

That You May Know The Certainty

LESSON 18: JESUS'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, PART 8 (LUKE 17:20-18:23)

The time for Jesus to enter Jerusalem is drawing very close. He has once again been traveling from village to village, between Samaria and Galilee (Luke 17:11). During this final stretch of the journey to Jerusalem, Jesus continued to have opportunities for teaching and healing.

THE COMING KINGDOM (LUKE 17:20-37)

17:20-21. Some of the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. They typically believed the Messianic kingdom would be a physical kingdom with great splendor and power. Such a kingdom would likely have come with noticeable physical events (e.g. overthrow of the Roman government, declaration of borders, etc.). However, God's kingdom would not be a physical kingdom that would come with physically observable and definable signs (John 18:36). Instead, it would be spiritual and rule over the hearts of people (within them). Also, the kingdom of God would be wherever the King was (among them).

17:22-37. Jesus then told His disciples about what was coming. Though the Lord's coming can sometimes refer to the final coming of Jesus, it appears to refer in this passage to the impending judgment God would bring on that generation of Jews in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-35; note how similar language was used in the Old Testament, Isaiah 13:6-9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 7:19; Joel 2:1-2). There would come a time when the disciples would long to see one of the days the Messiah was with them on earth but would not see it. But, they were not to be deceived by the various claims of false Messiahs. When He would come in judgment, it would be a noticeable event (like lightning flashing across the horizon). Before this judgment would come on that generation, though, Jesus would suffer many things in Jerusalem and be rejected by that generation. When Jesus would come in judgment upon that generation (accomplished through the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70), their seemingly normal society would be upended (like in the days of Noah with the flood and Lot with Sodom and Gomorrah; Genesis 6-8, 18-19). When God's judgment would come on them (i.e. the Romans march into Jerusalem), they should not attempt to

gather belongings from their house or turn back to their houses from the field (Matthew 24:17-20). Instead, they should flee and not turn back (remembering Lot's wife, Genesis 19:17, 26). The focus should not be on physical possessions and trying to save things about the physical life, but on preserving the spiritual life in service to God. Those who would heed Jesus's warnings would be ready and avoid the destruction, while those who did not would be destroyed (one taken and one left). This destruction would happen in Jerusalem, and it would be as obvious as seeing vultures over a corpse (Matthew 24:27-28).

TWO PARABLES (LUKE 18:1-14)

18:1-8. As Jesus's disciples would experience trials and persecutions, Jesus taught a parable emphasizing the need for people to always pray and not give up. In it, Jesus presented a judge who did not fear God, did not respect people, and was unjust (unfair, not seeking true justice) and a widow who continued coming to him to find justice against her enemy. Despite not initially granting justice to her, the judge eventually did grant it because of her persistence in asking. The lesson Jesus taught is that if this is how a wicked judge might react, certainly God will grant justice to those who are persistent in crying out to Him in prayer! So, despite the sufferings and trials the elect (Jesus's disciples) experience, God will avenge these sufferings. This would happen in one sense when God destroyed Jerusalem and will happen in an even greater way when Jesus returns for final Judgment. Yet, God requires that He must find such faith (as demonstrated by the widow) in His elect when He comes.

18:9-14. Jesus proceeded to teach another parable to address some who trusted in themselves to be righteous and looked down on everyone else. In the parable, two men went to the temple to pray: A Pharisee (commonly viewed as being righteous, Matthew 23:1-7) and a tax collector (commonly viewed as sinners by the Pharisees, Luke 15:1-2). The Pharisee was proud of his accomplishments (fasting twice a week, giving a tenth/tithe of everything he got) and thanked God that he was not like other people who engaged in wicked things like the tax collector (greed, unrighteousness, adultery). Yet, he failed to see his failures and need for God's mercy. In contrast, the tax collector stood in humiliation (with eyes downward, beating his chest) and pled for God's mercy due to his sin. Jesus taught that this one left justified (right with God) rather than the self-righteous Pharisee. The lesson Jesus taught was that humility (a sense of smallness toward God and your

accomplishments) will recognize one's personal need for God's mercy rather than mere outward demonstrations of righteousness. This is the only way to be exalted, not by self-righteous thinking and behavior (James 4:6).

CHILDREN AND THE KINGDOM (LUKE 18:15-17)

18:15-17. People were bringing their infants to Jesus so He might touch them. However, the disciples attempted to stop them (perhaps not wanting Jesus to be bothered and viewing infants/little children as unimportant to Jesus's mission). However, Jesus invited the children and taught the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as them. Therefore, Jesus demonstrates the safe/sinless spiritual condition of children and the value of their humble and submissive attitudes (Matthew 18:1-4). Furthermore, Jesus teaches that every person must have such childlike humility and submissiveness if they want to enter the kingdom of God!

THE RICH YOUNG RULER (LUKE 18:18-23)

18:18-23. A rich young ruler (Matthew 19:20; the nature of his authority is unknown) approached Jesus, identifying Him as "Good Teacher" and inquiring what he must do to acquire eternal life. Jesus asked about the young man's statement that Jesus is "good," since only God is truly good. Perhaps Jesus was challenging the man to recognize that his statement meant that Jesus is God (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1). Jesus then identified five of the Ten Commandments to the man (specifically the commandments which focused on treatment toward others, Exodus 20:12-16). The young man said he had kept these from his youth and asked what he still lacked (Matthew 19:20). Although he had kept the external requirements of these commands, Jesus's challenge for him to sell all that he had and give to the poor to have Heavenly treasure, and to follow Him, revealed the true nature of his heart. Although the man was willing to obey some commands, he was not willing to fully commit His heart and life to following Jesus. This was evident in that he became extremely sad at Jesus's teaching and did not do what Jesus required.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is continuing to challenge the prevailing ideas about the kingdom and service to God. Jesus knew it was necessary for Him to suffer many things in Jerusalem. He also challenged people to be deeply committed to prayer, humility, and sincerely following Him.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Why would the coming of God's kingdom not be in the observable ways many expected?

What would Jesus experience because of that generation of Jews?

What would be experienced by that generation of Jews?

Where would Jesus's disciples put their focus?

What lessons are taught in the parable of the persistent widow?

What lessons are taught in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector?

How did Jesus view little children?

Why did the rich young ruler leave Jesus extremely sad?

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Written by Eric Krieg

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