

Harmony Of The Gospels

The Later Perea Ministry

Matthew 19:1-20:34; Mark 10:1-52; Luke 13:22-19:28; John 10:40-11:54

I. ***The Withdrawal From Jerusalem To Bethany Beyond Jordan (John 10:40-42)***

- A. Having eluded their attempt to capture him, Jesus retreated to Perea, on the east side of the Jordan, which was the domain of Herod Antipas and where the rulers in Jerusalem had no authority.
- B. There He would be comparatively safe from arrest. There also he found a better reception, for "many believed on him." The Jews' allusion to the testimony of John the Baptist indicates that his ministry had enduring influence, and they accepted Jesus on that basis. As in the case of the woman of Samaria, faith in Christ was preceded by the witness of another.

II. ***Teaching In Perea (Luke 13:22-35)***

- A. It is likely that this question was asked by a Jew, and that the two parables illustrating the smallness of the kingdom's beginning suggested it to him. The Jews extended their exclusive spirit even to their ideals of a world to come, so that they believe that none but the chosen race would be saved.
- B. Jesus' reply to the question posed to Him emphasizes not "how many?" but "who?" The saved are those who seize their opportunity now (cf. 4:19). Once the time for decision has passed (v. 25), attempts to be saved afterward will be futile.
- C. The strict spirit of the Lord in giving His invitation is indicated by the phrase "narrow door," but the phrase includes more than this, for those who would strive must not only be prompt to act, but must be painstaking enough to act intelligently, and of an obedient spirit so as to act acceptably.
- D. The contrast is heightened between those inside and those outside the door, i.e., outside the kingdom. 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 (cf. 16:15). The tragedy would not only be that of looking at the patriarchs from the outside but also that of seeing Gentiles inside with them.
- E. Jesus, far from being threatened by Herod, called him "that fox." Today foxes connote cleverness; in Jesus' day they also connoted insignificance (cf. Nehemiah 4:3; Song of Solomon 2:15). Jesus intended to

continue His ministry and to manifest the power of the kingdom, but not indefinitely. That time was short.

- F. Luke draws the reader's attention to Jerusalem, that city of destiny, both as the place of our Lord's crucifixion and as the pathetic, unwilling object of His love. That love is set forth with beautiful imagery.

III. ***Jesus Heals On The Sabbath And Defends Himself (Luke 14:1-24)***

- A. Since this is the fourth time Luke records a controversy over the Sabbath, it is obvious that this was a major issue between Jesus and the religious leaders (cf. 6:1-5, 6:11; 13:10-17).
- B. His enemies evidently expected Jesus to act on impulse, and were confused by His calm, deliberate question. They kept their silence, but their silence only justified Him, since it was the duty of every lawyer to pronounce this act unlawful if it had been so.
- C. Jesus taught how to avoid earthly shame and obtain worldly honor. Yet they form a parable which is intended to teach the great spiritual truth that true humility leads to exaltation. Both man and God look upon humiliation as the just punishment of pride; but it is a pleasure to every right-minded spirit to give joy to the humble by showing Him respect and honor.
- D. The three excuses show 1) that the guests had made their arrangements without the least regard for the hour of the banquet; and 2) that they set little value upon either the friendship or the feast of the one who had invited them. The general invitation was given by Moses and the prophets in the ages before the feast was prepared.
- E. Although Jesus does not interpret the parable, we may link it with 13:28-30 and find in it an allusion of the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles. Those who had the benefit of the original invitation are the Jews with all their heritage and spiritual advantages (cf. Romans 9:4-5). "None" (vs. 24) refers to the parable and stresses the seriousness of the consequences of rejecting God's invitation.

IV. ***Great Crowds Follow Him And He Warns About Discipleship (Luke 14:25-35)***

- A. In the cases Jesus gives, the person would appear to "hate" those whom he abandoned for Christ. It is like repent, anger, etc., when spoken of God. If one takes the passage literally, it would be contrary to Ephesians 6:1-3 and Colossians 3:20, and also contrary to our Lord's own example (John 19:25-27).
- B. Jesus uses two different circumstances to illustrate His basic point: discipleship requires a conscious advance commitment, made with a realistic estimate of the ultimate personal cost. The practical nature of the circumstances Jesus so vividly pictures underlines the fact that

Christian discipleship is not some theoretical abstract ideal but hard reality.

