

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Gospels

May 13: Luke 1-2 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for May 13, 2017

Luke 1-2

Luke is an interesting New Testament author. He was a physician that traveled extensively with Paul and wrote this Gospel and the book of Acts. In Colossians 4:10-11, Paul refers to three men (Aristarchus, Mark and Justus) as the only “fellow workers ... who are of the circumcision.” He then refers to three other men (Epaphras, Luke and Demas) as also being with him. This would indicate that Luke was not a Jew which would make him the only gentile author of a New Testament book.

Luke opens with an explanation. We first find out that he is writing from the standpoint of someone that was not an eyewitness to everything from the beginning, but he has been instructed by someone that was and has a complete understanding of the events. He also tells the reader that his goal is to make an “orderly account.” I take this to mean that Luke went to great pains to ensure that chronological order was maintained.

When Luke begins his historical account, he actually starts before Jesus is born. His is the only Gospel that details the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist. We find out that John’s father was a priest named Zacharias, his mother, Elizabeth, was also a descendent of Aaron and they both were righteous before God. That was not something that could be said about all of the priestly line.

While Zacharias is burning incense in the Temple, an angel appears to him. The angel tells him that they will have a son and should name him John. He is also told that this son will turn many in Israel back to God and will serve before God in the “spirit and power of Elijah.” When Zacharias asks about his age and wants proof, the angel explains that he is Gabriel and tells him that he will not be able to speak until John is born.

Six months later, Gabriel appears to Mary and announces that she will have a Son and will name Him Jesus. Gabriel also tells her some of the honors that will come to Him. He will be great, will be called the Son of the Highest, God will give Him the throne of His father David, He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom will never end. When Mary expresses her confusion, she is told about Elizabeth (who had not made her pregnancy public). This is enough for Mary to believe and accept the word Gabriel.

Mary goes to see Elizabeth. When Mary first begins speaking, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and feels John “leap” in her womb. She then pronounces a blessing on Mary and recognizes the baby Mary is carrying as her Lord. Mary then gives a lengthy praise to God and expresses her humility. We then find out that Mary stays there for three months. The timing shows the possibility that Mary was there when John is born.

Everyone is overjoyed when John is born. When they prepare to circumcise him on the eighth day, they also have to decide what to name him. The family wants to name him after his father. Evidently Zacharias and Elizabeth had discussed this, because she tells them they will name

him John. The family is confused because that is not a family name. When Zacharias writes that his name will be John, he is suddenly able to speak again and he gives a prophecy about John's role in preparing the way for the Messiah and that God's promise to Abraham is about to be fulfilled.

We don't know any more about John's upbringing. We are only told that he grew, had a strong spirit and lived in the deserts until he became known to Israel.

Luke now takes up the account of Jesus' birth. We find out that Caesar Augustus is the emperor and he has ordered that a census be taken. Joseph is to take his family to Bethlehem to be registered. While there, Mary goes into labor and has no choice but to give birth to Jesus in the holding areas for the animals.

Out in the country, some shepherds are taking care of their sheep. An angel appears to them and tells them about the birth of the Savior. They are told that he can be found in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. Suddenly they can see a multitude of angels all praising God. They hurry to Bethlehem to see this for themselves. The shepherds return to the fields glorifying and praising God.

When Jesus is eight years old, they have Him circumcised and formally named. After Mary has waited the full days of her purification (according to the Law), they bring Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord and redeem Him with a sacrifice (according to the Law). The fact that they offer two turtledoves or pigeons speaks to their financial poverty.

While they are at the Temple, Simeon arrives at the urging of the Spirit. He had been told by God that he would see the Messiah before he died. Simeon takes Jesus and prophesies that He would be the salvation of the people and would bring revelation to the Gentiles. He also tells Mary that a sword will pierce her soul. While this may refer to her sorrow at seeing her Son crucified, I believe it refers to her process of arriving at a complete belief in Him as the Messiah and following Him. This statement is given after predicting that Jesus would cause the rise and fall of many Jews and this would be revealed in their hearts. The words of Jesus have the ability to pierce us through to our very souls to convict us of our sin. What is revealed is our humility or pride as we decide what to do with that knowledge.

Simeon is immediately followed by Anna. She was a widow of 84 years and a prophetess who had dedicated herself serving God in the Temple with prayer and fasting. Upon seeing Jesus, she talks about Him to all those that were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. The scriptures tell us that Jesus was brought into the world at just the right time. I believe that part of this was the sociological and governmental situation. However, part of this must also be that there were Jews who were listening to, digging into and at least partially comprehending the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

Jesus returns to Jerusalem and we are told that He "grew and became strong in the spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." Jesus had to learn obedience. I am convinced that some of the knowledge He displayed, especially as a child, was due to the education and influence of His parents. We know that Mary paid attention to the things He did and somewhat knew what He was capable of. At the Canaanite wedding, she does not know precisely what he will do, but she knows the servants should do whatever He told them.

When Jesus is 12 years old, His family travels back to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. His parents just assume that He is with someone in the group when they start home. They must have panicked when they could not locate Him. This was the Messiah that was entrusted to them by God through prophesy. What will be the outcome and how will God respond if they have lost Him? After three days of searching, they find Him in the Temple. He is listening and

asking questions of the teachers, but He was also answering questions with such understanding that He astonished them. His parents chastise Him when they find Him because of their concern. Jesus' simple answer is "Didn't you know that I would be about My Father's business. He was speaking of God, but they did not understand.

Again, we are told that Jesus was subject to His parents, but Mary remembered all these things and contemplated them. During this time, He grew physically and spiritually. He also was liked by men and pleasing to God.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Charles Fry:
Good Doug!

Jesus grew.... He was human in every way, yet without sin. He could impress the scholars when he was 12, but still too had the immaturity of a 12 year old boy who frightened his parents by his unexplained absence. It was Paul who wrote, "When I was a child, I thought like a child..." But we can be sure Jesus thought like a child too, when he was a child. That's a remarkable and wonderful thing to know!

Comment:

Wendy Range:
Thanks, Doug! I thought this was interesting reading (probably something you've studied in the past) when it comes to what environment Jesus was born in, and subsequently laid in a manger: <https://answersingenesis.org/holidays/christmas/born-in-a-barn-stable/>

Replies:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Wendy, for this link!

May 20: Luke 3-4 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for May 20, 2017

Luke 3-4

Luke gives us a very specific time stamp. He uses Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Phillip (Herod's brother), Lysanias, Annas and Caiaphas to establish these events in history. Since Tiberius succeeded Augustus in A.D. 14 John's preaching begins sometime in A.D. 29.

John's message was twofold. First, he preached baptism for repentance from sin. He was not shy to point out the faults of the Jewish leadership. He called them snakes and challenged them to bear fruits worthy of repentance. Second, as prophesied by Isaiah, he prepared the way for the Messiah. He warns that God could produce children of Abraham from anywhere (the Gentiles would soon be acceptable) and that every tree not bearing fruit will be destroyed (those leaders had better get in line with God and His Messiah).

Many came to John with questions about how to live a life in concert with God's expectations. He told tax collectors not to collect any more tax than they were supposed to. He told soldiers not to mistreat or falsely accuse anyone nor take bribes. When they wondered if he was the promised Messiah, he left no doubt that the Messiah would be much greater than he was.

John's blunt message of repentance from sin was not welcomed by Herod, who had sinned with his brother's wife. We find out that Herod ended up putting John in prison in order to squelch any uprising against Herod.

We also find out that while John was baptizing people, Jesus came and was baptized by him. Luke does not go into much detail about this, but does mention the Spirit taking the form of a dove which landed on Him and the voice of God from heaven.

Luke also gives us our second genealogy of Jesus. Matthew's list starts with Abraham and works forward through Joseph's family. Luke chooses to start with Jesus and work backward all the way to Adam and then God Himself. Always striving for accuracy, he comments that Jesus was assumed to be the son of Joseph. This, and the names in the lineage, lead me to believe that this list is through Mary, not Joseph. Matthew shows His kingly heritage, His right to the throne of David and the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham. Luke shows His physical heritage as the Seed of Woman (not man) that God promised would bruise the head of Satan.

Luke now gives an account of Satan approaching Jesus to tempt Him. Satan throws everything he can think of at Jesus, but the Messiah does not give in to the temptation. He fends Satan off with the proper application of the Word of God (even though Satan tried to twist it to his own use).

When Jesus returns to Galilee, His fame has spread. People are flocking to hear Him teach. While He is at Nazareth, His hometown, He reads from Isaiah when the scroll is handed to Him. The reading is a prophesy of Isaiah about the coming Messiah. When He finishes reading, everyone is waiting to hear what He has to say. Jesus tells them that the prophecy has been fulfilled in their presence right then. Those who knew Him as a young boy have trouble making the connection. Jesus knows they want Him to perform the miracles and signs they have heard about from other places. Instead, He tells them that a prophet is never accepted in his own country and gives a cryptic response about Elijah and the widow of Sidon as well as Elijah and Naaman. He seems to be telling them that there will be no signs in Nazareth because they won't accept Him. Instead He God is sending Him to other areas, just like Elijah, to find those willing to believe and obey. This makes them extremely angry and they force Him to the edge of a cliff intending to kill Him. Jesus simply walks right through them. Either they are not able to see Him or they are restrained from being able to do anything to Him.

Jesus travels to Capernaum and encounters a man with a demon. The demon recognizes Jesus and taunts Him. Jesus casts the demon out, the man is unharmed and the fame of Jesus spreads even further.

