

THREE MEN AND THE CALL

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

Yeshua, while walking along the road to Jerusalem with His followers (Luke 9:57-62), spoke with three different Jewish men of the kind of commitment needed in order to follow Him. Scripture records,

“And as they were going along the road, someone said to Yeshua, “I will follow You wherever You go!” Yeshua said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”¹

“He said to another, “Follow Me,” but the man said, “Allow me first to go and bury my father.” Yeshua said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. As for you, *go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.*”

“Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord, but first permit me to say goodbye to those at home.” Yeshua said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.” (Lk. 9:57-62)

It seems that Yeshua is hard-hearted in not allowing a son to bury his own father, or another to just return home and say, “Goodbye” to his family, but Yeshua wasn’t being callous. He was presenting *the urgent nature of the Kingdom’s Call* upon our lives as taking precedence over every-thing in this life. His words are designed to impress themselves upon us; to startle us and to sift us, and to establish us in the attitude that we should go. Actually, He’s putting up barriers, real Gospel realities for those who say they want to follow Him. It’s not a social club nor something we should take lightly. He wants us to know what we are getting into and the need to be totally dedicated to the Kingdom—like He is. Leon Morris states,

“As Jesus journeyed some people announced their readiness to follow him. They were clearly well intentioned, but they had not realized the nature of the demands the kingdom makes.”²

The first man, the “I will follow You wherever You go,” man, seems to give the Lord “his all,” but Yeshua speaks of the cost of what it means to follow Him. There might be nights where he would not be able to sleep in a bed, something that most take for granted. Would he be ready for that? Or would that end his commitment to Yeshua? From the time Yeshua began His ministry until His death He never had a place to call His home. What a bleak prospect for this disciple to be presented with, but a very necessary one.

Alexander Bruce states that this man was a Scribe and quite possibly, already a follower or disciple of the Lord. Matthew’s account reads:

“Then a certain Scribe came and said to Him, “Rabbi, I will follow You wherever You go!” 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.” *Then another of His disciples* said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”” (Matthew 8:19-21)

¹ Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament; Everett F. Harrison, New Testament, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 1045. “The rejection at Samaria” (Lk. 9:51-53) “gave point to this utterance. The Lord of the earth had less that he could call his own than the beasts and the birds.”

² Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Luke* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 196.

Bruce says the Lord “purposely paints the prospect in sombre colours” for him. “The whole speech is ...calculated to chill the scribe’s enthusiasm.”³ He also writes,

“The scribe has his spiritual home in” Rabbinic “traditions, and would not be at ease in the company of One who had broken with them. *Jesus had no place where He could lay his head in the religion of His time.*”⁴

How appropriate for those of us who love Yeshua and keep Torah His Way. There aren’t many Christian homes we are able to lay our heads. As King Solomon once penned, “There’s nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9c).

The second man wanted to bury his father, but Yeshua called him to proclaim the Kingdom instead. Two views are seen here in relation to the man’s father. First, the father may very well have still been alive. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* states that the man didn’t “mean that his father had died, but that he was obligated to care for him until he died.”⁵ This puts God and His Kingdom second to the man’s father, and even though family relations are extremely important to God, they must not take precedence over the Call of the Kingdom. The man was wanting to put his call “on hold” indefinitely. In Mt. 10:37 Yeshua says:

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” (Matthew 10:37 NKJV)

The other view is that the father had just died. The Jewish people consider burial as taking priority over many important things. Morris writes,

“The duty of burial took precedence over the study of the” Torah (Mosaic Law), and “the Temple service, the killing of the Passover sacrifice, the observance of circumcision and the reading of the Megillah (Megillah 3b).⁶ But *the demands of the kingdom* are more urgent still...the man...must not deny or delay his heavenly calling.”⁷

Either way, whether the father was alive or dead, Yeshua was calling the man to realize that the Kingdom of God was his primary responsibility, and that, even over the burying and/or support of his father.

