

UNBELIEVING ISRAEL AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

LUKE 13:10-35

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

Introduction

Summary of Morning Worship Service Based on Sermon Text

Jesus has told the people again that he must to go to Jerusalem to die where all the prophets have been killed (to undergo specifically a baptism, 12:50; 13:34; cf. 9:21-22, 44). All should be able to interpret the times and to settle matters quickly with God through faith in Him (12:54-59). In light of the present reality of Jesus' Kingdom, men everywhere should repent while there is still time...before it's too late...especially Israel the fig tree who has been given so much special revelation but has borne no fruit (13:1-9)! God is patient, not wanting any of his people to perish but for all to come to repentance- - but the time for repentance is NOW so that God's people can bear fruit in Jesus that will last (13:9).

Part of how Jesus desires the people to understand the times are through his healings which manifest the reality and presence of His Kingdom. In our passage today, Dr. Luke records another healing that occurs on the Sabbath. The reason for this miracle is that Israel may be given another opportunity to rightly interpret the times and realize that the Kingdom of God is near (cf. 9:6, 27; 10:9, 11). Jesus teaches the people that they are to strive to enter the narrow door in light of the Kingdoms' expansion in Him. Our passage closes with Jesus lamenting and pronouncing prophetic woes against Jerusalem for her unbelief.

In chapter 12 of Dr. Luke's Gospel, Jesus has told the crowds of how they ought to live their lives in light of God's character and his revelation (12:4-12). He has told them how they should seek first the Eternal, Unshakeable Kingdom, not putting their trust in or storing up treasures in a world that is passing away (12:13-34). He has told the crowds how to be watchful, alert and prepared when he comes, and to know that disciples will be accountable for how they lived their lives in light of God's grace (12:35-48).

He has told them again that he must to go to Jerusalem to die (to undergo specifically a baptism, 12:50), and therefore all should be able to interpret the times and to settle matters quickly with God through faith in Him (12:54-59).

In light of the present reality of Jesus' Kingdom, men everywhere should repent while there is still time...before it's too late (13:1-9)! God is patient, not wanting any of his people to perish but for all to come to repentance- - but the time for repentance is NOW so that God's people can bear fruit in Jesus that will last (13:9).

Part of how Jesus desires the people to understand the times are through his healings which manifest the reality and presence of His Kingdom. In our passage today, **Dr. Luke records another healing that occurs on the Sabbath. The reason for this miracle is that the people may be given another opportunity to rightly interpret the times and**

realize that Kingdom of God is near and therefore repent of their sins and turn to Christ for salvation (cf. 9:6, 27; 10:9, 11).

Jesus heals another person to show that the Kingdom has come near in Him. Jesus teaches the people that they are to strive to enter the narrow door in light of the Kingdoms' expansion in Him. Our passage closes with Jesus pronouncing prophetic woes against Jerusalem for her unbelief.

Interpretative help: When going verse by verse through Dr. Luke's gospel there may be a temptation to say: "Been there, done that!" Meaning that we have already had the Lord heal on a Sabbath (twice!) and one more time it will occur in Luke 14:1-6.

It is important to be reminded that there is a reason for the occurrence of this other miracle in the larger context. In light of Jesus' teaching to his disciples and the crowd, particularly in chapters 12 and the first nine verses of chapter 13, Israel is given another chance to respond with faith to the presence of the Kingdom.

I. Our Lord's Teaching and Healing in the Synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17)

^{ESV} **Luke 13:10** Now he was teaching in *one of the synagogues on the Sabbath*.¹¹ And there was a woman who had had a *disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself*.¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, *you are freed* from your disability."¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and *immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God*.

Jesus gives further revelation of the reality of the Kingdom that is present in him through making a woman who had been enslaved by the devil for eighteen years. The questions in light of this miracle are:

Will the people rightly interpret the times? (12:54-56);

Will Israel bear fruit if given more miracle-'manure'? (13:8-9);

Unfortunately, the response will not be good (cf. 13:15, 34-35).

