

Chapter Thirteen (13:1-35)

THE SON OF MAN CALLING FOR REPENTANCE

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If the Galileans were not worse sinners than others, why did God allow Pilate to mingle their blood with the sacrifices (13:1-5)?
2. What is repentance (13:1-5)?
3. Is Satan the cause of all our diseases (13:16)?
4. How many will be saved (13:23-24)?
5. Wouldn't it be easier to believe in Jesus if we could eat and drink in His presence (13:26)?
6. Why did Jesus call Herod a "fox"; isn't it wrong to call people names (13:32)?
7. How could Jerusalem be "forsaken"—isn't it still a city today (13:35)?

SECTION 1

Repentance Defined (13:1-9)

13 There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? ³I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

⁶ And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. ⁹And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

13:1-5 Importuned: The Lord's discourse on preparation for being called to judgment reminded some of those present of the great calamity that probably had recently occurred. Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, had

ordered some Galileans slain as they worshiped in the Temple and their blood was "mingled" with that of the animals they had just sacrificed. This event is extant in no other historical record than Luke's. Pilate was the son of Marcus Pontius (according to tradition), a Roman general. Pilate was a friend of the famous Germanicus, and his wife was a granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. The Pilate we know from the Gospels and from secular history was a typical pragmatic Roman politician. He was not excessively wicked or cruel, but he was weak and vacillating and would sacrifice principle and honor for his own ends. He was assigned the most unrewarding and difficult post that existed in the Roman provinces—Judea. He went there in 26 A.D. and remained about ten years. He was not particularly adept at administering his post because of the intransigent nature of the Jews and his own fear of displeasing the emperor Tiberius. Once he put shields of war which were used in worship of the emperor and a portrait of the emperor into the Temple by night. This nearly precipitated a revolution. On another occasion when he needed money to build an aqueduct into Jerusalem, he took it from the Temple's treasury. This started a demonstration by the Jews that had to be put down by Roman force. About six years after the death of Christ he got involved in a confrontation that ended his career. A self-made prophet appeared in Samaria and claimed that the ancient Tabernacle of the Jews and its vessels were buried on the top of Mt. Gerizim. He gathered a crowd and they ascended the mountain, singing psalms and shouting patriotic slogans. Pilate sent his troops to stop the crowd but the confrontation turned into a riot and a massacre. Pilate was reported to his superiors, called back to Rome, banished by Caligula to Gaul where, it is reported, he killed himself.

The Jews had the idea that any great physical calamity upon a nation or an individual must be considered a direct result of extraordinary sinfulness by the persons or person upon whom the disaster had fallen. Job's friends attributed his calamities to Job's sinfulness (cf. Job 22:5ff.). Jesus' disciples just knew that the man born blind was a terrible sinner—or his parents were (cf. Jn. 9:1-2). This view was also held by many Gentiles (cf. Acts 28:4). Generally speaking, the understanding that physical calamity in the form of war, pestilence, flood, famine, drought, disease and death are God's portents that this material order has been judged is correct! The Bible teaches very plainly that whirlwinds, earthquakes and other natural disasters are God's constant warnings to this world that it is doomed and that mankind must repent in order to be saved (cf. Joel 1:1-20; 2:30—3:3; Amos 3:6; 4:1-13; Romans 1:18-20; Rev. 8:1-13; 16:8-11, etc.). Even the diseases and maladies men bring on themselves as a consequence of sinful living are God's signals for repentance (cf. Rom. 1:26-27). The wrath of

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God is revealed from heaven against man's sin in the dissolution and disorder of "nature." Of course, the goodness and patience of God is also generally revealed in the natural order (cf. Acts 14:16-18; 17:24-31; Mt. 6:25-30; Rom. 4:2). But these are all *general* announcements from God to the world that it must repent. When people are killed by riots or accidents or natural disasters it does not mean they are all greater sinners than those who might not be killed in such calamities. Nor does it mean that the locale of any calamity signifies its recipients are worse sinners than those in a neighboring locale which might have been spared the disaster. In the book of Revelation, John predicts a great holocaust of judgment upon the Roman empire in the form of natural disasters, wars, and internal disintegration. While millions will die during those years of tribulation to come upon Rome, including many Christians, the Christians will go through the great tribulation to heaven to be with the Lamb. The impenitent will die and go to eternal torments. When God's judgments fall upon the earth to call the world to repentance, both righteous and wicked die—but their eternal destiny is what is important.

Notice how Jesus corrected the view of His questioners without denying the fundamental truth that was already there in their minds. Yes, the two events, one deliberately brought about by Pilate's orders and the other an "accident," do mean God is calling the whole world to repentance. No, neither of the events give any justifiable reason to judge that certain people (those suffering extraordinary disasters) are more wicked than others. The Siloam Tower "accident" is recorded in no other historical document than Luke's—however, accidents like this occur every day. No, violent death does not mean the victim was unquestionably some specially wicked person. But all death and all dissolution of nature means God has cursed this created universe and its destruction is inevitable! Unless every man repents, he will likewise perish in eternal death. God has promised to create a new heaven and earth which shall be eternal. He has also promised that any person who repents and enters into covenant relationship with His Son will be regenerated at that moment and will continue to be recreated, so long as repentance is continued, into the image of His Son and saved forever. All the frailties of man and nature in this present world order are focused on leading man to glorify God, if man will only repent and believe (cf. Jn. 9:1-38; II Cor. 1:8-10; 12:1-10; Heb. 12:1-17).

