



SMALL GROUP GUIDE
CROSSPOINT CHURCH

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

PERSONAL STUDY

You do not need to complete this section before your small group, but it is encouraged that you work through it and familiarize yourself with the passages. Each lesson is broken down into sections accompanied by inductive Bible study questions. Your small group leader has a leader's guide that has commentary containing all the answers to the inductive Bible study questions.

All sermons are uploaded online and it would be helpful to watch or listen to them if you miss a Sunday. The lessons provided will dive deeper into the passage and also provide an outlet to discuss, reflect, and encourage one another in Christ. The ultimate goal of this curriculum is to be a tool used for discussion, fellowship, and application.

If there are any questions on any of the lessons, please do not hesitate to email Pastor John at jvo@crosspointhb.org.

GROUP DISCUSSION

This is the core of the curriculum. These questions were designed to promote discussion in small groups. If everyone in the group takes an open and transparent approach to the questions, there will be enjoyable and productive times during your small groups. The questions are there to guide discussion, rather than test your Biblical knowledge. Feel free to add your own questions, skip others, or go through them all. Again, all we want from this study is for people to love Jesus and obey His Word together!

We are praying for you!
- CrossPoint Church



LESSON ONE

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON ONE • LUKE 19:28-48

Understanding the Context

Luke 19:28 is a transition verse that informs the readers the context is about to change. Jesus is now about to enter into Jerusalem and live his final days before the crucifixion. The triumphal entry is a clear indicator of who Jesus is, yet at the same time, his entry is met with weeping and sadness.

From Luke's point of view, Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, but he is also the rejected Messiah. Due to the rejection, this will lead to judgment. It is clear the spiritual leaders of Israel will not accept Jesus, even after all the miracles they have seen Jesus accomplish.

Jesus triumphal entry not only portrays the obedience Jesus has to the Father since the entry into Jerusalem also marks the certainty of his death. It also emphasizes the clear and utter rejection of the Messiah, who brings true peace to the world.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 19:28-48

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

34 They replied, "The Lord needs it."

35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

45 When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. 46 "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

47 Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. 48 Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

Section Questions

1. Why was it important that Jesus rode on a colt and what are some significant features about a colt? (See 1 Kings 1:38 and Zechariah 9:9 for some hints).

2. How do you understand Jesus telling the disciples to simply say "The Lord has need of it" as a response to any issues obtaining a colt? Does it seem weird and if so how?

3. How should the Pharisees response towards Jesus in v. 39 be understood? (See Psalm 118:26 and commentary below).

4. Verses 41-44 are a prophetic statement that has already occurred in history. What is that event? (See commentary for answer).

5. Why does Jesus respond the way he does in v. 41-44 towards Jerusalem?

6. What is the clear theme presented in Luke 19:28-48?

Commentary:

Luke 19:28 is a bridge and transition verse linking the previous section (Luke 19:11-27) and indicating that Jesus is on the move again. Jesus has finally arrived at the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Jesus and the disciples are at the mount of Olives, where he tells two of his disciples to go and secure a colt (donkey) for him. There are several significant features about this fact.

1. Up to this point, Jesus has walked everywhere in his ministry (or used a boat). He has

never mounted a colt. Jesus' decision to ride a colt was purposeful and not some haphazard decision, or because he was finally tired of walking.

2. The riding of a donkey was a symbolic sign to the claim of kingship. In 1 Kings 1:38, in response to Adonijah, who tried to set himself up as king, David instructs Zadok the priest and company, to have Solomon ride the king's mule to indicate Solomon is now the king. Thus, Jesus riding on the donkey into Jerusalem was a clear sign that Jesus is the king.

3. Additionally, riding a donkey was different than riding a horse. A horse was often associated with war, but the donkey, according to Zechariah 9:9, represented peace and humility. Although Luke does not mention it, Matthew 21:5 does cite Zechariah 9:9. It shows that Jesus riding a donkey was a fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus is the Messiah and the King.

How Jesus asked for the colt is interesting. He tells his two disciples to get the colt, and if there are any issues, to simply state, "The Lord has need of it." Some have suggested Jesus already made arrangements to get the colt, and the phrase "The Lord has need of it" was some sort of password.

However, nothing in the passage indicates that this was preplanned. Jesus being the almighty sovereign Savior, shows his control over this situation. From our human perspective, it seems outlandish and weird that someone would just give up a colt to total strangers simply because someone says, "The Lord has need of it." But when we understand that Jesus is in control of all things, that he is God, the request seems simple and obvious.

The disciples bring the colt to Jesus and place their cloaks on it (v. 35). As Jesus rides the colt into Jerusalem, the disciples rejoice and praise God (v. 36-38). This celebration is met with complete and utter rejection by the Pharisees (v. 39).

The Pharisees are completely aware of what is occurring. They understand that Jesus riding on a colt indicates that he sees himself as the king. The disciples shouting and praising Jesus with the statement "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" is a reciting of Psalm 118:26. This type of praise is, again, only meant for the Messiah and King of Israel.

For the Pharisees to ask Jesus to rebuke his disciples for shouting, Psalm 118:26 is a clear indicator that the Pharisees did not see Jesus as the Messiah and King. In other words, the Pharisees have clearly rejected Jesus as the Messiah and King. This fact is made even more apparent with the label "teacher."

While the Pharisees response is one of clear rejection, Jesus answer shows how foolish they are to reject Jesus. Even if the disciples don't shout Psalm 118:26, the stones, lifeless objects, will still cry out and praise Jesus who is the Messiah and King.

Jesus triumphal entry is supposed to be met with rejoicing and praise since Jesus was bringing peace and salvation. However, as verses 41-48 clarify, there is more disappointment and sadness due to the hardness of hearts.

Jesus is still outside the city, and as he gets closer and closer to Jerusalem, he states a prophecy in v. 41-44 that causes him to weep. Need to provide OT Reference and Fulfillment verses?

The prophecy is the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurs at 70 A.D. The Jewish people began a revolt against Rome in 66 A.D., which was met with complete failure and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. If the Jewish religious leaders, who represented the nation of Israel (and the general understanding of Jesus by the people) had believed and received Jesus as the Messiah and King, they would have all experienced peace. Yet peace has been hidden from them (v. 42) because of their rejection. Thus, what the nation of Israel will get instead is judgment.

Starting in verse 45, Jesus has finally entered into Jerusalem and goes into the temple. The theme of the rejection of Jesus is still prominent. This time with the temple, it gives a feel that it is not just the religious leaders who reject Jesus and do not care about God's word. But rather even those in attendance at the temple since the temple is filled with "den of robbers." Jesus driving out those who took advantage of the temple to make a profit further cements his judgment of Israel.

In fact, we see in v. 47-48, that while Jesus was teaching daily, the chief priest, scribes, and principle men of the people, sought to destroy Jesus. Again, the theme of rejection rings clear. The rejection of Jesus does not change who Jesus is, but it does continue to set Jesus up for his ultimate sacrifice - death on a cross, which ultimately is the means of how he brings peace and salvation to all.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions, how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
- Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
- Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. As believers it is easy for us to rejoice in the announcement of Jesus as King. However, this does not mean we always believe or obey everything about Jesus all the time. In what ways to you feel like you “receive” Jesus as King fairly well? What areas do you struggle?