- C. In contrast to the cares of the rich young ruler (18:22), Jesus does not say a disciple should sell all his possessions and give everything away. His thought probably is that of a continual abandonment of possessions, yielding up the right of ownership or the desire to cling to possessions, rather than outright disposal of them. The disciple of Jesus may be given the use of possessions in trust, as a stewardship, but they are no longer his or her own. This understanding is therefore consistent with the command to use our possessions wisely (cf. 16:1-12).
- D. The reference to salt here is due to the common element it shares with the preceding illustrations -- the consistent quality of life that Jesus expects of His disciples. The point is that tasteless salt is useless. Those who have ears are expected to apply this lesson to themselves.

V. ***The Scribes And Pharisees Murmur Against Jesus (Luke 15:1-32)***

- A. In Old Testament times it was taken for granted that God's people did not consort with sinners (cf. Psalm 1), but the Pharisees extended this beyond the biblical intent. The parables that follow show that the return of "sinners" to God should be a cause for joy to the religious leaders, just as it was to God.
- B. "Man" is emphatic; it is made so to convey the meaning that if man would so act, how much more would God so act. Two points are striking. First, in the obvious analogy to the search for the sheep, Jesus takes the initiative in seeking out lost people -- a major theme in Luke (cf. 19:10). Second, the climax of the story is not only the return of the sheep but the triumphant rejoicing in its rescue.
- C. The woman, having only ten pieces of silver, was evidently very poor. Considering the neighborly feelings in a small village, such joy is understandable, especially if the coin represented a tenth of the woman's savings. Jesus' final comment reinforces that joy. This parable, like that of the lost sheep, justifies Jesus' welcome of sinners (vs. 2).
- D. The two sons represent those who profess religion (the elder) and the openly irreligious (the younger). The sinful seek to escape from the authority of God just like the younger son sought to be independent of his father. He soon found himself in the deepest of humiliation and degradation.
- E. Repentance, in this parable, is pictured as a journey. It is more than a mere emotion or impulse. The younger son admitted that his sins were ultimately against God ("heaven"). The father in the story portrays the characteristics and attitudes of a loving heavenly Father, as Jesus' listeners would recognize (Psalm 103:13). In an ironic twist of fate, the

elder brother was not pacified by his father. He continued to rebel against the father's will until he himself became the lost son.

VI. **Three Parables On Stewardship (Luke 16:1-17:10)**

- A. The attitude of the two brethren to their father's estate, as set forth in the previous parable, introduced thoughts as to the proper relation which a man bears to his possessions, and Jesus discusses these relations in this parable.
- B. The steward, a worldly-minded man, knew better how to deal with a worldly-minded master above him and dishonest tenants beneath him and his needy brethren around him. Christians do not belong to this evil age, but they can nevertheless make responsible use of worldly wealth. This is their stewardship. God does not judge by the magnitude of the act, but by the spiritual motives which lie in back of the act. In the administration of the small possessions entrusted to us we reveal our disposition toward large possessions.
- C. The brief excerpt from Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage is included as an example of one aspect of the law that the Pharisees tended to minimize. The teaching is essentially the same as in Matthew 5:32, except that Luke 1) omits the phrase "except for fornication;" 2) says that the remarried man commits adultery rather than that he causes his first wife to do so; and 3) includes a comment about a man who marries a divorced woman.
- D. We can generally consider that the parable of the unjust steward teaches how riches are to be used and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches the terrible consequences of a failure to use riches. While Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom," the rich man was in "torment." The torment was so great that the rich man requested Lazarus' help in cooling him, but it was refused. Also refused was his request for one to return from the dead to aid his brothers. The rich man simply disregarded the affairs of the future life, choosing instead to cast his lot with the earthly, fading possessions of this life.
- E. Starting in Luke 17:1, Jesus ceases to speak to the Pharisees, and begins a new series of sayings addressed to the disciples. Righteousness has its obligation to rebuke as well as love has to forgive. The apostles asked for faith that they might be able to fulfill the great moral requirements that Jesus just revealed. He furthermore teaches that duty coexists with ability. When one's faith endows him with great talents he cannot consider himself as an unusually profitable servant because he can do no more than is his duty to do.

