

Luke 13:31-35
December 22, 2019

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: How do you feel when you observe someone rejecting Christ's offer of salvation? What goes through your mind? [Let people engage]

Transition: If you were with us last week, we observed that most Jews of Jesus' day counted on their privileged position as descendants of Abraham to gain them entrance to God's kingdom. However, Jesus teaches that salvation is a matter of personal faith, not of being born into a nation, a family, or even a church. How stunned those who missed the narrow gate will be, to see even Gentiles celebrating with Abraham, and themselves locked out. Today, we see Jesus's heart for the Jewish people, who continued to reject and spurn his offer of salvation, while the Pharisees continue to spend energy trying to trap Him and ultimately trying to kill Him. Let's read the text.

BOOK:

Jesus' Sorrow for Jerusalem

13 ³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus (X-Ref Mark 3:6) and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod (Antipas, Herod the Great's son) wants to kill you."

³² He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

³⁴ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. (Ps 118:26)'"

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.32: What does Jesus mean by calling Herod a fox? [It's not a compliment, but rather an expression of utter contempt. Foxes are well-known for being cunning and dangerous scavengers]

Q: What do you think was Jesus's "goal" [Ultimately His **goal** was to die for the sins of the world, and the resurrection on the **third day** after His crucifixion would attest to the fact that He had conquered sin and death.]

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

- Jesus is simply saying He would continue doing what He set out to do until He was finished, regardless of travel recommendations from the Pharisees or death threats from Herod. He would continue **unperturbed** and **unhindered**. His miracles would continue to attest to His power and authority over both the supernatural (casting out demons) and the natural world (healing) and were evidence that the Kingdom of God had come upon them.

- Jesus was the prophet foretold by Moses--
 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. (Deut 18:15, 18)”

The fox Herod had no power to kill the Lamb of God outside of Jerusalem and before the Father's plan would unfold, a plan set in place before the foundation of the world, a truth alluded to in many passages

2 Ti 1:9-note who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity ("before time began" = NET, CSB "before the ages began" = ESV, "before the beginning of time" = NIV, NLT)

Titus 1:2KJV-note - In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; ("before the ages began" = NET, ESV)

1 Peter 1:20-note For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

The Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself on the cross to save us from the storm of God's judgment that is going to fall on every sinner. He pleads with us to take refuge under His wings. If we will run to Christ, we will find shelter and mercy because of His great love.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 227-228). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A Personal Question about Danger (Luke 13:31–35)

Jesus was in Perea, which was ruled by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. The Pharisees wanted to get Jesus back into Judea where the religious leaders could watch Him and ultimately trap Him, so they tried to frighten Him away.

Herod had been perplexed by our Lord's ministry and was afraid that John the Baptist, whom he murdered, had come back from the dead (Luke 9:7–9). In fact, at one point, Herod wanted to meet Jesus so he could see Him perform a miracle! (Luke 23:8) But it appears that Herod's heart was getting harder, for now he threatened to kill Jesus. The warning the Pharisees gave (Luke 13:31) was undoubtedly true or Jesus would not have answered as He did.

Our Lord was not afraid of danger. He followed a "divine timetable" and nothing could harm Him. He was doing the will of God according to the Father's schedule (see John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1). It had been decreed from eternity that the Son of God would be crucified in Jerusalem at the Passover (1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8), and even Herod Antipas could not hinder the purposes of God. Quite the contrary, our Lord's enemies only helped *fulfill* the will of God (Acts 2:23; 3:13–18).

Jesus used a bit of "holy sarcasm" in His reply. He compared Herod to a fox, an animal that was not held in high esteem by the Jews (Neh. 4:3). Known for its cunning, the fox was an apt illustration of the crafty Herod. Jesus had work to do and He would accomplish it. After all, Jesus walked in the light (John 9:4; 11:9–10), and foxes went hunting in the darkness!

But Jesus also had a word to say about His nation: "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33). This parallels what He had said to the scribes and Pharisees in Luke 11:47–51. The nation not only rejected God's loving invitation to His feast, but they even killed the servants who brought them the invitation! (see Acts 13:27)

Our Lord's heart was grieved as He saw the unbelief and rebellion around Him, and He broke out in a lamentation over the sad plight of the Jewish nation. It was a sob of anguish, not an expression of anger. His compassionate heart was broken.

The image of the hen and her chicks would be a familiar one to an agricultural people like the Jews (see Ps. 91:4). Some of the Old Testament references to "wings" refer to the wings of the cherubim in the holy of holies in the tabernacle or temple (see Ex. 25:20; Ruth 2:12; Pss. 36:7–8; 61:4). The hen gathers her chicks when she sees danger is coming. The Pharisees told Jesus that He was in danger, when in reality *they* were in danger!