Repentance—what is it? Perhaps to see what it is *not* would be the place to begin. Repentance is *not*:

- a. Just being "blue" or sorry or regretful. Criminals regret getting caught but they do not repent. Judas was sorry he betrayed Christ but he committed suicide—he didn't repent. King Saul was sorry

the kingdom was being taken from him but he didn't repent (cf. Mt. 27:3-10; I Samuel; II Cor. 7:10, etc.).

- b. Just being hyperactive in "church-work." The legalistic Pharisees were hyper-active but impenitent. Paul was "more zealous" than all his brethren, but needed to repent (cf. Acts 22:3-5; Phil. 3:4-11, etc.).
- c. Just reformation of outward actions; not just changing of bad habits to good habits; not just enrolling in self-improvement or image-building programs. Impenitence is deeper than the outward appearance (cf. Heb. 4:11-13).
- d. Just penance or doing assigned acts of contrition, trying to "pay-off" God or make atonement for one's own sins by severity to the body (cf. Col. 2:20—3:4). Going into a monastery or becoming an ascetic will not suffice for repentance.

The Greek word *metanoia* is translated *repentance* and means literally, "to have another or different mind." Repentance is a change of mind. The word was used by the Greeks as a military command, "about face," or "reverse your march." Repentance is to go in a different direction. Biblical repentance is redirecting the mind and heart constantly toward the revealed will of God and away from worldly-mindedness. One cannot become a Christian without repentance and he cannot remain a Christian unless he continues it. Repentance is the mental, emotional and volitional metamorphosis (transformation) that changes a person from a son of darkness to a son of light. William Chamberlain in his book, *The Meaning of Repentance*, wrote, "Repentance is a pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ." Repentance is a journey, a life long journey. A person never reaches in this life the point where he needs no more changing in his mind to that of Christ's will.

Repentance involves a change of mentality. New direction, new knowledge is sought and gained—the knowledge of God's revealed will (the Bible). Scripture places great importance upon the place of the mind in a person's relationship to God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-4; Mt. 22:37; I Pet. 1:13; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:5; Phil. 2:5ff., etc.). The impenitent are those who are "hostile in mind" (Col. 1:21; Phil. 3:16-19; Jas. 1:8; Eph. 4:17). If we are to truly repent, we must "mind the things of God and not the things of men" (cf. Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Repentance means to think the thoughts of God. The thoughts of God are communicated to man *only* in the divinely inspired scriptures (cf. I Cor. 2:9-13). The mind of man *can* be directed, changed, renewed—it is up to man. Jesus taught that men must change their minds (repent) about what the nature of God's kingdom is—who the Messiah is—and what the right covenant relationship of men and women to God is (faith).

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Repentance involves a change of values. God wants men to love what He loves and hate what He hates. What we treasure determines the formation of our character (Hosea 9:10; Mt. 6:19-21; Prov. 23:7). Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious—value these things (Phil. 4:8ff.). Joy, appreciation, and satisfaction are found in fellowship with God's revelation of what is available—and that revelation is in the Bible. Man must repent and change his values to those of God. Jesus taught men that they must treasure right relationship with Him more than all other relationships. He said men must treasure God's word above all human opinions and traditions—treasure true and pure character above worldliness—treasure the welfare of people above rituals and ceremonies. He insisted that men must treasure discipline above indulgence and right motives above religious play-acting.

Above all, men must value the approval of God more than the applause of men. The repentance that demands a change of values is not easy!

Repentance involves a change of choice or will. The power to choose and decide is deliberately redirected in true repentance toward the expressed choices and purposes revealed as God's will. Surrendering the autonomy of our will to the rule of God is the epitome of repentance! We are free to choose or refuse His will. Truth and the evidences for it are not, of themselves, irresistible. Man may choose either truth or falsehood. With the choice comes the responsibility to accept the divinely-decreed consequences. God is going to give us what we choose! Jesus taught that men should surrender their wills to the will of God and put self-rule to death. The peace (will) of Christ should *rule* (Gr. *brabeueto*, arbitrate or umpire) in our hearts (Col. 3:15). Man must change his own self-determined righteousness and accept imputed righteousness from God. A kingdom with its citizens in revolt could not have peace. Men must surrender to God's rule in order for the kingdom of God to be a reality. Unless they do, they are subversives, enemies of God.

Repentance involves a change of conduct. The logical result of a truly changed spiritual nature is godly conduct. Repentance must be effected in deeds and actions because man is body and behavior as well as thoughts and feelings. Repentance is wholistic (Rom. 6:1-23). Man should conform his life to the "image" of God's dear Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). There are deeds "worthy" of repentance which the believer must do (cf. Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8; Acts 26:20, etc.). Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord . . ." but the one who *does* the will of the Father in heaven is the one who repents, (cf. Mt. 7:21).

The Bible is the story of clashing viewpoints. Therein is recorded the clash between the will of God for man, and man's volitional rebellion against God's will. This clash occurs along the entire front of human life. The classic example of the clashing viewpoints is shown in Mark 8:31-33

and Phil. 3:4-11. When man's thinking centers in himself he is always antagonistic toward God. When God's will is made the center of a man's purpose then man finds peace. Satan assumes that even in religion man's primary objective is to feather his own nest. Satan thinks when religion ceases to yield physical dividends man will cease to worship God (cf. Job 1:9-11). This is the mind of the flesh personified in the devil. The *change* represented by the transition of mind from this Satanic philosophy to that of Christ, who, in the flesh, lived as a Perfect Man, is repentance.