2. The rejection of Jesus is always met with judgment. As believers we will never see the judgment of Christ. However, there are consequences and correction for the sins that we commit. See Galatians 5:6-7 and Hebrews 12:5-11. What feelings does this produce for you? How might you be motivated to live a more godly and holy life in view of these truths?

3. In Luke 19:48 we see that the people were hanging on the words that Jesus was teaching in the temple. Clearly Jesus’ teaching is profound and worthy of our attention! How can we more often and more deeply “hang” on the words of God?



LESSON TWO

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON TWO • LUKE 20:1-18

Understanding the Context

The theme of rejection from the previous passages continues in Luke 20:1-18. The rejection comes in the form of a challenge to Jesus' authority. Jesus clarifies that the chief priest, scribes, and elders reject Jesus with a parable. In the parable, there are prediction elements of Jesus' ultimate death on the cross, something Israel is about to do to Jesus.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 20:1-18

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up 2 and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." 3 He answered them, "I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, 4 was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" 5 And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'From man,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where it came from. 8 And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

9 And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. 10 When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. 12 And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. 13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' 15 And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" 17 But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?"

18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

Section Questions

1. What are some of the implications of Jesus preaching the gospel at the temple (Luke 20:1)?
2. What is the religious leaders' general attitude when they question Jesus (Luke 20:2), and how do you know that?
3. What is the religious leaders' primary concern as they try to figure out an answer to Jesus' counter-question (Luke 20:5-6)?
4. Who/what does the vineyard, tenants, servants, and owner, and owner's son represent in the parable (Luke 20:9-16)?
5. Why do you think the people respond with shock (Luke 20:16)?
6. What does the Scripture citation (Psalm 118:22) help solidify that the parable teaches?

Commentary:

Luke 20:1 tells us that Jesus was teaching and preaching the gospel to people at the temple. It is important to see the implications that Jesus was preaching the gospel at the temple. The temple was a place where people went to receive the forgiveness of sins through sacrifice. Yet as Jesus preached the gospel, the forgiveness of sin no longer resides in the temple, but in Jesus. Luke 19:47 already stated that Jesus was teaching at the temple daily. It is no wonder that the chief priest, scribes, and elders were upset with Jesus. The high standing and authority the Jewish leaders had resided in the temple, and by Jesus preaching the gospel, the gospel effectively made the temple useless.

In Luke 20:2, the religious leaders of Israel question the source of Jesus' authority. It is important to realize that the question was not asked because of a lack of understanding or curiosity, but rather it was asked to trap Jesus. They wanted to destroy Jesus (19:47), and they were hoping that they could get Jesus to give a wrong answer by asking him this question.

But rather than answer the question since Jesus knew it was not coming from a genuine heart, he counters with a question of his own. Jesus challenges the religious leaders by asking if John's baptism was from heaven or man.

The religious leaders deliberate in Luke 20:5-6. Their concern is not to answer the question correctly. Their concern is about retaining their authority and power over the people. They don't want to say John's baptism was from God because John pointed to Jesus; hence, religious leaders lose their power and authority cause they should believe and submit to Jesus. If they say John's baptism is from humans, they will lose the people because everyone believes John to be a prophet; hence they again will lose power and authority over the people of Israel.

Since the religious leaders only care about themselves and their status, they all agree to respond with "I don't know" to try and avoid problems, thinking this was the best way to answer Jesus. Of course, Jesus doesn't answer their question either, knowing the wickedness of their hearts. But Jesus does use the opportunity to then teach the people around him with a parable to show just how wicked the religious leaders were.

The vineyard represents Israel (or God's promises). The tenants are the religious leaders of Israel. The owner of the vineyard is God the Father. The first three servants sent are the prophets of the OT that although they called Israel to repentance in the OT, Israel refused to listen to them. The son of the owner represents Jesus, whom the religious leaders ultimately crucify.

The parable is straightforward. The owner leaves his vineyard for some time and eventually wants to collect what rightfully belongs to him. Yet, the tenants see it differently. They refuse and reject all of the servants sent. A key point to note in the parable is that when the tenants see the owner's son, they completely recognize that he is the son and heir to the vineyard. They kill him, thinking that they could take the inheritance for themselves.

The parallel is that the religious leaders knew who Jesus was. They refused to answer Jesus' question in 20:4 reveals that they knew who Jesus was but rejected him, just like the tenants rejected the owner's son. This parable made clear that the religious leaders have rejected Jesus.

In addition, it also made clear what God's response would be. Like the owner of the vineyard who would destroy the tenants, God will come and judge all those who would reject him. Furthermore, since Israel would reject God, like the owner who gave his vineyard to others, God would give his gospel to the Gentiles.

The response from the people who are listening is complete shock (20:16). They are shocked at the judgment God will render and the fact that the religious leaders (and by implication the people of Israel) have rejected Jesus. Yet Jesus response to their shock with a scripture citation of Psalm 118:22. Jesus will be the cornerstone of salvation for all who believe. But he will be rejected. While it may sound like a shock to the people who are hearing the parable and making the connections, Jesus' citation of scripture essentially tells everyone what occurs in the parable is a certainty. Rejection of the stone (who is the cornerstone) will result in judgment.

The theme of rejection is evident in Luke 20:1-18. However, in God's great plan, the rejection of Jesus ushers in salvation for everyone who believes. The passage clarifies the self-centeredness of the religious leaders and the rightfulness of God's judgment towards Israel. However, what is also clear, is that Jesus is the crucified Messiah, that although he was rejected by his own, he still loved everyone and died for them, so that we all may be saved through faith in Christ.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions,
how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. The religious leaders cared more about their status and authority than salvation and truth. What are some things that people care more about than salvation or truth? Why do you think that is?
2. Jesus' counter-question to the religious leaders is a beautiful application of Proverbs 26:4-5. How would you respond to people who question the truth about Jesus and Scripture?
3. In the parable, the tenant's hearts are so hardened that their rejection of the owner's son brings judgment. This is a reality for all today who choose to reject Jesus as Lord and Savior. How does this truth spur your desire to proclaim the gospel to the lost family, friends, and co-workers?



LESSON THREE

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON THREE • LUKE 20:19-26

Understanding the Context

Luke 20:19 connects the previous passage with this current one. The scribes and chief priests understood the parable in Luke 20:9-16 enough to know the tenets were referring to them. They wanted to “lay their hands” on Jesus (hurt him), but they didn’t because they feared the people who had a favorable view of Jesus.

Although they could not hurt Jesus right after he taught the parable, they continued to look for opportunities to trap him so that they could at least turn him over to the authorities who could hurt Jesus.

What transpires in Luke 20:19-26 is another attempt from the religious leaders to trap Jesus. Yet again, we see Jesus, who knows their wicked hearts, respond biblically with such finesse that it makes the religious leaders look like fools.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 20:19-26

19 The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. 20 So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. 21 So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality,[a] but truly teach the way of God. 22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" 23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." 25 He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

Section Questions

1. Why did the scribes and Chief priest fear the people and not lay hands on Jesus? (See Lesson 2 for help)
2. How is the question asked in Luke 20:22 a trap?
3. What does the showing of the denarius to Jesus by the spies (Luke 20:24) imply about the spies?
4. Interpret and explain Luke 20:25.
5. How should we understand the fact that the spies marveled at Jesus' answer?

Commentary:

Throughout Luke, we are consistently told of the religious leaders' attitude and their desire to kill Jesus (Luke 19:47). Thus, Luke 20:19 should be no surprise to the readers that yet again, we read the scribes and chief priests desired to lay their hands-on Jesus to destroy him.

