

Jesus Teaches Entrance into the Kingdom And Jerusalem's Coming Result of Unbelief Luke 13:22-35

This is the second time Luke mentions Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem. (Luke [9:51](#) [read – about 6 months before](#)) Christ's heart and mind were fixed on doing the Father's will of redemption for the sin of man. Though still [three](#) months away, we must keep in mind how central the crucifixion was to Jesus, and how every teaching and miracle sought to prepare the disciples and bring more people into the kingdom!

I. Overview Summary This one verse is a summary of Jesus' ministry at this time.

“And he went through the cities and villages, [teaching](#), and journeying toward Jerusalem.” Luke 13:22
Over the last three years we've seen Jesus' ministry emphasize both his works (miracles and healings) and words (teachings). In the last months of His life, the emphasis changed to **teaching**! As we move forward in studying His life, we will see fewer miracles and spend more time examining His words! It is also interesting to note that much of what He will teach during these last days is a repeat; He had given many of these teachings before. But now He gives them with special emphasis to His listeners at this time in His ministry in and around the countryside of Judea and Perea. Many of Jesus' recorded words up to this point occurred in Galilee. Also, please realize that “journeying” is figurative, not literal. In His mind, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem for His death on the cross, but He was not literally making His way there that day. It was before Him; all He did and said would have the shadow of the cross over it!

II. Answer to an Old Burning Question – Entrance into the Kingdom

- **The Burning Question**

“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there [few](#) that be saved? And he said unto them,” Luke 13:23
We don't know who asked this question. But this was actually a much-debated question among Rabbis and Religious elites. So, it could have been one of them, but really, we have no reason to think that it could have been asked by one of the chosen twelve disciples. In fact, this same question will be asked of Jesus again in just a couple of months, after His interaction with the rich young ruler. (Luke 18:26) At that time, there is evidence that it was asked by a disciple. This was a deep theological question people wanted answered. “Are there few that will be saved?” But the truth is, people still ask it today, both followers of Jesus and unbelievers. But now it may be worded: “Why don't we see more people saved?” “Doesn't everyone go to heaven?” “Aren't everyone going to heaven, just on different paths?” “A loving God would not send people to hell.” “Are there few that can be saved?”

Why ask this Question?

1. This was a subject Jesus had [taught](#) on. ([read Matthew 7:13-14 - Sermon on the Mount](#)) He used the same thought that “few” would find entrance into the narrow gate. Please understand, **Jews had a wide belief gate**. They taught that **all** good Jews were “saved.” So that would be many people! Only sinners (non-practicing Jews/gross sinners) and tax collectors were not on their way to heaven with God. So this idea of few being saved was controversial.

2. Judea had some of the biggest crowds gathering to hear Jesus. (Luke 12:1 “there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people”; 14:25) Yet few were committing to Him. This would be hard for Jesus’ followers to understand after so much visible success.

3. Jesus’ recent messages seemed designed to discourage the crowds.

- * Spoke against the Religious establishment – Luke 11:14-26; 37-52 (calling them fools, murderers, hypocrites, full of wickedness); 12:1-12

- * Spoke against the unbelief of Israel – Luke 11:29-36 (vs. 29, “This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.” In this passage, Jesus said that Gentiles like the Queen of Sheba and Nineveh believed, but they would not!)

- * Spoke of coming division and difficulty – Matt. 10:34-39 (following Him would bring great division, even in families); Luke 12:49-53

- * Spoke of Israel’s need of repentance – Luke 13:2-10 (He said twice in these few verses, “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”) This had become one of His themes!

So someone asks, “Lord, are there **few** that be saved?” This question was about the word “few.” This was a yes-or-no question, but Jesus does not answer directly; instead, He makes His comments very personal!