A. A woman afflicted by sin and Satan (v. 11, 16)

We remember Jesus' first recorded synagogue sermon earlier in Dr. Luke's gospel that tells of Jesus' Divine Messianic-Mission that we continue to see fulfilled in our passage:

^{ESV} **Luke 4:18-19:** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

In the synagogue in Dr. Luke's account in 13:10ff, Jesus proclaims the good news to the poor (a poor bent-over and afflicted woman) and proclaims liberty to her as one enslaved to the devil.

As Dr. Luke tells summarizes Jesus' ministry in Acts 10:

^{ESV} **Acts 10:37-38:** you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

i. Jesus teaching in the synagogue on a Sabbath (v. 10)

This is the last time in Dr. Luke's Gospel that Jesus will be teaching in the synagogues. It is significant that Jesus has not taught in the synagogues since he began his journey to Jerusalem to die (9:51) and this will be the last time that he teaches in one; ***this implies that Jesus is giving Israel another chance to hear, see and respond to His Gospel-Kingdom message by faith*** – but the time is short.

After this scene, the opposition against him is so great that he will be unable to teach in synagogues.

As Jesus says to the unbelieving Jews in John's Gospel:

^{ESV} ***John 5:36 But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.***

ii. Jesus has compassion on a woman (v. 11)

B. The Power of Jesus to Heal and "Free" Her (v. 12)

- i. "Disabling spirit for 18 years (Luke says twice! v. 11b, 16)
- ii. Jesus calls the woman and with power of the His word heals her (v. 12).
- iii. Jesus has the power in His Word to overcome the evil one, and to free her from Satan's power.

C. Ability to Glorify God (v. 13)

Jesus gives the woman the ability to rightly glorify God as she was created to do.
Instead of being an Image-Bearer of God who was afflicted and bound, she was freed to serve, worship and glorify God!

But not all are too happy about this new found health and freedom!

¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

A. A Ruler of the Synagogue Who Opposes Jesus for His “Works” (v. 14)

a. What was a ruler of the synagogue?

The ruler of the synagogue was in charge of the worship service and the reading and teaching of the Scriptures; he had the authority to speak in the service, but not the authority to speak against Jesus. He perhaps found Jesus to be “out of order” in the service?!

b. What would have been his understanding of the Sabbath?

i. “He is...Indignant because Jesus healed on the Sabbath” (v. 14)

The ruler of the synagogue is clearly angry with Jesus and rebukes him. The Greek word **avganakte,w** (*aganakteo*) translated “**indignant**” in the ESV has the meaning of “**intense displeasure**”.

ii. He says: “There are six days in which work ought to be done...” (v. 14b) - True or false?

1. Ruler of synagogue is attempting to uphold the Law revealed in Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20:

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 5:12** "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. **On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may**

rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

^{ESV} **Exodus 20:8** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. ***On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.*** ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The ruler is not wrong in wanting to uphold the Sabbath (or Lord's Day) that God has commanded; rather, he is misinterpreting and misunderstanding the purpose of the Sabbath commandments. It is not "Pharisaical" to keep the Sabbath; it is Pharisaical to misinterpret the reasons of God for instituting the Sabbath (or Lord's Day) for man!

The ruler of the synagogue is saying that healing can be done on any other day (14b) - -but not the Sabbath because in his view healing was a work or labor that was to be avoided.

According to Rabbinic Law there were thirty-nine forms of labor forbidden (Bock, pg. 1217). One could water their cattle, but could not heal the sick, lamed and disease.

B. Our Lord's Response to this Misunderstanding and Hypocrisy (v. 15)

- a. The hypocritical issue: ***You take care of cattle on the Sabbath; why would you not be taking care of people on the Sabbath*** (v. 15)
 - i. Jesus rebukes the leader in response to his rebuke the Lord in front of the synagogue worshippers. Jesus teaches that hypocrisy or wrong interpretations of God's Law leads to treating animal-creatures of God better than those made in God's image (The purpose of God in creation is turned upside down! Cf. Gen. 1:26-28).