Like the previous lesson stated, the religious leaders decided not to touch Jesus because of the people. The people had a favorable view of Jesus at that moment. The religious leaders cared more about how they were perceived and looked in front of the people than doing right and obeying God.

Luke 20:20 provides background information for what is about to transpire. The religious leaders desired to destroy Jesus so much that they sent spies "who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him." In other words, these spies talked and acted like true disciples of Christ, all for the sake of getting Jesus to incriminate himself.

The trap was a question that is politically charged with religious ramifications. Before the question is asked, in an attempt to be sincere, the spies butter up Jesus with accolades in Luke 20:21. It is ironic because if the spies just took a step back, they would realize that they were speaking truths in their attempt to be clever. Unfortunately, they did not believe any of it.

The question asked is in Luke 20:22. They ask, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"

The question is a trap because the answer of yes or no would have been damaging for Jesus. If Jesus had answered yes, then there would have been an uproar with the people. The people of Israel believed that whoever the Messiah was, his purpose was to save Israel from Rome's oppression and reestablish Israel as its own nation ruled by the Messiah.

It would also have been perceived that Jesus was in favor of Rome and their oppression of Israel. It would also have suggested that Jesus' loyalty was to Rome and not Israel and God. If Jesus paid taxes, then it represented a belief that Rome was sovereign and owned everything. In a way, it denied that God is the creator and owner of all things.

Although there was a wrong understanding of what the Messiah truly came for (the salvation from sins, not from Roman oppression), it was still a trap because the question ultimately became a loyalty question. Is Jesus loyal to Rome or God?

If Jesus answers no, then Jesus could be perceived as a zealot in rebellion to Rome. To openly oppose tax was tantamount to inciting a rebellion, which was punishable with execution. The spies could use this information and present it to Roman authorities.

But like all the previous questions (i.e., Luke 20:1-8), Jesus masterfully responds. It is noted again in Luke 20:23 that the spies' desire was not to ask a real question but to trap Jesus. Nevertheless, the question is a good one, and Jesus' response provides the biblical parameters that believers should follow.

Luke 20:24 Jesus asked to be shown a denarius (a Roman coin). One is brought forward and shown. This step is important because it demonstrates that these spies partake in the obtaining and use of money from that same ruling government.

In other words, these spies may have wanted Jesus to say that he was loyal to God and Israel, and thus one should not pay taxes. Yet, the spies themselves have partaken in some means of earning a denarius, means that the Roman government has provided for them. So while they may have wanted Jesus to reject Roman authority, the spies themselves have already accepted Roman authority by merely earning and exchanging Roman money through the avenues the Roman government has provided.

This is why Jesus is then able to state in Luke 20:25, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." If you are going to take advantage of the things that the government provides, then it is only natural and right to pay the taxes the government requires.

But Jesus continues and says, "and to God the things that are God's." The spies only asked a question about taxes. But Jesus goes further and talks about God. While it is right to pay taxes to a ruling government where the citizens partake in the programs and opportunities provided, it does not mean that the government owns everything, nor is the highest authority for a Christian.

The "things" that are God's are everything that belongs to God, including the government. God uses the government for his purposes (Romans 13:1-7); therefore, believers need to render to the government what is the government's. By doing this, you are also rendering to God because its obedience to God. Additionally, one's heart attitude, mindset, goals in life, all these "extra" things fall under "things" rendered to God.

Of course, Jesus' masterful response makes it so the spies did not know how to respond (Luke 20:26). In fact, they marveled at his answer and became silent. The spies marveling should not be understood as some sort of concession to Jesus and acceptance of who he is. Rather the marveling should be seen as a type of shock at how good the answer was and the realization that they could not trap Jesus.

This passage continually shows the rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders. Their attempt to send in spies to trap Jesus that he may be destroyed shows the hardness of their hearts. But Jesus is the one true Lord and Savior. He cannot be trapped because everything that he says and does, glorifies the Father and exemplifies truth. His naysayers may not want to admit it, but their silence demonstrates they have no grounds to accuse Jesus of any wrong doing.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions, how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. Read Romans 13:1-7. With this passage and Luke 20:19-26 what kind of authority does God allow a government to have? (Think about the positive sides of government)
2. Read 1 Peter 2:13-17. Keeping in mind Romans 13:1-7 and Luke 20:19-26, what are the things we as Christians and citizens of a government should be submitting to? (Think about clear examples)
3. God is always our ultimate authority. However, there are times when a tension of obeying the government or obeying God exists because what is asked of Christians is not a clear sin issue. What are some examples that you can think of that fall into this category?
4. With the examples that you gave in question 3, how would you deal with it? How would you treat others who disagree and how would you do things differently? How would you determine if what is being asked by the government is sin or a preference issue?



LESSON FOUR

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON FOUR • LUKE 20:27-47

Understanding the Context

There are three different sections in Luke 20:27-47. This passage recounts a final challenge that Jesus has received and transitions to Jesus going on the offensive against the religious leaders. Jesus is getting closer to his crucifixion, and from this point, things start to heat up with judgment, lessons to his disciples, and ultimately Jesus' death. The following passage can be summarized and broken down as follows.

Luke 20:27-40 – The final challenge to Jesus made by the Sadducees concerning the topic of Resurrection.

Luke 20:41-44 – Jesus goes on the offensive and challenges the religious leaders about their understanding of the Messiah.

Luke 20:45-47 – These few verses serve two functions. First, it provides a contrast to the scribes that the disciples are supposed to be wary of. The contrast being the widow's sacrifice to honor and glorify God. Second, these few verses provide a transition for Jesus to prophecy about the destruction of the temple.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 20:27-47

27 There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, 28 and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man[a] must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the second 31 and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. 32 Afterward the woman also died. 33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."

34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36 for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons[b] of the resurrection. 37 But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." 39 Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." 40 For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

41 But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,

"The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

43 until I make your enemies your footstool."

44 David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?"

45 And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 47 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

Section Questions

1. What is the tone of the Sadducees' question?

2. If Jesus could not respond to the Sadducee's theological question about the resurrection it would be devastating to the gospel. Why?

3. Jesus does not answer all the questions about the seven dead husbands and the resurrection. He instead states verse 35. What is Jesus directing the Sadducees to?

4. How is the citation of the burning bush and Moses description of the LORD (v. 37) a biblical response that a resurrection exists?

5. What is the theological statement Jesus tries to make in verses 41-44?

6. What are the attitudes that the disciples are supposed to avoid (verses 46-47)?

Commentary:

Luke 20:27-40

Luke 20:27 informs us that a different group other than the scribes and chief priest challenge Jesus. This time it's the Sadducees. We are also told, theologically, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Although the Sadducees challenge Jesus's authority in this passage, it differs from the two previous challenges (Luke 20:1-8; Luke 20:19-25). The Sadducees are not attempting to trap Jesus but rather mock Jesus. They believed the resurrection to be unbiblical and ridiculous. Thus, their question, which pertained to the resurrection, was to

show the foolishness of Jesus. However, Jesus' response is crucial. If the resurrection is, in fact, unbiblical, this will destroy the gospel since Jesus needs to be resurrected from his death to show his power over sin and death.

The question comes from the law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. The law states that if there is a situation where a husband dies without any sons, and a brother is alive, he has a duty to marry his brother's wife that she may have a son to carry the dead husband's name.