In this lament, Jesus was addressing the whole nation and not just the Pharisees who had tried to provoke Him. The people had been given many opportunities to repent and be saved, but they had refused to heed His call. "House" refers both to the "family" of Jacob ("the house of Israel") and to the temple ("the house of God"), both of which would be "left desolate." The city and temple were destroyed and the people were scattered.

But there is a future for Israel. The time will come when their Messiah will return and be recognized and received by the people. They will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35; also see Ps. 118:26). Some of the people would use these words at His "triumphal entry" (Luke 19:38), but they will not have their fulfillment until His coming in glory (see Zech. 12:10; 14:4ff; Matt. 24:30–31).

Israel's house has been left desolate. The nation has no king or priest, no temple or sacrifice (Hosea 3:4–5). But the nation has God's promise that she has not been forsaken (Rom. 11:1ff). There can be no peace on earth until the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) is seated on David's throne (Isa. 11:1ff).

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! (Ps. 122:6)

Strive to enter in at the narrow gate!

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 241-242)

13:31–35 (Matt. 23:37–39). In response to a warning from some Pharisees ... Jesus said that He had to reach Jerusalem because He was appointed to die there. There is debate concerning the Pharisees' report about Herod wanting to kill Jesus. Throughout Luke, the Pharisees are presented in a negative light. Why would the Pharisees have wanted to protect Jesus in this instance? It seems best to understand the incident as the Pharisees' pretext to get rid of Jesus. Jesus had publicly stated that His goal was to reach Jerusalem, and He was well on His way. Thus, the Pharisees were apparently trying to deter Him from His task, to scare Him into setting aside His goal.

Jesus' response, Go tell that fox, indicates that He saw the Pharisees as Herod's messengers who would report back to him. Jesus stated that He had a mission to perform (Luke 13:32). This Herod was Herod Antipas (see the chart on the Herods at 1:5).

When Jesus said, Today and tomorrow and the next day, He was not saying that He would arrive in Jerusalem in three days. The point was that He had a mission in mind and that He would continue on the schedule He had set for Himself. The goal was Jerusalem where He would die. He must present Himself publicly to the religious authorities and then be put to death.

It was at this point that Luke recorded the rejection of Jerusalem (representing the nation) by Jesus (13:34–35). Jesus lamented for the city and longed to protect it as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, that is, tenderly and lovingly, even though the people were not willing. His entire ministry up to this point had been to offer the kingdom to the nation. But since the nation, which had even killed the prophets, had rejected His words, He would now reject them. Jesus stated, Your house is left to you desolate (aphietai, "abandoned"). "House" probably refers not to the temple, but to the whole city. Though He would continue to offer Himself as the Messiah, the die was now cast. The city was abandoned by the Messiah.

Jesus noted (quoting Ps. 118:26) that the people of the city would not see Him again till they said that He was the Messiah. The crowd did quote this verse when Jesus entered the city in His Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:38), but their religious leaders disapproved. Ultimately this truth will be proclaimed when Jesus comes again and enters the city as the millennial Ruler.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1543). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

13:33 Jesus clearly understood Himself to be a prophet, but this self-understanding does not exclude a royal, messianic self-understanding as well, as the allusion to Ps 118:26 in verse 35 makes clear (Lk 19:29–40).

13:35 This is a prophecy of God forsaking Israel (see Jr 22:5–6). Jesus declared that Israel would remain rejected until it acknowledged Him as its Messiah. The triumphal entry (Lk 19:29–40) did

not fulfill this requirement, as the note of rejection continued there (19:41–44; cp. Rm 11:11–32). Luke either moved the saying forward for narrative purposes (see Mt 23:39) or else Jesus made such a remark more than once.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 381-385). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Context

After Jesus' teaching that many of his contemporaries would be "thrown out" and not share in God's kingdom, Luke recorded an incident that illustrates Israel's rejection of the Prophet/Messiah. In this incident, found only in Luke, some Pharisees who were friendly to Jesus reported Herod's desire to kill him (13:31). Jesus replied rhetorically that the "fox" Herod would have no effect on his plans. He would continue his ministry of exorcism and healing and on the third day achieve his goal (13:32). For Luke and Theophilus the mention of the "third day" would bring to mind Jesus' resurrection. The following verse (13:33) is connected to the preceding by the repetition of "today and tomorrow" and serves as a commentary to 13:32. Jesus' destination was Jerusalem where, as Israel's Prophet/Messiah, he, by divine necessity (*dei*), would meet his death. He was to die both "in" and at the hands of Jerusalem.

