

Questions On The Road To Jerusalem

Introduction. This is the main passage in Luke in which Jesus expresses a strong sense of destiny in His final journey to Jerusalem. This chapter, which occurred in the period six months after His third Passover which ends with His arrival at Bethany before His last Passover, deals with multiple subjects. However, three subjects are significant because they deal with salvation and are worthy of our study today.

I. *Is There Justice In This World (Luke 13:1-9)?*

- A. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, was not known for his gentleness. He did not get along well with the Jews and did not hesitate to kill people who got in his way.
 - 1. This incident may have occurred when the Jews protested Pilate's taking money from their temple.
 - 2. The governor had in the temple crowd armed soldiers disguised as civilians, and they killed some unarmed Jews.
 - 3. Where was God when this happened? Why did God allow His faithful people to be killed without warning?
- B. Jesus refuses to attribute tragedy or accident directly to one's sin as did the Jews (cf. John 9:1-3). On the contrary, He affirms the sinfulness of all people (Romans 3:23). Whereas the victims of the two calamities referred to in vss. 1-5 perished physically, all who do not repent face spiritual death. Instead of a philosophical discussion, Jesus pressed a practical, urgent warning.
- C. Jesus pointed out that these deaths in the temple were but one seeming tragedy in many that occur in our world. What about the fall of the tower of Siloam? Could not God have prevented this accident and spared the lives of eighteen people?
 - 1. According to Jesus, the real question is not, "Why did others die?" but, "Why am I still alive?" In vss. 3 and 5, Jesus made His answer very personal; and in the parable, He personalized it even more.
 - 2. These men were not momentous examples of divine vengeance, as they supposed; but every impenitent sinner -- even they themselves, except they repent -- shall be like monuments of the judgment of heaven, and in a more awful sense (Acts 17:30-31).
- D. Jesus alludes to Micah 7:1 in His lament over unproductive fig trees. The symbolism applies to Israel (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7). Jesus' mention of both a fig tree and a vineyard makes the figure doubly clear. The tree is not immediately destroyed but is given an extra year of grace, even beyond the three years its owner had already waited. Israel, however, failed to recognize her season of opportunity.
 - 1. God could have judged the nation immediately, but He gave them

- more time.
2. In A.D. 70, He allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem and the temple.
- E. There is here an individual application: God expects us to bear fruit for His glory (Isaiah 43:7). Instead of asking, "Why did others die?" we should ask, "Is it worth it to God for me to be alive?" The reference here to the impending destruction of Jerusalem is far from exhausting our Lord's weighty words; they manifestly point to a "perdition" of a more awful kind -- future, personal and remediless.

II. ***Is Salvation Personal Or Theoretical (Luke 13:22-30)?***

- A. Jesus' teaching now turns to personal responsibility. Once again, Jesus took an abstract question and brought it down to concrete reality. The question is not, "Are there few who will be saved?" but, "Will you be among the saved?"
- B. The "strait gate" emphasizes the difficulty of entrance, the definite manner of entrance and that there are few exercising the wisdom, persistence and faith to attain life. The word "strive" means "to agonize like an athlete." In the Grecian games, athletes would put forth all their effort to gain victory. Jesus warns us to avoid an easy, complacent and theoretical attitude toward the eternal destiny of the soul. We should be diligent and active and make entering heaven our chief calling (Colossians 3:1-2).
1. Many seek salvation, but they do not agonize for it. For them it is a mere wish or slothful endeavor, not a life and death struggle. Therefore, they are shut out.
 2. Many seek to be saved at a time that is too late. In this life they neglect the concerns of God and are engaged in other pursuits. At death, or at the judgment, they will seek to enter in but the door will be shut; the day of mercy will be over.
- C. If we fail to take salvation seriously, we may find the door shut and somebody else taking our place at the feast!
1. Every Jew expected to sit with the patriarchs at the Messianic banquet. The concept of such a feast in heaven as a celebration with the Messiah is alluded to throughout the Old Testament. The tragedy would not only be that of looking at the patriarchs from the outside but also that of seeing Gentiles inside with them.
 2. The saved are those who seize their opportunity now (cf. 4:18-19). The "strait gate" limits the opportunities a person has to enter; thus people should act now (2 Corinthians 6:2)!
 3. Some of those who had been first in their opportunities of hearing and obeying shall become last by virtue of their failure to make the most of their opportunities. Many Gentiles with meager opportuni-

ties will win higher favor with God than Jews with greater opportunities which they did not sufficiently appreciate.

III. **Why Are So Many People Lost (Luke 13:31-35)?**

- A. Since Jesus was in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas, the Pharisees thought they could frighten Him; but they were greatly mistaken.
 - 1. Herod's father, Herod the Great, had killed the children in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18), and Herod Antipas had slain John the Baptist (9:7-9), so this ruler was capable of doing the same to Jesus.
 - 2. The Pharisees wanted Jesus to go to Judea where they had authority to deal with Him, but He knew their plans and continued to follow His plan.
- B. Jesus was not afraid. He lived on a divine timetable and knew that He could not die until His hour had come (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1). "The third day" refers to our Lord's resurrection from the dead when His earthly work of redemption would be completed. Note the sarcasm in our Lord's words in vs. 33 and connect it with 11:47-51.
- C. The last two verses of this chapter contain one of the most heartrending appeals that ever came from the lips of the Son of God.
 - 1. Some of the Jews did believe (John 11:45; 12:11, 42). But the nation was lost because it, for the most part, wasted its opportunities to be saved (vss. 34-35).
 - 2. During His years of public ministry, Jesus gave people many opportunities to believe the gospel; but they preferred to go their own way (Jeremiah 10:23; Galatians 2:20).
 - 3. God's longsuffering and graciousness will only be extended for a time (2 Peter 3:7-10). There will be no defiance of Christ at His second coming. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, but it will be too late for unbelievers when they face the judgment (Philippians 2:10-11).

Conclusion. There is indeed a great day coming. In one way or the other, these three questions pertain to our salvation. Have you repented of your sins? Are you now striving to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Or have you turned away from the Lord because of unbelief? In Luke 11:28, Jesus proclaimed, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Will you keep it today?