When Jesus comes to Peter's house, He finds Peter's mother-in-law is sick. Jesus heals her and she begins to follow Him. All throughout His travels in Galilee, He heals people and casts out demons. These demons were apparently openly testifying that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God. When Jesus tries to leave the area, the people do not want Him to go. Notice the difference in the reception here versus in Nazareth. Jesus tells them that there are others that need to hear His message and He must go to those places, too.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
Both lineages show the Messiah as a son of David. Solomon and Nathan. Luke's lineage is a perfect circle from Jesus back to God. Imperfect beings enclosed with two perfect beings, the Son and the Father. 77 names.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks, Doug! I would have loved to witness Jesus unroll the scroll and read the prophecy that he was fulfilling in their very presence! Goosebumps!!!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:
So sorry to be so far behind. Anyway, I have a question about John. The word of God came to him in the wilderness and then he began preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. I assume that God told John to preach this. My question is: Was this preaching merely a training exercise for the people (preparing the way) or were their sins actually forgiven? Did God expect the ones who had been baptised with water to undergo the real baptism later with the Holy Spirit?

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:
When Aquilla and Priscilla hear Apollos preaching in Ephesus in Acts 18, they take note that he is teaching accurately about the Lord, but only teaches the baptism of John. They then take him aside to explain the way of God more accurately. When Paul arrives in chapter 19, he asks them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed as is taught by Peter in Acts 2. They don't even seem to know about the Holy Spirit. Paul then asks what they were baptized into and they say it was John's baptism. Paul then explains that John's baptism was for repentance and the people he baptized were told by John to believe on Christ Jesus when He came after John. When the people in Ephesus understand what Paul is saying, they are baptized into the name of Jesus. This would indicate that they were baptized, not again for the same thing, but into the name of Jesus. When John's father, Zacharias, prophesies after John's birth, he says that John will "give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins." (Luke 1:77) John's baptism and teaching did not forgive sins (they were still under the Old Law) but he did teach them that the coming Messiah would provide forgiveness and remission of sin. This should not have been a surprise as many of the prophets testified to this very concept.

Comment:

Lowell Hermon:
Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:
Thank you!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Matt 21:24-26, 31-32

24 Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 25 John's baptism — where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'" 26 But if we say, 'From men'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

... Jesus said to them,

"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

NIV

John's message and baptism were indeed for the children of Abraham (Luke 3:7-8, Acts 13:24), people who already had a covenant relationship with God through Abraham and under the Law. John's preaching and his baptism focused on repentance for forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3-4 "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.", and Matthew 21:32). In Matthew 3 we have the theme of repentance highlighted in v2, 8, and 11 with confessing sins and being baptized in v6. These themes carry over into the Christian faith, and forgiveness of sins is connected to repentance, confession, and baptism in both John's preaching and Christian preaching, as in the conversion reports included in Acts.

The forgiveness of sins in John's baptism was based on repentance within an existing covenant relationship with God, for the people of Israel. The theme of repentance for the forgiveness of sins wasn't new, other prophets had proclaimed that theme (see Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:47-51, Ezekiel 18:21-23). Repentance and sacrifice, repentance and confession, repentance and prayer, repentance and baptism, the Law and Prophets, including the last great prophet, John, offered forgiveness for repentance that resulted in change, genuine turning from sin.

The forgiveness of sin in Christian baptism, in the name of Jesus, still calls for repentance, and produces results John's baptism could not, such as a new birth (John 3:5-6), a new covenant (, a new life set free from sin, cleansing by the blood of Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, circumcision of the heart.

Forgiveness under the Law was real, but it was also based on the contingency that at the right time God would provide the necessary atoning sacrifice by sending his son into the world (See Hebrews 7:18-19, 27-28, 10:4). Those who were forgiven under the Law, including those who received John's baptism, needed the redemption of the blood of Jesus. Those who lived to hear the gospel, even if they had been cleansed by the sacrifices of the Law, or by repenting and submitting to John's baptism (like those Doug referenced in Acts 19), still needed to repent and be baptized into Christ for the ongoing forgiveness of sins provided by the immortal high priest serving in the presence of God, with the new birth and New Covenant relationship, with the indwelling Spirit and freedom from slavery to sin (Romans 6).

Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thanks, Charles!

Marc Hermon:

We've had this discussion before on whether or not every person baptized with John's baptism (including the apostles) all needed to be re-baptized after the resurrection. I'm probably in the pretty small minority camp that think they didn't need to be. If a person accepted John's baptism with the understanding and correct faith that it was looking for the future Christ, then I have a hard time thinking that didn't cover them. It covered people like Abraham who "was credited with righteousness" until the Messiah removed his sins also. The reason I'm in the minority is because I have a hard time answering the question "Well, when did they then receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?" I just don't know. Perhaps when Jesus rose from the grave the believers that had accepted John's baptism received the HS in their hearts at that time. Although I don't know the answer, the Lord could have easily done this miracle. I do know that we have no example of anyone who received John's baptism before Christ's resurrection being required to be re-baptized again after Christ's resurrection. That doesn't mean they weren't, we just don't have an example of it. The example in Acts 19 is not an example of this. It is, however, a good example that re-baptism is necessary if we are initially baptized with an incomplete and incorrect faith. Since they had received John's baptism they were still looking forward to the Christ which means they did not have an understanding of what Jesus had already done for them. This is an erroneous faith for the time they were being baptized and clearly necessitated a re-baptism into Christ with full assurance of what He had done and thereby receiving the Holy Spirit. As Charles said, Christ came at the "right time" appointed by God. But this was an interesting transition period especially to the Jews and many families. Spouses all of a sudden found themselves unequally yoked. Masters now had servants that were their brothers in Christ. It was an amazing and very difficult transition for many people and Paul says "remain as you are" in whatever station of life and live for Christ. We can definitely agree that Christ saved those who were obedient to his commands (whether they were commanded to be re-baptized or not). We also can definitely agree on what side of Christ's resurrection we are all on today and what kind of obedience is required from us....and we praise HIM for his indescribable gift!

Doug Twaddell:

Absolutely Acts 19 applies to those that accepted John's baptism after the time that Christ'

Doug Twaddell:

(oops) after the time that Christ's baptism was in effect. We can be confident of our own salvation through knowledge, obedience, faith and hope.

Charles Fry:

At the risk of speaking and thus revealing my folly, some of these things seem somewhat important to me.

1. Rather than hypotheticals, don't we have explicit examples and instructions that don't call for speculation in terms of Christian baptism?

2. Abraham is a splendid example of faith. No one after the cross was instructed to be circumcised or offer animal sacrifices as he did, because Jesus purchased a people with his blood and established a new covenant.

3. I am puzzled why it seems incredible to ask people who believe in Jesus to be baptized in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, if they hadn't already done that. Perhaps we have notions about that process that we superimpose back onto the generation of Jesus and his disciples. Those (Jewish) folks were used to the idea of a

ritual dip in water every time they were made unclean or approached the temple. There were ritual baths for dunking in Jewish households and public ritual baths all around Jerusalem, and concentrated near the temple. I would be astonished if anyone who had been baptized by John, a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins with no promise whatsoever for new covenant, new life, thought that they had received "salvation in Christ" by what they had done, as Jews under the Law. I doubt that anyone who had been baptized by John would have rejected or questioned baptism into Christ because "I was already baptized." That imputes modern schismatic thinking into an earlier era.

4. Gal 3:26-27 " You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (NIV)
How many people did John baptize into Christ? There is no equivocation here. None. He could not and did not baptize anyone into Christ. None of the folks he did baptize had clothed themselves with Christ unless and until they were baptized into Christ. There were Jews in the Galatian churches, the problem of Judaizing the Christian faith was a major theme of the letter, and in the next verse after those above Paul asserted that "you are all one in Christ Jesus." There is only one Biblical way to get there, "in Christ Jesus," and John couldn't do it when that way wasn't opened until Jesus opened it, after John had died.

Charles Fry:

5. Jesus did deal with his disciples directly, on the night of his betrayal when he washed their feet, and after his resurrection when he appeared to them. On the night of his betrayal he pronounced them "clean" except for Judas, and referred to them having bathed. Perhaps a reference to their baptism by John. But, he said they needed him to wash their feet or they would "have no part in him." (John 13:8-11). Then after his resurrection he "breathed on them and said, 'receive the Holy Spirit.'" (John 20:22). I don't know that he did that with anyone in Galilee, or anyone anywhere else, but he did do something in behalf of the disciples, and it would be presumption to suppose he extended this beyond the disciples, when John only mentions these things including the disciples.

6. Did the apostles command people who had been baptized by John to be baptized in the name of Jesus? I think it is obvious they did. In Acts 2:38 with the gathering of "devout Jews" (Acts 2:5) in Jerusalem, it makes no sense to assume that none of those who responded to the gospel that day had previously been baptized with John's baptism. We know his message had gone to Alexandria in Egypt (the Apollos story in Acts 18) and to Antioch of Pisidia (as Paul referenced in Acts 13:24, "Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel." Do note the "before" as well as the expanse and the limit of John's message.) There must have been people in that crowd of God fearing Jews who had been baptized by John. Whether there were or weren't, neither at Pentecost nor any other time did the preachers of the gospel take a poll to weed out people who had been previously baptized by John or anyone else. Peter did not say "every one of you who hasn't already been baptized" in Acts 2:38, he covered them all, "every one of you, repent and be baptized." No polling for whatever people had previously done or believed.

We have no hint in the command to baptize disciples in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20) that there were exceptions based on the calendar, no hint that "one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism..." (Ephesians 4:3-6) had exceptions, that some people had a different baptism, before the cross, which explicitly did not include the Spirit because John couldn't give the Spirit, and

these folks received what they had never been promised, and didn't participate in the one baptism Paul wrote about.

Charles Fry:

7. Were the disciples who had received John's baptism in Acts 19 recently baptized? I don't know, the text doesn't say that. Did Apollos baptize them? I don't know, the text doesn't say that either. It seems questionable though. If Apollos had been the one who taught them, wouldn't he have corrected that before he left Ephesus to go to Corinth? Perhaps Luke was providing examples known to him, to show that in fact, as other scriptures indicated, John's message had gone far and wide among the Jews of the diaspora, and the question of the limitations of John's baptism sometimes came up in the preaching of the gospel. Notice that Paul first asked a "when" question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). With their negative reply and expression of ignorance, he didn't then ask, "When were you baptized?" because "when" didn't matter. What did matter is "what baptism did you receive?" (Acts 19:3) and the answer was "John's baptism." It still was not a matter of "when were you baptized?" because Paul still didn't ask about the timing, or parse his message with, "well, that would be fine if it had been before 33 AD but it was too late for you!" Instead he ignored any interest in when and went on to say John's baptism wasn't for people who believe in Jesus. People who believe in Jesus need to be baptized by Jesus' authority. That really is what he said. "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." And when they heard that, they argued that they'd already been baptized, thanks anyway. No, they promptly were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, not the prophet John. Timing wasn't the issue, and we don't know the timing. What baptism was the issue.