- ii. Animals get better treatment than a “Daughter of Abraham” according to the legalistic interpretations of Israel’s teachers! Jesus is rebuking the ruler and all the Teachers of Israel who taught this way that they were ***reversing the proper order of creation and showing compassion to animals, but not humans***; they call compassion to animals a necessity on the Sabbath, but call compassion to human beings “labor” or “work”- -this is hypocrisy of the highest order in God’s economy!
- iii. If one can show an animal compassion by watering them on the Sabbath, then one can show a human being compassion by healing them. As Prof. Bock comments: “What is true of animals is more true of people”- pg. 1218).

Professor Green observes that Jesus’ response sets up parallels, arguing from lesser to greater in this text:

“If an animal, how much more a daughter of Abraham? If one whom you have bound for a few hours, how much more one whom Satan has bound for eighteen years? If you can loose the bonds of an animal on the Sabbath as well as the other six days of the week, ho much more is it necessary for God to loose this woman’s bond on the Sabbath?” (Green, NICNT, pg. 524).

Jesus reveals this man’s (and many who believed this way in Israel) as being a sham, a mere hypocritical faith in their understanding and interpretation of God’s Word!

ESV Mark 2:27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

- b. Our Lord’s right interpretation of what constitutes “work” (v. 15-16)

C. Freed at Last! (v. 16)

- a. A daughter of Abraham (v. 16a) - She was a woman of faith and it is most appropriate with regard to the *purpose of the Sabbath* for a woman of faith who has been bound to be healed.

Proper work and labor on the Sabbath (or Lord’s Day) are works of ***necessity and works of compassion or mercy***. Jesus instructs us that we are to keep the commands of God in upholding the Sabbath day, regarding it as holy, and calling it a delight (Isa. 58), but also realizing that the spirit

of the Sabbath is for God to be glorified and His people to be healed of their sins and infirmities!

^{ESV} **Mark 2:27** *And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*

It should be noted that both Jesus and the synagogue ruler are seeking to use the Word of God as their basis for faith and practice, but Jesus is the Master Interpreter of the Scriptures, and he reveals his ability not to merely quote the Scriptures, *but sovereignly and with authority give the true, God-breathed meaning of the Scriptures as the very Son of God and very voice of God (cf. John 5:19-40).*

As Jesus rebukes the unbelievers in Israel in John's Gospel: ^{ESV} **John 5:39** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is *they that bear witness about me,*⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

- b. Satan had bound the woman for eighteen years (v. 16b)- Heb. 2:14-18
 - i. Jesus is continuing his work of overcoming the Kingdom of Satan and releasing those who are bound to him as slaves (cf. Luke 10:18; 11:14-23). This is part of Jesus' binding the strong man and releasing the captives.
 - ii. "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..." (10:18)
 - iii. A daughter of Abraham has been freed from bondage and oppression and this is an initial fulfillment of all believers' redemption in Jesus Christ.

As Zecharias had praised God earlier in Luke's Gospel with this truth:

^{ESV} **Luke 1:71-75:** *...that [believing Israel] should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;*⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us⁷⁴ *that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,*⁷⁵ *in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

- iv. "[Jesus] regards his act of healing as an act of liberation from Satanic bondage, as a direct engagement in cosmic conflict,

through which God's eschatological purpose comes to fruition" (Green, NICNT, pg. 525).

^{ESV} Luke 11:20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

The fact that there is indeed healings upon the Sabbath means that Satan's Kingdom is being destroyed and a foretaste of the Kingdom when all sin and sickness will be removed is being displayed for all to see in Jesus Christ.

D. The People Are Divided (v. 17; cf. 12:51: "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?")

The people are divided by Jesus' clear signs of the Kingdom: Israel's teachers are shamed (and the implication is that this will continue to infuriate them, cf. 14:1) and yet the people rejoice over the works of God in Jesus.

