

# THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR FAITH

JESUS CHRIST  
THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE  
EPHESIANS 2:20

A.D.

*Footsteps of Jesus*

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# how to use this study

Each lesson in this *The Cornerstone of Our Faith* study has four major parts.

Every lesson begins with an introductory section called *The Foundation*. In this section, the author will give background material to help prepare your mind and heart for God's Word.

The second part of each lesson is called *The Cornerstone*. This section is always the heart of every lesson. The Bible is explored in detail to help us understand the text. Those who are accustomed to hearing African-American preaching can hear this section "preach." God's Word is powerfully presented so that all can understand.

The next section of each study is critical for the Word to fulfill its intended purpose. It is called *The Inscription*. Just as people take note of inscriptions on cornerstones or monuments, each lesson is written so as to drive home a point worth remembering and a principle worth following. It offers the encouragement to change attitudes or behaviors to align better with God's Word. To *know* the Bible is one thing; to *do* it is another.

Every lesson ends with a series of thought-provoking *Discussion Questions* that help you explore God's Word on a personal and a congregational level. These questions provide opportunities for group discussion and participation. Teachers can tell by the responses whether their students have really come to grips with the lesson.

## about the author

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# Lesson 1

## King of Kings

(*Luke 9:51-55*)

### FOUNDATION

Sometimes referred to as the Travel Narrative, Luke 9:51–18:14 presents a journey motif to teach us about the road Christians must walk to be victorious. Although heaven is truly attainable for those who remain diligent during their journey, true followers of Christ clearly should expect some bumps along the way, including rejection and not quite fitting in with others, such as friends, family, and coworkers.

Completing the journey up to the New Jerusalem with Christ requires total commitment and determination. Our walk with Christ must remain our primary priority, and we should carefully consider in today's world of unending distractions and temptations. At most points along the way, something is usually present to entice us and to take our eyes off the road, causing us to put our walk with Christ on hold.

Successfully completing our walk with Christ doesn't require perfection, but it does require devotion. We must remain focused and remember that Jesus requires a whole-hearted response according to Luke 10:9: "Say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (NIV). Just as Jesus presented this charge to His disciples then, we must also share the good news of Christ in both word and deed.



During His journey to Jerusalem, Jesus met a lot of interesting people—people with real problems and shortcomings. Jesus’ teachings helped them and can help us today as we journey from earth to eternity. Jesus helped them, and He continues to help us today understand the cost of discipleship.

This series of lessons are taken from Luke 9:51-18:14. It’s going to take us a bit to get there, but we will be blessed. This section of Scripture, which contains events not found in the other gospels, gives details of Jesus’ journey from Galilee to Jerusalem.

***When it was time to go, Jesus got up (Luke 9:51)***

Have you ever been far away from home, but realized it was time to head home? Even though you’re ready to get home, the thought of driving hundreds of miles to get home is less than exciting. When the moment of truth arrives, you can’t stay any longer—you have to leave. Your host has been more than gracious, but you can’t wear out your welcome. Besides, you aren’t at home—you’re just passing through.

According to Luke 9, Jesus faced a similar situation. He had left His home in heaven to come to earth on a mission to redeem humankind (1 Corinthians 15:47). As it neared the time of His return to heaven, Jesus knew the trip back home was not going to be easy (Luke 22:42). He would make it back home, but He would face many bumps and bruises along the way. Nevertheless, He not only set out on the journey to Jerusalem where He would be crucified, but He did so with great courage according to Luke 9:51: “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”

In fact, he “set his face” to go to Jerusalem because it was time for Him to do what He came to earth to do: become the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). Have you ever woken

up in the morning—happy to be alive—but dreading the tasks of the day? On these days we may even wish we could just lie in bed and not face the challenges ahead. Thankfully, Jesus actually got up and went to Jerusalem. A question remains, however, is: Have you actually gotten up and headed to the New Jerusalem?

Christ set forth toward Jerusalem because it was His purpose to do so—and because it had been prophesied. For example, when Elijah was preparing to exit the stage of life, we see a parallel in 2 Kings 2:9 of what would happen to Jesus in Jerusalem: “When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.’ The Bible is a remarkable book. In hindsight, God is showing us Jesus through Elijah: ‘Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answered, ‘John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen’” (Luke 9:18-19, ESV).

Although the crowds didn’t know who he was, Jesus made it clear that He was NOT Elijah. He was the *One* to whom Elijah was pointing others. Let’s not make the same mistake the people of Elijah’s day and Luke’s day made. Let’s give Jesus His just due. After all, we are His church, so we should know who He truly is.

He left heaven with focus and a purpose. All too often, we lose sight of our purpose as Christians because we don’t have a spiritual game plan. Just as great athletes train tirelessly and devise a strategy for their opponents, we must do likewise spiritually, for we have a formidable adversary who will stop at nothing to destroy us. Successfully completing our spiritual mission doesn’t happen all at once. It is achieved by breaking it down into smaller goals and tasks. Look at Jesus’ example: 1) He had a mission, 2) He knew where He was

going, and 3) He knew Jerusalem was the next step in the journey. Do you know where you're going, and do you have a plan for how you will get there?