13:6-9 Illustrated: Jesus brushed aside the demand for theological argument about the relationship of disasters to human wickedness and focused on the need of all men to repent—especially the Jewish nation. While the whole world needs to repent, the primary target of the Lord's teaching here is the Jewish people of His day. They must repent of their rejection of His messiahship lest the destruction predicted by their prophets come upon them (Deut. 28:58ff.; Dan. 9:24-27, etc.). Jesus illustrates His warning to them with this short but succinct parable.

A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard. He came seeking fruit but found none. He said to his vinedresser, I have come three years seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down. The vinedresser begged for more time to cultivate it, then if it bears no fruit, he will cut it down. Whom do the characters in this story symbolize? God is the owner, Israel is the fig tree, and Jesus is the vinedresser. God has given Israel centuries to produce the fruits of repentance, but all that time (for the most part) she produced nothing in true repentance. She had been planted in a very fertile land. She had promised to produce (cf. Ex. 19) a kingdom of priests (servants of God). But through the centuries she had defaulted on her purpose. Now God is ready to "cut it down" but by His grace He gives Israel additional time to repent while the Messiah preaches to her. He even gives Israel forty years of grace beyond the preaching of the Messiah before He cuts her down in 70 A.D. Because she would not repent and serve her purpose, she became of no more use to God in His redemptive work, so He destroyed her.

What Jesus is saying to His audience is that repentance is something to do—not just talk about. Repentance is to produce in one's nature and life that for which he was created. Repentance is to fulfill one's God-ordained purpose. What is applicable to the nation of Israel is applicable to the whole world and to every individual in the world.

How shall such a transformation be wrought in men? First, it will be done gradually. Repentance, because it is a lifetime journey, cannot be accomplished all at one time. There is no "instant repentance." Repentance is *not* produced by:

- a. Intimidation. Mankind cannot be frightened or forced into repentance (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

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- b. Indulgence. God makes His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike and yet all men do not repent. We cannot expect to produce repentance in people's lives by indulging them in their self-centeredness.
- c. Intuition. Man cannot find motivation within himself to repent. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt . . . (Jer. 17:9).
- d. Intoxication. Emotional, experiential excitation does not produce lasting repentance—it does not produce stability and steadfastness. Saul did not repent though he became emotional (I Sam. 24:16-22 and I Sam. 26:1ff.).
- e. Inventions. Organized programming of people, entertaining people, or inventing new human philosophies or ideologies does not produce godly repentance.
- f. Impressiveness. Our "testimony" or our example is not sufficient alone to produce repentance in others. God is the only absolutely faithful Person existing (Rom. 3:4) and His Life, manifested in His Son, is the only sufficient example to produce repentance.

Repentance is produced by the transforming of the human mind through the word of God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Repentance is produced by the infusion of the will (nature) of God into the mind and nature (will) of man. This is done when the word of God is preached and men believe it (cf. Rom. 10:14-17; Lk. 24:47; II Pet. 1:3-11; Jn. 6:63). Although some of the character or will of God is revealed in nature (cf. Rom. 1:18ff.; 2:4; Acts 14:16-17; 17:24-29), God's will for man's salvation is found in *only one place—the Bible*.

The mission of every follower of Christ is to proclaim repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30-31, etc.). Repentance is begun when through the gospel we capture the minds of men for obedience to Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-6). Bringing men to repentance *is evangelism*. The classic example of the opposite of the mind of Christ is a quotation from H. L. Mencken (1880-1956): "I have done, in the main, exactly what I wanted to do. Its possible effects on other people have interested me very little. I have not written and published to please other people, but to satisfy myself, just as a cow gives milk, not to profit the dairyman, but to satisfy herself. I like to think that most of my ideas have been sound ones, but I really don't care."

The mission of the Christian is not to *eliminate* the will of man, but to *conform* it to the will of Christ. Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System* defined it as "impressing the moral image of God upon the moral nature of man." It is significant that even the church of Christ itself must carry on a constant program of repentance (cf. Revelation, chapters 2 and 3). In any program of repentance for the world or the church, preaching

the word of God is primary. There is no true repentance unless men hear and obey the word of God.

SECTION 2

Repentance in Doctrine (13:10-17)

10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." ¹³And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. ¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." ¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" ¹⁷As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

13:10-14 Attack: This is another occasion when Jesus had been invited to give the Sabbath teaching in one of the Jewish synagogues. This particular synagogue is somewhere in Judea (probably in Jerusalem). This is the "hot-bed" of religious orthodoxy. There was a woman who had a spirit (Gr. *pneuma*) of infirmity (Gr. *astheneias*, lit., "lack of strength, weakness"). She had something that kept her bent double (Gr. *sugkuptousa*) and unable to stand erect for eighteen years. Apparently it was another case of demon possession. Luke calls it a "spirit" of infirmity and Jesus attributes her predicament to some "binding" by Satan (v. 16). Note, there is no suggestion of immorality in this woman's life. She was the victim of Satanic activity without any deliberate or conscious surrender to wickedness on her part. Why? We do not know. Perhaps the ancient incident in the life of Job (Job 1) may furnish some explanation. There is not even the slightest hint that this demonic invasion of her body had caused any immoral effects in her life. Here she was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Evidently Jesus saw in her a faith that stood above some of the religious leaders and He called her "a daughter of Abraham." Jesus did not grant that appellation to every Jew!

