

Luke Chapter 13

Luke 13:1 "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

“Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices”: This incident is in keeping with what was known about the character of Pilate. Evidently, some worshipers from Galilee were condemned by Rome. Perhaps because they were seditious zealots, and were sought out and killed in the temple by Roman authorities while in the process of offering a sacrifice.

Such a killing would have been the grossest sort of blasphemy. Incidents like this inflamed the Jews’ hatred of Rome and finally led to rebellion, and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

This is telling of a terrible time when the Romans would swoop down on a large crowd and kill a large number of the people. Pilate represented the dreaded Roman government. These Galileans were not the strict Hebrews. Many would say they got what they deserved for their loose living.

Luke 13:2 "And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?"

“Were sinners above” It was the belief of many that disaster and sudden death always signified divine displeasure over particular sins (Job 4:7). Those who suffered in uncommon ways were therefore assumed to be guilty of some more severe immorality (John 9:2).

Luke 13:3 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

“Except ye repent”: Jesus did not deny the connection between catastrophe and human evil, for all such afflictions ultimately stem from the curse of humanity’s fallenness (Gen 3:17-19). Furthermore, specific calamities may indeed be the fruit of certain iniquities (Prov. 24:16).

But Christ challenged the people’s notion that they were morally superior to those who suffered in such catastrophes. He called all to repent, for all were in danger of sudden destruction.

No one is guaranteed time to prepare for death, so now is the time for repentance for all (2 Cor. 6:2).

“Ye shall all likewise perish”: These words prophetically warned of the approaching judgment of Israel, which culminated in the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Tens of thousands in Jerusalem were killed by the Romans.

Jesus has discerned what they are thinking. He knows these disciples, and these Hebrew followers have no respect for these Galileans. Jesus is quick to tell them that not only are the

Galileans guilty of sin, but they are too. They, as well as the Galileans, need to repent and be saved by grace. Just because a person has the outward appearance of being a Christian, does not free them from the obligation of repenting from their sins.

Luke 13:4 "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?"

“Siloam”: An area at the south end of the lower city of Jerusalem, where there was a well-known pool (John 9:7, 11). Evidently one of the towers guarding the aqueduct collapsed, perhaps while under construction, killing some people. Again, the question in the minds of people was regarding the connection between calamity and iniquity (“sinners above all men”).

Jesus responded by saying that such a calamity was not God’s way to single out an especially evil group for death, but as a means of warning to all sinners. Calamitous judgment was eventually coming to all if they did not repent.

Jesus is telling them to stop pointing fingers at others' sins and start looking at home at their own sins. When this tower fell, the Hebrews were quick to say these were people who had fallen away to Rome.

Luke 13:5 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

We must be very careful to make sure all of the sin is out of our life, before we point fingers at someone else. In less than 40 years from the time Jesus made this statement, Jerusalem fell and literally hundreds of thousands perished.

Luke 13:6 "He spake also this parable; A certain [man] had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none."

“Fig tree”: Often used as a symbol for Israel. In this case however, the parable’s lesson about fruitlessness applies equally to the whole nation, and to each individual soul.

The man is symbolic of God, because the Israelites are His chosen people.

Luke 13:7 "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

This fig tree produced no fruit. The terrible thing is for 3 years Jesus brought them the salvation message. For 3 years, He went away sorrowful because very little fruit was produced. In fact, God's beloved Israelites rejected Jesus.

At the very last of Jesus' ministry, He turned away from the Jews and offered the gospel to the Gentiles. He had given up on them producing fruit (cut it down).

In John 11:54 we read about this: "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples".

Luke 13:8-9 "And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung [it]:" "And if it bear fruit, [well]: and if not, [then] after that thou shalt cut it down."

“Let it alone this year”: This illustrates both the intercession of Christ and the extreme patience and graciousness of the Father.

We see in this that these privileged Hebrews had forgotten that duties go along with privileges. As we said before, this prophetic parable that Jesus gives here comes true, because Jerusalem is devastated shortly after this. Jesus gave them a chance; they just didn't take it.

Luke 13:10 "And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath."

“Synagogues”: The place where Jewish people gathered for worship (“synagogue”), is a transliteration of a Greek word meaning (“to gather together”). Synagogues originated in the Babylonian captivity after the 586 B.C. destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. They served as places of worship and instruction. Jesus frequently taught in the synagogues, as did Paul.

Luke 13:11 "And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up [herself]."

“Had a spirit of infirmity” This suggests that her physical ailment, which left her unable to stand erect, was caused by an evil spirit. However, Christ did not have to confront and drive out a demon, but simply declared her loosed (verse 12), so her case appears somewhat different from other cases of demonic possession He often encountered (11:14).

Luke 13:12 "And when Jesus saw her, he called [her to him], and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity."

“He called her to him”: The healing was unsolicited; He took the initiative (7:12-14). Furthermore, no special faith was required on her part or anyone else's. Jesus sometimes called for faith, but not always (8:48; Mark 5:34).

