

Luke Chapter 13 Continued

Luke 13:22 "And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem."

“Through the cities and villages”: Luke’s geographical points of reference are often vague; the readers he had in mind were probably largely unfamiliar with Palestinian geography anyway. (Matthew 19:1; Mark 10:1 and John 10:40), all say that Christ moved His ministry to the region east of the Jordan known as Perea.

That move probably took place at about this point in Luke’s narrative. Therefore, the cities and villages He traveled through may have included places in both Judea and Perea.

“Journeying ... toward Jerusalem”: During His ministry in Judea to Perea, Christ went to Jerusalem on more than one occasion, at least once for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:11 – 8:59), another time for the Feast of Dedication, (John 9:1 – 10:39), and another time when He raised Lazarus.

Luke’s focus was on Christ’s constant progression toward His final trek to Jerusalem for the express purpose of dying there, and he therefore described all Christ’s traveling as one long trek toward Jerusalem.

These last few months of Jesus' ministry was all leading up to the climax of the Passover in Jerusalem where He would be the Passover Lamb. He taught right up till the time of the crucifixion.

Luke 13:23 "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,"

“Are there few that be saved”: That question may have been prompted by a number of factors. The great multitudes that had once followed Christ were subsiding to a faithful few (John 6:66). Great crowds still came to hear (14:25), but committed followers were increasingly scarce.

Moreover, Christ’s messages often seemed designed to discourage the half-hearted. And He Himself had stated that the way is so narrow that few find it (Matt. 7:14). This contradicted the Jewish belief that all Jews, except for tax collectors and other notorious sinners, would be saved.

Christ’s reply once again underscored the difficulty of entering at the narrow gate. After the resurrection, only 120 disciples gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 1:15), and only about 500 in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; Matt. 28:16).

This is a legitimate question for then and now. The answer both times is "yes", as we see Jesus expound upon it in the next few verses.

Luke 13:24 "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

"Strive": This signifies a great struggle against conflict. Christ was not suggesting that anyone could merit heaven by striving for it. No matter how rigorously they labored, sinners could never save themselves. Salvation is solely by grace, not by works (Eph. 2:8-9).

But entering the "strait gate" (narrow gate), is nonetheless difficult because of its cost in terms of human pride, because of the sinner's natural love for sin and because of the world's and Satan's opposition to the truth.

"Will seek to enter in" I.e., at the judgment, when many will protest that they deserve entrance into heaven (Matt. 7:21-23).

Jesus answers the question of verse 23 by telling them how to be saved. Jesus explains that a person needs to have determination to live the life that Jesus has set before us. Those who seek and cannot get in have too broad a view.

They are full of compromise and will not walk the disciplined, self-sacrificing life that it takes to enter in. The door is Jesus. If we walk on the narrow path that leads to righteousness, we will find the door (Jesus), and enter in.

Luke 13:25 "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:"

"I know you not" (Matt. 7:23; 25:12). Clearly, no relationship ever existed though they had deluded themselves into thinking they knew the owner of the house (verse 26). Despite their protests, He repeated His denial emphatically (in verse 27).

This is a sad scene which indicates that somehow they found the door; but by the time they had wandered everywhere but the narrow path, they had spent too much time of their life in the world. They have lost their chance to enter in.

The doors of this symbolic city were closed at nightfall or at the end of a person's life. What this means to me is there is no salvation after death; only judgement.

In Hebrews 12:17 we read of someone who waited too long to repent, "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Luke 13:26 "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." "But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

We see in this that these people feel that because they are Hebrews (God's chosen people), that He will make exceptions for them. Race, color, creed, or station in life will have nothing to do with any of us making it to heaven. There is only one way to heaven and that is through Jesus.

Jesus told them, "I am the way" (John 14:6). He also said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me". You see, being Abraham's physical descendants won't get you there. I know some people whose parents were mighty men and women of God. I am here to tell them that will not get them to heaven. The Lord does not have grandchildren, just children.

Luke 13:28 "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you [yourselves] thrust out."

“Weeping and gnashing of teeth”: This speaks of inconsolable grief and unremitting torment. Jesus commonly used the phrases in this verse to describe hell (Matt. 13:42, 50; Matt. 24:51).

Salvation is an individual thing. Each person has to activate their own will to follow Jesus. The offer is to whosoever will. These prophets (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), are all accepted because of their faith. The ones thrust out will be because they rejected Jesus and His teachings. The sorrow will be unexplainably horrible when they discover they have not made it.

Luke 13:29 "And they shall come from the east, and [from] the west, and from the north, and [from] the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

“They shall come”: By including people from the 4 corners of the earth, Jesus makes it clear that even Gentiles would be invited to the heavenly banquet table. This was contrary to prevailing rabbinical thought, but perfectly consistent with the Old Testament Scriptures (Psalm 107:3; Isa. 66:18-19; Mal. 1:11).

No one will be rejected because of nationality. There will be individuals from all nations who will be saved. Those who follow Jesus' plan of salvation will be saved. Jesus lets them know by this that salvation is not reserved to just the Israelites, but is open to all who will receive it.

Luke 13:30 "And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

“Last ... first ... first ... last”: In this context the saying seems to contrast Jews (“the first”) and Gentiles (“the last”).

Those who the world classifies as last sometimes receive the message of Jesus more freely and so might be the first to believe. His is a religion of the common people. Learned people of the law rejected Jesus. Israel had been first; but if they reject Jesus, they shall be last.

Luke 13:31 "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee."