Yeshua’s Call into His Kingdom is one of total dedication, and it echoes the radical consecration and holiness unto God we find in two places in Mosaic Law. In Torah the only people who couldn’t bury anyone, including their parents, was the Nazarite (Num. 6:6-8)⁸ and the High Priest (Lev. 21:10-11).⁹ The Nazarite was not able to leave his Vow, even for the death of his mother or father. He had *entered a sphere of holiness* comparable to, and even greater than, the High Priest of Israel. Although all Israel was called to be

³ Alexander Balmain Bruce, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, vol. one: *The Synoptic Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 142. In Mt. 8:18-22, where a similar account is spoken of, the man is called a scribe (*gramataes*, Mt. 8:19).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Harrison, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1045.

⁶ The Megillah refers to the scroll for the reading of Esther and its celebration, which is a biblical commandment (Esther 9:20-32).

⁷ Morris, *Luke*, p. 197. See Gen. 23:1-20 for the biblical importance of burying a wife, and Gen. 50:1-14 for burying a father.

⁸ Craig A. Evans, *New International Biblical Commentary: Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1990), pp. 164-165.

⁹ The High Priest was so restricted. The Aaronic priests, the Sons of Aaron, weren’t to defile themselves among the dead, but they could do so in the case of their parents, their children, their brother and their virgin sister (Lev. 21:1-3).

holy,¹⁰ the High Priest was the holiest or the most “set apart” (i.e. consecrated) individual in all the world, to Yahveh. He was the mediator or go-between for God to Israel and for Israel to God. We see this type of consecration and holiness of Aaron when his two oldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, take incense into the Holy Place, which was only their father’s responsibility, and God kills them (Lev. 10:1f.). *God forbids Aaron to mourn for them* because Aaron is the living link between Israel and God, and he must not defile himself, not even for his own sons, in order that the living connection remains open.

The Nazarite Vow opened up an avenue for the common Israeli to walk in the kind of holiness, dedication and purity that only the High Priest walked in. It was the greatest vow an Israeli could take and it was especially esteemed among the Hebrews.¹¹ The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* states:

“The Nazarite vow symbolized *extreme* devotion to God. A solemn oath was sworn to separate oneself *from* certain items, such as symbols of feasting (grape products) and ritual impurity (dead bodies), *as well as to*”Yahveh’s “*unique service*.”¹²

Yeshua’s Call, to every man and woman, *into His Kingdom*, to be Light to the world, requires the kind of dedication that the High Priest and the Nazarite pictured, and of course, Yeshua Himself. The crucified Messiah reveals, in His answer to the man who would bury his father, the urgent nature of what it means to truly follow Him—to be a Christian. Marshall, commenting on it, says Yeshua is saying,

“Let the (spiritually) dead bury the (physically) dead...Those who do not follow Jesus are regarded as spiritually dead (cf. 15:24, 32; Jn. 5:25; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 2:1; 5:14). They have missed the life associated with the kingdom.”¹³

“*To believe in Jesus*” is not something to be taken lightly nor is it only a mental assent to Jesus being the Savior. Too many so-called Christians only have this. The biblical Call is extremely demanding and costly. Craig Evans rightly states, “*To follow Jesus requires radical commitment*.”¹⁴ This is the norm, not the exception. This is Christianity. Marshall adds, “the duty of following Jesus is placed above the most stringent of human duties.”¹⁵

The third man also seems to be a disciple. He wanted to follow Yeshua, but first he wanted to return home and say goodbye. It doesn’t seem unreasonable, but the *urgency of proclaiming the Great News* allows for no turning back. Morris “points out that the kingdom has no room for those who look back when they’re called to go forward.”¹⁶ This man said, “I will follow You, Lord” (Lk. 9:61), but Bruce thinks that he was a type of man who continually put other things “first...before he addresses himself to the main duty to which he is called.”¹⁷ Talk about distractions taking us “out of the Way.”

¹⁰ Ex. 19:6; 22:31; Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:26; 22:31-33; Num. 15:40; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 28:9, etc.

¹¹ See Acts 18:18 and 21:20-24f., where the Apostle Paul takes the Nazarite Vow to show everyone that he still kept the Law of Moses as God’s guideline for how to walk out his faith in Messiah Yeshua (cf. Rom. 3:20, 31; 7:7, 12, 14; 1st Cor. 7:19).

¹² Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit and Tremper Longman the 3rd, General Editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 920. *Italics* are the author’s.

¹³ I. Howard Marshall, Author; I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, Editors, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 411.

¹⁴ Evans, *Luke*, p. 162.