We see here, that Jesus was still allowed to preach in some of the synagogues. This was one probably in a rural area away from Jerusalem. Luke, more than any of the others, goes into detail about illness making us realize that he was truly a medical man.

Luke 13:13 "And he laid [his] hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God."

The disease mentioned here sounds like a very serious curvature of the spine. Sometimes this illness comes in a person's youth and gets worse and worse as they grow older. This woman seems to have a lot of faith to receive this healing. She knew exactly what to do and whom to glorify when she received her healing.

Take note that this was done on the Sabbath and these self-righteous, religious people were more concerned with dotting every "i" of the law than they were with helping this poor soul. She immediately stood straight. This was not a prolonged healing, but a miracle.

Luke 13:14 "And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day."

“Ruler of the synagogue”: An eminent layman whose responsibilities included conducting meetings, caring for the building and supervising the teaching in the synagogue (8:41; Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:38).

My own opinion of this is that this ruler is jealous of the miraculous ability of Jesus and looks for any little technicality he can trap Jesus with. This is really a little too shallow for anyone to believe that the real reason was the law.

Luke 13:15 "The Lord then answered him, and said, [Thou] hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or [his] ass from the stall, and lead [him] away to watering?"

“Loose his ox”: Nothing in Scripture forbade either the watering of an ox or the healing of the sick. Their Sabbath traditions placed a higher value on animals than on people in distress, and therefore corrupted the whole purpose of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

Jesus always has an answer for them. He says to them you loose your animal on the Sabbath, are you telling me that animals are more valuable to God than people are? Of course, they had no answer for Him.

In one instance, He told that they were so foolish that they would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. They had no reasoning for what they did, at all. Like so many churches today, their doctrine is more important to them than the truth taught in the Bible.

Luke 13:16 "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

“A daughter of Abraham”: She was a Jewess.

“Whom Satan hath bound”: Job’s physical ailments and other disasters were also inflicted by Satan, with divine permission. This woman had apparently been permitted to suffer, not because of any evil she had done, but so that the glory of God might be manifest in her (John 9:3).

Luke 13:17 "And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him."

He left these rulers of the church without anything to say. They knew what He said was right. The people believed Him even more, and they could see right through the shallowness of these rulers.

The people rejoiced with this woman who had been stooped over for 18 years. They also rejoiced that they had found a way to worship that showed some hope for them. It is wonderful to know that the God you worship is powerful and can do mighty things to deliver His people.

The ritual they had been practicing in the synagogue had left them cold, but this gospel Jesus preached was good news.

Luke 13:18 "Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?"

Jesus here is saying, how can I tell you in a way that you can understand what the kingdom of God is like? I will show you something you do understand, and you can compare it with that.

Luke 13:19 "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it."

“It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden”: Palestinian mustard plants are large shrubs, sometimes up to 15 feet high, certainly large enough for birds to lodge in. This is undoubtedly a reference to several Old Testament passages, including (Ezek. 17:23; 31:6; Dan. 4:21), passages which prophesied the inclusion of Gentiles in the kingdom.

We see here, a tiny mustard seed growing into a tree big enough for birds to build a nest in. Jesus is the Tree of Life. His beginning in the earth was small.

Very few people ever dreamed that He and a handful of disciples could grow into a mighty movement which would affect the whole world. Small beginnings do not mean small endings. The tree which Jesus started here has overspread the entire world.

Luke 13:20-21 "And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?" "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

This second short parable here speaks of the secret move that takes place inside a person. When they received Jesus inside of them, even though they at first didn't show it outside, their faith began to grow until one day they were a very strong Christian. They became a complete Christian when Jesus became the central point of their life.

Luke Chapter 13 Questions

1. Who had Pilate killed and mingled their blood with the sacrifices?
2. Who did Pilate represent?
3. What had these people assumed about these Galileans?
4. What does Jesus know they are thinking?
5. Who did they think were greater sinners than anyone in Jerusalem?
6. What was Jesus telling them to stop doing?
7. This parable about the fig tree was about whom?
8. What did He come looking for this 3 years?
9. God's beloved Israelites did what that upset God?
10. In John 11:54 when Jesus stopped walking among the Jews, where did He go?
11. How many years did Jesus preach and they didn't hear Him?
12. How many years did He go to the fruit tree and there was no fruit?
13. What city is devastated soon after Jesus says this?
14. Where did Jesus preach on this Sabbath?
15. How long had this woman been stooped over?
16. What did Jesus say to her when He healed her?
17. What did she do immediately after she was healed?
18. What type of illness did she have?
19. What shows us that Luke was a physician?
20. What were these people more interested in doing than in healing this woman?
21. What did these rulers accuse Jesus of?
22. What did they say to the people?
23. Why is this ruler doing this, really?

24. What does Jesus tell them they are more interested in than people?
25. Who does Jesus call her?
26. How are they similar to churches today?
27. What did these rulers feel after Jesus straightened them out?
28. How did it affect the people?
29. The people rejoiced for another reason besides the woman's healing. What was it?
30. What did Jesus liken the kingdom of God to (2 things).
31. What difference do you see in the two?