace has been hidden from your sight.

[21 : 52] Yes, Jesus was no doubt sad about Herod's rejection, but sadness in the end did not soften his judgment. Because having been offered to taste in the goodness of the powers of the age to come and then to reject it, that is to willfully crucify the Son of God.

It is to hold him in contempt. And you cannot hold the Son of God in contempt and know the blessings of his salvation.

It cannot be. Friends, we need to know that. We need to know that the ministry and the mission of the gospel is a supernatural ministry.

It proclaims the power of the world to come. It brings an encounter with the powers of the age to come, and it announces the coming of the King.

As verse 26 says, it tells us that he will come in the glory of the Father and his holy angels to judge the whole world himself. And that judgment, says Jesus, will be according to the response that has been given to his gospel now, in this world, in this age, for every single human being.

[23 : 14] Because the gospel proclaims to all men, even to rulers and kings, it proclaims that Jesus Christ alone is the Lord and King of this world.

And it demands love and loyalty to him alone. And if you will not receive his message now, if you will not receive his messengers now, as verse 26 says, if you are ashamed of Christ and his commands now, he will surely be ashamed of you on the day he returns in power and glory.

See what Luke is saying? Don't think that you can scorn the goodness of the powers of the age to come by rejecting the good news of Jesus now, and survive to share the splendor of that glorious kingdom in power and glory when at last it comes.

You can have no greater mistake to make in your life, friends. No greater mistake than to think that. And of course, we as Christians mustn't think either that the true mission of the gospel can ever, therefore, coexist peacefully with the powers of this world and its rulers.

Of course not. A supernatural ministry that announces the power of another world demanding to rule this world now. A word that proclaims that Jesus is the only power and authority in this world to bow down to, not yours.

[24 : 48] That we must demand allegiance to his rule and his word and his law, a higher rule than the rule of any parliament or president or king. That is a very unpopular message with the powers of this world, which of course is why throughout history there has been vicious suppression of the Christian church so often by so many regimes from communism to Nazism, and increasingly, of course, in the West today in our post-Christianized, increasingly secular world.

But of course, the Bible also tells us, doesn't it, that the Lord who sits in heaven laughs. He looks down at such fury and scorn against his son. And he laughs, as Psalm 2 says.

He warns kings and rulers to be wise, to not reject his son's rule, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.

And we know God does judge rulers and nations in history just as he will judge individual human beings for eternity.

And if Israel, with all its privileged tasting of the goodness of God's kingdom, and if this generation that had the extraordinary privilege of hearing with their own ears and seeing with their own eyes the words and the person of God on earth before them, if Israel was rejected and passed over and cast off and its institutions destroyed, as they were within a generation of these things happening, then how much more so for other nations of this world?

[26 : 35] We shouldn't be surprised, should we, if nations and world empires that have had the privilege of tasting of gospel truth, who have been shaped by Christian truth and its foundations and institutions, that if such nations increasingly turn their backs upon the message and upon the messages of Christ, we shouldn't be surprised if God increasingly turns his back upon them.

They drift into decay, economic decay, social collapse, insignificance on the world stage. Read history and you'll see the past, look at the present, and fear for the nations of the West.

The message of the Christian church is a supernatural message. It brings the challenge of the world to come right into the midst of this world and it demands that the people of this world bow to its king. In one sense, one sense, the radical Christian gospel does make the same sort of absolute claim that radical Islam makes on the world today for its rule and its power.

But, and it is a massive but, Christ's weapon is not the sword, but the word. And what a difference there is in the kingdom and in the king that we proclaim compared with the radical Islamists.

[28 : 09] And that's what's so wonderfully evident in verses 10 to 17 that follow us here, just as it is in what verse 6 tells us of what this radical ministry of radical Christian faith really looks like.

It's not wielding death and destruction and evil and great fear. Look at verse 6. It's wielding healing and health and life and great joy.

You see, the preview Jesus gives us of his true kingdom, the place where his radical rule is to be established, is nothing like the ghastly pictures that we see on our television screens of the territory of the Islamic State, is it?