“Depart”: Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea. Christ was probably either approaching Perea or ministering there already. The Pharisees, no friends of Herod themselves, may have warned Christ because they hoped the threat of violence from Herod would either silence Him, or drive Him back to Judea, where the Sanhedrin would have jurisdiction over Him.

Herod and Herodias wanted to get rid of Jesus, because He was so popular with the common people. Herod was so superstitious about John the Baptist that he was afraid to do anything himself.

These Pharisees, whether working for Herod or for themselves, would like for Jesus to be gone as well. They warned Jesus of Herod, because Jesus knew Herod had John the Baptist beheaded.

Luke 13:32 "And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third [day] I shall be perfected."

“That fox”: Some have suggested that Jesus’ use of this expression is hard to reconcile with (Exodus 22:28; Eccl. 10:20; and Acts 23:5). However, those verses apply to everyday discourse. Prophets, speaking as mouthpieces of God, and with divine authority, were often commissioned to rebuke leaders publicly (Isa. 1:23; Ezek. 22:27; Hos. 7:3-7; Zeph. 3:3).

Since Jesus spoke with perfect divine authority, He had every right to speak of Herod in such terms. Rabbinical writings often use “the fox” to signify someone who was both crafty and worthless. The Pharisees, who trembled at Herod’s power, must have been astonished at Christ’s boldness.

“Today and tomorrow, and the third day”: This expression signified only that Christ was on His own divine timetable; it was not meant to lay out a literal 3-day schedule. Expressions like this were common in Semitic usage and seldom were employed in a literal sense to specify precise intervals of time.

“I shall be perfected”: I.e., by death, in the finishing of His work (John 17:4-5; 19:30; Heb. 2:10). Herod was threatening to kill Him, but no one could kill Christ before His time (John 10:17-18).

Jesus calls Herod a fox. He sends him word not to bother Him because He is going on with His work 3 more days here. He sees right through these Pharisees and will not be stopped.

Luke 13:33 "Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the [day] following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

“It cannot be”: Not all prophets who were martyred died in Jerusalem of course. John the Baptist, for example, was beheaded by Herod, probably at Herod’s palace in Machaerus. This saying was probably a familiar proverb, like the adage (in 4:24; Matt. 13:57).

The statement is full of irony, noting that most of the Old Testament prophets were martyred at the hands of the Jewish people, not by foreign enemies. Luke’s inclusion of this saying

underscores his theme in this section of his gospel, Jesus' relentless journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of dying.

Jesus tells the Pharisees, "You nor Herod is not driving me away; I must go to Jerusalem because that is where a prophet must die."

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen [doth gather] her brood under [her] wings, and ye would not!"

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem": There is a great tenderness in these words, as seen in the imagery of a hen with chickens. This out-pouring of divine compassion foreshadows His weeping over the city as He approached it for the final time (19:41). Clearly, these are deep and sincere emotions.

"Would I have gathered": Literally "I willed, but you willed not." Christ's repeated expressions of grief over the plight of Jerusalem do not diminish the reality of His absolute sovereignty over all that happens. Nor should the truth of divine sovereignty be used to depreciate the sincerity of His compassion.

God's great love for Jerusalem had been long standing. God always wanted Jerusalem to come to Him and let His covering protect them. God had dwelt here in this city with His people. He had led His people out of Egypt, and He led them with His fire and smoke for forty years to the Promised Land.

Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem where God dwelt with His people, but His people activated their free will and rejected God's only Son. Jesus is mourning for the beloved city Jerusalem when He says, "O Jerusalem". They rejected the prophets God sent and then rejected God's Son. I say with Jesus, O Jerusalem why did you not understand how much God loved you?

Luke 13:35 "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until [the time] come when ye shall say, Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

"This account of Luke's clearly falls at an earlier point in Christ's ministry than the parallel account (in Matthew 23:37-39), which took place in the temple during Christ's final days in Jerusalem. The wording of the two laments is nonetheless virtually identical. Here Christ delivers prophetically the same message He would later pronounce as a final judgment.

Jesus now speaks to them that this is their house. They have taken it away from God with their evil will. They will not receive the Lord at this time. They are blinded with the very law that God had given them to set them free.

Jesus is speaking prophetically here that there will come a day in the far future when they will see Him coming in the clouds and then they will mourn for what they had done. Then everyone will bow to Him and confess that He was Messiah.

“Blessed”: Quotation from Psalm 118.

Psalm 118:26: “Blessed be he that comes in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.”

Luke Chapter 13 Continued Questions

1. What did Jesus go through the cities and villages doing?
2. What were the last few months of Jesus' ministry leading up to?
3. In verse 23, one asked Jesus what question?
4. What is the answer to this question then and now?
5. How is the gate we enter in described?
6. What is wrong with those who want to enter in and cannot?
7. Who is the door?
8. When is it too late to try to get in?
9. What is taught in Hebrews 12:17?
10. Why do the people in verses 26 and 27 believe they should be saved?
11. No man cometh to the Father but by whom?
12. The Lord has no _____, only children.
13. What happens when they see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God and are thrust out themselves?
14. What does verse 29 mean?
15. Is God a respecter of persons?
16. The learned people of the law rejected _____.
17. Who came to Jesus and told Him to get out?
18. What reason did they give Jesus why He should leave?
19. What did Jesus call Herod?

20. What did Jesus tell them to tell Herod?

21. What is the city where prophets perish?

22. What fowl did Jesus use to describe how God would have protected Jerusalem, if they would have accepted it?

23. How had God led His people 40 years in the wilderness?

24. What is Jesus doing when He says, O Jerusalem?

25. In verse 35, their house is left _____.

26. What is Jesus speaking prophetically of in verse 35?