8. No one baptized with John's baptism was "baptized into Jesus' death." (Romans 6:3), no matter when they were baptized. They couldn't be buried with Jesus before Jesus was buried, they couldn't rise to new life before Jesus was raised, and neither John nor anyone else ever said they could or would or should. The apostles themselves did not believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus before it happened, not one of them. Christian baptism is based on faith in something quite specific, which only became possible after Jesus was raised from the dead. Col 2:12 "buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

9. Neither Abraham nor John the Baptist nor the thief on the cross was called on to be baptized into Christ, because they all lived on the old covenant side of history. If Abraham or John or the thief had been alive in the flesh in the crowd at Pentecost, then Peter's command to be baptized in the name of Jesus would have been pertinent to them, as to everyone else who heard that message.

10. Jesus meant something when he said, "I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt 11:11)
Why would he say such a thing? Isn't it because John could only say, "he is coming" while anyone in the kingdom can say "he has come" and proclaim salvation in his name. John couldn't do that. He couldn't give the Holy Spirit to anyone. He couldn't baptize anyone into Christ. He couldn't give anyone what Jesus had not yet bought. He lived and died under the old covenant. His baptism was part of the old covenant. The baptism Jesus commanded after his resurrection is New Covenant, with promises and blessings John never made or thought he could make.

Marc Hermon:

I told you I was in the minority. :) I think the "devout" that you mentioned in Acts 2 isn't a reference to their devotion to Christ. It's a reference to their devotion to Judaism. In several occasions in Peter's speech he accuses them of being wicked and killing the Son of God. I don't get the impression from Peter's speech that these were people being re-baptized. And I wish I could, but its too difficult for me to believe that the events of Acts 19 aren't a direct result of the events at the end of Ch. 18. I think the context demonstrates that they had been recently baptized with John's baptism. As I said earlier and I will admit again, I just don't know because I don't think we have definitive proof one way or the other. We can be clear what we need for salvation in the era that we are living and I'm convinced that it was made clear for them also on whether or not they had to be re-baptized.

Charles Fry:

I would suggest that if one ignores all the other scriptures about John and his baptism, and about baptism into Christ, and the giving of the Holy Spirit (which one should not ignore), just the two stories Luke related in Acts 18-19 convey clearly and purposefully that John's baptism is not acceptable for the preaching of the gospel and John's baptism is not sufficient for the disciple of Christ.

Marc Hermon:

I agree. John's baptism was not acceptable for anyone who received it after the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is exactly what I think Acts 18 and 19 is telling us that had happened. Before the resurrection, however, John's baptism was acceptable for preaching the good news of the coming Messiah and kingdom. Jesus says in Luke 7, "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Baptism is the "answer" to accept and be obedient to Christ and is how we get the Holy Spirit. I hope no one thinks that I'm belittling it or purposely ignoring scriptures. I just can't unequivocally say that the Spirit didn't fall on those later who had previously accepted the preaching of John about the coming Christ. I just think this is well within the realm of possibilities of how God handled this unique time and unique people who lived during the time of Jesus. God handled another unique people, the first Gentiles, in a unique way also giving them the Holy Spirit before baptism. But this doesn't diminish the importance and requirement of baptism that they were immediately commanded to do to be obedient. That being said, I love you Charles Fry because of how much you make me constantly think about things. The odds are highly in your favor of being correct. I find myself being wrong a lot! When we get to heaven if we find out that indeed everyone was required to be re-baptized I will promise to give you a high-five...if our spiritual bodies allow us to do that. :)

Charles Fry:

I'll say again, "received it after the resurrection of Jesus..." is an unstated assumption, not in the text of Acts 19.

Marc, it's no lack of respect for you or affection for you that prompts me to respond (again and again). I generally intend to avoid being disagreeable, and I do have both the utmost respect for you, as a believer, a teacher, a Christian man, and I love you, enjoy your insights and humor, and appreciate the good work you do. I am also well acquainted with holding a minority viewpoint. However, on some subjects, and baptism is one of them, I've participated in too many Bible studies where folks are sure there are "exceptions" or "examples" that lead to the conclusion baptism into Christ is not (always) necessary, although the New Testament offers no alternatives.

To cite Cornelius as unique, yes, it was only the second instance of an event like that, which is to say, it was a sign, like the events at Pentecost were a sign. But it was not an exception to the consistent message that those who believed needed to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was poured out, they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of prophecy (Joel, John the Baptist, and Jesus on the specific of the Spirit, Acts 11:15-18). I don't know that they received the "indwelling Holy Spirit" at that moment in time, I don't know that the apostles received the "indwelling Holy Spirit" at Pentecost either, they may have received that measure of the Spirit when Jesus breathed on them and said "receive the Holy Spirit." Peter recognized that the sign though (partly because he'd been prepped for it) and did what? He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus. There was no exception. The Lord provided a sign to confirm what had always been the will of God, that the gentiles too should share in the blessing. Because of the sign Peter was able to say, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?" And he was able to defend that act as the will of God. This story affirms the consistent example and commandment that that people who believed and repented were to be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ. Cornelius had been obedient, right up to sending for Peter and welcoming him and listening to him, but he needed to be buried with Christ, needed to be born again, needed to have new life and freedom in Christ, all of which are associated with Christian baptism, and none of which are associated with any other baptism.

One last comment, a semantic detail, and I'll let this go, as I probably should have before now. I've come to be uncomfortable with the term "rebaptized." It can be misleading I think. If a person needs to be baptized into Christ, it is because they haven't been yet really been baptized into Christ. If they had some other baptism, then being baptized into Christ isn't a repeat, isn't rebaptism, it is baptism into Christ. One isn't reburied with Christ or reborn again. or reraised together with Christ. These things happen once and for all. The folks in Acts 19 aren't said to have been "rebaptized" or "baptized again," they are described as having previously had John's baptism, and then at Paul's clarification and command, they "were baptized into the name of Lord Jesus."

God be with you and bless you, always.

Marc Hermon:

Don't you feel though that it is partly stated in Acts 19:4? "And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." It seems to me that Paul is stating that the wrong thing about their baptism was it was based on looking forward to something that had already occurred and so based on an incorrect faith for that time. And why did they have this incorrect faith? I don't think it's a big assumption at all that Acts 18:25 answers that question. The text states that Apollos had to be corrected because he was preaching and I think baptizing with John's baptism. The text does not state that he was able to get back to every person and correct his teaching. The end of Acts 18 is supposed to help us understand the situation that Paul encounters in Acts 19.

I too have been in way too many discussions where people are looking for exceptions to obedience to Christ through immersion. I hope none of the readers of our discussion think either one of us have talked about a salvation outside of an immersion. As I stated earlier, Jesus himself in Luke 7 says that the Pharisees rejected the counsel of God by rejecting the baptism of John which He had purposed for them to prepare their hearts for the acceptance of His son.

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

I really appreciate all the comments and viewpoints and knowledge that has gone into this discussion! This is where learning is at its best. Thank you again, Marc, for facilitating this group.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Ditto on everything Kevin said!

May 27: Luke 5-6 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 5-27-17

Luke 5-6

Jesus arrives at the Lake of Gennesaret where He sees some fisherman cleaning their nets. He asks one of the boat owners, Peter, to take Him out a little way where He sits in the boat and teaches the people on the shore. After He is done, He suggests that they head on out and catch some fish. Peter points out that they haven't been able to catch anything all night. However, he agrees to follow instructions. They catch so many fish that it is necessary to call for help bringing it in. Peter is humbled by the experience as were James and John. Jesus tells them that they will now begin catching men. When they return to shore, the men leave their boats behind and start following Christ.

In a different city, Jesus encounters a leper who approaches Him and expresses faith that Jesus can heal him. Jesus does heal him and tells him to follow the Law given to Moses and show himself to the priest to be declared clean. As a result, many come to Him to be healed.

Now the crowds become severely large with people wanting to be healed. While He is at one house, some men bring a friend who is paralyzed. When they cannot get in the door, they go up to the roof and let him down that way. Jesus is impressed by their faith and tells the man that his sins are forgiven. The scribes and Pharisees are skeptical of Jesus' authority to do this and offended that He would claim that ability. Jesus points out that it would be easy to claim that his sins are forgiven since that is not something that can be verified by men. To prove He can do this, Jesus tells the man to pick up his bed and walk. When the man does, it amazes the crowd.

Jesus now sees a man named Levi (Matthew) collecting taxes. When Jesus tells him to follow Him, Levi does. Afterward, Jesus goes to Levi's house for a meal. Naturally, there are many other tax collectors there. The scribes and Pharisees complain that Jesus ate with obvious sinners. Jesus' argument is that those who are sick need a doctor. Therefore, sinners need the Savior. Jesus does not point out here that all have sinned so the Jewish leaders also need a Savior. The tax collectors knew that they were in need of Jesus. The Jewish leaders thought they were above the need for Jesus.

He is asked why the followers of John the Baptist fasted but His don't. Jesus alludes to Himself as the bridegroom and says that the friends don't fast while the bridegroom is there. There will be plenty of reasons and time to fast when He is gone.