Here is hope for some in Israel (cf. 13:8-9): Some within the synagogue rejoice at the works of Jesus Christ because they believe that the Kingdom of God has indeed manifested itself in Him!

...And all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.- v. 17b

II. What is the Kingdom of God like? (Luke 13:18-21)

This additional healing miracle where a Daughter of Abraham is healed and Satan's kingdom is continually overthrown through the finger of God (11:20) and the powerful miracles of Jesus revealed the undeniable presence of God's Kingdom in Jesus.

In light of this miracle, Jesus goes on to teach more on God's Kingdom that is being manifested in Him.

We should understand the "Therefore" in v. 18 as unpacking, or interpreting specifically the prophetic-event-miracle of the bent over woman being healed:

¹⁸ He said therefore, "*What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?*" ¹⁹ It is like a **grain of mustard seed** that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." ²⁰ And again he said, "*To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?*" ²¹ It is **like leaven** that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

A. The Kingdom of God is like a Grain of Mustard Seed (vv. 18-19)

These two parables are aimed at Israel's eschatological expectation concerning the manifestation of God's Kingdom. Although Jesus' Kingship and Kingdom might seem to have humble beginnings: a few people are healed (like the woman on the Sabbath); a few people believe in Israel (the Apostles and true disciples of Jesus such as the "Daughter of Abraham" in the passage who was poor and despised in her community); disease and death still continues even though the Kingdom has been manifested; a King who must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die (cf. 9:22, 44) to many without eyes of faith.

Yet God's Kingdom in Christ will continue to grow and spread all the way to the ends of the earth, until the whole world is under Christ's rule and the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ:

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 15:24-26:** ²⁴ *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

^{ESV} **Revelation 11:15** Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.*

i. What is a mustard seed?

In the Judaism of Jesus' time the mustard seed was used in proverbs as designating something extremely small in creation. The mustard seed was considered the smallest seeds that would grow into great trees.

ii. Grew larger and greater than could be expected (v. 19)

The mustard seed (extremely small, humble and insignificant) grows into a tree where birds can nest (extremely large and extensive) (Compare the birds of heaven nesting from Old Testament images found in Psalm 104:12; Ezek. 17:22-24; Dan. 4:10-12, 20-27 to describe God's favor and outstanding kingdom growth).

This parable of Jesus teaches that the Kingdom that seems small initially in Jesus' ministry and the Apostle's preaching in the Book of Acts will become a larger-than-life reality as it progressively grows larger and larger- -yet slowly.

The time between the first and second coming of Jesus will be characterized by a potentially powerful Kingdom that will be great,

but will progressively grow until it reaches full size (like a small seed to a great tree).

In contrast to many in Israel during Jesus' time, the Kingdom would not be suddenly revealed at his first coming of Messiah where God would judge the living and the dead. When Messiah comes for the first time, the Kingdom would not be immediately evident and overthrow the Roman Empire at that time.

Rather, the Kingdom would be manifested humbly in Jesus then progressively and powerfully grow until the Day he returns and restored creation, making all things new. The Kingdom would come in a way that surprises many people (and why it is a parable in Matthew 13 under the mysteries of the Kingdom).

The idea of the mustard seed brings to mind Ezekiel's prophecy in chapter 17:

^{ESV} **Ezekiel 17:22-24:** Thus says the Lord GOD: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ **On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.** ²⁴ And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it."

The Kingdom would have insignificant and humble beginnings, but there would be a glorious eschatological revelation of Christ's tremendous Empire and Unshakeable Kingdom when He returns to judge the Living and the Dead!