Jesus saw her. He called to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." Then He laid His hands on her, and immediately she twisted and bowed

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frame straightened up and she continually praised God. Jesus did not have to lay His hands on her to effect the healing. He could heal with a word (He cast the demon out of the daughter of a Syrian woman with a word, Cf. Mt. 15; Mk. 7). When Jesus healed it was immediately and permanently. Luke uses the Greek word *apolelusai*, perfect tense verb meaning, "loosed and continually loosed." The healing was immediate, complete, unquestionable, unhysterical and without prolonged efforts to convince the woman she had been healed. Jesus probably laid His hands on her to make it absolutely clear that the powers of deity were in Him.

People with compassion and a common-sense judgment of what is good, right and true, would have joined the woman in rejoicing and giving praise to God. But not everyone in that synagogue had this kind of fundamental honesty and compassion. This healing was unquestionably an act of deity. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant (Gr. *aganakton*, originally signified physical pain or irritation). The official of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had broken a rabbinical tradition. The Old Testament Law specified only a few Sabbath restrictions. On the Sabbath, the Jew could not:

- a. Do any work (Ex. 20:9-10)
- b. Plow or harvest (Ex. 34:21)
- c. Kindle a fire (Ex. 35:3; Num. 15:32-36)
- d. Bake or boil food (Ex. 16:23)
- e. Tread the winepress (Neh. 13:15)
- f. Haul goods to market (Neh. 13:15)
- g. Trade or sell (Neh. 13:16; Amos 8:5)

The main thrust of the Sabbath legislation was not negative. The prohibitions of the Law were to force a spiritually-immature people to concentrate on the real issues God ordained the Sabbath for:

- a. to give men an opportunity to trust completely in God for providing all they needed for sustenance (Ex. 16:22-29).
- b. to be for man an opportunity to sanctify himself to God's holy way of life (Ex. 20:8ff.; Lev. 16:31), a day for "afflicting the soul in repentance" and thinking God's thoughts.
- c. to be a day set aside for worshipping the Lord in sacrifice and offerings (Num. 28:9ff.).
- d. to be a day for men to do good to their fellow man—to let their servants and sojourners find rest and help (Ex. 23:12ff.; Deut. 5:12-15).

The seventh day is no longer legislated as a special day since the Law was "nailed to the cross" (cf. Col. 2:14; Gal. 5:2-6; Eph. 2:14-16; Rom. 14:5-9, etc.) in the death of Christ. His death abrogated the entire Law of Moses, fulfilling it, suffering its penalty, and instituting a "better covenant."

But Christians are to live "a sabbath-kind-of-life." The Old Testament prophets kept predicting that the Messianic age was to be a sabbath-kind-of-life (cf. Isa. 56:1-4; 58:13-14; Jer. 17:19-27; Isa. 66:22-23; Ezek. 44:24; 46:3). In Hebrews 4:9 the Greek word, *sabbatismos*, is translated, "a sabbath rest." It is a word not found anywhere in all the Greek language until Paul uses it there. Paul "coined" this word to express or illustrate the experience of spiritual rest he said Christians are to have in their New covenant relationship in Christ. The Christian should live a sabbath-kind-of-life every day of his life—not just one day.

The major portion of the Jewish people never did comprehend the higher and more spiritual essence of the Law of Moses, including the Sabbath legislation. The people of the days of prophets, for the most part, profaned the Sabbath (cf. Amos 8:4-6; Ezek. 20:12; 22:8; 22:26; 23:38, etc.). After the captivities of the Jews, myriads of rabbinical traditions were accumulated and enforced regarding the Sabbath. There are thirty-nine kinds of forbidden Sabbath activity in the rabbinical tractate called *Shabbath*. The list includes such things as tying or untying a knot, seizing any prey, writing two letters of the alphabet or sowing seed. In addition to these specific rules, there was a huge collection of traditions argued by some as binding and not binding by others. Some argued such absurdities as:

- a. It was unlawful to eat an egg laid upon the Sabbath since the hen had broken the Law by laying the egg on Sabbath.
- b. It was unlawful to slaughter an animal on Sabbath, unless it was a louse—some would only allow that the louse's legs might be plucked off on Sabbath.
- c. Women were not allowed to look into a mirror on Sabbath lest they brush loose hairs from their shoulders and be working on Sabbath.

Some of the more liberal and conscientious rabbis held that it was legitimate to fight in self-defence on the Sabbath—that other religious duties might supercede the Sabbath such as keeping certain of the great feasts and circumcising a Jewish male-child. The saving of life takes precedence over the Sabbath (so says, Yoma 85a), so that anyone being assaulted or anyone dangerously ill (life-threatening illness) could be assisted on the Sabbath. The more rigid rabbis would have no part of such liberalism and forbade any kind of ministrations to the sick on the Sabbath.

The effect of such multiplication of traditions and extreme legalism about the Sabbath (and rites of purification, etc.) was that many Jews, including the rabbis, learned devious and hypocritical ways to evade them. For instance, since on the Sabbath one might only travel a "Sabbath day's journey" (six stadia, or seven-eighths of a mile) a fictitious domicile would be invented, so that from that point it was within the Law to start off on another six stadia.