He now has a parable for them. He tells them that no one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment to patch an old one with. Also, you don't put new wine into an old wineskin. The new cloth will need to shrink and might cause another tear. Besides, who would damage a new garment to try and save an old? The new wine will still be fermenting, causing the formation of gas which could burst the old, inflexible skin. A new skin can stretch with the expanding wine. These sayings seem to indicate that trying to fit new into old does not always work well. The implication is that trying to fit the Law that Christ will bring into the pattern of the Law given by Moses is not going to work. Not only is there no way to merge the two successfully, in the end both will be ruined to the point of being useless.

On the Sabbath day, Jesus and His disciples are walking through a field and picking grain that they immediately eat. The Jewish leaders cry foul claiming they have violated the law of the Sabbath. Jesus brings up David and his men eating the showbread from the Tabernacle that only the Priests could eat. This was allowed because God said it was and He was Lord of the Tabernacle. Jesus informs them that He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

On another Sabbath, Jesus encounters a man with a withered hand. The Jewish leaders are watching to see what He will do. Jesus simply asks them if the Sabbath is for doing good or for doing evil, for helping or for harming. When no one answers, He heals the man. The Jewish leaders are furious with this.

Jesus takes time, at this point, to go off by Himself to pray. When He returns, He selects the twelve that are to be called Apostles. He then travels from Jerusalem to the coast of the Mediterranean teaching and healing.

Luke now records the teachings we often call the beatitudes. Jesus uses these words to give hope to the hopeless and to comfort the downtrodden. He also calls on them to love those that hate them or treat them badly. We should treat others the same way we would want to be treated if the roles were reversed. If we are only nice to those that are nice to us, what is the big deal? Even evil people will sometimes do that. The challenge is to be kind and merciful to those who are not that way toward us; to give to people who cannot repay it. We must always remember that God has been kind and merciful to us when we do not deserve it.

He also reminds us that we should be careful about the judgments we make on others. The goal is to be generous; not only with our physical blessings, but also with our spiritual and emotional blessing we can give to others. We are promised that God will reward us generously.

What will happen if a blind man tries to guide another blind man? Both will not end up where they want to be and they could be injured. He uses this to show that if we are to guide others, we need to make sure our own life is in order. We must remove the glaring problems from our own lives in order to help others with their problems.

We will be known by our fruit. In winter or early spring, you could easily convince me that an apple tree was an orange tree. I can't really tell the difference. I do, however, know the difference between an apple and an orange. Once that tree produces fruit, I will know exactly what kind of tree it is and you will no longer be able to fool me. Our lives should be the same way. Our fruit (words, actions, behavior, reactions, etc.) will tell the world who we are. We might be able to fool them for a time, but our works will find us out.

What good does it do to call Jesus "Lord" and not do what He asks? Jesus says that person is like a man who builds a house on a foundation of sand. He is told it won't hold and to use rock, but does it anyway. Predictably, it collapses with the wind, rain and flooding. However, if he would take the advice of master builders and dig deep to build it on firm rock, it would withstand the wind, rain and flooding. Jesus, the master spiritual builder, has given us the

proper way to structure our spiritual house. If we choose not to follow His instructions or try our own way, predictably, it will collapse under the pressures of life. If we do follow His instructions, our spiritual life will be able to stand against the trials that come.

Comment:

Kimra Grantham Robinson:

Thanks! Nice to be reminded of our goals first thing in the morning.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, brother Doug!

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Amen brother! Covenant confusion is the basis for most religious false teaching today!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! A lot of wonderful children songs ran through my mind while reading these passages tonight. One thing brought out at the study today is not allowing zeal to leave us. These passages are very familiar to us. May we always be zealous to read the Word. Tonight I give Christ honor and awe for the marvelous miracles He performed.

June 3: Luke 7-8 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for June 3, 2017

Luke 7-8

In Capernaum, some elders of the Jews approach Him on behalf of a centurion who had a dear servant who was sick. The first thing we learn is that he was concerned about a servant. This would not be typical behavior for a Roman soldier and tells us something about his character. Second, he believes Jesus has the ability to heal his servant. This is also not typical of a Roman soldier. Finally, we also find out that the Jewish leaders spoke highly of him. This would definitely not been true of your average Roman let alone a soldier. On their way to the centurion's home, other friends of the soldier arrive to express his belief that Jesus can heal his servant without actually being there. He gives the analogy of his own experience as a man in authority. If he wants a servant to do something, they do it. He believes that Jesus is similar, except that instead of having authority over physical servants, Jesus has authority over everything, even diseases. Jesus points out that He has not found that great of a faith, even among the Jews.

The next day, He sees a funeral procession that is carrying the dead only son of a widow. He has compassion on her and brings her son back to life in front of everyone. This creates quite a stir.

All of these events are reported to John the baptizer who sends servants to confirm that Jesus is the Messiah. They arrive to see many miracles by Jesus who tells them to tell John what they have seen. After they leave, Jesus tells the crowd about the importance of John's message.

While the people, even tax collectors, show their trust in God through the baptism of John, the Jewish leaders reject God and John's baptism.

Jesus compares the people to children that cannot decide what they want. One minute they want you to dance, the next they want you to cry. The Jewish leaders criticized John for being so cautious about what he ate or drank but they criticize Jesus for behaving more like them.

Jesus goes to a Pharisees house for a meal. A woman shows up and pours expensive oil on Jesus' feet after wiping them with her hair and tears. The Pharisee thinks to himself that if Jesus was really a prophet, He would know about the woman's past and tell her to leave Him alone. Jesus knows the Jews thoughts, so He tells them a parable about a creditor who had two men that owed him 500 denarii and 50 denarii respectively. The man forgives both of their debts. Jesus asks the Pharisee which of the debtors will love the creditor more? The Pharisee agrees that the one that owed more will appreciate the forgiveness more. Jesus explains that when He came in the house, the Pharisee did not even offer water for Him to wash His feet. This woman so appreciates His forgiveness, she was willing to wash His feet with her hair. Naturally, instead of learning the lesson intended, they question His ability to forgive sins. This leads me to two questions. First, how much did I owe that God forgives? Second, who is going to be most receptive to God's message of forgiveness?

We now find out that several women are making sure that Jesus and the twelve apostles have their physical needs taken care of while they are traveling. These include Mary Magdalene, who Jesus healed of seven demons, and Joanna, who was the wife of one of Herod's stewards. Under normal circumstances, these two women would have had nothing to do with each other. Jesus, and His purpose, bring them together.

When a large group of people gather to hear Him, He tells them a parable about a farmer that is spreading seed. Unfortunately, not all of it falls on good ground and is destroyed. What falls on good ground does grow and produce. His apostles want an explanation. Jesus explains the different soils as types of hearts that are hearing the word. We often make this about the seed we are sowing and where it lands, but perhaps more meaning for us is to ask what kind of soil are we?

Jesus then tells us not to hide our lives from the world. Instead, we should be bold about telling the world about our faith. He connects this with the previous parable by encouraging us to be careful about how we hear the word and what we do with it.

When Jesus' mother and brothers arrive, the crowd indicates their arrival. Jesus tells them that His family is not about physical relations, but about spiritual connections.

Jesus and the apostles get in a boat to cross the sea. After Jesus falls asleep, a storm comes up that threatens to sink the boat. The apostles become afraid and wake Him up. He is not concerned about the storm. He is concerned about their lack of faith. He stills the storm to increase their faith. Perhaps if we focused more on our faith, which comes through knowledge of the word of God, we would not be overly focused on the challenges we are facing.

In the area of the Gadarenes, Jesus encounters a man that is demon possessed. His state is so bad that he has no clothes and lives in the cemetery. The demons recognize Jesus immediately and beg Him not to torture or destroy them. Instead, they want Him to cast them into some swine. The swine run off a cliff and drown in a lake. The men that were feeding the swine, an interesting occupation for a Jew, run and tell everyone what happened. When the community comes to see Jesus, they also see the formerly demon possessed man clothed and calm. The people demand that Jesus leave the area. The formerly demon possessed man

wants to go with them, but Jesus tells him to go home and spread the word about what happened to him.

When Jesus returns to Galilee, He is welcomed with open arms. Even the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, falls down at His feet asking Him to come to his house to heal his daughter. On the way, a woman with an unstoppable bleeding reaches out and touches His clothes. She is immediately healed and Jesus also immediately knows what happened. She is afraid that she will be in trouble, but Jesus is merciful to her and commends her faith.

While this is going on, someone from Jairus' house arrives to tell them that the girl has died. Jesus encourages them to believe instead of being afraid, telling them that she is not dead, just sleeping. The crowd scoffs at this idea, but Jesus goes in, takes her by the hand and raises her back to life. This made a big impression with Jairus, his wife and all the people.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Good words!

Comment:

Joanne Caffie:
I had several questions but now I can't remember all of them... So I'll ask the one I can for now
The demons who recognized Jesus asked Him not to torture or destroy them but instead cast them into the nearby swine. The swine ended up running off a cliff and drowned anyway. What am I missing here?

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:
I believe they wanted to avoid any retribution from Christ, which they knew He had the power to enforce. By being sent into the swine, they were saved that punishment but still released their hold on the man. I cannot answer the question about what happened to them after that.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Matthew 12:43-45 suggests to me that the demon(s)/evil spirit(s) have no interest in housing in animals, but they would do it temporarily to avoid what they perceived would be Jesus' treatment of them. So, there being no point in remaining in the swine, they quickly dispatched them to go on to other souls. These are just some thoughts. Hope they are helpful.

Comment:

Craig Hensley:
A good lesson. As far as the demon possessed man: what a blessing he was given. Through his death, Christ gave us a similar freedom:

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NIV)

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug Twaddell! I'm fascinated by the two times the gospels mention Jesus was amazed. Here with the centurion and earlier in Nazareth at unbelief. May we reflect the centurion's belief!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Joanne Caffie, I think it is intriguing that demons can appeal to the Son of God for mercy under the Will of God and be heard. Justice and the purpose of God and the times established by the Father apply to all, even demons, and even the Son of God. Jesus had the power to torture them (as they had tortured their victim), but he did not, and had not come to do so. That thought reflects their character, in contrast to his. Nor had he come to execute judgment ahead of time. Even demons have their "rights" to face judgment as ordained at the proper time. So Jesus rescues the demon oppressed, but is not vindictive, does not violate the Father's order, and is in every way true to his purpose to seek and save the lost.