This double pronouncement story is followed by Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. Luke's arrangement may have been due to word association with "Jerusalem" in 13:33–34. Jesus lamented that he would often have gathered the people of Jerusalem together but that they continually refused. Instead they continued to kill the prophets and as a result would be forsaken and experience divine wrath. One day, however, they would welcome Jesus and bless him. Although Luke possibly was alluding to the triumphal entry (cf. 19:38), his primary focus was on the parousia, when the Lord returns in glory. The nature of this blessing may be understood positively, indicating either that Israel will by that time have turned in faith to the Lord, or negatively, indicating that they will be forced to acknowledge him in the day of judgment but that it will be too late for salvation.

Comments

13:31 At that time. This ties the following material closely to what has preceded.

Some Pharisees. For "Pharisee" see comments on 5:17. These Pharisees were genuinely interested in Jesus' welfare. Attempts to portray them as purposely giving false information in order to lure Jesus to his death in Jerusalem are based either on the view that all Pharisees were evil or that Luke sought to portray all Pharisees in an evil light. Both views are incorrect. Some Pharisees were sympathetic to Jesus and the Christian movement (cf. John 3:1; Acts 5:34–40; 15:5; 23:6–10), and in this incident Jesus did not rebuke them. These Pharisees were in fact friendly. Luke did, however, see the chief priests and Sadducees as irredeemable.

Herod. This was Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. See comments on 3:1. Herod already had killed John the Baptist (Luke 3:19–20; 9:9). He was curious about Jesus (9:9; 23:8), and although he was not directly responsible for Jesus' death, he made no attempt to save him (23:6–16).

Wants to kill you. Some have speculated about whether it was Herod's desire to kill him that caused Jesus to leave for Jerusalem. Luke, however, saw Jesus' journey to Jerusalem as

fulfillment of a divine necessity. It was the theological issue that concerned Luke, not a reconstructed rationalistic one.

13:32 Go tell. This is not a command meant to be fulfilled but a rhetorical comment.

Fox. “Fox” was a metaphor for deceitful craftiness then as well as now.

I will drive out demons and heal people. The present tense of the verbs “drive out,” “heal,” and “reach” in this partial summary of Jesus’ ministry (cf. also 9:1–2) emphasizes this continuing aspect of his ministry.

Today and tomorrow. Compare Exod 19:10. This denotes a limited period of time.

On the third day. Compare Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40. The number of times Luke referred to Jesus’ being raised on the third day makes it difficult to avoid thinking that he intended Theophilus to see here a reference to Jesus’ resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:4).

I will reach my goal. Compare the *dei* of Luke 13:33. For Luke, Jesus’ goal was not merely his arrival in Jerusalem but the completion of his redemptive work. To those, such as Theophilus, who were familiar with the story of Jesus, the next verse would have indicated that this goal involved Jesus’ death and resurrection. Some have suggested that the verb “will reach my goal” (*teleioumai*) is a divine passive and should be interpreted “I shall have my goal completed by God.” But *teleioumai* can also be a middle voice and can be interpreted “I shall surely complete my goal.” Because this verb is in the first person and the other two verbs in the sentence are all active in meaning and in the first person, this favors the latter interpretation. Regardless of all human opposition, Jesus would complete his work. God’s plan would be fulfilled. In fact, God was already working through Jesus’ opponents to bring about his plan.

13:33 In any case. This is emphatic.

I must keep going. For the divine *dei*, see Introduction 8 (1). This underlines not only Jesus’ determination but even more the inexorable force of the divine will.

Today and tomorrow. See the previous verse.

And the next day. “The next day” is the third day (13:32).

For surely. Herod could not interfere with God’s sovereign plan.

No prophet can die outside Jerusalem! This is the second passion pronouncement in the travel section begun in 9:51. No doubt this saying reflects such passages as Jer 26:20–23; 38:4–6; 2 Chr 24:20–21 and such extrabiblical traditions as those found in Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.3.1 (10.38) and Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 120.14–15.

13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Jesus’ lament, like Jeremiah’s, bemoaned the fate of the sacred city that refused to heed God’s Prophet. (Compare Ps 137 for a similar lament.) It was Jesus who spoke these words, not God or a personified Wisdom. Jerusalem’s negative reaction to Jesus is evident. Jerusalem should not be understood as referring simply to the twenty-five to thirty thousand people who lived in the city but as representing Israel as well. See comments on 10:41.

You who kill the prophets. Compare 13:33. The present participles in this verse reveal that they continued to do so even in Luke’s day. This accusation covers not only the death of Jesus but also the deaths of Stephen (Acts 7) and James in a.d. 62.

And stone those sent to you. Compare 1 Sam 30:6; 1 Kgs 12:18; 21:13; 2 Chr 24:21; Acts 7.