Let us never underestimate the power of God's expansive power and empire and kingdom that continues to grow through what seems to be weak and insignificant in the eyes of the world. Jesus was the long-anticipate Messiah-King and he went humbly to his death in order to establish his rule and reign in resurrection-ascension-enthronement glory at God's right hand! As Hebrews teaches us:

^{ESV} **Hebrews 12:1-3:** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our

faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

No matter how weak or insignificant God's Kingdom might appear throughout history and up the present time, God is near in impending judgment that will come like a thief in the night!

People are saved through the folly of preaching and even through the greatest times of oppression, suffering and martyrdom, the Kingdom grows and grows and grows and continues to grow to the ends of the earth, and the Lord is with his Church who witnesses to the Gospel and power of this Kingdom until the end of the age! (cf. Matt. 28:18-20).

B. The Kingdom of God is like Leaven

i. What is leaven?

1. Leaven has been used to describe the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy (12:1).
2. While leaven can stand for sinfulness (see also 1 Cor. 5), leaven can also righteously describe the way the Kingdom expands through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus.
3. Leaven works its way through the dough, or the entire batch or loaf of bread. The Kingdom doesn't seem to be influential, especially when Jesus is dying upon the cross and many of the Apostles are being martyred, but this message of the Kingdom Gospel will permeate to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8).

The Kingdom is pervasive and invasive and it is at work through the Gospel as leaven is within bread.

4. This Gospel leaven will continue to work through the whole world until all of God's people are saved and redeemed in Christ. This leavening process is outwardly manifested as well as inwardly cultivated as men are conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ through sanctification.
5. And just as it is impossible to unleaven bread once the leaven has started working through it, so it is impossible for

the gates of hell to prevail against the Church in his present age, no matter how small, insignificant, or weak the Kingdom may seem. Don't be fooled by its initial start or size- -but trust in the God who will continue to build up His Church.

Professor Green comments: "Set in relation to the healing episode of vv. 10-17, this parable declares that satanic domination is being repealed and the kingdom of God is made present even in such seemingly inconsequential acts as the restoration of an ill woman who lived on the margins of society" (NICNT, pg. 527).

What does this teach us of Jesus' Kingdom?

- 1) The way of the Kingdom is humility leading to glory.

The Kingdom does not "come" in this present age in pomp and circumstance and great power, but gradually and humbly as God's Spirit is continually at work calling and regenerating sinners and uniting them to Jesus Christ.

- 2) The way of the Kingdom is faithfulness to the Gospel as it continues to spread through the world.

III. The Narrow Door of the Kingdom

This humble and seemingly insignificant Kingdom that is being revealed in Jesus Christ is open to all who would believe in him- -but the door is narrow.

The time is short for entrance through the narrow door of the Kingdom. Once the door is shut many in Israel who have identified themselves as Kingdom people of God will find a great surprise when they are shut out of the Kingdom because of their lack of faith and rejection of Jesus (vv. 27-28).

Many from other parts of the world will find themselves heirs to this Kingdom (cf. 12:32) through faith in Jesus Christ.

The time is near...Repent; for the Kingdom of God is at hand!

²² He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to him, "***Lord, will those who are saved be few?***" And he said to them, ²⁴ "***Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.***" ²⁵ When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence,

and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' ²⁸ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

A. The Narrow Door of the Kingdom of God (v. 24)

- i. Jesus continues to teach as Dr. Luke specifically tells us again that he is "journeying toward Jerusalem" (v. 22; cf. 9:51).
- ii. Jesus' teaching is in response to question: "**Lord, will those who are saved be few?**" (v. 23) Perhaps the question was asked of Jesus by someone who thought that ***there was more rejection than reception of Jesus and the Kingdom*** (underlining the outward observation of the Kingdom being insignificant and humble in its beginnings as the mustard seed).
- iii. Jesus says: "Strive to enter through the narrow door" (v. 24a)

As usual with our Lord's response to questions, he does not answer this one directly as in other places (cf. 13:1-5), but he answers it nonetheless.

Jesus puts the attention where it should be: on each person's responsibility to strive to enter the Kingdom while it is present in Him; while there is still time to repent; to call upon the Lord while he is near (cf. Isa. 55:6ff).