The swine "solution" was proposed by the demons, and was no solution at all, highlighting their folly. Jesus did not prevent them influencing the swine, and as Butch O'Neal observed that seemed to be a poor interface for them to make a satisfactory connection, and the swine went mad and drowns themselves. No net gain for the demons, but Jesus allowed them their plea. The contrast between the calm and sensible hostage set free and the insanity of the pigs highlights the contrast between the work of Jesus and that of the devil, and drives home the reality that while God watches over the sparrows (and pigs) one human is worth far more than many sparrows (or pigs).

Replies:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Charles!

June 10: Luke 9-10 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for June 10, 2017

Luke 9-10

Jesus sends His apostles out on their own. He gives them power over demons, to cure diseases, to heal the sick and to preach the kingdom of God. His specific instructions specify that they are to not take any provisions for the trip. This is a test of faith for both the apostles and those that believe their words. He also gives them permission to move on if the people in a certain area do not respond. He points out that this is a judgement against those people and not the apostles.

Herod begins to take note of the things that Jesus is doing. He is understandably confused and concerned. He knows that he had John the baptizer beheaded. Some believe that Jesus is John back from the dead. Others are convinced that He is Elijah. Because of these different

opinions and because of the amazing stories being told about Him, Herod is very interested in meeting Jesus.

When the apostles return, Jesus wants to take them off by themselves for a while. However, the crowds follow wanting to see miracles, be healed and hear more teachings. Toward the end of the day, Jesus asks the apostles to give them some food. The problem is that they only have 5 loaves and two fish. They know that is not nearly enough for the crowd which has about 5000 men, not to mention women and children. Jesus blesses the food and they are able to feed everyone and collect twelve baskets of leftovers.

When Jesus is finally alone with His apostles, He asks them who people are saying that he is. They tell Him that some say John the Baptist but some Elijah or one of the other prophets who had come back from the dead. What Jesus really wants to talk about is who the apostles think He is. Peter speaks up with the correct answer. Jesus reminds them that He must suffer many things because the Jewish leadership would reject Him.

Jesus also tells them that following Him has a great cost. His followers must give up their own will and accept God's will for their lives. Jesus gave us the greatest example by giving up (temporarily) His position in heaven to accept the will of the Father.

About eight days later, Jesus takes Peter, James and John to a mountain where His appearance is transformed right in front of them and Moses and Elijah appear. Peter suggests that they build three monuments to them, but he is interrupted when a cloud surrounds them and God speaks from the cloud.

As Jesus is teaching the next day, a man begs Jesus to cast a demon out of his son. He had asked the apostles to do it, but they could not. Jesus expresses frustration with them and then sends the demon away. When everyone is amazed, He tells His apostles that He will be betrayed. They don't understand what Jesus meant and are afraid to ask.

They begin arguing among themselves who would be the greatest. Jesus presents a child to them as an example of the humility they need to learn. John comments that they saw someone casting out demons in Jesus name and told him to stop. To their surprise, Jesus tells them to leave him alone. Their pride was causing them to think that they were better than others.

Jesus begins to focus on getting back to Jerusalem. On the way, He goes through a town in Samaria. They are not happy because Jesus isn't staying long. James and John want to call fire from heaven like Elijah did with the prophets of Baal. Jesus chastises them by reminding them that their purpose is to save lives, not destroy them.

Someone boldly tells Jesus they will follow Him anywhere. Jesus reminds him that He is homeless. When He calls someone else to follow Him, they want to bury their father first. Jesus tells them to get their priorities straight. Another person wants to see their family one more time. Jesus tells them that looking to the past is no way to prepare for the future.

Jesus appoints seventy others and sends them in pairs to prepare towns for His arrival. He gives them similar instructions that He gave the apostles earlier. He also tells them to eat what is put before them (sound familiar parents), heal the sick and preach the kingdom. He hints that it will not be easy by telling them they will be sheep among wolves. If a town refuses them, He compares that city to Sodom. He points out some specific towns that had already rejected Him and says that if Tyre and Sidon had seen the same miracle, they would have repented. If we reject those preaching Jesus, we are rejecting Jesus. If we reject Jesus, we are rejecting the Father.

The seventy come back and are amazed that even the demons were subject to them. Jesus points out that He saw the fall of Satan, indicating His preeminence over him, and He gave a portion of that authority to them. He reminds them that they should not celebrate the power given to them. Instead, they should celebrate the mercy shown them.

Jesus thanks the Father for giving Him teachings that can be understood in their simplicity but can confound those that are not honestly seeking the truth. He then addresses His followers with the realization that they are seeing things and understanding things that the prophets and fathers of old wanted to experience and know.

A lawyer has a question for Jesus. He asks, "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asks the man to answer his own question. The man quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus simply agrees with him. The lawyer should have stopped there. However, he asks a follow-up question, "Who is my neighbor?" His only reason for asking this was to make himself feel better. We can fall into this same trap if we are not careful. We can attempt to find a justification for our behavior instead of following an obvious truth. Jesus decides to answer this question with a hypothetical scenario. A Jew is mugged and left for dead on a road. A priest and a Levite each refuse to help. A Samaritan, who the Jew would probably not have helped, renders aid at a great cost. Jesus wants to know which of the three was a neighbor to the unfortunate man. The lawyer obviously knows that it was the Samaritan. Jesus tells him to do the same.

Jesus finds Himself at Mary and Martha's house. Mary is listening intently to Jesus teach. Martha is busy with preparing a meal. When Martha asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her, Jesus has an interesting answer. He acknowledges that Martha is worried about many things (and does not discourage her from those), but He also commends Mary for her choice to listen to His teachings. He tells Martha that Mary has chosen something good that can never be taken away. If we are so busy with too many things (even if they are good deeds or causes) that those become our focus instead of learning the teachings of God, we are in danger of emphasizing something that can draw us away.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thanks, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thank you, Doug Twaddell! So many good lessons in these two chapters. I was reminded of the 70/72 (manuscripts conflict on #). Glad Luke records this. Two by two - a practice continued in the early church. Today I'm thankful we have two witnesses sent out to the Philippine brethren . 😊 May we praise God for revealing the Word despite language barriers. And may they return with joy!

June 17: Luke 11-12 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 6-17-2017

Luke 11-12

Jesus' disciples ask Him to teach them to pray. Jesus gives them an example prayer. Jesus is not giving them a series of words that are to be used as the perfect prayer. He is showing them concepts that they can include their personal prayers.

Jesus includes a parable that depicts a man that has a traveler that arrives late in the night. Needing to feed him, he knocks on another friend's door to ask for some bread. Jesus admits that the door may not be opened the first time. If the man persists, the door will eventually be opened. Jesus uses this to encourage us to persistently ask God for the things we need. He emphasized the teaching by pointing out that if imperfect human fathers know how to give their children good things, how much better will God be at knowing what is best for us.

Luke also takes time to point out that Jesus casts out a demon that could not speak. Afterward, some of those watching begin to reason that He is casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus counters this with 3 points. First, why would Satan harm his own efforts to influence humans? Second, if only Satan can cast out demons, by what power are those who the Jewish leaders accept casting out demons? Finally, if Jesus is casting out demons, it proves that He has more power than Satan who is giving power to the demons.

Jesus also points out that when He frees someone from a demon, they are not automatically in the clear. If the demon leaves and the victim does not successfully fill the emptied area of their being with something good, the demon will return, with friends, and torment the person even more than they did before. This should also serve as a warning for Jesus' followers (us). When we overcome a temptation or sin, if we don't replace that part of our lives with something acceptable to God, we can more easily fall back into the same issue later.

When some near Jesus begin praising His mother, Mary, as blessed, Jesus takes no time to change the blessing to those that hear Him and obey Him. More than once Jesus does not allow over-praising of Mary. Interesting considering much of the religious world today spends so much time honoring, praising and praying to her. Jesus is not pleased.

Jesus recalls the account of the prophet Jonah. He tells the people that He will offer them the sign of Jonah. Just like Jonah called the city of Nineveh to repent, Jesus is calling people to repent. He also points out two cases of judgement against the Jews as a nation. First, the queen of the south (probably Sheba) recognized the wisdom of Solomon, but many do not recognize the greater wisdom of Christ. Second, Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah but many are refusing to repent at the preaching of Jesus who is greater than Jonah.

Jesus makes some references to light. A light should be placed where it can be useful. Like many other times, light here symbolically represents truth. If our spiritual eyes are good and opened wide, then plenty of spiritual truth is able to enter our lives. If our spiritual eyes are closed or not working correctly, then very little or no spiritual truth can enter our lives. We also must be careful that we do not mistake lies for the truth (darkness for light).

At this point a Pharisee invites Jesus to dinner. Jesus does not wash His hands according to the traditions of the Pharisees. Jesus makes a point about this when the man inwardly questions this. He warns us about being more concerned about keeping up appearances and not ensuring purity throughout our lives. When the lawyers take offense because they feel Jesus is implicating them, He addresses them with the same concerns. At this point, all the Jewish religious leaders begin to ask questions designed to trick Jesus into saying something they can use against Him.

During all this, a large crowd begins to gather. Jesus addresses His disciples by telling them that they must avoid the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. We should not fear those who can harm us physically. We should fear God, who will make the determination of our eternal destination.

That determination will be based on our actions during our lives here. If we honor Christ, God will give us honor in the judgement.

Someone in the crowd asks Jesus to confront his brother about a disputed inheritance. Instead of issuing a ruling, Jesus warns about the dangers of covetousness and trusting in physical wealth. He tells a parable about a farmer who brings in a bumper crop. The man decides to tear down his existing barns and build bigger barns and then he will sit back and enjoy his wealth. God informs him that his life is over and asks the question, "Whose will all these things be?" Instead of focusing on physical wealth, we should focus on spiritual riches.