Of violence and suppression and terror. The God who is distant and dark and fearsome. No, rather, what we have here is a picture of ultimate peace and liberation and joy in the presence of God who is the provider, who is the satisfier beyond understanding of all of his people.

That's the picture we see in verses 10 to 17. It's a preview of the world to come. A preview of the world to come, seen in the contentment of this wonderfully satisfying miracle.

[29 : 28] Look at verse 10. The apostles return, they report everything that they've done, and Jesus takes them away to Bethsaida, no doubt, to instruct them further. Notice, again, the focus is always on the apostles, the 12, verse 12, his disciples, verse 14, and so on through the passage.

You see, their ignorance is still great as to the real scope of Jesus' mission. And they need to understand fully the great gulf between their own impotence to do anything.

To create this kingdom. And Jesus' extraordinary power. And that's what's to the fore in this miracle, as well as in the miracle that Luke records in verses 37 to 43, where the disciples, again, are found impotent.

They can't do what's needed. They can't cast out the demon. But Jesus comes and casts them out with a word. So Jesus needs to show them that his kingdom is still far, far greater than anything they can imagine.

He needs to show them the power which alone can bring this kingdom to this world. And the power of the world to come has got to break into this world if it's going to change it.

[30 : 43] And that can only do, it can only happen through the presence of Jesus himself. And so here in this miracle, Jesus demonstrates to his disciples the full implications, the goal, if you like, of what his salvation is really all about.

It gives them a foretaste, quite literally, of what it will be like when his kingdom fully comes. Now they all know by heart, probably, these latter chapters of Isaiah that we've been speaking about with a promise of God's great day of salvation.

Salvation and judgment, when those who have rejected God will be judged and rejected, but when all of God's servants will be redeemed, when they will eat and drink and rejoice and sing and all former troubles will be forgotten, is what Isaiah says.

It'll be the end of evil. Dust will be the serpent's food. And there will be no hurt, no destruction in all my holy mountain. And they all longed for that day.

They all prayed for that day to come. They longed for Isaiah's vision of chapter 25 and 26 that we began our service with. They longed for that to be fulfilled. When having destroyed Leviathan, the

twisting serpent, the devil, he will destroy death forever.

[32 : 02] He'll wipe away all tears from all faces. When Isaiah says, the dead shall live, their bodies shall rise from the dust of the earth and sing, and all God's people will sing together.

This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. And on that day, says Isaiah, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, and he will swallow up death forever.

And the Lord God will wipe away all tears from all eyes. It's a picture, isn't it? Of the end of all want, of all dissatisfaction, and all emptiness.

It's a picture of the fulfillment of every hope and desire and appetite and dream of the human heart. It's a picture of the world that deep down, every human being in their hearts longs for with an unappeasable want, with an inconsolable longing.

That's true, isn't it? That's the longing of every heart this morning here that's weeping and mourning for a lost loved one. It's the longing of every frustrated and hungry heart this whole world over.

[33 : 22] Everybody's got a hungry heart. Everybody wants a place to rest. Everybody wants to have a home. That's what Bruce Springsteen sang when I was a boy. I used to sing along in the days of vinyl.

Remember vinyl? But he's right, isn't he? Not the greatest philosopher in the world, but he's right. Everybody hungers deep down for that satisfaction.

And we know it, and God knows it, because he put that hunger there. It's a hunger for his home. It's a hunger for his rest. And that's what Jesus gives a glimpse to his disciples of right here.

It's a foretaste of the abundance, of the overflowing bounty and ultimate satisfaction that only his glorious kingdom can give, that only he can bring to the hungry human heart.

Look at verse 17. These hungry, weary, tired people out in the desert, they all ate and were satisfied. And there was an abundance overflowing, an excess, basket loads of extras.

[34 : 34] Nobody could possibly have their appetite unsatisfied. Even Edward Lobb would be satisfied by that meal. You see, he's showing his disciples how wide and how wonderful his salvation really is so much more than they'd even yet understood.

And he's showing them how far beyond any earthly power or any person in this world alone it possibly is to achieve this.

That's no doubt why he says to the disciples, first of all, in verse 30, well, you give them something to eat. All they can think about is how to go about that this world's way. We've only got one lunchbox.