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13:15-17 Answer: Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of the rabbis here in His reminder, "Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it?" Edersheim notes that rabbinic tradition in the Talmud provided for water to be drawn for beasts on the Sabbath. Jesus is showing the vicious perversity of this rabbinic legalism which would allow a beast to be watered, but not a faithful worshipper of God to be released from the malicious cruelty of Satan's invasion of her body. The hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue is evident:

- a. He was pretending to censure the crowd, but was really aiming at Jesus. "But the ruler . . . said to the people . . ." (13:14)
- b. He blamed the woman for coming to the synagogue for healing when he knew she came to worship. She had no idea Jesus would heal her.
- c. He placed institutional values above human values.
- d. He was more concerned about his animal property than the Sabbath. He was only pretending to hallow the Sabbath!

It is so easy to lose the sense of values with respect to people in a highly technological and institutionalized society. There is even the danger in the church that we will manipulate, count, organize, systematize and institutionalize until people lose their identity. Let the church beware! Jesus makes it plain, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (cf. Mt. 12:12).

God rested from His creative work and on the seventh day began His eternal sustaining or sanctifying work (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). It is as Jesus said, "My father worketh until now, and I work . . ." (Jn. 5:17). God continues doing good, even on the Sabbath. In fact, doing good is God's way of resting. Rest, as God defines it, is not the cessation of work, but the doing of holiness which brings peace, satisfaction, joy, spiritual growth. That is rest!

Luke used the Greek word *deo* which is translated in English "ought." *Deo* is much more intense than two other Greek words (*opheilo* and *chre*) translated "ought." *Deo* means "it is binding, it is obligatory, it is inevitable, it is proper and right." There is no hint of any other option or alternative in this word. Jesus is saying that ethically and theologically, the need of this daughter of Abraham takes precedence over Sabbath laws, and especially over Sabbath traditions. The Sabbath was made for man's highest good—not man for the Sabbath. Jesus is saying that doing good, even in this particular case, is exactly the purpose for which God instituted the Sabbath. Not only was the woman's body delivered from Satan's invasion, knowledge of Jesus' deity was given her so she might accept the Messiah and His kingdom.

The irrefutable righteousness of Jesus' answer to the attack of the ruler of the synagogue had two results:

- a. His adversaries were put to shame. The Greek word *kateschunonto* means they were "confounded" or "dishonored." It is doubtful that Luke is referring to their shame in connection with any repentance. Jesus' answers exposed His adversaries' hypocrisy.
- b. All the people rejoiced. They rejoiced not only that the woman had been delivered from her physical malady, but also that they had seen divine truth about God's love for man and the real truth about the Sabbath.

SECTION 3

Repentance in Destiny (13:18-21)

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

13:18-19 Infamous Kingdom: Jewish rabbis and politicians expected the messianic kingdom of God to begin in splendor, hugeness and power. Jesus tells this audience, especially the officials of the synagogue, that the messianic kingdom will begin very unpretentiously. It will begin like the tiny, speck-like mustard seed, but it will grow into a great "tree." The Greek word for "mustard seed," is *sinapi*, a word of Egyptian origin. The domestic mustard plant was known as *sinapis nigra*. The seed was well known for its minuteness. In good soil the plant often attained a height of 10 or 12 feet and had branches in which birds could nest or perch. The tree is a familiar figure of speech in the O.T. to portray a grand, great, benevolent kingdom (cf. Dan. 4:10-27; Ezek. 17:22-23; 31:6, 12).

That the messianic kingdom of God could arrive at such greatness with such an unpretentious beginning through the Rabbi from Nazareth and His fishermen-disciples was incredible to the apocalyptic-minded Jews of that day. While Jesus Himself was in His fleshly ministry, a statistical review of His "hard" countable successes would have confirmed their estimate of failure. Jesus' kingdom did not reach the proportions of a "tree" while He was here on earth. God's messianic kingdom must, by its very nature, begin unpretentiously. It does not have its origin in force, but in the acceptance of His word by free choice. His kingdom is not concerned primarily with any of this world's riches or fame, but in character and eternity. It has no power-structures through which men must climb to the top. Its King

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proved that greatness is found in humble service for others. God's great universal kingdom began in Palestine, the most obscure, despised and unlikely province of the glorious Roman empire of the first century. Its founder was a Jew, from Nazareth, in Galilee—a carpenter's son, despised and hated by His own political leaders. Both He and His principal assistants were unknown, unschooled, uninfluential people. They had no army, no budget, no capital city and no support from the masses. But after the death of its founder, this kingdom grew and grew and permeated the whole world (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:6, 23; I Thess. 1:6-10; Acts 28:22; 17:6, etc.). But that is the way God chose to conquer (cf. I Cor. 1:27-29) and conquer He did! In Paul's day some even of Caesar's own household had come into this universal kingdom (cf. Phil. 1:12-13)!