Jesus then reminds His disciples (us) that they should not be overly concerned about their physical issues. We should do our best to be good stewards of what God has provided, but worrying about it will not accomplish anything positive. What we are the most concerned about is a telltale sign of what we deem the most important in our lives.

Jesus now talks addresses being a good steward. A good servant will always be prepared for the master to return. An evil servant not be prepared for the master or a thief. Jesus expects us to always be ready for His return.

Jesus talks about a fire that He will bring to the earth that He wishes was already burning. Unfortunately, he reminds them, He has a difficult trial to go through first. When that fire is brought, it will divide people, even families. No doubt this is what has happened. The world, even families, are divided on their belief or unbelief in Him.

Jesus reminds us that we as humans are able to discern what will happen with the weather and prepare for it, but do not often prepare for things that are much more important. He points out that instead of going before a judge to resolve a disagreement, we should do everything we can to settle the matter before it gets that far. The judge may decide against us. The saying I have heard is this: "Most people plan more for a week-long vacation than they do for their eternal life."

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thanks, brother Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
So many good lessons you've highlighted from these chapters. Thanks Doug Twaddell

June 24: Luke 13-14 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for June 24, 2017

Luke 13-14

Luke records Jesus' response to an incident with Pilate and some Galileans. Somehow he mixed their blood with a sacrifice. None of the other Gospel writers mention this and no obvious record can be found in any of the early church writings. This leads to many suppositions about what Luke is referring to. While I may not know the exact details of this event or the tower of Siloam mentioned next, I still believe it happened. Jesus wants those listening to think about whether this happened because they were worse sinners than other

people in Jerusalem. This is important because they definitely tended to believe that if something bad happened to you, it must be because you have angered God in some way. We, too, must fight against this concept. It is so easy to look at someone's misfortune (or our own) and take this same logic path.

While He is teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath, a woman is there who could not stand up straight. Jesus heals her. Naturally, the Jewish leaders are not happy. Jesus points out that even they will do necessary work on the Sabbath, like caring for their animals. Surely the health of the woman was more important than a drink for an ox.

Jesus compares the kingdom to a mustard seed and leaven. One is small and grows into a large tree. The other is small but can influence large amount of dough. We have a saying, "Dynamite comes in small packages." The teachings of Christ have the ability to do tremendous things in our lives and can influence many people through even one individual.

When someone asks if only a few will be saved, Jesus acknowledges that it is a narrow gate. He emphasizes the point by telling them that many will think that they are going to be allowed to enter, but will be denied.

In a turn of events, the Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod wants to kill Him. Jesus is not concerned. He not only wants to get to Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecies about His death, He laments about how much He would love to comfort and protect the people, but they will not allow Him.

Once again Jesus is in the house of a Pharisee on the Sabbath and once again a man with a handicap is present. Naturally, Jesus is going to heal him, but this time He takes the initiative by asking if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. When they refuse to answer Him, He heals the man and reminds them that they would help one of their animals that were in trouble, even if it on the Sabbath.

As Jesus watches them jockey for the most favored seats at the dinner, He gives them some advice. When they force themselves into the best seats, the host then must embarrass them to direct them to their proper seat which is in a lower position. Instead, He says they should go sit in the worst possible seat so that the host can, in front of everyone, move them up to a more important place. He also tells the host that instead of inviting their rich and powerful friends to the dinner so they can return the favor, he should invite those that are poor or unfortunate even though they could never return the favor. To emphasize this teaching, Jesus then tells a parable about a man that plans a great supper. When he lets those invited know that it is ready, they all have different excuses why they cannot attend. The man tells the servant to bring in the poor, maimed, lame and blind to eat the supper.

Jesus also teaches that there is a cost to following Him and we should consider that before committing to it. When we consider the cost, though, we also should consider the consequences of refusing. When put on the balance scales, Paul tells us that the eternal weight of glory far exceeds the light affliction we must endure now. (2 Cor 4:17)

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thank you brother! I sure do appreciate Jesus!

Comment:

Debbie Bolinger:

Amen!! I do too appreciate what Jesus has done for us everyday!! 😊😊😊

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug! Ditto what Steven and Debbie said!!!! :D

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

And ditto what Butch said! Thank you. Job's friends certainly had the mindset that Job must have sinned because of the misfortune that befell him. As you say, we have the same mindset today. Those who prosper must be more beloved by God than those who struggle in poverty. The Pharisees were all about the rules and prided themselves on observing them at the cost of understanding the spirit behind those rules. Do we tend to do likewise - putting too much emphasis on following church traditions rather than the spirit? (i.e. 1 cup churches vs individual cup, greet each other with a holy kiss vs. not)

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! To the best of my knowledge there are 7 recorded miracles on the Sabbath. This would be a good short lesson/topic for a young man to deliver to a congregation.

July 1: Luke 15-16 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 7-1-17

Luke 15-16

When the religious leadership again complains that Jesus is spending time with sinners, He confronts them with a series of scenarios. If a man has 100 sheep and only 99 are accounted for, he will make it a priority to find that lost sheep. When he does, it will be a joyous celebration. The same thing occurs in heaven when a sinner repents and turns back to God. If a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one, she will search everywhere until she finds it. When she does, she will call her neighbors to celebrate with her. All of God's angels rejoice when a sinner is saved through obedient belief.

He emphasizes these concepts with a longer parable about a man that had two sons. The younger son decided he wanted his inheritance early so he could try and make his own way. The father gives it to him, but the young man recklessly spends all of it and now has nothing. He is finally relegated to taking care of pigs (a humiliating experience for a Jew) and actually considers eating the slop that he is giving them (not very appetizing). When he comes to himself and realizes his position, he decides to return home. He does not feel worthy to return as a son, so he hopes that his father will at least hire him as one of the servants. To his surprise, the father celebrates the return of his son with a feast. This does not sit well with the older son who had not squandered his inheritance but had been working diligently for his father. The father points out to the older son that he loves both of them. Since he stayed, he will have all that the father has. However, it is right to celebrate the return of the son that left.

The father explains feeling as if the younger son had died and was now brought back to life. This must be how God views us when we stray away from Him and then return. No wonder the angels rejoice.

Jesus gives an odd parable about a man who manages the business affairs of a rich man. When he is accused of mishandling his responsibilities, the rich man tells him to put everything in order and leave. The manager is not sure what to do. He does not want to do physical labor, but he does not want to beg, either. He devises a plan that will put him in the good graces of the other rich men his master does business with. To do this, he goes to everyone that owes his master money or goods and discounts what they owe if they will pay it immediately. His master is impressed with this shrewd financial maneuver. We are similar in that we are only managers of our physical wealth, we do not own it and one day it will be taken away. While we have access to it, we should use it to place ourselves in a position to receive spiritual blessings. Those that are faithful with a little that is not their own will be given much that will be their own. We cannot serve both the physical and the spiritual. At some point they will be in conflict and we will be forced to choose.

When the Pharisees, who loved their riches, made light of this, Jesus condemned them for wanting to appear Godly without actually changing their hearts.

Luke records a brief statement about divorce from Jesus. If this is taken by itself, it would appear that if a man remarries after a divorce it is adultery and any man that marries a divorced woman commits adultery. However, we must take this in concert with other records of Jesus' teachings as well as instructions from the apostles that give further insight and explanation. God hates divorce. That is a fact that He makes abundantly clear. In our time, we can surely see why this is. We also must realize, though, that divorce is not an unforgivable sin. We can be forgiven and God will remember it no more. We must also recognize that all sin carries with it consequences. Even when we are forgiven, the consequences may remain and we must accept those with humility, patience and understanding.

Jesus now gives a parable about two men. One is rich and the other, Lazarus, is a beggar that is desperately sick and hungry. All he wants is some crumbs from the rich man. When they both die, Lazarus is depicted as being carried to the bosom of Abraham (a place of comfort) while the rich man is depicted as being buried but nothing else. The rich man finds himself being tormented and can see Lazarus in the distance at peace. He begs Abraham to let Lazarus put a drop of water on his tongue. It would appear that the rich man has become the beggar. When the request is denied, the rich man changes his focus and wants Lazarus to be sent back to warn his brothers. He realizes that they are headed for the same place he is and that is something he would like to prevent. Abraham tells him that they have all the information they need to change their lives. The rich man knows they will not listen to the prophets but argues that if someone raised from the dead, that would get their attention. Abraham points out the reality that if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not listen even if someone did rise from the dead. Remember, Jesus is telling this to people that will be witnesses of Him rising from the dead and knows that some will listen but most will not.

Comment:

Steven Wright:
Amen!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, brother Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Doug! It's a great blessing to be with you and other brethren this week. ❤️ I'm so grateful for everyone's faithfulness to the study. It brings great joy! One takeaway I have from today's study is a reminder that, "what is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight." And the crumbs from the table of our Lord is so much more than we deserve. How blessed we are that He has great compassion on us!

July 8: Luke 17-18 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 7-8-17

Luke 17-18

Jesus begins with the reality that, even between brethren, issues will arise. The solution for these issues is communication and forgiveness. Even if the offense seems to keep repeating because they are having difficulty changing the behavior, we are to forgive them repeatedly. The apostles, realizing the difficulty of this, ask Jesus to increase their faith. His response to that request is twofold. First, if you have enough faith, you can deal with any situation or difficulty that will come along. Second, if the master tells the servant to do something, there is no expectation for the master to thank him. He has simply done what was he was told. Jesus, as our master, has given us instructions. While we are to do those, He also expects us to go above and beyond the expectations. If we only do what is minimally required, we are unprofitable servants. In Matthew 25:30, Jesus says they will be cast into outer darkness.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus encounters 10 men afflicted with leprosy. When they beg Him for mercy, He tells them to show themselves to the priest. This was how the Law of Moses instructed to determine if a person was still leprous or was cured. The vast majority of Jesus' healings have an immediate effect on the one that is healed. This time it appears that the healing was either gradual or happened away from Him as they went to see the priest. When they realized they are healed, only one of the men immediately returns to Jesus. He falls down on his face and glorified God and gave thanks to Jesus. I may be reading too much into this, but it seems to me the man knew that the healing was from God (giving Him glory for the source of the healing) and that Jesus was the giver of that power (giving Him thanks for the healing). Even if that is not the case, the man recognized the connection between Jesus and the Father and praised both. Jesus commends him for his faith.