- **The Burning Answer**

“**Strive** (Lit. - sports term - agonize; strain every nerve; struggle as against conflict) **to enter in at the strait** (Lit. - Old English word – narrow; confining – geographical strait – Strait of Gibraltar; Strait of Singapore) **gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able** (Lit. – has the idea that they were trying to pry open the door but could not).” **Luke 13:24**

It is interesting to note the difference between the Sermon on the Mount’s version of this statement and this one. In Matthew 7:13, it says, “**Enter ye** in at the strait gate....” while here we have “**Strive to enter in** at the strait gate.” Over two years later, unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah faced strong opposition. The Religious Leaders had denounced Jesus. This pressure will make entrance into the kingdom of God increasingly more difficult among the Jews! Now, each individual would need to overcome the extreme peer pressure against Jesus and growing unbelief concerning Him being led by the religious leaders! (Read Insights into the current mindset about Jesus – John 7:12-13; 9:22, 34; 12:42) Those who would believe needed to **strive** (agonize, strain) to know and understand. Most people didn’t really care to know the truth about Jesus. They had their religious practices, their ideas about God, and His system of right and judgment. They felt set in their religious practices. Unfortunately, this is so much like the day we live in; people’s belief system is set, but it is not based on God’s word!

Jesus went on to say that entrance into the kingdom would not be easy; it would be narrow. “**Many**” would seek to enter in and would not be able to. We all love easy: easy weight loss, easy learning, easy meal prepping, easy cleaning, easy organizing, easy, easy, easy! We all love hard things that are made easy! But Jesus is saying the way to the kingdom is not easy; an agonizing struggle will be required to gain access through the narrow gate!

Going on, Jesus will give an illustration, a word picture, to help visualize the reality of the exclusiveness of entrance into the kingdom.

- **The Burning Reality**

“**When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye** (notice the second person pronouns now – Jesus brings the listeners into the illustration.) **begin to stand without, and to knock at**

the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: //²⁶Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. ²⁷But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Luke 13:25-27

“master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door” – In the ancient Middle East, the owner of a house would lock it up before going to bed. John and I do that before heading upstairs at night. We go around, shut windows, pull curtains, and make sure all the doors are locked. In Jesus' time, securing the house against invasion was a more complex process. Opening it again before daylight was dangerous. In the dark, you could not see who was outside the house. This was an understood illustration – once that door was closed and locked at night, **the opportunity for entrance was gone**; there was no getting in. Reminds me of another door found in Genesis: the door to the ark. Noah built the ark as God had instructed him and preached righteousness for 120 years. Then one day God brought the animals two by two, and that same day Noah and all the animals went into the ark, as Genesis 7:16 tells us, “And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.” Those are words of finality, just as we read here in Jesus' story.

“Lord, Lord, open unto us” – The knocking and the repeated “Lord, Lord” show the desperation of those on the outside. They seemed surprised the door was shut and locked. They honestly thought they should be on the inside! Notice the plural pronoun “us”; **many people seem** to be seeking entrance. But the shut, narrow door separated them. Then came the voice from within, “I know you not, nor where you are from.” In different English translations, the phrase “where you are from” suggests **not belonging to the household**. Examples: “I know you not, you are not of my household.” “What household are you? I know nothing about you.” Then starts the reasons why they should be allowed into the kingdom: (read vs. 26-27)

- 1) **“We have eaten and drunk in thy presence”** – This is a **claim to a relationship and knowledge**. “We have eaten together!” “We have sat down together, eaten and socialized at the same time!” Now, eating together can be a sign of closeness, but not necessarily. One time I was at a banquet with Tim Tebow, the famous Christian athlete. We ate the same menu: roasted chicken breast, grilled green beans, tossed salad, and a fancy, decorated three-layer cake... I'm not sure he ate the cake, but I did. But ladies, Tim Tebow and I are not friends, not even acquaintances, and he certainly wouldn't let me into his house just because we ate at a banquet on April 5, 2023. But then the second reason came...
- 2) **“You have taught in our streets”** – Again, this is another claim to **relationship and knowledge**. “We have heard you speak! We have listened to you! We have been your students!” Again, listening, taking notes, hearing someone doesn't necessarily build a relationship. I am pretty sure most of my college professors would not unlock a closed door for me, even though I regularly attended their classes!

Catch this: Jesus is teaching that association with Him, listening to Him, and admiration of Him isn't enough to get through the narrow door and into the kingdom! Wow! What Jesus is teaching is that superficial knowledge is not a personal relationship! The Gospel is a relationship with Jesus!