Jesus is not teaching salvation by works here but that one is to strive to hear and obey the message of the Kingdom by seeking God's grace in Christ. Jesus' teaching is like the message of the Proverbs in seeking to hear and understand God's wisdom by God's grace:

^{ESV} **Proverbs 2:1-5:** My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ² making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ³ yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴ if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Strive [Greek Imperative or Command: **avgwni, zomai** struggle, fight; do one's best; compete (of athletic contests)] has the meaning of emphasizing a struggle which was an athletic metaphor

in Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism that pertained to virtue and obedience to the Law of God (Green, pg. 530).

This is the idea or practice that the Apostle Paul speaks of that is translated “athlete exercises self-control” in 1 Corinthians 9:

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 9:24-26:** Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every ***athlete exercises self-control*** in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

Jesus is placing the focus not on how many or who will be saved, but the present-tense necessity for all to be striving to enter the Kingdom by grace.

- iv. There will be a time when the door will be closed and no one else will be able to enter (v. 25ff).

Those who think they are inside will be outside; those who are outside will get inside by faith in Jesus.

Notice that it is the Master who does not recognize those who claim to be on the “inside” of the Kingdom (Israel) (v. 25- “I do not know where you come from.”). Those who will be rejected were privileged to eat with the Master and came near the special revelation of the Kingdom that he proclaimed (v. 26).

Nevertheless because of their lack of repentance and faith in Jesus, they are not known by Jesus (v. 27).

^{ESV} **Galatians 4:9** ***But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God,*** how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3).

B. The Kingdom is for the Last in this Present Age (v. 30)

This message of Jesus describes an eschatological reversal for those in Israel who claimed to be first- -they will be last (v. 30). Those throughout the world who were last with regard to God’s special revelation and the favor that they enjoyed as God’s people will be first as they believe and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Many in Israel who claimed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their forefathers will find themselves cast out from the presence of the

Lord and His Kingdom, unable to attend the great eschatological table in the Kingdom because of their unbelief.

Those who thought they were privileged because they were near to our Lord's revelation in proximity or in hearing and seeing distance were far from him in their hearts. Their eschatological end will be shameful and terribly painful in that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 28). Matthew describes the punishment this way:

^{ESV} **Matthew 8:11-12:** I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Those who were far off from special revelation (Eph. 2:11), from the other parts of the world (east, west, north and south) will find a place as heirs of the Abrahamic promise through Jesus Christ. The Apostle teaches about this eschatological reversal that occurs for many Gentiles:

^{ESV} **Ephesians 2:11-14:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...

As the Old Covenant prophets had foretold, the Gentile nations will come to Zion and Abraham as the Father of many nations will be fully revealed at this Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 25:6-9:** On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.⁹ It will be said on that day, "***Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.***"

The passage in Isaiah's prophecy tells us of an eschatological banquet feast that reveals the universal ("catholic") embrace of

God's salvation (that includes Israel's remnant and the Gentiles from the four parts of the earth).

The door of entrance to that sumptuous Kingdom-banquet-feast is through Jesus Christ alone.

^{ESV} **Psalm 107:2-3:** Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble ³ and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

But this message is not only a sobering reminder to unbelieving Israel, but to all who have the privileges of being part of the visible church!

All those who are confessing Christians and members of the visible Church (particularly in America!) must soberly understand this message as well! All those who have been given much such as covenant privileges like the privilege of sitting under God's Word rightly preached and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper administered, have great responsibilities to believe and obey what they see and hear.

We cannot merely just claim to have been close to God's revelation and think we have special privileges that will save (cf. v. 26-27). We should not merely claim close proximity or that we have been members of a church, made a mere decision for Christ with no fruits of repentance, etc (cf. Luke 3:8ff). Rather, we must have a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith. Better, we must be known by Him as we are regarded as his Kingdom Disciples and children.