When the Pharisees ask about the timing of the coming kingdom, Jesus assures them that it is not something that you can observe with the physical senses. He asserts that the kingdom will be internal in each individual. He follows this with a discussion for His disciples. He warns them that some will try to pinpoint the time and place of the coming kingdom, but not to listen to them. It is at this point that we can see that Jesus is speaking of His final appearing in judgement. It will come as fast as the lightning moves across the sky. People will be going about their regular day and making plans for the future, just like in the days of Noah before the flood. He mentions that the people of Sodom were preparing for the future, not the end, when God destroyed the city. Jesus reminds them of Lot's wife, who could not help but turn and look to see what was happening to their possessions and friends. We should not care about the world's riches, but instead look toward eternity.

Jesus gives a couple of statements that have been misunderstood by many. In 17:35-36, Jesus says that some will be taken and the others left. Many have understood this as "left behind." The Greek word (Strong's #G863) does not mean just that. It also includes the idea of

being sent away, yielded up, let go, not to keep, etc. Instead of “left behind,” a better understanding would be “left out.” When contrasted with the word “taken” (strongs #G3880), which means to take with one’s self, to join with one’s self, to receive something. Jesus is describing some people being taken with Him and some being left out. This is consistent with Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where he describes those believers that are alive being “caught up with Him (Jesus) in the air.” Those that are left out will be the goats described by Jesus in Matthew 25 that are “sent away” to destruction and “left out” of paradise.

Jesus tells them a parable to encourage them to pray and not give up. A widow that cannot seem to get justice continually brings her case before a judge that is described as unjust. Even the unjust judge eventually grants the woman’s petition in order to keep her from coming back. God is not an unjust judge. He will avenge His people.

When he noticed that some were thinking of themselves as righteous and others as sinners, He told a parable about a Pharisee that went to the temple to pray. He used his prayer to remind God how good he was, of the good deeds he did and thanked God that he was not like other men, especially the tax collector that was nearby. Meanwhile, the tax collector used his prayer to beg God for mercy because he knew he was not worthy of God’s grace. Jesus tells them that the tax collector was justified, because he humbled himself before God, and the Pharisee was not, because he lifted himself up before God.

When two infants are brought to Him, the disciples try to keep them away. Jesus uses them as an object lesson. He points out that we adults must believe in the kingdom of God as a little child believes the things a parent tells them, even though they might not fully understand. This is faith.

A ruler approaches Jesus to ask what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus reminds him of the commandments from the Law of Moses, which the man says he has kept his whole life. Jesus informs him that there is one more thing that he should do. He tells him to sell everything and give the proceeds to the poor. Because he loved his riches, he seemed unable to do this. Again, Jesus uses this as an object lesson. He points out that it is difficult for a rich person to not trust in his riches but instead trust in God, thus making it difficult for him to enter the kingdom. Since the Jews understood that riches were a sign of God’s favor, they question whether anyone can be saved. Jesus assures them that with God, all things are possible.

Peter, never one to hold back, points out that they, the apostles, had left all to follow Him. Jesus assures them that there is a great reward for those that are willing to leave material riches behind for Him.

Jesus now takes them aside and tells them what will happen after they arrive in Jerusalem. He reminds them that all the things that will happen were spoken of by the prophets. He included the humiliation He would endure, the physical scourging He would suffer and His resurrection on the third day. Unfortunately, they did not understand any of these things.

As they approach Jericho, Jesus heals a blind man named Bartimaeus. As the man follows Jesus, he glorifies God and all the people that knew him glorified God, too.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Great study, Doug! I sincerely appreciate your notes on these two chapters. On the 2nd coming - days of Noah/Lot - I was focusing more on how disobedient the world was during those days & will be at His return. I think I was missing the point. The two thoughts go hand in hand but I agree it's referencing that people will be going about planning for today/future rather than

looking toward eternal life. Just this week Steven referenced Lot's wife in a comment and Tad Morris shared a good story on teaching Nate. We are to remember Lot's wife & be prepared to leave this world without looking back. Fix your eyes on Jesus! Another take-away is Jesus with the little children. It's the first I realized He was holding babies. Finally, I so appreciate the 1 leper and Bartimaeus' example of thanksgiving. "Your faith has made you well," had immediate physical benefits but also renders a more important healing of eternal salvation, praise be to Christ. Thanks again, Doug, for all that you've taught in the name of Jesus Christ!

Comment:

Lori Watt:

I would appreciate some thoughts on 18:19... this statement of Jesus has seemed strange to me. How is He not good?

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Did he say, "I'm not good?"

Luke 18:19 (NIV)

19 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone.

There is no assertion of Jesus not being good. The assertion is that only God is good. So, why did the man call Jesus good? Did he think Jesus was God? Since I do believe Jesus is God, I have an answer to the question, of why I would call Jesus good.

Folks ought to think of such things when they call men "reverend" and similar language. Is he God? If he is, then okay, otherwise, why?

Replies:

Lori Watt:

Thanks, Charles!

Denise Waits:

Thank you for clearing that up. :)

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:

Amen.

July 15: Luke 19-20 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 7-15-17

Luke 19-20

As Jesus travels through Jericho, He sees a man up in a tree. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector who was too short to see over the crowds. Jesus makes the decision to go to his house. Some that saw Him begin to complain. When Zacchaeus explains the charitable giving that he does and promises to pay back four times over anything he has taken dishonestly. Jesus grants salvation for his dutiful following of the law.

He offers another parable when some are misunderstanding the nature and timing of the kingdom. A nobleman gives 10 of his servant's one mina each. When the master returns, some of the servants have increased their mina many times over. However, one servant simply hid his so it could be returned. The mina is taken from the servant and given to another. The lesson is that we are to be good stewards of what God gives us. If we are not, what we have will be taken away.

When Jesus arrives at Mount Olivet near Jerusalem, He sends two of His disciples into town find a certain donkey colt. They bring it to Him and He rides it into the city. Multitudes meet Him calling out praises to Him and spreading our clothes on the ground.

Jesus enters the temple grounds and drives out those that are taking advantage of the poor that need to exchange Roman money for coins acceptable to the Temple or to buy a sacrifice. Jesus continued to go to the Temple every day to teach and the Jewish religious leadership began planning how to kill Him.

One day in the Temple, they approach him wanting to know what authority He had to do these things. He asks them a question in return. "Was John's baptism from God or men?" They cannot answer the question. If they say "from God," the follow up question will be, "Why didn't you believe him?" If they say from men, the mass of people that believed John to be from God will revolt. So they simply say, "We don't know." Jesus informs them that He will not tell them where His authority is from, then.

Instead, He tells them a parable. A man planted a vineyard and went away, leaving it to hired vinedressers. When the time for harvest arrived, he sent a servant to collect what was his. The vinedressers beat him and sent him away. This happens two more times. The owner then sends his son thinking that the vinedressers will respect him. They kill the son hoping that they will be able to keep the inheritance. There is no doubt that this was meant to indict the Jewish leadership as the vinedressers. God had sent many to them and they mistreated and killed them. Now God sent His Son and they are going to be filled with pride and desire for power that will lead them to kill Him.

At this point, the Jewish leadership has had enough. They begin to attempt to infiltrate Jesus' followers with the goal of catching Him saying something that they can take to the Romans as an accusation. One of the questions they ask is whether it is lawful to pay taxes to the Roman government. Jesus asks them whose image is on the tax money. It is Caesar's. Jesus instructs them to give to Caesar what is his and give to God what is His. No matter how hard they tried, they could not get Him to say anything punishable by the Romans.

The Sadducees approach Jesus with a question about who someone would be married to after the resurrection. Jesus assures them that there is no marriage in the resurrection. This is interesting because they did not even believe in a resurrection. Because of that, Jesus takes the lesson a step farther. He informs them that even Moses believed in a resurrection. At the burning bush, God said, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." He said this using the present tense. Obviously God recognizes that even though they are physically dead, they live on spiritually.

Jesus brings up a point for the scribes to consider. They knew and taught that the Christ would be the son of David. However, David wrote about the Christ being his Lord (master). Why did David call one of his sons (descendants) Lord? Jesus then warns the people to watch out for the scribes. He explains that they love to look very religious and have the honor and praise that comes with being a leader, but they do it all for show. This should also be taken as a warning for us both to look out for people like that, but also to make every effort not to become like them.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thanks, Doug!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Thank you.

Comment:

Joanne Caffie:
Thanks Doug. We've heard the phrase over & over again "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob" but I never thought of God's use of this phrase to be in the present tense.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
Comments on Luke 20:18? I've always read the first and last halves of this verse to both be negative towards those that reject Jesus. Tonight for some reason I read it differently in my mind. In light of Ezekiel talking about removing/breaking my heart of stone could perhaps the first half of this verse maybe refer to my old life being shattered on the Rock of Christ and being made into a new creation? Tonight this verse reminded me of the chorus of a song in the blue book.

PICK UP THE BROKEN PIECES AND BRING THEM TO THE LORD
PICK UP THE BROKEN PIECES TRUST IN HIS HOLY WORD
HE WILL PUT YOU BACK TOGETHER AND MAKE YOUR LIFE COMPLETE
JUST PLACE THE BROKEN PIECES AT THE SAVIORS FEET.

Replies:

Charles Fry:
I've never thought of that passage that way, but it is Biblical truth that some things (including our sinful, prideful self) have to be broken to come to the Lord. <http://www.livwat.com/articles/10013.html>

Doug Twaddell:
When I look at the Greek for "fall" in that verse, the majority of the uses are centered around the idea of falling from prosperity or falling prostrate in homage. We could look at it as our choice to humble ourselves willingly before Christ or He will humble us (all will kneel before Him).