The hypothetical scenario posed is trying to make a mockery of the resurrection based on the law stated in Deut. 25:5-10. The hypothetical situation suggests that seven brothers all tried to fulfill their duty, but none succeeded in having a son. All of them die along with the woman too. The question then, if the resurrection truly existed, whose is the woman's actual husband since she was legitimately married to all of them.

Jesus responds in two ways. First, he corrects the Sadducees' mindset. Because they don't believe in the resurrection, they assume that our life now will be the same in the resurrection. But the resurrection will be different than how we live our lives now. How different? Scripture never really says. But one thing for sure is that we cannot die anymore (v. 36) because we will be equal to angels and are sons of God. This suggests that we do not need to marry or be given into marriage. The better question the Sadducees should be asking is who is considered worthy to attain the resurrection (v. 35). The reality and truthfulness of the resurrection are real. Mocking it only seals their faith not to receive resurrection.

The second response provides biblical evidence that the resurrection is real. The Sadducees held the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) as authoritative scripture, believing the tradition or other portions of scripture less so. This is why Jesus cites Exodus and the burning bush passage (Ex. 3), it is a passage the Sadducees could not reject. Jesus points out that Moses calls the Lord, the "God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" who are all dead by the time of Moses. If the resurrection did not truly exist, then the God the Sadducees believe in is not the God of the living, but rather the God of the dead, which would mean no one has any use of the God of the OT. This logic absolutely destroys the Sadducees theology and their mocking question.

The Sadducees tried to challenge Jesus authority by making him look like a fool, but Jesus turns the table and makes them look like fools instead. Interestingly, scribes answer in verse 39 and state that Jesus has spoken well. The scribes did believe in the resurrection and perhaps this was a show that the scribes were willing to flip flop to whoever gave them the best edge. People liked Jesus and he just made the Sadducees look like fools, so the Scribes probably tried to hitch a ride on that train. Or it could be that they all (Scribes and Sadducees) realize that they could not trap Jesus because all his responses were perfect. Thus, as verse 40 states, "They no longer dared to ask him any questions."

However, although they may be done, it is now Jesus' turn to go on the offensive and challenge all of the religious leaders.

Luke 20:41-44

Jesus challenges "them" (v. 44). It is unclear who exactly "them" might be, but given the Scribe's response in verse 39 and what Jesus says about the Scribes in verse 46-47, Jesus is most likely challenge the Scribes.

The question Jesus has is, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son?" Here Christ is being used as a title to refer to the Messiah. To ask the question differently, Jesus is asking, "How can people say the Messiah is David's son?"

It is taught in Israel that the Messiah would come from the line of David, thus, from a genealogy perspective, the Messiah would be David's son. Yet, as Jesus continues, in Psalm 110:1, David himself calls the Messiah, "my Lord."

The question then, how can the Messiah be both David's son and David's Lord? The answer is that the Messiah is both divine and human at the same time. This refers back to Jesus' virgin birth and also all the miracles that only God could do.

Israel was only looking for a Messiah from the line of David to save Israel from Roman oppression. But the one true Messiah was coming to save everyone from their sins, a reality the religious leaders could not fathom.

Continuing on the offensive against the Scribes Jesus warns his disciples of the wicked attitude the Scribes have that the disciples must avoid.

Luke 20:45-47

In a quick short two verses Jesus warns his disciples of an attitude to avoid. Jesus shows 5 fatal flaws of the Scribes:

- (1) They parade around in long robes that is meant to advertise their special status and wealth.
- (2) They love greetings in marketplaces which shows how much they care about the accolades of people.
- (3) They like the best seat in the house because that is an example of their high status.
- (4) They devour widow's houses, meaning their wealth and status oppress widows who were one of the most vulnerable groups of people.
- (5) They make long prayers to show those around them they were righteous, but it was only an external show.

What you find in these attitudes of the scribes is someone who cares more about how they look, what people think about them, and their own comfort with status and wealth. None of these attitudes should be attached to a disciple of Christ.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions, how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. The resurrection is a foundational truth of the gospel. If there is no resurrection, Jesus never resurrected, which means we would all still be under the power of sin and death forever (1 Corinthians 15). Discuss this doctrinal logic. Compare Romans 5:12-21.

- Since the resurrection is so central to the gospel, how can we be careful to fit it into our gospel witness?

2. The divinity and humanity of Jesus is something perhaps most of us will never fully grasp. What about Jesus being fully human and fully divine do you struggle to understand? What about it gives you confidence in your faith and how you live? (See: John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1-4)

3. Look at the commentary section and the 5 flawed attitudes that we are told to beware of. Modernize the flawed attitudes of the scribes with how some in the church could express the sinful attitudes. What are some ways that we can guard ourselves against the sinful attitudes?



LESSON FIVE

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON FIVE • LUKE 21:1-4

Understanding the Context

Luke 21:1-4 serves as an example, rebuke, and transitional passage. Back in Luke 20:45-47, Jesus warned his disciples about the scribes and their attitude. One of the warnings had to do with the fact that the scribes “devour widows’ houses.” Now in Luke 21:1-4, we see the action of a widow. The widow’s action is compared to the rich person and also serves as a rebuke to the rich and praise for the widow. Finally, as the temple is put into focus, the attitude of the rich person, along with the scribes, helps set the stage for Luke 21:5 and following with Jesus giving a prophecy on the temple.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 21:1-4

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, 2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. 4 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Section Questions

1. What is the main difference between the offering of the rich and widow?
2. How is Luke 21:1-4 connected with Luke 20:45-47?
3. How does Luke 21:1-4 provide the setting for Luke 21:5 and following?

Commentary:

In the immediate passage, the message is clear: Jesus is comparing the offering of the widow and the rich person. The focus is not on the amount of the offering, but rather the heart attitude behind the giving. Although the rich person gave, he didn't give sacrificially (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Contrast the widow. The widow puts in two small copper coins. One coin was worth about 1/128 of a denarius, which was worth one day's wage. Jesus comments that the two small coins was everything the widow had to live on. She was already poor, and now she had absolutely nothing after giving it to the Lord.

When comparing the widow and the rich person, the widow clearly gave more, although the amount was much less. It is the heart attitude, not the amount given, that God says is important (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Within its larger context, this passage also provides an example of the wickedness of the scribes and hints at the wickedness of the religious leaders. One way the scribes can "devour widow's houses" (Luke 20:47) is to allow a widow, the most vulnerable in ancient society, to give all that she had without actually helping her. The fact that it is allowed is an indictment of the religious leaders. They would rather take the money of a widow than help her. This is not suggesting that the widow shouldn't give. Each person should give according to their ability (2 Cor. 9:6-8). However, the religious leaders were supposed to protect the widow and care for her (Like the church is, 1 Timothy 5:3-10). Luke 21:1-4 is also an example of the wickedness of the scribes and the corruption of the temple. This is then a fitting setting for the next passage in Luke where Jesus prophesies judgment on the temple.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions,
how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. Let's place Luke 21:1-4 in a modern setting. How should the church and its members act towards someone we know has very little or nothing left, yet chooses to give it up to the Lord? Should we stop them? Why or why not?

2. It's clear that the amount of the offering is not what matters; it is the heart behind it. Today many Americans can perhaps give more than they think. For some, the typical 10% may be exactly like the rich person who gave, but it was out of his abundance. How should someone who has been blessed by God decide to tithe in light of Luke 21:1-4? Use 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 to help formulate your answer.