They say, how are we going to do this? We'll have to buy food for all these people. We'll have to go to Tesco. No, in fact, with all this number, we'll have to go to Costco with a lorry. See, that's all they could think of.

They have no idea yet of what the gospel of the kingdom really means, that it's nothing less than the power of another whole world breaking into this world. The power of complete recreation.

[35 : 44] But you see, I think many, many Christians today still have no idea of that properly. It's so easy, isn't it, for us to focus on the here and now.

We think about the gospel maybe as changing people's minds and their thinking about Jesus. Well, of course it's that. And about changing people's lives to more holy living and a better way of behaving and so on.

And yes, certainly it's that. Of course it is. But that is not all it is. We ourselves might achieve some of that. We can persuade people of things.

We can teach people. We can train people up to a point. But we can't bring the life of the new world, the age to come, into this world. We can't transform this whole universe.

It doesn't matter how great we are at proclaiming and preaching. We can't end all suffering and evil. We can't raise the dead, can we? But Jesus can.

[36 : 52] And he will. And that's the great goal, the end, of what his kingdom means. Nothing less than that.

And that's what these people glimpsed that day, in the ultimate life that Jesus came to deliver. And the sheer contentment and the joy that's pictured by that miracle that satisfied the crowd's appetite so wonderfully.

And that is what Jesus has come to bring to the world. It's just what Edward was showing us last Sunday morning in Romans chapter 8, that the sufferings of this present time are not to be

compared with the glory that's to be revealed.

When the whole creation will be renewed and released into the glorious resurrection of all God's people. And yes, it's true that our gospel is not to be triumphalistic, that we're to wait, says Paul, with patient endurance.

It's not yet. There are many sufferings of the present time. But the fullness of that glory is surely coming. And the foretaste that we see here is real.

[38 : 00] And its message must fill us with hope. We must never forget that it will be reality one day. It's right, isn't it, that we focus on the cross of Jesus.

But Jesus himself was intent on making all his disciples see the glory of his coming kingdom. They were never to forget that and they never did. What Peter called later on in his letter, they never forgot the power and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ which they proclaimed.

And they were eyewitnesses of his majesty here in this miracle. And then shortly on the mountain when they saw Jesus transfigured, they never forgot when they preached the message of the cross that they were heralding also the coming of the glorious kingdom of Christ.

These things are inseparable. people and that indeed is why Jesus himself tells us what he does in verses 18 to 27.

When having shown us the proclamation of the world to come, he gives a preview of the world to come in this miracle. But now he lays out with great clarity the path to the world to come that is seen both in the confession of a suffering Messiah and in the coming of the Son of Man.

[39 : 25] Having seen and heard all these things that they've now heard in Jesus' ministry, Jesus turns to his disciples and asks them a question, verse 18. Who do the crowd say I am? And they repeat what we read in verses 7 to 9.

Well, John or Elijah or one of the prophets. But what about you, he says, verse 20. And Peter voices these marvelous words speaking for all of them, a great confession. direct contrast to all the crowds who, yes, knew it was something supernatural.

But Peter is saying, no, he is not just one of the prophets. He's not just part of the story. He is the one that all the prophets pointed to. He is the goal of the story.

He's the Christ of God, the Messiah of God. And with that, we have the climax of God's self-revelation. But then, verse 22, the immediate shock.

He will suffer and will be rejected and be killed by the very religious establishment whose job it was to guard and proclaim the truth about God to the people. Well, we've seen, haven't we, through history and very much in recent history that so often it's the religious establishment that in the end instead of proclaiming Christ, persecutes Christ and his people.

[40 : 40] But notice Jesus' response. He says to his people, not, not, take up your swords therefore and fight those who reject me and oppose me. But, verse 23, take up your cross and follow me on this road of shame and suffering.

Once again, note well that the way of the true God and his Christ is this, it's never a call to bombs and bullets to avenge the name of our Savior or one of our prophets.

And don't tell this abroad, he says, verse 21. He didn't want the crowd forcing a political office on him. John chapter 6 tells us they wanted to make him king by force.

No, verse 22, he must suffer. That's what the scriptures foretell. That is the plan and purpose of God. All through Luke's gospel we're told that these things must happen.