Also, the Greek translated broken means exactly that. When we humble ourselves before Christ, we allow ourselves to be broken so that he can reshape our lives. That song is a great reminder of that process. However, at the end of the verse, the words "grind" and "powder" (KJV) are the same Greek word that can describe the process of winnowing the chaff to separate the grain. Jesus very well may have been connecting the concept of judgement harvest that He uses other places. If we don't choose to willingly break ourselves on Him, He will separate us like chaff from wheat which is good for nothing and is thrown into the fire.

Marc Hermon:
nice article Charles Fry

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! Also praising God for granting you good health these past 3 weeks during 2 VBS and the Midwest Bible Campout. I love the story of Zacchaeus. He's an example of one who walks in footsteps of Abraham's faith.

July 22: Luke 21-22 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 7-22-17

Luke 21-22

As Jesus watches people bring money as a gift to God, He uses the occasion to point out an example of how God and man think differently. Man sees a gift, especially money, and gives it importance and value based on the monetary amount. God sees a gift, any gift, and gives it importance and value based on the obedience to Him first and the degree of the sacrifice for the individual second. The size of the monetary value is not important to Him. We must keep this in mind. We often devalue our own talents and gifts because we look at them in terms of human value instead of Godly value.

Jesus, as others point out the beauty and majesty of the Temple, tells them that a day is coming that it will sit in ruins. Naturally, they want to know when this will happen and how they can know it will happen before hand. Jesus begins by telling them not to follow those that come along claiming to be Him and not to panic when they see tragedies and wars occur. All of these things, both natural and man-caused, will always continue. He warns them that persecutions will be brought against them, but they are not to be feared. Instead, they should understand that they will be opportunities for them to spread the Gospel. He also tells them that some of them will suffer to the point of death. Again, they are not to let this deter them. No amount of persecution, even death, can cause them to lose their soul if they remain faithful through patience.

Jesus tells them that when they see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, they are to leave immediately. This is when not only the destruction of the Temple will occur, but also great loss of life as God allows the Gentiles to take over the promised land because of Israel's unfaithfulness.

After all of these things, Jesus says that then they can begin to look for the second coming. Even though they wanted specific details and signs, Jesus provides them only with general statements that, as with most prophecies before they are fulfilled, can be interpreted many different ways. However, these statements cannot be taken out of context or seen as contradictory to other teachings from God's word about the second coming. We know that it will happen as fast as the lightning moves across the sky and that everyone will be going about their normal business, just like in the days of Noah.

Jesus now tells them a parable. He tells them that just like they can look at trees to see when the seasons are about to change, they will be able to know when the kingdom is near. He also assures them that it will arrive during this generation. Since Jesus has not returned, we must look at another kingdom that came during that time span. This would fit with the coming of the Church. However, it is also possible that when Jesus referred to "this generation," he was not speaking of a short generation of people, but the longer time frame of the generation after the Law of Moses which would include us. If that is the case, He could be speaking of the judgement day.

Either way, Jesus closes by reminding them not to get so caught up in this physical life that we that we are not ready spiritually for the judgement. We should always be watching, always be ready and always be praying as that day comes closer.

We now see Jesus preparing with His apostles to eat the Passover as the Jewish religious leaders try to determine the best way to have Him killed. They find their man with Judas, as he decides to betray Jesus for money. Jesus tells His apostles that they will find a room in Jerusalem where the owner will allow them to gather. Jesus expresses how much he has wanted to eat this with them. It is an interesting statement because Jesus knows that this will be His last meal before His death. This is the expression of how much He has wanted to reach this point in His obedience to the Father. This is the culmination of all the Fathers planning, the Holy Spirits power and the Sons efforts. We should understand from this the depth of His love, dedication and faithfulness toward us.

At the end of the meal, Jesus explains how He wants His followers to remember His sacrifice. He also points out that one of them will betray Him.

Once again, Jesus must deal with their inability to understand that serving others is more important than seeking glory for themselves.

Jesus also informs Peter that He will betray Him. Peter, as he usually did, fervently disagrees. Jesus assures him that he will and gives him a sign so he will know when it has happened. Jesus also tells them that they will no need to prepare themselves so they can continue after He is gone. Instead of trying to understand what Jesus is speaking of, they point out that there are two swords and surely that will be enough. They miss His point entirely.

They go to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus prays and warns them to stay alert. While there, Judas arrives with the Jewish leadership in tow. After he points out Christ, Peter wields his sword and cuts off the ear of the High Priests servant. Jesus heals the man and tells Peter that this is what is supposed to happen.

When they take Jesus away, Peter follows to see what will happen. Over a span of a little more than an hour, Peter denies knowing Jesus 3 times. As the rooster crows, Jesus looks at Peter. I can only imagine the emotions that were contained in that look (betrayal, disappointment, loneliness, pain, perhaps a little "I told you so," "Do you believe me now?") After this, Peter remembers Jesus' prediction and leaves the area crushed.

Jesus is now mocked, beaten, blindfolded and smacked in the face. The council prods Him with questions about whether He is the Christ. Jesus points out to them that not only will they not believe Him, nothing He says will compel them to release Him. When they ask Him if He is the Son of God, He admits that He is. At this point, they feel they have enough evidence to convict Him of blaaphemy.

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:

The recounting of this story always brings the sadness and the reality that had to prevail; God's will.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, brother Doug!

Comment:

Janet Gordon Gentry:

I always enjoy hearing your perspective and recounting of the scriptures! Great thoughts. Thanks!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Luke's account always pricks my heart and gives me chills. I also appreciate your thoughts for these passages Doug. Paragraph 1 would make a good collection table talk.

July 29: Luke 23-24 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 7-29-17

Luke 23-24

Jesus is taken to Pilate and falsely accused of teaching that the Jews should not pay taxes to the Roman government. Jesus acknowledges to Pilate that He is the King of the Jews, yet Pilate can find no legitimate reason that Jesus should be killed. When Pilate realizes that Jesus is from Galilee, He decides to send Him to Herod, who is governing that area for Rome.

Herod is excited to see Jesus. He has heard of the miracles being performed and is hoping to see one for himself. Jesus, however, knows that Herod does not have the authority of Pilate. Jesus has the goal of being condemned to crucifixion and Pilate, not Herod, can do that. When Jesus refuses to entertain Herod, He is sent back to Pilate.

Pilate consults with the Jewish leaders to tell them that, since he has found nothing worthy of a death sentence, he is going to chastise Jesus and let Him go. This would be part of the tradition of pardoning a prisoner at the time of Passover. The Jews insist that Barabbas, convicted of murder and rebellion, should be the prisoner who is released. Pilate consents and condemns Jesus to death.

As Jesus is taken to be crucified, they force Simon to carry the crossbeam. A very large crowd follows Him with the women mourning and lamenting His fate. Jesus tells them not to weep for Him, but for themselves. The situation is about to become difficult for those that follow Him. Jesus points out that if they, His opponents, are not afraid to strike against Jesus, they will be even more emboldened to strike against His followers when He is gone.

As Jesus is crucified with two criminals, He asks God to forgive those that are involved. Jesus offers mercy and forgiveness to those that are harming Him. Even after this, they continue to mock and insult Him. Even one of the criminals joins in. The other criminal recognizes his sin and that his punishment is justified. He also realizes that Jesus has not done anything wrong and knows something about the His connection to God and a coming kingdom. He asks Jesus to remember Him. Jesus offers him forgiveness and mercy. Much has been made of this event with some trying to connect it with salvation in our time. What must be understood is that our salvation through baptism (death, burial and resurrection of Christ) was not available to this man. Also, Jesus had, on many other occasions, forgiven the sins of an individual. He had the power and authority from God to do this. The only connection to our salvation today, is that Jesus is the author and mediator of both.

As various signs appear, Jesus physically dies. One of the Roman soldiers comes to the conclusion that Jesus was a righteous man. As most of the crowd disperses, His followers continue to monitor Jesus' body. A member of the council, Joseph from Arimathea, formally asks Pilate for permission to take the body of Jesus. He takes Jesus down from the cross and gives Him a formal burial in a new tomb. Again, the women continue to monitor all of these actions and make note of where the tomb is. They return with more spices for the body and then rest on the Sabbath.

On Sunday, the first day of the week, the women return with more spices. They are shocked when they find that the tomb has been opened and Jesus' body is not there. Two angels that appear as men tell them that Jesus has risen from the dead. When they tell the apostles, they don't believe them. When Peter goes to the tomb, he is amazed at what had happened.

That day, two men are going home to Emmaus. They are discussing all the things that had happened in Jerusalem. Jesus joins them and their conversation, but does not allow Himself to be known to them. When Jesus asks them about what happened, they tell Him the entire account. They call Jesus a prophet, but admit that they were "hoping" that He would redeem Israel. They also admit that they are not sure what to make of the story about the tomb being empty. Jesus begins with Moses and explains everything about the Messiah. When they get to Emmaus, they offer a place for Jesus to stay for the night. As they sit down to eat, Jesus takes bread and blesses it before He divides it up. They immediately know who He is, but then He vanishes from their sight. The men leave immediately to return to Jerusalem to tell their account of seeing Christ and find He appeared to Peter, too. While they are discussing these things, Jesus appears to them. When they think He must be a spirit (ghost), He tells them to touch Him and prove to themselves that He is real. To increase their belief, he eats food in their presence.

Luke now records Jesus giving some final instructions to His apostles. He reminds them that all the Old Testament prophecies about Him were fulfilled. He then gives them a miraculous understanding of those prophecies. He tells them that they will be preaching repentance and remission of sins starting at Jerusalem. He also instructs them to stay in Jerusalem until they receive power from God. This happens on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus takes them to Bethany. As He is blessing them, He is carried up into the heavens. They worship Him and then go back to Jerusalem where they go regularly to the Temple to praise God.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks, Doug! Most important history we will ever read. Praise God for His plan of salvation being fulfilled!