VII. *Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead (John 11:1-44)*

- A. The message and its form indicate the close intimacy between this family and Christ. They make no request, trusting that the love of Jesus will lead Him to Bethany. The resurrection of Lazarus was so that the Son of God would be glorified by manifesting that death held no dominion over Him.
- B. Jesus delayed going to Bethany so He could discipline and perfect the faith of the sisters and the disciples. He withheld His blessing that He might enlarge it. Jesus countered the disciples' objection with an enigmatic statement. That expression may have been a current proverb, perhaps similar to His remark in 9:4.
- C. In his speech, Thomas showed how little faith he had in Christ's ability to conquer death. He needed to witness this miracle, but even after seeing it, it proved insufficient to sustain his faith in the ordeal through which Christ was about to pass (John 20:25-29).
- D. The doctrine of the resurrection was commonly held by all the Jews except the Sadducees. Jesus would draw Martha to look upon Himself as both the resurrection and the life. Where He is, there is life. There is also resurrection at His command without limitation.
- E. His feeling is expressed by three words: "groaned," "troubled" and "wept." The first of these connotes anger. Perhaps Jesus was expressing his resentment against the ravages of death that had entered the human world because of sin. The second word expresses agitation. That is, Jesus was not apathetic or unnerved by the prevailing mood of sorrow. Lazarus had been a beloved friend, and Jesus shared in the common feeling of grief over his death.
- F. When Martha met His condition, which was the last step of faith she could take, Jesus took the next step. He did not ask God to raise Lazarus; He thanked Him for having already answered His prayer. So great was Jesus' faith in the Father that He assumed that this miracle, so necessary to His mission, was as good as done. His main reason for raising Lazarus was to convince the assembled people that He had been sent by the Father.

VIII. *The Effect Of The Raising Of Lazarus (John 11:45-54)*

- A. As a result of Jesus' miracle in Bethany, a meeting of the Sanhedrin was called. The council expressed not only disapproval but also frustration. The chief priests and Pharisees did not deny the miracles, which made their conduct all the more inexcusable.
- B. They were afraid that Jesus would ultimately undermine Judaism and leave it prey to the innovations of Rome. If Jesus became the dominant power, they would lose their influence.

- C. Caiaphas was high priest from A.D. 18 to A.D. 36. He championed expediency above law when he coldly suggested that it was better for Jesus to die.
- D. John takes Caiaphas's statement as a kind of double entendre, an unconscious and involuntary prophecy that Jesus would become the sacrifice for the nation so that it might not perish. The irony of the statement is paralleled by the record of the rulers' mockery of Jesus at the crucifixion (cf. Mark 15:31).
- E. Acting on the advice of Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus without a hearing, and sought the means to carry their condemnation to execution. For this reason Jesus left Bethany, where danger threatened him, and went to Ephraim, a village north of Jerusalem. This town was on the edge of the Judean desert, into which Jesus could flee if necessary.

IX. *Jesus Starts On The Last Journey To Jerusalem By Way Of Samaria And Galilee (Luke 17:11-37)*

- A. Jesus passed northward from Ephraim about forty miles, crossing Samaria and coming to the border of Galilee. He then turned east along that border down the wady Bethshean which separates the two provinces and crossed the Jordan into Perea. Here we soon find Him moving toward Jericho in the midst of the caravan of pilgrims on the way to the passover.
- B. The lepers received the blessing when they, like Naaman (2 Kings 5:15), showed their faith by their obedience. However, the Lord publicly noted the indifference and ingratitude of the nine and the thanksgiving of the tenth. Are we as ungrateful for the blessings we receive?
- C. More than three years before, Jesus had begun to say that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and they thought it was time for this promise to be fulfilled. They were looking for some manifestation of God's power in the civil realm, but they are told that the work of the kingdom is internal and spiritual (John 3:8; 18:36; Colossians 1:27).
- D. When Jesus brings up the glory of the kingdom, He also mentions the humiliation and suffering which precedes it, so that the faith of His disciples may not be weakened by false expectations and misunderstandings. The Lord gives two historical accounts of the false security of the ungodly, and in doing so He endorses them as real history. Despite all warnings, they were taken by surprise.
- E. The solemn words "I tell you" (v. 34) introduce a warning that the return of the Lord reveals ultimate destinies. Even those closely associated (in bed and at work) are separated, one taken into fellowship with God, the other abandoned to judgment. The two illustrations reflect

activities selected to show that the Son of Man could come at any time, day or night.

- F. Jesus gave a proverbial answer, the meaning of which is that sin courts and draws to itself punishment and destruction just as a carcass draws the buzzards and vultures.