That is the appointed path of the servant of the Lord who is the Messiah, King of God. Those two strands of the Old Testament prophecy that just don't seem to belong together and the Jews could never bring together and still can't bring together that the one who is God's king, his Messiah, must also be the servant who will suffer and bear the sins for his people.

[41 : 54] But they come together in Jesus. It's so clear when you see it. Even in Isaiah 52 that we quoted the good news of the Lord, the king coming back to Zion.

Immediately it goes on, right away to talk of the servant of the Lord who will be lifted up, high and exalted. A term that's only ever used of God in Isaiah.

Yes, he is the son of man who is the son of God and he must suffer. And that's the appointed path to the glory of the world to come. And so says Jesus in verse 23, so must anyone who comes after me.

losing his life, often literally, for Jesus' sake. And certainly sharing in the shame and the reproach of this world because like Jesus, if you belong to him, you don't belong to this present world.

You belong to the world to come. And therefore, the people of this world who hate the world to come will hate the people of the world to come just as they hated Jesus. And that won't change. [42 : 59] Notice Jesus does not say to his disciples, well, this will be a temporary thing, but don't worry. Soon things will get better and better. Well, that wasn't so, was it?

For Tony Blair's Britain. And it certainly will not be so for the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world, at least if we believe Jesus' words. We have to be very careful, don't we, about any trends in the church, any teaching that would want to tell us that, well, if only the church did more of this or that or the next thing, we'd be building the kingdom gloriously here and now.

If only we were more involved in social work or political involvement or education or homeschooling or environmentalism or whatever it is, that the kingdom will somehow be brought about on this earth the way we want to see it.

No, says Jesus, we can no more do that than the disciples could feed the 5,000 with those loaves and fishes. Only the presence of Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God, can do that.

And only the presence of the Son of Man in the power and glory of the Father and his holy angels will transform this world at last into the world to come. But look at verse 26.

[44 : 14] That day will come, he says, and he will come in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels, and then he will make all things new.

And there'll be no more hunger and no more hungry and unsatisfied human hearts and no more tears and sorrow and sighing and grieving will flee away forever.

For those, Jesus says, who have been unashamed of him and his words now, and he'll be unashamed of them on that day.

You see what Jesus is saying? It's those who are unashamed of the confession of a suffering Messiah who will be found unashamed at the coming of the Son of Man.

That's a real challenge to all of us, isn't it? And yet, look how encouragingly Luke's message and Jesus' words speak to us, to every true follower of Jesus.

[45 : 16] See, Jesus hides nothing about the reality of the path to the world to come for himself and those who follow him. It is the way of the cross. It is the way of shame and scorn.

And yet, do you see how his call to discipleship is hedged in by this marvelous preview of the splendor of his kingdom and the marvelous promise of his certain return in glory to make that splendor permanent for all who are his?

Do you see that? Because only if we grasp the true splendor and the grandeur and the glory of his kingdom, if we grasp what his salvation really will mean one day, only if we grasp that will we be able to keep following him in the way he leads us, in the way of shame, and keep to our task of proclaiming to this sad world in all its present sufferings the challenge of a supernatural ministry that brings the power of age to come into this present age.

And all the disturbance, all the division, all the disruption and the painful rejection that always attends that kind of message in this world. It's only those who truly rejoice in the splendor of the coming of the Son of Man who will be able to truly rejoice in the shame of confessing a suffering Messiah.

Isn't that right? So friends, let's make this year, let's make 2015 a year when we remind one another often of the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as Peter urges us to do.

[47 : 03] That's Luke's message for us here, loud and clear. The splendor of his kingdom is adumbrated, it's foreshadowed before those 5,000 men that day and it's written for us here to remind us that that day is coming.

Soon and very soon we're going to see the King and we're going to see the splendor of that glorious kingdom. And then, verse 26, he will be unashamed to welcome us into that splendor and glory.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, how we thank you for the splendor of your coming kingdom and for the revelation of that glory to our hearts through your gospel.

May it fill us, hearts and minds, with glorious anticipation and so strengthen us and enable us to be unashamed of you and your words this day and to the very ends of our lives.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[48 : 28] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.