3. How you use money is often a window into your heart. It shows what you care about most. How do you honor God with your money yet still enjoy the blessings he has given you? How do you reconcile this tension in your heart and mind?

At CrossPoint we teach giving based on 4 biblical steps (2 Corinthians 8-9):

1. Make giving a priority. God instructs Christ-followers to be givers.
2. Choose a percentage. Not everyone can give 10%. Some can give more than 10%. Ask the Spirit to lead you as you give.
3. Make your giving progressive. Start at a certain percentage, and grow from there. We serve a generous God, who we can imitate in our giving.
4. Be persistent. There will come times where giving is challenging. Stick with it.



LESSON SIX

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON SIX • LUKE 21:5-38

Understanding the Context

Luke 21:5-38 is the final discourse on eschatology (end times) in the gospel of Luke. In this passage, Jesus makes some prophetic judgments that have already happened in our history, and others that have not yet occurred.

Ultimately there are two main applications to realize concerning eschatology. First, to realize that God's word (and thus his promises and prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled) will come true (Luke 21:25-33). Second, because as Christians knowing that the end is coming, we must be prepared and live obediently and worshipfully to Christ (Luke 12:34-38).

Because this is a long passage with numerous theological topics, this study will highlight a couple topics and focus on the application that we are supposed to take away today. If in your small group questions about certain verses or theological topics come up, please feel free to email them to Pastor Jim for help at jjane@crosspointhb.org.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 21:5-38

5 And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, 6 “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” 7 And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” 8 And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

10 Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, 22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. 23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

29 And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

37 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. 38 And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

Section Questions

1. What are the two judgments that Jesus speaks of in Luke 21:5-38? Have they already been fulfilled and if so when?
2. What are some of the predictions that Jesus states will happen in the future? Of the predictions given in Luke 21:5-38, what is the one that is most important for us as Christians to believe and remember?
3. Which section within Luke 21:5-38 provides us with the application for today, given all the statements about the future?

Commentary:

Jesus foretells two prophetic judgments and a prophetic warning. There is the judgment on the temple and Jerusalem (which are related) and then there is the prophet warning that wars and persecution are coming.

The judgment of the temple (Luke 21:5-9) and Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24) have already occurred in our history. Starting in 66 A.D. the Jewish people started a revolt against Rome. There were two other revolts before 66 A.D. (one in 19 A.D. and 38 A.D.), but these revolts were more riots. The one in 66 A.D. actually grew into a full-scale war against Rome. In 70 A.D. Rome was finally able to push their Army into Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. This fulfilled Jesus prophecy in Luke 21:5-9 that the temple would be destroyed and that Jerusalem was surrounded and would be defeated in Luke 21:20-24.

Interestingly, what we see in the pronouncement of judgment of the temple in Luke 21:7-9, are the disciples asking when the end will come. It is a natural part of human nature to want to know the future. But knowledge of the future is only for God to know. It is also natural for us to think that when the world looks as if it is crumbling, with wars and travesty occurring (such as the destruction of the temple for the Jews) then we think that Jesus must be coming soon. We have had many people who claim Christianity who have tried to determine and even predict when the end is coming and when Jesus will return.

All of it has been futile. Part of the reason being is that wars and persecution of those who are followers of Christ will be a reality as it is stated in Luke 21:10-19. Everyone needs to be careful of “signs” or people who claim to be coming in the name of Jesus. It is not necessarily for anyone to have to listen to others about Jesus coming. The reality is, for everyone who believes and follows Christ, his coming will be obvious to all.

In Luke 21:29-33 Jesus tells a parable. The purpose of the parable is given in verses 32-33. When watching a fig tree, it is obvious when summer is coming due to how the leaf comes out in a fig tree. The leaf will come out and summer will proceed as it always does every year. In the same way, the prophecy of judgment on the temple and Jerusalem, the warning of persecution and times of war, and most importantly, the fact that Jesus will return, will all occur, just like the leaf on the fig tree right before summer.

All of God’s word is true. This especially means that, all of God’s word that has yet to be fulfilled, will indeed come to pass and be fulfilled exactly as God has said it would be. This truth and reality that God’s word will all come true leads to the one application about eschatology that every Christian needs to keep as their focus.

As we live in the present we must watch our hearts and do all that we can to obey Jesus and live our lives according to his word, eagerly waiting for Jesus return (Luke 21:34-36). It is easy for us, as it was for the disciples, to let the “cares of life” and the enjoyment of life, make us forget or worse, not desire Jesus to come back. When our hearts wander and begin to focus on this world rather than on Jesus, when the day comes that Jesus does return, it may not be good for those who did not stay alert and watch their own hearts.

Therefore, the one absolute truth we must realize when reading a passage like Luke 21:5-38, is that all of God’s word is true. His promises, prophecy, and statements of future judgment and salvation, will all come true. The application to this truth is not to focus on when Jesus will return, or what will happen in the future. The focus should actually be the present. The focus should be on how we can best obey and glorify God today and every day that we are alive. Keeping ourselves ready for Jesus return and ensuring our hearts are constantly on Jesus and not the world.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions, how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. The prediction of the temple's destruction and Jerusalem's fall is well documented in history books. How does knowing that we can read the occurrence of Jesus prediction in other books besides the Bible encourage your belief of the Bible? What if we didn't have any history books record what had occurred? Does this change anything about the Bible for you?

2. We have already had our fair share of people who have claimed specific dates of Jesus' return. Why do you think people make these claims? How do we as Christians discern what other people say about the future? Is it something we should even focus on?

3. The application is clear. The best thing to focus on concerning the future, is to focus on today. Discuss how we can best "watch" ourselves. What are some things you do to focus on obedience to Christ today?



LESSON SEVEN

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON SEVEN • LUKE 22:1-23

Understanding the Context

Within this passage, we have the famous narrative of the Lord's supper, which we practice today and call communion. The first part of the passage, Luke 22:1-13 sets everything up. We read about how the search to betray Jesus by Judas Iscariot commences. We read that as the Passover is drawing near, Jesus prepares himself for his crucifixion with the Passover meal, which ultimately represents what Jesus will accomplish on the cross.

Luke 22:14-20 not only helps explain the true significance of Jesus' sacrifice, but established for believers for the rest of time until the Lord returns (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) a memorial practice so that we may continually remember the significance of Jesus' sacrifice.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 22:1-23

1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. 2 And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

3 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. 4 He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. 6 So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." 9 They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" 10 He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters 11 and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12 And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." 13 And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. 21 But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. 22 For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" 23 And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

Section Questions

1. What is the significance of the Passover? Read Exodus 12. Discuss the connections of what is happening in Exodus 12 with Jesus death and resurrection.

2. What is the significance that Satan "entered" Judas? Does it suggest that Judas was a willing recipient? Defend your position.

3. Why does Jesus say that he will not eat of the bread and drink the cup?

4. What is the purpose of the bread and the cup?

5. What is the importance of the Lord's Supper (Communion) for us today?

Commentary:

Luke 22:1-2 informs us that the Feast of Unleavened bread drew near. Typically, the Passover would be celebrated and the next day for seven days people would celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The two religious holidays, because they were celebrate one right after another, essentially became one religious celebration. It should be noted at this point, thoughts of Exodus should come to the reader's mind. The celebration of Passover was to remember what God did to redeem Israel out of Egypt in Exodus. The sacrifice of the lamb was a memorial reminder of how God passed over the Israelites because of the blood of the lamb. At this point the reader begins to realize the connection of the Passover in Exodus and Jesus being the ultimate sacrifice that God may not pour out his wrath on people, but rather look to the sacrifice of Jesus instead.