X. *Two Parables On Prayer (Luke 18:1-14)*

- A. The theme of the first parable is that of the vindication of God's misunderstood and suffering people. God's people in Old Testament days needed to "wait" on God as He worked out justice with apparent slowness (cf. Psalm 25:2-3). In the book of Revelation the martyrs wait for vindication (6:9-11).
- B. Though a beloved people cry continually to a just God, yet He will in mercy be longsuffering to their enemies, and because of this longsuffering He will seem to delay His answer, but the delay will not be extended a moment longer than is necessary. When the season of repentance is past, then the Lord's answer will be speedy or immediate.
- C. Despite the admonition to pray without discouragement, and this promise to answer with all speed, God's patience with the wicked, and His consequent delays in answering the prayers of the just, will prove such a trial to His people as to leave it questionable whether any of them will have faith enough to pray until the coming of the Lord. There is an echo of this passage in 2 Peter 3:1-13.
- D. The second parable shows the difference between self-righteousness and humility, and an occasion of prayer is chosen because it best illustrates the point which the Lord desired to teach.
- E. The temple was the appointed place for Jewish prayer. The stated hours of prayer were 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., but men went there to pray whenever they felt like it. The Pharisee prayed having himself rather than God in his thoughts. His prayer was more like a boast of himself. On the other hand, the publican would not even lift his head and smote his breasts, as if to remind himself of the "stroke" of God which he deserved (Nahum 2:7; Luke 23:48).
- F. We are taught here, as in the parable of the prodigal son, that the penitent unrighteous are more acceptable to God than the righteous who make no confession of their sins.

XI. *Going From Galilee Through Perea, Jesus Teaches About Divorce (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12)*

- A. Knowing that Jesus had modified the law of Moses, the Pharisees asked this question seeking to entrap Him. If He agreed with the teaching of Moses, then they would show that He was contradicting His

former teaching, and was therefore too inconsistent to have any credibility.

- B. Jesus goes back to God's original law on marriage and draws the conclusion that no one can divorce or dissolve marriage for any reason other than what the scriptures allow. The Jews immediately proceeded to show that He was in conflict with the law of Moses. Jesus replied that Moses did not command, but suffered or permitted, men to put away their wives for any reason. Had the law given at creation been pressed upon the people, many would have refused and chosen to live in fornication.
- C. Jesus reaffirmed the teaching of Matthew 5:32 by stating that there is only one reason for divorce: fornication. He gives the innocent party the right to remarry someone who has a right to be married (1 Corinthians 7:39).
- D. The disciples actually illustrate not only the hardness of heart of which Jesus spoke, but also the wisdom of allowing divorce under the law of Moses. "This saying" refers to Jesus' statements in vss. 4-9. Jesus says that because of this law regarding divorce and remarriage, there will be those who will make "themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

XII. *Christ And Children And The Failure Of The Disciples To Understand (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17)*

- A. Children in Jesus' day were often brought to rabbis and elders to be blessed, customarily by placing hands on them (cf. Genesis 48:14). The disciples rebuked the parents and others who were bringing their children. Why? Perhaps they were annoyed that Jesus was being delayed on His journey to Jerusalem, or they felt they were being interrupted in their important discussion.
- B. Jesus was indignant at their interference, and directed that the children be brought to Him, declaring at the same time that the kingdom of heaven is composed of those who are childlike in their nature.
- C. The incident told in this section is a fitting sequel to the discourse on divorce. The little children, the offspring of happy wedlock and a source of constant joy and pleasure to faithful husbands and wives, serve by their presence to correct false impressions as to the supposed inconvenience of an indissoluble marriage bond.

XIII. *The Rich Young Ruler And The Perils Of Riches (Matthew 19:16-20:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30)*

- A. When the young man came running kneeling, he showed his great reverence for Jesus. He seemed to think, though, that heaven could be gained by performing some meritorious acts.

- B. God, who knows what is good, had revealed good in the commandments which He had given. Yet the ruler had asked Jesus to be wise above God's revelation, and to create a law or rule of goodness in addition to that already given.
- C. What Jesus demands is undivided loyalty and full-hearted obedience. This young man could not face that. He was willing to discipline himself to observe all the outward stipulations and even perform extra works; but because of his wealth, he had a divided heart. His money was competing with God; and what Jesus everywhere demands as a condition for eternal life is absolute surrender of self.
- D. The possession and use of riches is permitted to the Christian, but their possession becomes a sin when the one who owns them comes to trust in them or in any way suffers them to interfere with his duties toward or relations to God. It should be remembered that Judas heard these words only a short time before he sold His Lord.
- E. Peter, impressed by "impossible" and speaking for his fellow disciples, thinks Jesus' words are unfair to the disciples. His statement suggests that he and the others are still thinking in terms of deserving or earning God's favor. Jesus promises that the apostles, in their own personal ministries, would "judge" the Lord's church after He ascended to heaven.
- F. The promise of large recompense which Jesus had just given ("hundredfold") was apt to tempt some to labor not for love, but for the rewards which might be repeated thereby. Jesus corrects this spirit by His statement and the parable that follows it.