How often. This does not require that Jesus had been in Jerusalem on numerous occasions, although it suggests it, and John explicitly stated that he had. We should instead understand it to mean the many times Jesus had yearned to gather the people of Jerusalem to himself.

As a hen gathers her chicks. The mother hen is a common metaphor for loving protection.

But you were not willing! Note the contrasting “I willed” (ēthelēsa), but “you did not will (ouk ēthelēsate).

13:35 Your house. The term “house” may refer to the temple proper, the physical city itself, or the city’s people. Probably the city and its people were meant. The city will be the focus of attention in 21:5–24.

Is left ... desolate. Matthew followed this with the apocalyptic sayings of Matt 24–25, which refer to Jerusalem’s destruction and the parousia. “Is left to you desolate” alludes to Jer 12:7; 22:5; Ps 69:25; 1 Kgs 9:7–8. Here the reference is to the Romans’ destruction of Jerusalem. This is evident from 19:42–44 and 21:6, where the same verb is used to describe Jerusalem’s fall in a.d. 70, as well as from the fact that Luke’s readers knew from hindsight of this tragic event. The verb is a divine passive for God has abandoned you [to judgment]. There is no suggestion here that God was replacing the temple with the church. There is a sense in which God’s judgment of Israel began to manifest itself even before a.d. 70 in that the kingdom had been given to the Gentiles.

You will not see me again until you say, “Blessed.” In Matt 23:39 this saying occurs after Palm Sunday and must therefore refer to a later event. Although there are terminological similarities with Palm Sunday (Luke 19:38), where the event follows this saying, Luke also intended this blessing to refer to the parousia. Any allusion to Palm Sunday is at most ironic for at least two reasons. First, it was not the people of Jerusalem who uttered this blessing in 19:38 but the disciples. Second, the blessing of 13:35c comes after the destruction of Jerusalem described in 13:35a.

The blessing, which comes from Ps 118:26, was chanted to incoming pilgrims on feast days. In the context of this Gospel it can be understood (1) negatively as Israel will not see Jesus again until the parousia, but, alas, it will be too late or (2) positively as Israel will be converted before the end time and will greet the parousia with faith (cf. Rom 11:26–27; cf. also Acts 3:19–21). The former interprets the “blessing” along the lines of Phil 2:10–11, i.e., a forced confession apart from conversion (cf. Luke 8:28). The lack of any clear Lukan teaching about a future conversion of Israel and unqualified statements such as are found in Acts 13:46–47; 18:6; 28:25–26 favor the first interpretation.

The Lukan Message

The Lukan theological emphasis in this pronouncement story is twofold, corresponding to the double nature of the story itself. The first theme is God’s sovereign rule. Herod’s desire to kill him did not worry Jesus, for no two-bit politician could frustrate the divine plan. Nothing could hinder its fulfillment. Since Luke 9:51 Jerusalem had been the goal, and nothing could thwart the fulfillment of Jesus’ destiny. Death clearly awaited him. He would die in Jerusalem like other prophets (13:33–34), but that would not be the end; for on the third day Jesus would complete his mission (13:32). Luke’s readers would understand this to be a reference to the resurrection, due to 9:22 and their knowledge of the resurrection tradition. For a discussion of Luke’s understanding of the divine necessity of Jesus’ death and the sovereignty of God, see Introduction 8 (1).

The second emphasis in this pronouncement story is Jesus’ rejection by Israel, here represented by Jerusalem. Jesus’ ministry to the people had been a continual invitation for them to repent and enter the kingdom God had sent them. As their fathers had in earlier times, so Israel in the first century rejected God’s Prophet/Messiah, even putting him to death. Furthermore, Jesus’ death would not be the last one (cf. 11:47–51). Israel would put to death God’s

messengers in the early church as well, for they “always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51). Such wrongdoing cannot go forever unpunished, as the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9) points out. Even as Judah’s sin led to Jerusalem’s destruction in 587 b.c., so it would lead to another even more tragic destruction in a.d. 70. Jerusalem had been forsaken by God. Like Jonah, Jesus preached divine judgment against a great city, but this judgment would not be rescinded because, unlike the Ninevites (Jonah 3:1–10), Jerusalem did not respond with repentance.

In this passage Luke explained to his readers once again that Israel’s fate was understandable in light of the rejection of their Messiah and that readers need not be shaken by what had happened to Israel. See Introduction 7 (2). Whether Luke understood the final saying in 13:35 to mean that Israel one day would turn in faith to Jesus is unclear (see comments on 21:24). Paul, however, did have such a hope (Rom 11:26–27).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 13:31-35). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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