¹⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 411.

¹⁶ Morris, *Luke*, p. 197.

¹⁷ Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels*, p. 537.

No one who puts their hand to the plow and continually looks back, as a lifestyle, is fit for service in His Kingdom (v. 62) because he is not serving the King. He is not focused. He isn't disciplined. *The Wycliff Bible Commentary* says,

“A farmer who is plowing must always look forward *if he is to plow a straight furrow.*”¹⁸

One cannot keep their eyes on both their own carnal interests and that of God's Kingdom. Someone who tries to do that *will never walk straight along the Road of Life*. As for the three men,

1. The Scribe, who would follow Yeshua wherever He went, needed to consider the vigors of the Kingdom Call. His life wouldn't be his own if he followed Yeshua. He might not have a house, a car and a big fat bank account. Was he willing to surrender himself to Jesus even if he wasn't guaranteed this, and almost guaranteed the latter? We think “Christianity in the USA,” but what about following Jesus in China or any other country, and there are plenty of Muslim countries, where a disciple of Jesus is persecuted unto death?
2. The second man had legitimate conflicting duties: he wanted to bury his father and he wanted to follow Yeshua. Which should he do first? Yeshua spoke of the Kingdom's Call as having to take precedence over the care for his father and his burial, which must have pierced his heart and made no sense to him, but the Kingdom's Call cannot “be put on hold.” The Call is of the utmost urgency, even to the burying of one's parents. Putting it off *is to disregard it*.
3. The third man, who only wanted to say goodbye to his family, didn't realize that he had to die to self in order to follow the Lord of the Universe. Yeshua must be top priority—all the time. Who knows what else might come up to sway him from responding to the Call? It reminds me of what Yeshua said to the 70 when He sent them out:

“After these things the Lord appointed 70 others also, and sent them two by two before His presence into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His Harvest. Go your way. Behold! I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals, *and greet no one along the road.*” (Luke 10:1-4)

Their mission, their responsibility, was so urgent that Yeshua forbid them to stop and chat along the road. Talking to others on the road was an important way to gain information about the next town, etc. It was like a newspaper, but Yeshua made it plain that they weren't to do that, for the sake of the Message being given to as many as possible.

It's not that Yeshua doesn't want us to have a bed or a home, or that He doesn't want us to take care of our parents, or that we can't speak with people that we meet (which is actually an important part of evangelism), but nothing, absolutely nothing is to come between us and Yeshua's Call upon our lives. Yeshua, as our King, must be uppermost in our minds and hearts, all the time.

Marshall rightly says the three men expressed “their willingness to follow” Jesus, but did not understand “the degree of self-sacrifice involved.”¹⁹ Marshall goes on to say,

“Those who would follow him where he goes must be ready to share the homeless lot of the Son of Man, to place discipleship above the claims of family and duty,” and that “The commitment required is *absolute.*”²⁰

¹⁸ Harrison, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1046.

¹⁹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 408.

This holy and focused commitment and consecration to Yeshua is not for only super-believers and pastors. This is the starting point for every true Christian—*a starting point which never ends*. It's an internal and eternal Call to give all of who we are to Yeshua, all the time.

The Call is a continual dedication of ourselves to Yeshua, every moment of our lives, just as He did to His Father. This total dedication is seen in the daily sacrifices that Israel offered up every day to God, consisting of the sacrifice of a lamb in the morning and one in the late afternoon (Ex. 29:38f.).

