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Luke 18: The Kingdom, Faith, Humility, And The Coming Judgment



By Dan Maines

Luke 18: The Kingdom, Faith, Humility, And The Coming Judgment

Introduction

† Luke 18 brings together several teachings that reveal what Jesus was doing as the Old Covenant age approached its end. He taught His disciples to persevere in prayer, warned against self-righteousness, welcomed those who received the kingdom with childlike dependence, exposed the danger of trusting wealth, predicted His death and resurrection, and restored sight to a blind man who believed.

† These aren't disconnected stories. Luke places them within Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem, where He would accomplish redemption and later bring the covenant judgment He had repeatedly warned was coming upon that generation (Luke 9:51; Luke 13:33-35; Luke 19:41-44).

† Luke 18 also contains one of the clearest time statements concerning the coming vindication of God's people. Jesus didn't tell His disciples that justice would be delayed for thousands of years. He said God would bring about justice for His elect speedily.

Luke 18:1-3

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not become discouraged, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect any person. Now there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me justice against my opponent.'"

† Jesus taught this parable immediately after speaking about the days of the Son of Man. The chapter division shouldn't separate Luke 18 from the prophetic setting established just before it (Luke 17:22-37).

† The disciples would face opposition, persecution, and circumstances that could tempt them to lose heart. Jesus instructed them to remain faithful and continue praying while they waited for God's promised vindication (Luke 21:12-19).

† The widow represents persistent dependence. She had no earthly power to force the judge's hand, but she continued appealing for justice until her case was heard.

Luke 18:4-5

For a while he was unwilling; but later he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect any person, yet because this widow is bothering me, I will give her justice; otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'

† Jesus wasn't comparing God morally to this unjust judge. He was arguing from the lesser to the greater. If even an unrighteous judge could finally respond, God's righteous response to His people was absolutely certain.

† The emphasis isn't that believers must annoy God until He reluctantly responds. God isn't reluctant to hear His people. The

contrast shows how much more certainly the righteous God would answer His elect.

† This encouraged first-century believers who were suffering while waiting for the promised judgment and vindication associated with the coming of the Son of Man (2 Thessalonians 1:4-10).

Luke 18:6-8

And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unrighteous judge *said; now, will God not bring about justice for His elect who cry out to Him day and night, and will He delay long for them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

† The words speedily and when the Son of Man comes belong together. Jesus connected the vindication of His elect with the coming of the Son of Man that He had just described (Luke 17:24-30).

† Jesus had already told His disciples that some standing with Him would not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:27-28). Luke 18 doesn't overturn that time frame.

† Revelation uses the same theme. The martyrs cried out asking how long until their blood would be avenged, and they were told to rest a little while longer (Revelation 6:9-11). Near the conclusion of Revelation, judgment on the city responsible for the blood of God's servants is announced (Revelation 18:20-24).

† The question about finding faith wasn't a prediction that Christianity would disappear from the planet thousands of years later. It challenged Jesus' disciples to remain faithful through the approaching persecution and tribulation (Matthew 24:9-13).

Luke 18:9-12

Now He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and began praying this in regard to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, crooked, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

† Jesus identified the fundamental problem before telling the parable,

these people trusted in themselves that they were righteous. Their confidence rested in themselves rather than God's mercy.

† The Pharisee measured himself against other people and concluded that he was righteous because he considered himself morally and religiously superior.

† This same problem appeared throughout Jesus' confrontation with the religious leadership. External religious performance couldn't produce the righteousness that comes through faith (Matthew 23:25-28; Philippians 3:8-9).

Luke 18:13-14

But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to raise his eyes toward heaven, but was beating his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other one; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

† The tax collector offered no list of accomplishments. He recognized his sin and depended entirely upon God's mercy.

† Jesus declared that the humble man went home justified rather than the self-righteous Pharisee. This anticipates the gospel truth that justification isn't achieved by boasting in human accomplishment (Romans 3:27-28).

† The kingdom reversed human expectations. Those who exalted themselves would be humbled, while those who humbled themselves before God would be exalted (Matthew 23:12).

Luke 18:15-17

Now they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for the little ones, saying, "Allow the children to come to Me, and do not forbid them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

† Jesus didn't describe the kingdom as something postponed for thousands of years. The kingdom was being announced and people were being called to receive it (Luke 16:16).

† A child receives rather than earns. Jesus used children to illustrate

humble dependence, directly contrasting with the self-confidence of the Pharisee.

† Entrance into God's kingdom isn't based on status, religious achievement, wealth, or personal greatness. It requires humble dependence upon God (Matthew 18:3-4).

Luke 18:18-23

A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept since my youth." Now when Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely wealthy.

† The ruler's wealth exposed what controlled his heart. Jesus went beyond outward commandment keeping and exposed the man's deepest allegiance.

† Jesus wasn't establishing poverty as a universal requirement for salvation. He confronted this particular man's trust in possessions and called him to abandon everything that prevented him from following Christ.

† His sorrow demonstrated the conflict. He wanted eternal life, but he wasn't willing to surrender the security he found in his wealth.

Luke 18:24-27

And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God!" Those who heard Him said, "And so who can be saved?" But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

† Wealth can create the illusion of independence and security. The problem isn't possessing money, but trusting in riches instead of God (1 Timothy 6:17).

† The disciples understood Jesus' statement to be extremely strong,

which is why they asked who could be saved.

† Jesus' answer places salvation completely beyond human achievement. What people can't accomplish for themselves, God can accomplish.