As the covenant people of God, may we never be "asleep in the light". May we never take for granted the revelation of Jesus we have in Word and Sacraments, but let us remember the responsibilities we have as his people in light of the privileges we have been given. As Jesus said earlier in Luke 12:48b and what is being emphasized again here is the truth that:

"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required."

We should be reminded of the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 9:4-6 that teach us of all the privileges that Israel had but many who did not believe were not responsible as they should have been revealing their non-covenantal status before God:

Romans 9:4-5: They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel...

For those given grace, and those exposed to the special revelation of God more than others (such as America has experienced in the past few hundred years), may we never just assume that we have a saving relationship with Christ! Rather let us strive to enter the Kingdom by grace and to persevere in Christ with that same grace as we grow in Him and the knowledge of his will for us.

IV. Woes Pronounced Over Jerusalem

Jesus is headed for Jerusalem (9:51; 13:22) and so he must bring his salvation Gospel-Kingdom message to the center of the Jewish world. But his fate and the fate of Israel (represented by Jerusalem) are entwined together (Green, pg. 534). The response in Jerusalem will be consistent with Jerusalem's response to the prophetic-Kingdom-repentance message of the prophets: unbelief.

In fact, as the prophets brought possible salvation through repentance to Jerusalem and were killed and Jerusalem judged for her rejection, so in Jesus Christ the Great and Eschatological Prophet of God will be killed and Jerusalem judged for her rejection.

Jesus teaches that Jerusalem should not be remembered or characterized so much as merely the center and heart of the Jewish world, but they should be remembered and known as the center and heart of where faithful prophets are killed. Jerusalem should be known for killing messengers sent to her by God! (v. 33b-34a).

As Professor Green writes: "As God's agent, Jesus must carry the divine message to Jerusalem, but Jerusalem kills those whom God sends; on account of this, Jerusalem itself is doomed" (pg. 534).

There is an interpretive link found in the beginning of this pericope that ties it to the greater context: "At that very hour..."

³¹ *At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him,* "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.' ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'" ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

A. Two Kings and Their Missions (vv. 31-33)

i. Pharisees “warn” Jesus of Herod’s desire to kill him (v. 31)

It seems that the Pharisees are seeking to get Jesus out from Herod’s domain so that they can rid the people of His teaching (I don’t think we are to believe that they are truly concerned for him although some scholars see the reference to “some Pharisees” as indicating that some Pharisees are siding with Jesus and do not want him to be killed, not fully understanding his message).

In my opinion, and based on what Dr. Luke has told us with reference to the Pharisees (Luke 5:21, 30; 6:7; 11:53; 14:1) it seems likely that this was an evil and diabolical attempt to get Jesus to leave this region of Herod’s so that he would be more exposed to the power of the Sanhedrin.

Herod was indeed a powerful and evil man as Dr. Luke has made known throughout his gospel (3:19-20; 9:9), but this powerful and evil man will not hinder our Lord from his Divine Messianic Mission no more than the devil could do in his temptations and attempt to destroy the Son of Man (cf. 4:1ff).

ii. Jesus’ response: “Go and tell that fox...I finish my course” (v. 32)

1. A fox was a description of a cunning but weak ruler (Geldenhuys, pg. 382). Jesus will remain faithful to His Divine Messianic Mission.

2. Jesus’ realization of the Father’s timeline and agenda.

Plummer notes the irony in Jesus’ reply (concerning Herod trying to kill him): “I have nothing to fear from Herod; I am safe here, for death comes in Jerusalem; not only is he safe, God’s will is done” (Bock, pg. 1248).

3. Jesus’ opposition to a king who is opposed to his Divine Messianic Mission

4. Jesus knows that it is in Jerusalem according to the Divine Will of God that he will die (cf. 9:22, 44).

B. Woes on Jerusalem (vv. 33-35)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your

children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Jesus as the Great and Final Prophet of God will face suffering and death in Jerusalem just as the prophets who were sent before him (cf. Acts 7:51-53).