XIV. *Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection To His Disciples (Matthew 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45; Luke 18:31-34)*

- A. This was the third and by far the clearest and most circumstantial prophecy concerning His death. The details are minute even to the complicated arrangement by which the Jewish authorities pronounced sentence and forced Pilate to confirm their sentence.
- B. Despite the fact that Jesus was now plainly telling them of His death, James and John could not rid their minds of the delusion that He was about to ascend to the earthly throne of David. The "right hand" and "left hand" suggest proximity to the King and a share in His prestige and power. They confidently expressed that they were ready to go with Jesus ("drink the cup" and "be baptized with the baptism"), but He, in a gentle rebuke, informed them that they would indeed suffer for the cause of Christ.
- C. The indignation of the ten doubtless sprang less from humility than jealousy plus the fear that they might lose out. Power and authority characterized the Roman Empire. Greatness among Jesus' disciples is

based on service. Anyone who wants to be great must become the "minister." At this point Jesus presents Himself -- the Son of Man -- as the supreme example of service to others.

XV. *Blind Bartimaeus And His Companion Healed (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43)*

- A. Matthew tells of two men, while Mark and Luke tell only of one -- the principle one, Bartimaeus. The title "son of David" was the popular Jewish designation for the Messiah, and Bartimaeus confessed his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. Blind as he was, he saw more than those who spoke of the Lord as Jesus of Nazareth, thus making Jesus different from other men only in the matter of His residence.
- B. Although there were attempts to silence him, he demonstrated the spirit of Jacob. The more resistance he met, the more strenuously he wrestled to obtain the blessing. Jesus is no respecter of persons. He heard the cry and stopped.
- C. After his healing, there is no command to be silent. That point in Jesus' ministry has been reached when more public self-disclosure could not change the course of events. The two healed men joined the crowds following Jesus, pressing on to the passover they expected and the cross they did not.

XVI. *Jesus Visits Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-28)*

- A. Zacchaeus was a "chief tax collector," holding a higher office in the Roman tax system than Matthew did (5:27-30). This system, under which an officer gained his income by extorting more money from the people than he had contracted to pay the Roman government, had evidently worked well for Zacchaeus.
- B. Jericho had been filled with reports about Jesus, and great excitement existed among the people. Zacchaeus shared this excitement. This is the only instance where Jesus invited Himself to be any man's guest. Love constrained Him to pause in Jericho that He might save the house of Zacchaeus.
- C. The visit of Jesus had converted Zacchaeus and brought salvation to his house. Though as yet Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24), and was not proclaiming salvation to the Gentiles, yet He could consistently receive Zacchaeus, for, though an outcast publican, he had not so forfeited his sonship in Abraham as to bar him for this right.
- D. The people were filled with dreams and expectations which a few days later resulted in the triumphal entry. They were eagerly looking for honors and rewards under the new ruler. Jesus corrected these false

hopes by a parable which showed that there must be patient waiting and faithful work before there could be any season of reward.

- E. The citizens of the kingdom represented the Jews. Jesus will call us into account for our stewardship, and some, despite the long absence of their Lord, and the rebellion of the citizens, will be found to have been faithful.
- F. The last servant represents those who make the difficulties of the Christian life an excuse for doing nothing. No argument can justify the sinner who contends against God. Everyone who makes use of what he or she has will increase their abilities, a rule which applies in all the affairs of life.

XVII. *Jesus Enters Bethany And Mary Anoints Him For His Burial (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-11)*

- A. The supper is mentioned later by Matthew and Mark, but without any reference of time. John does give us a time reference. Matthew and Mark seem to insert the account of the supper in Simon's house where they do because of the determination of Judas was formed at it. This is the second time Jesus was anointed, the first time being recorded in Luke 7:36-50.
- B. The time indications in Matthew 26:2 and Mark 14:1 do not say that the supper at Bethany was given two days before the Passover, but that two days before the Passover Jesus predicted that He would be delivered up to be crucified after two days, and the rulers resolved that He should not be put to death at the feast.
- C. Matthew and Mark do not give the woman's name, but John tells us that it was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Matthew and Mark state that Mary anointed the head of Jesus while John states that she anointed His feet. Matthew and Mark stress the cost of the "perfume;" John suggests that it was worth approximately a year's salary for a working man (John 12:3). This perfume was possibly from the nard plant (native to India); it was extracted from the thin-necked alabaster flask by snapping off the neck.
- D. Jesus begins His rebuke by accusing the disciples of "troubling" her. What they call waste, Jesus calls "good." The anointing does not designate Jesus as the Messiah but prepares Him for His burial after dying the death of a criminal, for only in that circumstance would the customary anointing of the body be omitted.
- E. The presence of Lazarus and Christ at one table greatly excited the curiosity of the multitudes who had come up to Jerusalem to attend the passover. When word of this supper spread among the people it was natural that they would go out to Bethany to see the sight.