Because the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread was about to be celebrated in Jerusalem, Jews from all the region to the city. Although the chief priests and scribes wanted to kill Jesus, they couldn't because of the increasing crowd of people, who honor Jesus believing him to be at least a good teacher or even a prophet.

Luke 22:3-6 informs us of the betrayal that Judas Iscariot is about to commit. It is not surprising that Judas was about to betray Jesus as it was noted earlier in Luke 6:16 when Luke was describing the apostles. Judas Iscariot is the one who became the traitor. Here now in Luke 22:3-6 we read of the details of Judas' traitorous act.

It is important to realize that Satan "entered" Judas Iscariot. Judas was not tempted, he was not demon possessed and controlled by Satan, it is simply that Satan entered Judas. In other words, Judas readily accepted Satan and was already primed to betray Jesus. An explicit reason is not given why Judas decided to betray Jesus. Looking at the other gospels accounts it seems to be related to greed and money. Whatever the case, Judas was ready and willing to betray Jesus. Satan "entering" Judas simply notes the certainty of betrayal, but make no mistake, Judas betrayal is an act done by Judas and therefore makes him responsible.

Judas confers with the chief priest that he will find an opportune time, specifically where there is an absence of a crowd, the very thing the chief priest were afraid of, to betray Jesus. All this information sets for the coming crucifixion. It sets the stage for how a perfect and righteous person who has done absolutely nothing wrong his whole entire life, is still crucified and killed.

Luke 22:7-13 sets up the Lord's supper and is similar to Jesus triumphal entry (Luke 19:28-40). Like the triumphal entry, Jesus tells his disciples to prepare for the Passover and all the details are already predetermined by God. Everything Jesus says would happen, does happen. Contextually, what this implies to the reader is Jesus' prediction of his own death, like all the details of the Passover feast he is about to have with his disciples, will indeed come true.

Luke 22:14-23 provides us the details of the Lord's supper and what we now celebrate today as communion. Jesus makes two interesting comments. He says in Luke 22:16, that he will "not eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" and in Luke 22:18, that he will "not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." These two statements come off the heel when Jesus says in verse 15 that he earnestly desires to eat this Passover with the disciples before he suffers.

Verses 16 and 18 are pointing to the future consummation of God's kingdom. When Jesus sacrifices himself for the salvation of all who believe in him, when the time of the Gentiles is done (Luke 21:24), then Jesus can enjoy the meal at the great banquet celebration. The Lord's supper is meant in part, to remind us of the future reality that will occur. When all believers with Jesus, will enjoy a meal in heaven.

For the present and until Jesus returns, Jesus explains to his disciples the significance of the bread and the wine. The bread represents Jesus body, a remembrance of his life and suffering through the sacrifice he gave. The cup represents the new covenant. Matthew and Mark make mention of the blood (presumably the wine) that represents the new covenant. The cup or the pouring out of the cup is typically a symbol of wrath. Here in Luke 22:20 it would refer to Jesus sacrificial death where God poured out his wrath onto Jesus for the sins of the world. It is Jesus' death that the new covenant has been established. It is under the new covenant that all Christians are under and able to receive the blessings of God.

The big picture is, when we take the bread and the cup during communion, what we are doing is worshiping God by remembering his goodness and salvific plan. A plan that had his one and only Son Jesus Christ sacrificed on the cross to establish the new covenant, a covenant which all Christians are a part of and receive the blessings from God. Communion is not simply tradition, but a specific time of worship where we all remember the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Communion is a worshipful event and should not be taken lightly (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions, how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. Judas made life decisions that ultimately brought him to a point where he would betray Jesus for money. What are signals and signs that someone who would profess Jesus as Lord would take a path that turned them away from Jesus? What are some things we can do to help people when we see these signals and signs? (James 5:19-20)

2. Communion helps us remember what Jesus has done, but it also reminds us of the future that will undoubtedly come. In fact, Jesus' death and resurrection, while having daily implications, should also propel us to hope and desire the glorious future that is waiting for us. How often does the gospel make you think about the future coming hope? How often do you think about heaven?

3. Communion is an act of worship. It is to be taken seriously (1 Corinthians 11:27-34) and meant to fix our minds and hearts on the death and resurrection of Christ. But it is easy to simply go through the motion of communion and treat it as tradition rather than worship. What are steps that we can take to ensure communion is a purposeful act of worship?



LESSON EIGHT

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON EIGHT • LUKE 22:24-30

Understanding the Context

Jesus reveals that one out of the twelve disciples will betray him. There is a discussion by the disciples of who it could be (Luke 22:23). Somehow, the discussion devolves into the question about who is the greatest of the disciples. This question sparks a teaching moment for Jesus who graciously rebukes his disciples for lacking the proper perspective. Although Jesus rebukes his disciples, he also encourages them with the things they have done well and informs them of their rewards for doing them.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 22:24-30

24 A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26 But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. 27 For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

28 "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, 29 and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Section Questions

1. Reading Luke 22:24-30, what was the initial understanding and definition of greatness by the disciples?
2. Look through each comparison and provide examples of what not to do, and what to do, regarding being great in the eyes of God. (1) Kings, (2) become as young, (3) leader who serves, and (4) sitting at the table vs. the one who serves the table.
3. Why do you think Jesus encouraged the disciples in verses 28-30 right after he rebuked them?
4. Who are the ones receiving the twelve thrones? Is Judas Iscariot? If not, who has replaced him?

Commentary:

Somehow the conversation veers away from determining who was going to betray Jesus to who is the greatest disciple. Since this was a discussion among all the disciples, it is okay to presume that each of them wanted to be the greatest, hence the dispute. The dispute reveals a wrong attitude and wrong understanding of what it means to be the greatest.

Jesus could have rebuked his disciples directly, being clear and concise. However, he chooses to be gracious and teach his disciples through clear comparisons that cannot be misunderstood.

Jesus points out that the kings of the Gentiles who are at the top of the food chain, exercise lordship over their subjects. In other words, they rule in a way that benefits themselves and is oppressive. This "greatest" is seen as more of an authoritarian that has no compassion or care for his subjects. These kings are sometimes called benefactors. Meaning, they only care to help someone under them if they are somehow helped themselves.

But this is the world's definition of greatness. The disciples are to be absolutely opposite of the world. Their definition of greatness matched too much of the world, and Christ is showing them a better way.

Jesus then uses positive comparison of what greatness looks like. The greatest is like the youngest. In the culture of the day, the youngest person always served the older. Thus, the teaching of becoming like the youngest was an emphasis on being submissive. The emphasis is made even more clear with the phrase "and the leader as one who serves."

Jesus then ask a rhetorical question. Who is greater? The one who is at the table or the one who serves? The

answer would seem to be the one who reclines at the table. Yet Jesus is not the one at the table but the one who serves among them. This service could be the foot washing that Jesus did for the disciples as it is noted in John 13. However, looking just at Luke, the service probably refers to Jesus sacrificial death for the salvation of mankind.

The point is, being great is not about being on top or ruling over those “below” you. Being the greatest is about out serving others. The one who willingly sacrifices their wants and desires to for the benefit others. These comparisons and questions are meant to subtly rebuke the disciples for their misinformed and wrong-headed attitude regarding what it meant to be great.