Luke 18:28-30

Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You." And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or wife, or brothers, or parents, or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time, and in the age to come, eternal life."

† Peter contrasted the disciples with the wealthy ruler. The ruler wouldn't leave his possessions, but the disciples had left their former lives to follow Jesus.

† Jesus promised that their sacrifice wasn't forgotten. They belonged to a new covenant family that would extend far beyond natural family and national boundaries (Mark 10:29-30).

† The disciples were living during the transition between the Old Covenant age and the age that was coming. Hebrews described that former covenant as becoming obsolete and ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13).

Luke 18:31-34

Now He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all the things that have been written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be ridiculed, and abused, and spit upon, and after they have flogged Him, they will kill Him; and on the third day He will rise." The disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

† Jesus deliberately went toward Jerusalem knowing exactly what awaited Him. His death wasn't an accident or unexpected defeat. It fulfilled what the prophets had written.

† Jesus specifically predicted His suffering, death, and resurrection. The disciples still didn't understand because the significance of these events hadn't yet become clear to them.

† The cross and resurrection stand at the center of redemption. Jesus

would accomplish what the sacrifices and shadows of the Old Covenant pointed toward (Hebrews 9:11-15).

Luke 18:35-38

Now as Jesus was approaching Jericho, a man who was blind was sitting by the road, begging. But when he heard a crowd going by, he began inquiring what this was. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

† The blind man recognized something about Jesus that many who could physically see failed to recognize. Calling Him Son of David identified Jesus with the promised Davidic King (Luke 1:32-33).

† His physical blindness didn't prevent spiritual recognition. He knew where mercy was found and cried out to Christ.

† Luke places this event just before Jesus enters Jericho and continues toward Jerusalem. The King was approaching the city where He would be rejected, yet a blind beggar recognized Him.

Luke 18:39-43

Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He asked him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" And Jesus said to him, "Regain your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

† The crowd tried to silence the blind man, but he refused to stop calling upon Jesus. His persistence echoes the lesson that opened the chapter, don't lose heart.

† Jesus responded with compassion, restored his sight, and acknowledged his faith. The man immediately followed Jesus and glorified God.

† Luke 18 begins with persistent faith waiting for vindication and ends with persistent faith crying out for mercy. Between those accounts, Jesus exposes self-righteousness, misplaced trust, and unwillingness to surrender.

Historical References

† Josephus described the growing instability, violence, famine, and destruction surrounding Jerusalem during the Jewish-Roman War. His account provides historical background for the first-century judgment setting repeatedly warned about by Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

† Josephus recorded the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, providing an outside historical witness to the generation in which Jesus' warnings reached their terrible conclusion.

† Eusebius later reported that believers in Jerusalem departed the city before the war and went to Pella. His account is significant when compared with Jesus' instructions that His followers flee when they recognized Jerusalem's approaching desolation (Luke 21:20-22).

† These historical writers don't establish biblical doctrine. Scripture establishes the doctrine, while historical records help us understand the first-century setting in which these events occurred.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Luke 18 teaches us to pray without losing heart. We aren't waiting for the AD 70 coming of the Son of Man, that judgment belongs to the first-century fulfillment, but persistent dependence upon God remains part of faithful Christian life.

† We shouldn't approach God like the Pharisee, measuring ourselves against others and trusting our religious accomplishments. We approach Him humbly, knowing that our confidence is in Christ.

† We receive the kingdom with dependence rather than pride. God's kingdom isn't a future political government waiting to appear on earth. Believers have already been brought into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).

† We shouldn't allow possessions, accomplishments, status, or religious performance to become our security. Our confidence belongs in Christ.

† We live after the covenant transition was completed. We aren't waiting for the Old Covenant age to end, we're living in the reality established through Christ and fully revealed when that former covenant order disappeared.

† Like the blind man, we recognize Jesus as King, depend upon His mercy, follow Him, and glorify God.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Was the vindication promised in Luke 18:7-8 thousands of years away?

A: No. Jesus said God would bring about justice for His elect speedily. The statement follows His teaching concerning the days of the Son of Man and fits the first-century time statements Jesus repeatedly gave His disciples (Luke 17:22-37; Matthew 16:27-28).

Q: What did Jesus mean when He asked whether the Son of Man would find faith when He came?

A: He was challenging His disciples concerning perseverance through the persecution that would precede His coming in judgment. They needed to remain faithful instead of losing heart (Matthew 24:9-13).

Q: Does Luke 18 teach that Christians must sell everything they own?

A: No. Jesus exposed the rich ruler's particular attachment to wealth. The issue was what possessed his heart and prevented him from following Christ (Luke 12:15; 1 Timothy 6:17).

Q: Why did Jesus say people must receive the kingdom like a child?

A: A child illustrates humble dependence rather than self-sufficiency. This directly contrasts with the Pharisee who trusted in his own righteousness (Matthew 18:3-4).

Q: Was Jesus' death something that interrupted God's plan?

A: No. Jesus said what was written through the prophets concerning the Son of Man would be accomplished. His suffering, death, and resurrection were central to God's redemptive purpose (Acts 2:22-24).

Q: What does the healing of the blind man teach us?

A: The blind man recognized Jesus as the Son of David, persisted in calling for mercy, received his sight, and followed Him. His response demonstrates faith, dependence, gratitude, and discipleship (Luke 1:32-33).

Q: Are believers today still waiting for the kingdom to arrive?

A: No. The New Testament says believers have been transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son and have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:22-24).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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