13:20-21 Infectious Kingdom: The Greek word for leaven is *zume*. It is "sour dough" in a high state of fermentation. Today's housewife uses yeast. Such fermentation makes bread dough "rise" giving it lightness and flavor. Unleavened bread is heavy, hard and tasteless. Leaven is used in the scriptures mostly to symbolize defilement or uncleanness—to characterize the pervasive nature of evil. In this case, however, the only point to be symbolized is the infectious, contagious nature of the messianic kingdom of God. The small, insignificant kingdom provides spiritual leavening for the whole world. Quietly, silently, unobtrusively the truth of Jesus made its way into the hearts of men and women. The word of God is like leaven. It works slowly (cf. Mk. 4:26-32), unseen in its working, but dynamically. It transforms as it permeates. God's truth, heralded by the church, has its influence in all of human culture (e.g. politics, commerce, science, arts, etc.), as well as in the transformation of individual people into the image of Christ, (cf. II Cor. 2:14; Rom. 16:19, 26; Col. 1:6, 23; Rev. 11:15; II Cor. 3:17-18; 5:17; I Cor. 6:9-11). Even by the time the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Colossians (about 60 A.D.) this leaven-like working of the Gospel had infected the known civilized world (Col. 1:6, 23) and by 313 A.D. (the edict of Constantine) it had conquered Western civilization. The Jews expected the messianic kingdom to be established almost instantaneously, spectacularly, powerfully and Jewishly. Never did they expect it to come slowly, quietly and universally. The Jews expected God to "signal" with some cosmic, catastrophic upheaval of political structures—they were so accustomed to God working through such natural spectacles they could hardly envision Him working otherwise. Elijah looked for God to come in an earthquake or storm—but God came in a "still, small voice" (I Kings 19:12). The prophet Zechariah had to remind the people of his day that God most often works "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit . . ." (Zech. 4:6). Jesus cautioned the Jews that the kingdom would come "not with observation, but within" the hearts of men (Lk. 17:20-21; Rom. 14:17).

There are very important lessons for all followers of Jesus to learn from these two parables. First, we must not despise the smallness of things in the kingdom. God works with things small in the eyes of men (cf. I Cor. 1). Second, we must not try to make the kingdom into some humanistic, big-time, proud, world-like corporation and manipulate or regiment men and women. The kingdom works like leaven. All that is necessary is that the Word of God make contact with the hearts of men—the Word itself is the *only* agent able to transform the “dough,” (cf. Heb. 4:11-13, Jn. 6:63, James 1:18; I Pet. 1:22-24, etc.). Third, we must believe that the kingdom, though its beginnings are small and its working is unnoticed, will become great and accomplish its purpose and endure forever. These parables permit no pessimism or despondency. Men may take the good things of God’s creation (like the Sabbath) and violently pervert them and it may *appear* that such evil men control God’s kingdom. But the truth of the matter is, things are not as they appear. God’s kingdom does not operate as the “kingdoms” of men—but His kingdom will survive and conquer.

SECTION 4

Repentance is Difficult (13:22-30)

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³And some one said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, ²⁴“Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us.’ He will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ ²⁶Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!’ ²⁸There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. ²⁹And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

13:22-27 Urgency: After Jesus taught these two parables on the kingdom He apparently went to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. That visit is recorded exclusively in John’s Gospel (Jn. 10:22-39). The Feast of Dedication is better known by its Jewish name, *Hanukkah*. In 167 B.C., on the 25th of December, Antiochus Epiphanes (a Greek-Syrian)

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maliciously defiled the Jewish Temple by erecting an altar to Jupiter in it and by sacrificing a sow on the Temple altar. Exactly three years later, to the very day, Judas Maccabeus (Jewish patriot) defeated the forces of Antiochus, slew five thousand of them, recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple. He rededicated the Temple and declared a holy feast, *Hanukkah*, which means literally, "Feast of Lights." According to legend, Judas found only one cruse of oil fit to use in the Temple, which would normally have lasted but one day. A miracle occurred (supposedly) and the oil lasted eight days. All this legend is recorded in the Jewish Talmud. The *Hanukkah* ceremony is festive and happy. It begins by the recitation of two traditional blessings followed by the lighting of the 8-lamped *Menorah* (one lamp lit each night). Then the singing of Jewish hymns which would include the canting of the Hallel (Psa. 113-118). There are special readings of the Torah taken from Numbers chapter 7, and from the Haphtarah (Prophets) in Zechariah 2:14 through 4:7. These religious ceremonies are followed by games, dancing and eating. At this particular *Hanukkah*, Jesus gave one of the plainest affirmations of His messiahship He had ever given. He even claimed He had the power to give eternal life and to keep anyone who believed in Him from perishing. His "sheep" could never be lost or taken away from Him (cf. Jn. 10:24-30). When the Jews heard this they considered it blasphemous so some of them picked up large stones from the accumulated rubbish piles associated with Herod's remodeling work there and threatened to stone Him to death. Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem crossing over the Jordan river at Jericho and came to Bethany "beyond" the Jordan where John the Baptist had immersed many people, including Himself. In this area (and throughout southern Perea) Jesus conducted an extensive preaching tour which is summarized by Luke, "He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:22). All the preaching Jesus does from Luke 13:22 through Luke 17:10 is apparently done "beyond" the Jordan in Perea. It was the earlier trip to Jerusalem for *Hanukkah* and Jesus' astonishing claim to give eternal security that prompted someone to ask, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

Three other trends appearing in the Lord's public ministry were also responsible for this question: (a) Jesus was increasingly emphasizing the individual spirituality necessary for salvation; (b) there was a visible defection of disciples beginning to take place—many out of the clamoring multitudes of the second year were beginning to feel disillusionment with Jesus' refusal to get involved in politics; (c) and there was very evident intensification of the opposition by the Jewish rulers. Jewish exclusivism might also have prompted the query. In the Jewish apocrypha we read statements like: "The Most High hath made this world for many, but the world to come for few" (II Esdras 8:1), and "There be many more of them which perish, than of them which shall be saved: like as a wave is greater

than a drop" (II Esdras 9:15-16). Since those who lived in Perea were considered outside the pale of orthodox Judaism, one of the crowd in Perea might have been wanting to see where Jesus stood in relation to the Pharisaic haughtiness of those Jews in Judea.