Although Jesus rebuked his disciples, he still inserts an encouragement. In other words, the disciples might be wrong in one area, but it does not mean they were not loyal to and trusted by Jesus. The disciples may not know what it meant to be great in the kingdom of God, but they have stayed with Christ throughout all his trials. The trials are not defined and kept vague. It probably refers to the hostility, rejection and slander they experienced from people, specifically the religious leaders as they continued to follow Jesus despite the religious leaders seek to kill and destroy Jesus.

Because the disciples stayed with Jesus through his trials, they have been assigned a kingdom and sit on thrones ruling the twelve tribes of Israel. The disciples like all believers will be in the kingdom of God enjoying a meal at his table. However, there is a special place for the disciples.

It should be noted that Judas Iscariot is not included among those who would receive a throne and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Remember that Luke wrote both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. The twelfth throne probably refers to Matthias who replaced Judas.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions,
how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?


2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. Many people in this world, including Christians, desire being “great” according to the world. Why do you think this is the case? What is so appealing about being great that many, including Jesus’ disciples, want it?

2. Following up question 1, why should Christians not want what the world deems as “great?” Is there a happy medium between what God would define as great and what the world defines as great?

3. Servanthood is the mark of greatness according to Jesus. List out specific traits and actions of servanthood that we all can work on and aspire to.

4. Jesus encourages his disciples that they will be rewarded for their loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus. In the past couple lessons, the hope that is coming (Jesus return and life in the kingdom of God) is used for encouragement for the disciples to live in the present. Right now in the world, the future doesn’t always look good; in fact, it looks bleak at times. But with every passing day, we get closer to the hope of Jesus’ return and dining with him in the kingdom of God. Is the future a hope to you? How can we find hope and encouragement in the future rather than despair and anxiety?



LESSON NINE

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON NINE • LUKE 22:31-62

Understanding the Context

A lot of things are happening in Luke 22:31-62. We move from the scene in the upper room to the Mount of Olives where Jesus prays before his betrayal. He is betrayed by Judas and arrested. He is taken to the high priest court where he will be unjustly condemned, but right before that happens we see Peter's denial of Jesus.

A general theme emerges through these narratives. As Jesus is about to be condemned to crucifixion, everyone around him abandons him. One would think that since everyone abandoned Jesus, Jesus would in turn abandon his disciples. But that is not the case. Jesus' faithfulness to the Father and his desire to save mankind was never based on our faithfulness, but based solely on his righteousness and obedience to the Father's gracious plan of salvation.

For this lesson we will focus on how everyone left Jesus, even Peter who swore he never would.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 22:31-62

31 *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* 33 Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." 34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

35 And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." 36 He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. 37 For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." 38 And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

39 And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. 40 And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." 41 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." 43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45 And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

47 While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, 48 but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" 49 And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" 50 And one of them struck the servant[e] of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? 53 When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

54 Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. 56 Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." 57 But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." 58 And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." 59 And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

Section Questions

1. Read Luke 22:35-38. Why do you think Jesus changes what he said in Luke 9:3 and 10:4, and tells his disciples that they now need to carry a money bag and a knapsack? Why is there need to buy a sword and what does it entail?
2. The general theme is abandonment of Jesus. How is Jesus abandoned in Luke 22:39-46? How is he abandoned in Luke 22:47-53?
3. Why do you think Peter denied Jesus rather than be faithful to him?

Commentary:

Back in Luke 22:21 Jesus indicated that one of his disciples will betray him. They discuss among themselves who it would be, but ultimately the conversation leads to “who is the greatest” and figuring out who is the betrayer quickly becomes a non-issue for them.

In Luke 22:31-34, Jesus makes it clear that while Jesus has prayed for Peter’s faith and Satan will not win in trying to take him, nevertheless, Peter will deny Jesus three times. Peter does not believe he will deny Jesus and proclaims that he will go to both prison and die for Jesus. Something that does eventually happen, but not until after Jesus’ ascension. There is a possibility here that Peter may have thought that Jesus was saying he was the betrayer. After all, to deny Jesus is in some ways an act of betrayal. Perhaps this is why Peter was so adamant that he would go wherever Jesus would go.

Then in Luke 22:35-38, with the impending crucifixion about to occur, Jesus informs all of his disciples that everything for them is going to change. Before, when Jesus sent out his disciples he was able tell them that they did not need to bring any money bags or knapsacks (9:3; 10:4). They could depend on the generosity of others and not be worried about attacks. But after Jesus’ crucifixion, this could no longer be the case. Followers of Christ should not be surprised by hostility and a lack of generosity.

Jesus uses a metaphor of selling one’s cloak to buy a sword. He is not saying that a sword (or our modern context any sort of weapon) needs to be purchased in order to go out and preach the gospel. He is simply making the point that there will be hostility towards the disciples of Christ who go out into the world proclaiming the name of Jesus. Unfortunately, the disciples have no idea what Jesus is talking about and picks up two swords. Jesus comment of “it is enough,” seems to have the tone of “fine, just take it and let’s go.” The disciples are clueless, and Jesus simply moves on.

Before Jesus is arrested, Jesus takes one last moment to pray to the Father in Luke 22:39-46. Focusing on the theme of how the disciples abandoned Jesus, it is interesting to note how Peter recently proclaimed that he would follow Jesus to prison or death. Such a statement can be understood as Peter committing to follow Jesus everywhere. Yet at the Mount of Olives, all of the disciples, including Peter, could not even stay awake to pray for Jesus. Peter was willing to die, but could not stay awake to pray for Jesus.

The betrayal by Judas Iscariot that initiated back in Luke 22:3-6, now comes to fruition in Luke 22:47-53. One of Jesus’ closest followers is the one that initiates Jesus’ arrest, finding the opportune moment to let the chief priest and temple officers know where to arrest Jesus. While there is a temporary push back with one disciple swinging

his sword, ultimately as Jesus is arrested no one gets arrested with Jesus. Luke does not note what the disciples actually did (Matthew 26:56 indicates that the disciples all left and fled), but it is clear they were not with Jesus. Again, Peter not long before indicated that he would get arrested with Jesus if that is what happened to Jesus. Yet again, Peter abandons Jesus. First, he couldn't pray for Jesus. Now he didn't live up to his word and follow Jesus by getting arrested as well.

In the final section of this lesson we see Peter for the final time abandon Jesus by denying Jesus three times in Luke 22:54-62, fulfilling what Jesus had predicted in Luke 22:31-34. Peter is the only one that follows Jesus from a distance to see what will happen to him. Although he is the only one that follows, he also becomes the only one that denies Jesus three times. Luke does not explain why Peter denies Jesus. Perhaps it was embarrassment, fear, lack of conviction, or a combination of all three. Whatever the reason, Peter at the moment felt denial of Jesus was better than faithfulness to him.

In each denial, there is the opportunity for Peter to recant and follow Jesus to the death as he said he was willing to do. But with each denial it affirms the resolve of Peter to not be associated with Jesus. After the third denial, Jesus looks at Peter, reminding Peter of what Jesus said and the rooster crows fulfilling Jesus' prediction. This is the final abandonment from of all Jesus' disciples and leaves Jesus alone to be crucified.