***He made preparations (Luke 9:52)***

Not only did Jesus have a goal, He planned ahead. He didn't just wander up and down the streets with a deer-in-the-head-light expression on His face. He sent His disciples ahead to let others know He was coming to their town. Likewise, He has sent us into the world to tell others that He's coming to town. Although the Samaritans didn't welcome Him, some will accept Jesus. We can't choose for others and decide not to offer Jesus to them. Shouldn't we at least let others choose or reject Jesus, instead of doing so for them by not sharing the gospel of Christ with them?

People didn't welcome Him all the time then, and they aren't going to always welcome Him today either. Likewise, they are not always going to accept us either if we're living godly.

We are headed toward heaven as joint heirs with Christ. Therefore, we shouldn't expect others to welcome us all the time. We're supposed to be disciples or followers of Christ, but we take it personally when some people don't want to accept the message of Christ. Are we any better than Christ?

***Doctors heal, not kill (Luke 9:53-56)***

Just as Christ expected (Luke 10:10), the Samaritans refused Him. Likewise, Jesus suggests the same thing will occasionally happen to us, as well. Instead of wanting to throw in the towel when others reject the message of Christ, we should remember that rejection is a critical part of our journey to the New Jerusalem. "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation" (Luke 17:24, ESV). Before we



receive the crown of righteousness from Christ Himself, we must prepare ourselves for spiritual warfare—including occasional rejection from spiritually sick people.

After the Samaritans rejected the Christ, James and John hastily offered to torch the unbelievers with fire called down from heaven (Luke 9:54). But Christ remained focused on the reason for His mission: to seek and save the lost, not kill them. Therefore, when we engage with people who are not Christians, we shouldn't be surprised if/when they act less than nice. All too often we fail to reach out to others with the message of Christ because we can't handle it when the spiritually sick actually act sick. What else should we expect?

Some years ago, my wife, children, and I experienced a severe bout with food poisoning. A dear family friend who happened to be a nurse took us to the emergency room and waited patiently with us. Despite her taking *her* time to take *us* to the doctor to help *us* get well, I was less than appreciative at the time. In fact, I was snippy. At one point I reared up from the back seat and demanded to go home. I thank God now that she didn't put me out. She put up with my foolishness, because she knew I was sick. That's the way sick people act sometimes. And guess what? We should sometimes expect the same when we are trying to lead the lost to Christ. Remember, the Great Physician came to heal the sick—not kill them (Luke 5:30-32).

If the church is going to really grow, we have to get over our fear of sick people. If we're looking for the preacher to grow the church, we may as well put a padlock on the door and go home. It doesn't work like that. Why?

- Your preacher doesn't know *your* neighbor. They have lived next door to *you* for 20 years.
- Your preacher doesn't know *your* co-workers. They work with *you*.

- The preacher doesn't know *your* friends. They've been *your* running buddies *you* since grade school.
- The preacher isn't *your* brother's brother—*you* are. The preacher isn't *your* mother's child—*you* are.

For better or worse, you may be the only Bible these folks have the opportunity to read. We must, therefore, be faithful and true witnesses who show others the way to Christ by our lives. Yes, the church will grow when the gospel seed is consistently planted by the sowers.



The Old Testament depicts the city of David—that is Jerusalem, as the geographic center of where God ruled over and dwelt with His people. The temple was located in Jerusalem, the priests ministered there, and the kings who led God's people were enthroned there. As the mother city of God's people, Israel, Jerusalem played a prominent role in Scripture. Moreover, Jerusalem was the location where the church itself had its start (Acts 1-2). Fittingly, the overall story of Scripture focuses on God's redeeming a chosen people from all nations—beginning at Jerusalem. Ultimately, however, the journey that began at Jerusalem will culminate at the New Jerusalem (heaven). In order to make the journey to the New Jerusalem, we must remain diligent and set our minds resolutely to reaching this heavenly city.

There are a lot of concepts we may not fully understand. For example, electricity is amazingly powerful, yet it can be safely contained within the thin plastic casing, which wraps around a wire. We may not understand electricity; however, we must respect it or run the risk of being electrocuted. Similarly, we don't necessarily understand how a jet that weighs thousands of pounds can seemingly glide in the sky. We may not understand it, but we certainly have a vested interest in making sure the plane flies properly.

There are some things that don't seem practical, but we'd better understand them, or the consequences may be severe. In case we need to be reminded, what we don't know can actually kill us. The same is true in spiritual matters. What we don't know can kill us spiritually, and even result in eternal separation from God. What we don't know and understand about Christ can kill us spiritually. Because we don't take the time to understand them, we often miss some of the most important lessons in Scripture.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. In what ways should our walk with Christ be similar to His journey to Jerusalem where He faced crucifixion? See Luke 9:23.
2. When it was nearing the time for Him to return to heaven, Christ "set his face" to go to Jerusalem. What does this teach us about facing unavoidable challenges in life?
3. Christ came into the world for a specific reason and remained focused on fulfilling this purpose. What is our God-given purpose for living, and how do we remain focused on it?
4. How did Jesus' disciples respond when the Lord was rejected by the Samaritans? How does this relate to our attitude toward those who refuse the message of Christ?
5. Discuss what it means to be afraid of spiritually sick people (Luke 5:30-32).