The Lord's full answer to this question appears almost enigmatic. He says, "Yes, few—No, many!" Jesus does not answer specifically because the number of those who will be saved is information only God is capable of bearing. Man's standards and abilities to comprehend such a possibility are totally inadequate, (cf. Acts 1:7; Jn. 16:12; Rev. 7:9). Jesus answers first by saying, "Yes, few will be saved because so many are unwilling to enter salvation by the narrow gate." The Greek word *stenes* is translated "narrow" but means "difficult, pressurized, restricted on both sides." Matthew uses the word *tethlimmene* to describe the "narrow" road Jesus proclaimed (Mt. 7:14). *Tethlimmene* means "afflicted." It is through "many tribulations" that we enter the kingdom of God (cf. Acts 14:22). If only few are saved, it will not be because the Jews are few and the Gentile nations are many, but because of all people of the world, only a few really strive to enter through the "narrow" door. The Greek word *agonizesthe* is translated "strive" and is the word from which we get the English word, "agonize." The same Greek word *agona* is used in Hebrews 12:1 to describe the Christian life as a "race," a "contest." Never, in all His preaching, did Jesus suggest it would be easy to be saved. That idea is the heresy of men who are afraid of self-discipline and in love with statistics. Some want to "instant-package" salvation into some handy-dandy system, an emotional experience or "five easy steps." Many, who refuse to make strong, agonizing efforts to do the whole counsel of God, will be disappointed. Do not worry about debating the number of those who will be saved or not saved. Let each Christian concentrate on entering by the "narrow gate." The narrow gate demands stern self-surrender and painful self-sacrifice.

In the mini-parable Jesus tells here He is emphasizing difficulty of entering—a definite manner of entrance—few exercising the persistence to attain. Jesus knows nothing of "many" ways of salvation. He does *not* mean here to imply that many would be *seeking* to enter. His parable implies that many will shun the "narrowness" of the gate in this life and then cry out for access at judgment (cf. Lk. 16:19-31). Those who faithfully seek the narrow door shall find it.

Once the door is "shut" the opportunity to enter is over. Once death to this life comes or the final judgment (whichever is first), there is no more opportunity for salvation (cf. Heb. 9:27; Lk. 16:26). Jesus paints a terrifying picture here of those who find themselves *too late* to get in the door to salvation. It was there all their earthly lives to enter, but one day it will be closed *forever!* The people Jesus portrays here are those who socialized, played at religion, even condescended to associate with Christ on a non-surrendering basis. They recalled their opportunities. They remembered

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they had been invited by Him to follow Him and they had even been in His company while He was here in the flesh. But religious environment does not save—character does (cf. Lk. 11:27-28). Not even the power to work miracles saves (Mt. 7:23). Many today think they would have a better relationship with Christ if only they might “eat and drink” in His physical presence. Jesus pronounced those “more blessed” who have “not seen” and yet have believed (Jn. 20:29). The impenitent cities (Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida) all had Jesus teach in their streets but most of their citizens did not enter His kingdom by the narrow door (cf. Lk. 10:13ff.). The greatest suffering of Hell may be the constant memory of lost opportunities (cf. Lk. 16:25—“son, remember . . .”).

13:28-30 Universality: It would be difficult for Jews to repent (change their minds) about the universality of the messianic kingdom. Jesus deals with that here in answer to the question “Will those who are saved be few?” “No,” says Jesus, “many will be saved.” Even those who never had opportunity to eat and drink and hear Jesus teach like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets. They came to God by the “narrow door” of agonizing, struggling, self-sacrificing faith. It is loyalty, faith and repentance that saves. None of these Old Testament saints depended on their own self-righteousness. They depended on God’s mercy and by faith accepted God’s covenant terms. Jesus continues by saying that men will come from “the east and the west, from the north and the south” and enter the kingdom. The kingdom will have as citizens men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. The prophets of the Jews predicted this universality (especially Isaiah 2:2; 19:16-24; 25:6-12; 60:8-14; 66:18-24; Hosea 1:10-11; Zech. 14:16-21, etc.). However, the Jews, for the most part, refused to interpret their prophets as promising covenant acceptance for the Gentiles.

Jesus says, “Behold!” “Surprise, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.” In other words, there are going to be some shocking surprises in the matter of salvation. Those who enter by the narrow door are those the world expects to be lost! God’s judgment of saved and lost is in direct opposition to the world’s! Those the world would consider as prime prospects for salvation (first) will be last; those the world thinks have no chance at all to be saved (last) will be first, (cf. Mt. 19:30; 20:16; Mk. 10:31). Salvation does not depend on erudition, wealth, race, self-justification, or any form of law-keeping. “By the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). Salvation is by the grace of God, appropriated by faith (Eph. 2).