As we will see in the next lesson Jesus still is crucified and dies for the forgiveness of sins. Although he is abandoned by all, he does not abandon his mission and obedience to the Father to be the perfect sacrifice and secure the forgiveness of sins through his blood.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions,
how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. All of the disciples, especially Peter, abandoned Jesus at his most vulnerable moment. Peter was restored by Jesus (John 21:15-19) so we know that the abandonment was a moment of weakness and failure, and had nothing to do with Peter's salvation. Like Peter, have you ever been tempted to deny and abandon Jesus? These denials could be in front of family, friends, co-workers, etc.

2. What do you think causes someone to deny Jesus? What temptations, characteristics, or circumstances would make someone consider denial?

3. Peter denied Jesus, but was restored. Do you think someone could deny Jesus and never be restored? Why or why not?

4. Within our own strength we will always be weak to temptations. How can we find strength? How can we overcome our weakness in life?



LESSON TEN

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERSONAL STUDY

LESSON TEN • LUKE 22:63-23:49

Understanding the Context

Luke 22:63-23:49 is the account of Jesus' "trial" and crucifixion that lead to his death. Jesus was more subjected to mob rule where the crowd called out for his death and Pilate simply gave into the mob.

In any case, everything that happens to Jesus fulfills Scripture. Jesus' death, although desired by an unbelieving and angry mob, leads ultimately to their judgment and salvation to all who do believe. Jesus' death is both the darkest time in history because people killed the Son of God. Yet also the happiest of times since Jesus' death means salvation and forgives of sins for all.

This lesson will be more topical focusing on the criminals and their response to Jesus. Particularly we will focus on the criminal who Jesus proclaims will be with him in paradise. We will go through the theological implications and understand the salvation that God gives to anyone who believes in him.

Interpreting the Passage

Luke 22:63-23:49

63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. 64 They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" 65 And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

66 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, 67 "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, 68 and if I ask you, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." 70 So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." 71 Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

23 Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." 3 And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." 4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." 5 But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

6 When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. 8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. 9 So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. 10 The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. 11 And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. 12 And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

13 Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. 15 Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. 16 I will therefore punish and release him."

18 But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"— 19 a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. 20 Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, 21 but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" 22 A third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." 23 But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. 24 So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

26 And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. 27 And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. 28 But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' 31 For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. 35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

Section Questions

1. How does the first criminal view his own crimes and Jesus?
2. How does the second criminal view his crimes and Jesus?
3. Does the salvation of the second criminal seem fair compared to Christians who live their whole lives serving God?
4. How does the salvation of the second criminal exemplify how the gospel works?

Commentary:

There were two criminals that were going to be crucified with Jesus (Luke 23:32). They each have their own perspective and response to Jesus. In fact, the criminals could be generally indicative of how everyone in the world responds to the gospel message.

We are told in verse 39 that one of the criminals railed at Jesus. He questions Jesus "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

This first criminal's response to Jesus is a selfish one. Jesus is only there to help him obtain what he wants, salvation from a physical death. In fact, this first criminal lumps Jesus together with him and other criminals using the pronoun "us." This suggests that he views Jesus as a criminal as well. This criminal has probably heard about Jesus through others, which is not far-fetched since it is likely everyone in Jerusalem has heard about Jesus.

The question "are you not the Christ" is not referring to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah who saves mankind. This criminal, who is a Jew since he uses the title Christ to refer to Jesus. His understanding of Christ is like every other Jewish citizen during that time. They look to Jesus as the person who would deliver the nation of Israel from the oppression of Rome and establish Israel as a nation again. His question of ridicule is suggesting that Jesus should be able to, with force and his followers, save him and the criminal and proceed to successfully rebel against Rome.

There is not belief from this first criminal. Jesus to him only matters if he is useful to him and his desires. If he is not useful, then he is nothing. His rejection of Jesus is clear.

However, the second criminal rebukes the first. Clearly the second criminal views Jesus differently. He questions the first criminal if he even fears God? Suggesting that he understood there to be some sort of connection of Jesus with God the Father. With a confession, he makes clear that he and the first criminal belong exactly where they are, being crucified for their crimes. They justly deserve death (Luke 23:41). In repentance of his wrongdoing, the recognition that he needs God's grace, and his recognition that Jesus is righteous, he proclaims that Jesus has done nothing wrong. Then he pleads to Jesus to remember him when Jesus enters into his kingdom.

Don't miss the fact that the second criminal recognizes that Jesus will be going into his own kingdom. This makes clear that second criminal genuinely understood that Jesus is indeed the Christ.

Jesus' response in verse 43, indicates that the repentance and belief of the second criminal was indeed genuine and therefore he would be in paradise with Jesus. In other words, the second criminal received salvation by God's grace, while the first criminal received what was due to him, judgment.

There are multiple questions that come to mind regarding the salvation of the second criminal.

1. The second criminal lived his whole life in rejecting God and actually committed crimes. How is it in the last moment of his life, through one act of repentance and belief could he be saved?

This is what it means that God's saves everyone by his grace alone so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is never about what we can bring to God, but everything about God's mercy and grace. Even though the second criminal believed in the "final hours" of his life, God's grace can indeed work such miracles.

2. How is it fair to other Christians who have lived their entire lives faithfully and yet the criminal believes a couple hours and still go to heaven with the rest?

This question reveals a jealous attitude. By asking is it "fair" the Christian is basically saying, he wishes he could live according to the world, enjoy all of its pleasures, and still believe at the final seconds of his/her life and go to heaven. But the reality is, what a great pleasure it is for the Christian to have been able to live a God-honoring and obedient life. Even more so, praise God that another soul has repented and believed! Because salvation is not about human efforts, but all of God's grace, "fair" does not enter into the discussion.

3. If someone can believe in the last second, why can't I just believe at the end of my life and still go to heaven?

Again, this question has a wrong attitude. The answer to the second question goes here as well. To further expand, because salvation is by God's grace, you cannot assume or plan when you will believe. If someone was able to do this, then that means salvation can be done by the efforts of man. Salvation is meant to be today, as long as it is call today (Hebrews 3:7-13). Tomorrow is never a guarantee for anyone, thus all should be exhorted to grab hold of God's grace and believe in Jesus.

One thing that we can clearly learn and see from the second criminal is that we should make every effort to give the gospel no matter the circumstances, because you just never know how God's grace will work. No one is ever a lost cause in hearing the gospel. If the person is alive then they can still receive the gospel message.



Personal Application

1. Looking back at your notes and study questions,
how does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?

2. What is the most important thing for you to remember and why?
(Consider: main characters, instructions given, setting, timing, etc.)

3. What does this passage teach you about being a follower of Jesus?
 - Is there an attitude or behavior you need to change?
 - Is there a new level of commitment or service to others you are feeling called to?

4. Write a brief prayer of response to what God has taught you in this week's lesson:



GROUP DISCUSSION



1. Sometimes people will point to the salvation of the second criminal and say the Christian religion is easy. Everyone can believe and no one really needs to be Christian until the end. How would you respond to this? Use Scripture to defend your statement.

2. The first criminal is indicative of people who simply want to reject Christ, or use Christ for their own self-pleasure. In fact, today people use Jesus more as a genie. How can you identify this attitude and how do you graciously show someone that they are using Jesus rather than worshiping Jesus?

3. As long as there is life, the gospel message can be preached to someone who has yet to believe. Is this the kind of mindset you have for preaching the gospel? Have you ever given up on someone when it comes to the gospel? How as reading Luke 23:39-43 encouraged you to not give up and to keep proclaiming the gospel?