The daily sacrificial lambs not only pictured how Israel was saved out of Egyptian slavery, by the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, but it also pictured every Hebrew being totally dedicated to God every morning and afternoon. This symbolically pictures our continual dedication. We were not the first to be called to be totally dedicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Bruce relates that Yeshua was on the road to Jerusalem when this event took place.²¹ In other words, He was going to His torture and crucifixion. He had counted the cost and was walking it out for you and me. Yeshua is calling all of us to the New Jerusalem above, but first we have to die with Him in the old Jerusalem below.²² May we take action now, within ourselves, casting down every vain imagination and every carnal desire that exalts itself above our King,²³ vigorously and determinedly seeking to follow Yeshua all the days of our life that we have left. Let not anything come between us and Him, and His Call upon us. We can only do this in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to be the Light of this world (Mt. 5:14-16) in whatever sphere of life we find ourselves. There's an old Hasidic proverb, taken from Lev. 19:11, 13, 35-36, which states that we're not to deceive our neighbor. The Hasid takes it one step further—we're not even to deceive ourselves. May Yeshua open our eyes as to what it truly means to follow Him. May we strike down, by His Spirit, every thing that hinders us from being totally dedicated to Yeshua and fully following Him. Come! Let us be about our Messiah's Business as He was His Father's Business. When Yeshua was 12 years old, He was in the Temple interacting with the Jewish Sages. His parents didn't know where He was. After three days they finally found Him in the Temple. Can you imagine their fear at what might have happened to Him? Yeshua doesn't deal with that. He doesn't comfort them and say that He was sorry that He had caused them so much grief. Instead he questioned them, saying,

“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's Business?”
(Luke 2:49)

Our Father's Business is to be totally dedicated to Him through His Son, by the Holy Spirit. Only then can we properly minister to others.

Satan's lie is that God won't forgive us and take us back. We've strayed too far and sinned too much. The Truth is that God will forgive us, like the father did his prodigal son, if we only ask Him. In this we have ancient Israel as a grande picture because from the days of Moses to that of Jeremiah, about 800 years, Israel was continually wandering off the Path, but God was *always* calling her back to Himself. He never cast her out without telling her that He would take her back and be her God. One of my favorite passages in Scripture is where God has annihilated the southern kingdom of Judah—the Temple of Solomon and Jerusalem are no more, and He brought whatever few were left into Babylonian captivity. The northern

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels*, p. 536. See Luke 9:51.

²² Mt. 10:38; 16:24; Lk. 9:23, etc.

²³ 2nd Corinthians 10:5 states, “Casting down imaginations and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Messiah.”

kingdom of Israel had been destroyed more than a hundred years earlier, and so there was no nation of Hebrews anywhere. This is what God said though, about the nations that mocked the Hebrews not having a nation, in spite of their grievous sins. God says in Jeremiah 33:24-26,

“Have you not considered what these nations have spoken, saying, “The two Families which Yahveh has chosen, He has also cast them off”?! Thus they have despised My people, as if they should no more be a nation before them. Thus says Yahveh! “If My Covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of the Heavens and the Earth, *then* I will cast away The Seed of Jacob and of David My Servant, so that I will not take any of his Seed to be rulers over The Seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! *For I will cause their captives to return, and I will have mercy on them!*” (Jeremiah 33:24-26)

The three Jewish men who sought to follow Yeshua, but whom Yeshua rebuked, are a valuable lesson for us.

1. The first man said, “I will follow You wherever You go,” but Yeshua realized he hadn’t counted the cost of not having a home, etc.
 - A. We seek comfort over total dedication to Yeshua. We can face this carnal reality, and with Yeshua’s help, overcome it, and truly follow our Master, who paved the Way for us. He had no place to call His own.
2. The second man wanted to bury his father, who very well may have just died, but Yeshua called him to make the proclamation of His Kingdom over the loving duty to bury one’s father.
 - A. This is how urgent and important the Call is.
3. The third man also seemed to be a disciple. He wanted to follow Yeshua, but first he wanted to return home and say goodbye. Again, Yeshua presses upon us the *urgency of proclaiming the Great News* allows. There no turning back.
 - A. Carnal distractions had no place in the life of Messiah Yeshua, and they shouldn’t have any place in our lives either.

If our consecration to Yeshua is less than absolute, and we “wince away” from being like that because we know it’ll take everything out of us, all we need to do is to ask Papa God to forgive us, and to give us the heart of His Son Yeshua in order that we might fully follow our Lord. Papa God delights in molding us into the Image of His Son.²⁴ We are continually and subtly, and not so subtly attacked by our carnality, to take us “out of the Way.” When it comes to staying on the Path and overcoming temptation, Yeshua says to us today,

“Watch and pray! Lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)²⁵

With our Lord we will overcome every obstacle, just as He did. Yeshua is Faithful to us. Let’s keep our eyes on Him.

²⁴ Rom. 8:29; 1st Cor. 15:49; 2nd Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10.

²⁵ Revised on Saturday, September 16, 2023.