- i. As Jesus has told the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9, so now he pronounces specific prophetic woes upon Jerusalem (vv. 32-35).
- ii. Jesus indicates prophetically the formal rejection of Messiah in his death.
- iii. Jesus desires to protect Jerusalem in himself from impending divine judgment (see last sermon on Luke 12:49-13:9) as a hen gathers her chicks under her protecting wings - -but they will not turn to him in repentance and faith.
- iv. Jesus is deeply burdened by the hardness of the hearts of many in Israel. Throughout redemptive-history when God had sent them prophetic messengers to turn them back to God and away from their sins, the city of God was characterized by murder rather than repentance (v. 34a).

In Dr. Luke's second volume, the Book of Acts, we learn more of this hard-hearted rejection and mass unbelief in Israel:

^{ESV} **Acts 7:51-53:** *"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."*

Acts 28:25b-28: *"The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶ 'Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' ²⁸ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."*

- v. Because of the majority of those in Israel who reject him, Jesus says: “Behold, your house is forsaken” (v. 35)

This saying of Jesus was to eschatologically fulfill the prophet of Jeremiah the Prophet (cf. Luke 24:25-27; 44ff):

Jeremiah 12:7: "I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.

Jeremiah 22:3-5: Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.⁴ For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people.⁵ **But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.**

Because of Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus Christ who is the only hope and Savior of mankind whether Jew or Gentile, their house is left desolate. Because they have rejected Jesus, they have no protection to cover them from the impending wrath of God to come.

1. Jerusalem as house.

Jerusalem was the city of God's Household or people (see Heb. 3:1-6). This means that Jerusalem or Zion was representative as the heart of God's special revelation and saving activity where God's people resided.

This temporal-typological location on the map in the Middle East is desolate now in the sense of having any special significance for the covenant purposes of God in the world. God's household as specially represented in Israel is no longer valid (old wineskins now that the new wine in Jesus has come).

2. Temple as house.

Once the glory of God left the temple of God's people permanently in the Person of Jesus Christ, the temple was left desolate as a place where God would meet with his people.

National Israel is under the curse of God and the only hope of escaping God's wrath is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah of God! As Paul teaches us in Romans 11, God will use the Gentiles faith in Jesus the Messiah to cause many in Israel to be jealous and to repent and so as the Apostle Paul says: All of true and elect Israel will be saved!

Just as there was a remnant when Jesus Christ first came- - Simeon, Anna, Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, Elisabeth and others....John the Baptist, Christ's disciples, etc. So, God will save those in Israel who turn to Christ by faith alone through grace.

*And I tell you, you will not see me until you say,
'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord!'"*

Jesus seems to hold out hope to Jerusalem at the end of this prophetic woe quoting Psalm 118:26:

*ESV Psalm 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of
the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.*

It is as if he is saying that if Israel responds with welcoming faith in Him, understanding Jesus to be the Messiah then they will see Him in His Kingdom and be saved!

If Jerusalem welcomes the One who comes in the name of the LORD, they will be saved!

To be continued...

CRB

www.aplacefortruth.org

Bibliography- For Further Reading

Beale, G. K. and D. A. Carson. Editors: *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament.* Baker, 2007.

Bock, Darrell L. *Luke: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Volumes 1-2,* Baker, 1994.

Bromiley, G. Editor: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Volumes 1-4, Eerdmans, 1982.

Brown, David. *The Four Gospels: A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, Banner of Truth* (1864 reprint).

Geldenhuis, Norval. *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (New International Commentary on the New Testament, NICNT)*, Eerdmans, 1952.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke (NICNT)*, Eerdmans, 1997.

Green, McKnight, and Marshall. Editors: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. IVP, 1992.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Luke, Volumes I-II (Preaching the Word Series)*, Crossway, 1998.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, Eerdmans, 1978.

Morris, Leon. *Luke: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, IVP Academic, 1988.

Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman. Editors: *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP, 1998.

CRB