Superficial Knowledge vs. Personal Relationship

Those outside of the narrow gate had arguments for why they should be allowed inside, but I want you to notice something. They only started with their reasons; they had them all lined up, but verse 26 tells us, “Then shall

you **begin** to say...” You see, they didn’t get to give all their reasons; the voice inside cut them off, repeating the same statement.

“I know you not” – For 40 years Israel was led in the wilderness by God; followed His pillar of fire or cloud, ate the manna He provided, drank of water He poured from a rock, knew His protection. Yet, they never really knew Him. They didn’t trust Him as God or love Him with their hearts. At the first difficulty, they rebelled against God’s leading; when they had a chance to dance before a golden calf, they did it. You see, they didn’t really know God; they had only superficial knowledge of Him. They saw His works, heard His words, but didn’t have a personal dedication of their hearts and souls to Him. And it was the same in Israel as Jesus stood before them! The crowds were hearing and seeing Jesus’ works and words, but they didn’t really believe who He was, the Son of God, their Messiah. But the same can be true for some of us here today. We may know about Jesus, but if we haven’t put our belief in His work for our soul, when the day of judgment comes and the door is closed on opportunity, it’s a relationship with God that will be the dividing factor, and without it, His voice will say,

“depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” – Jesus is revealing their heart; it was full of sin! In the minds of those outside pounding on the door, they deemed their works of righteousness and service sufficient **to equal** a relationship with God. But the Lord said He never knew them. **It was religious work, religious talk, religious study, religious service, but that’s all it was.** (go to these passages) Romans 9:31-32 tells us this, “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at the stumbling stone;” Titus put it this way, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate.” (Titus 1:16) Basically, they were trying to do salvation their way --by doing, not God’s way – His mercy and grace, and they were to have faith and follow! **They had a superficial knowledge of God without a personal relationship with God.**

Jesus continues with the reaction of those on the outside as they see those that “sit down in the kingdom of God.”

- **The Burning Result**

“There (Lit. - often translated - “In that place”) shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out (Lit. – cast out; excluded). ²⁹And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.” Luke 13:28-30

Let’s first understand this Jewish cliché.

“weeping and gnashing of teeth” – It is found four times in Matthew and once here in Luke, and it refers to both physical and emotional pain. Weeping is because of sorrow and pain, while the gnashing or grinding of the teeth is the result of emotional distress, anger, and even rebellion! Why?

- 1) “when you see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God” – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the founding patriarchs of the Jewish people. They form the foundational lineage of Judaism; the ones to whom God gave His covenant. They were three men of great faith in God. The prophets were those who came to Israel with God’s message.

Historically, the prophets were held up as great men, but when they lived and preached repentance toward God, they were hated, hunted down, and killed by the people of Israel!

- 2) “and they that come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.” – Those who came from every direction were believing, faithful Gentiles, and for those on the outside of the narrow gate, viewing them come and sit down in the kingdom would have been a great surprise. Pious religious Jews always counted Gentiles as unclean dogs and not worthy of God’s mercy and certainly not a place at His kingdom table!

So, verse 28 is written a bit awkwardly by 21st-century standards. The result of #1 and 2 is weeping and “grinding” of teeth. When the ones on the outside of the narrow gate look and see their national heroes **and** the Gentiles sit down in the very kingdom they thought they had inherited, they will not only suffer physical pain but also great anger and distress. They will continue to rebel against the plan of God! They will raise their fist in His face and continue their attitude of hatred.

But then Jesus reminds them of something He has repeated many times before, “behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last” – Jesus is making clear again that Gentiles would be invited to come into the kingdom. This is consistent with the Bible’s teaching, from cover to cover! “God so loved the world!” (Gen. 28:14; Ps. 107:1-8; Is. 60:2-3; 66:18-19; Mal. 1:11; Rom. 1:16; 10:12-13; Gal. 3:6-9; Eph. 2:14-19) So, we understand that the last Gentiles will be first, and the first Jews will be last, but all those faithful followers, Jews and Gentiles, who have repented and made Him Lord of their lives will be together in the kingdom and sit down with Him! (Rev. 5:9; 7:9)