SECTION 5

Repentance or Doom (13:31-35)

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32 And he said to them,

“Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.’³³ Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

13:31-33 Denunciation: Herod Antipas was tetrach of Galilee and Perea. He was the son of Herod the Great by Malthace (a Samaritan woman) one of his father's eight wives. Antipas married the daughter of Aretas who was a Nabatean king. While married to her he seduced and married his half-brother's wife, Herodias, who was also his niece. He was sly, treacherous, weak-willed, insecure, sensual, opportunistic and grovelled before the Caesars for his office. Accused of treason to Caligula by his nephew, Herod Agrippa I, he was deposed about 36 A.D. and spent the remainder of his days in exile. His attitude toward Jesus was one of curiosity (to see miracles, Lk. 23:7-12), yet He was jealous and fearful of Jesus' popularity (Lk. 9:9ff. — see comments there) lest Jesus be a threat to his throne. Jesus would not present Himself before Herod, either by invitation or threat. Jesus never feared Herod, neither his influence (Mk. 8:15) nor his power (Lk. 13:31ff.).

It is interesting to note that the Pharisees, of all people, warned Jesus of Herod's intentions. It is possible that some of the Pharisees (like Nicodemus and perhaps Joseph of Arimathea) were sincerely trying to protect Him. But it is more probable that these Pharisees were hoping to scare Jesus out of Perea (Herod's domain) into Judea or Jerusalem where the Sadducees and Pharisees had control (supervised, of course, by Pontius Pilate). They especially wanted to get Jesus away from the Galilean and Perean multitudes with whom He was still very popular. The Greek word *alopeki* is “she-fox” and some think Jesus intended His reply for Herodias who was the murdering conniver behind most of Herod's orders. She had married Herod because he was ruler of more territory than her former husband and she was power-hungry. Whatever the case, Jesus' reply was that of the sovereign Son of God. His answer to Herod might be paraphrased:

- a. I work miracles; I have divine power; I have more of that to do in Perea. I will leave when I am ready—not before.
- b. My program is definitely set by God. Herod will not be able to thwart it.

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- c. My mission will reach its goal.
- d. I will leave at the exact time that fits My appointed schedule.
- e. I must leave here, and go to Jerusalem (sarcasm) because that is where all prophets are killed. The "holy" city, the messianic city of "peace" and "righteousness" is the murderess of holy men.

"Three days" was merely a proverbial expression for a short time. Jesus remained in Perea longer than three days. He does not go to Judea until He is called there because of the death of Lazarus (cf. Lk. 17:11 with John 11:1-16).

Herod was a moral weakling. He could be manipulated by those who played on his sensual appetites. Occasionally, he regretted his wicked deeds, but he did not repent (change his mind and life). Jesus knew his heart and denounced him for what he was—a cunning, predator-like animal, a fox. Jesus' refusal to appear before Herod is a classic demonstration of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you" (Mt. 7:6).

13:34-35 Desolation: The reminder that He would soon (in about 3 months) be killed in Jerusalem pierces His heart, not for Himself, but for the impenitent people of the city who shall do the deed. God tried desperately to save these people and their city. He sent prophet after prophet to call them away from their own self-righteousness and to repentance, but they killed the prophets. Finally, God sent His Son—now they will kill Him. What more can God do? He will not violate their own freedom to choose. They have chosen not to accept God's will (cf. Jer. 6:16-19). He must leave them to their own rebellious designs. The Greek word here is *aphietai* meaning "leave in the sense of abandoning, forsaking." Luke uses the Greek word *eremosis* in 21:20 which means literally, "desert, desolate place, uninhabited place." A storm of terrible destruction is coming upon this people and their city (cf. Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 21:20-24; 19:41-44). It was predicted by Daniel that the Jewish nation would, after rejecting its "Anointed One," bring about its own destruction in conjunction with "the abomination of desolation" (Roman armies) (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).

What did Jesus mean when He said, ". . . you will not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"?

- a. He may have meant that, while these Pharisees were trying to get Him to go to Jerusalem immediately, Jerusalem would not see Him until about 3 months later when the Passover multitudes would shout, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (cf. Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9; Lk. 19:38).
- b. He may have meant that Jerusalem did not want Him when He wanted to gather her under His wings, but she would definitely see

Him again when He came in power and judgment with the Roman armies (cf. comments Luke 21:25-32).

- c. He may have meant that although Jerusalem would see Him again in the flesh when she crucified Him, she would not acknowledge Him as who He really is, Lord and God, until she sees Him at His Second Coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

Quite frankly, we do not know which is the correct meaning. We prefer the first one because it fits the context here in Luke most suitably. We also acknowledge that Jesus made exactly the same statement in Matthew 23:37-39 after He had already made His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. The third alternative does not appear suitable because at His Second Coming all are not going to say, "Blessed is he who comes . . ." although all will acknowledge who He is.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you know people today who think natural disasters or physical diseases signal the victims are worse sinners than others? Will this passage in Luke 13:1-9 help you answer them?
2. If repentance is a continuing thing in a man's relationship to Christ, and is brought about by knowing and doing the revealed will of Christ, how important is Bible study or Sunday School or preaching the word?
3. Are you fulfilling the purpose for which God created you or are you merely "cumbering the ground" like the fruitless fig tree? What did God create you for?
4. Is it really true that doing good to a human being in need should take precedence over religious ceremonies?
5. Is your whole Christian life a "sabbath-kind-of-life"? What needs to be improved?
6. Do you see the church today being the "unpretentious" but "infectious" kingdom Jesus characterized in these parables?
7. Why will there not be "many" who are saved?
8. Do you think Jesus treated Herod correctly?
9. Why did Jesus leave Jerusalem to herself?