II. Jerusalem’s Unbelief

- Pharisee’s Warning

“The same day (Lit. - Other translations use “At that very hour;” “At that time;” “Just at that moment;” “Just then;” “A few minutes later”) **there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will (Lit. – wants to) kill thee.**” Luke 13:31 This seems to be a quick interjection or interruption in Jesus’ teaching. First, we can be sure these Religious Leaders were **not** trying to protect Jesus from the deadly grip of Herod there in Perea, where he ruled. Perhaps they were trying to scare Jesus back into Judea, where they had more control and power. The Pharisees certainly would not have been happy with Jesus’ teachings concerning the kingdom and would desire to distract and perhaps even move Him to a place where they could try to take and kill Him. This was already their ultimate goal!

- Jesus’ Timetable But instead of being scared, Jesus gave them a message for Herod!

“And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do (Lit. – perform) cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected (Lit. - finish my course; be finished; I will be through; accomplish my purpose; reach my goal; complete my work).³³ Nevertheless I must walk (Lit. – journey) today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out (Lit. – outside) of Jerusalem.” Luke 13:32-33

“Go ye, tell that fox” – I think foxes are fun to see. They are kind of cute with those big bushy tails. But I also know foxes can be a menace to poultry and small backyard pets, and they love to dig, messing up yards and fencelines. Here, Jesus isn't giving Herod a compliment, but a message! Later, we are told that as Jesus stood before Herod during His trials, Herod “was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.” But here, three months earlier, Jesus is telling Herod about the miracles He was then doing in Perea (verbs are in the present tense), but the day was coming when He would be done with those miracles; Jesus would complete His work!

“today and tomorrow, and the third day” – This is a Jewish cliché, speaking of a short amount of designated time. Jesus uses this phrase twice, in verses 32 and 33. He was not talking about a three-day timetable. Everyone there knew He meant an immediate future schedule. Jesus knew His timeline, and neither Herod nor anyone else would interfere with or change God's plan for Him.

“I shall be perfected” – I just love this! Jesus explains that He was looking toward the completion of His work and purpose; the work of our redemption! No one could kill Jesus before His time, and it must be accomplished in the right way: Jerusalem and the cross! It was not going to happen by throwing Him off a cliff, or stoning Him in the temple, but on a cross in Jerusalem! Luke 24:46-48; John 10:17-18; 19:30; Acts 17:2-3; Heb. 2:9-10; 5:8-9

“it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” – It is true that prophets were murdered in other places besides Jerusalem. It is sad to realize that through the ages, Jerusalem was a dangerous place for the prophets of God. Though it was the center of Judaism, it did not always have a heart for God and His messengers. Here Jesus is prophesying His death in Jerusalem

- **Jerusalem's Unbelief** The Religious Leaders desire to move Jesus back to Judea, and the mention of Jerusalem in verse 33 causes Jesus this spontaneous lamentation over Jerusalem and its people!

Past Unbelief:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not !” Luke 13:34 This is the first time Jesus will say these words. The second will be during the Triumphal Entry in just a few months. Do you hear the tenderness and heartfelt sadness in Jesus' words? These are the deep and sincere emotions of God concerning those who reject Him. Soak it up. As He recounts Jerusalem's past sins, it doesn't lead Him to accusations or scoldings, but to such sorrow. The hen and chicks are a beautiful picture illustrating God's love and care for His own. “I would,” in contrast to “ye would not,” is striking. It makes me wonder how many times God would, but I would not. He would bless me, but I would not obey. He would use me, but I would not serve. He would lead me, but I would not follow. Makes me shudder. We see here the grief that man's unbelief and rebellion bring to the God of the universe! Ask yourself: do you often cause God grief by your unbelief and rebellion?

Present Unbelief:

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : Judgment was coming. Sin is always punished! Let me give you a few other English translations of this phrase from Bible Gateway: “Behold, your house is forsaken.” “See your house is abandoned to you.” “Look, God is abandoning your house to you!” “Listen carefully: your house is left to you abandoned by God and destitute of His protection.” Wow! What a dangerous place their rebellion against God had left them – abandoned and without His protection! This was the message to Israel by the prophets of old and now the message of Jesus! (2 Chron. 24:20-21; 36:15-16; Is. 1:2-4; 64:10-12; Jer. 22:5) Oh, how we should be on guard to never be under the firm, disciplining hand of God! For Jerusalem, in just about 40 years, 25,000-30,000 of her citizens would be slaughtered in her streets; the people would be scattered, and their land torn away from them for almost 2000 years! This judgment was so close to Jesus’ heart that He would repeat it later in Matthew 23:37-39. He saw the bitter future, and it brought Him great grief. Jesus was not in danger as the Pharisees wanted it to sound like; Israel was!

Future Hope:

and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Luke 13:35 Jesus’ love and foresight for Jerusalem prompted these comments and prophecies. He was well aware of their doom. **But** one day they will welcome Him! Jesus was telling those lying, deceiving Pharisees that after their nation’s judgment, the day would come when “at the name of Jesus every knee [would] bow....and that every tongue [would] confess that Jesus Christ [was] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. 2:10-11 God’s chosen nation would not be left desolate! It was His promise! Paul wonderfully explains God’s amazing plan in **Romans 11:1-5; 25-36**. Their hope was Jesus, and one day they would recognize it!

Believers’ Application:

1. Finding salvation requires more concentrated effort than most people are willing to put in.

1) One must realize salvation is obtained God’s way! By adulthood, most have been persuaded by the many lies of the devil. These must be rejected; instead, accept the Gospel according to the Word of God!

- Doing good and being good would suffice to obtain a ticket to heaven. This is such a classic lie of the Devil. We see it plainly answered in the Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:5
- A loving God would not send anyone to eternal punishment in hell. Jesus Himself taught that God sends the unbelieving to hell. Matt. 25:41-46; Luke 12:5; John 3:16; Rev. 20:15
- Being familiar with God makes me right with God. Many people believe that because of their familiarity with God and His words, they will be found in the kingdom. But Jesus’ words will ring true: “I never knew you.” It’s a relationship, not superficial knowledge! Matt. 7:21-23
- There are many ways to God. The classic words of Jesus, while teaching the disciples the night before He died, should be burned into our souls: “...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” John 14:6 There is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus! Rom. 5:9-11

2) One must realize salvation will be a rejection of our way and an acceptance of God's way. It will be a sacrifice and a life of denial. It will cost us.

- We must reject our way of self-righteousness. It is not our striving work that gets us into heaven! At the judgment, there will be many prideful protests about why those on the outside should be allowed into the kingdom! Giving money, playing the organ, helping the poor, working at a food bank, teaching a class, reading the Bible from cover to cover every year, saying the rosary, being confirmed, baptized, taking communion...none of these good and religious things will ever get one to heaven according to Jesus; if you don't have a relationship with Him, you will perish!
- We must reject our way of sinful pleasure. We all have our bends and love of sinful pleasures. Turning to Jesus is a rejection of our life of sin! We cannot serve sin and Jesus! Rom. 13:14; Titus 2:11-12; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:15-17 To be a Jesus-follower, we must reject our way of sinful pleasure.
- We must accept God's way of salvation. Peter preached – Acts 4:10-12; Paul wrote – Rom. 10:9-11; Just as Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by me."

Most people are comfortable with broad, easy beliefs concerning gaining heaven. They like the idea of thinking positively about peace, joy, and holiness, but are unwilling to confront themselves before God as He calls them from His Word, the Bible! They truly don't examine themselves in light of God's truth. The vulnerability and true ugliness of their sinful heart make them feel uncomfortable and even hopeless. But that is when true Hope becomes evident. Salvation is through Jesus! Not just listening to His words and studying His works is sufficient, but it is vital to turn to Him in faith and away from your way of thinking and trust Him to save you!

Read Isaiah 55:6-7

2. Jesus told His listeners in verse 35 that their "house is left unto you desolate." Bible teachers believe He was looking toward the great destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which occurred in 70 AD. Here are some interesting facts about this devastating time in Israel's history.

Do some research to share with your class. Hint: The eyewitness accounts of Josephus Flavius are recorded and available on the internet.

3. The Bible tells of God's great love and compassion for all sinners. Here is a selection of those many verses! Psalm 103:8-18; Lamentations 3:21-23; Isaiah 43:25; Luke 19:10; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:1; 4:9-10