

LUKE

Chapter 13

Repent or Perish

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

This passage begins the second part of Jesus’ response to the crowds that began in 12:54–59. This second part (13:1–21) encompasses a call to repentance (13:1–9), Jesus’ second Sabbath controversy (13:10–17), and two parables of the kingdom (13:18–21), all of which give examples of how the people must be discerning in their interpretation of “this critical time” (12:56). (CC p. 532)

Luke establishes a clear continuity between this pericope and the preceding one by recording that “at that same time” some who “were present” (παρῆσαν) reported about the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. Thus this report comes from the same crowds who gathered in 12:1 and whom Jesus has been addressing since 12:54. Jesus is still speaking of examining the signs in “this critical time” (12:56). The themes of judgment and repentance (Law and Gospel) run through both 12:54–59 and 13:1–9. In this pericope, both judgment and forgiveness for the penitent are evident in the two separate but related segments, 13:1–5 (the blood of the Galileans and the tower of Siloam) and 13:6–9 (the parable of the fig tree). (CC pp. 532-533)

Jesus had been critical of the crowd following Him for their inability to interpret “this present time” (12:56). One senses that some in the crowd respond to this criticism by telling Jesus of the Galileans murdered by Pilate to suggest that are aware of how God does indeed punish sinners. They are not as dense as Jesus makes them out to be. They may falsely conclude that if nothing really bad happens to them in life, it is a sign that they have been living good lives and will be saved because of their good life. (PBC)

13:1 *the Galileans*. τῶν Γαλιλαίων—The use of the definite article with “Galileans” indicates that this is a specific group known to those involved with Jesus at this point. Since both Peter (22:59) and Jesus (23:6) were called Galileans, this would be particularly poignant for Jesus’ disciples. (CC p. 531)

In the previous passage, Jesus chided the crowds because they did not examine the signs of “this critical time” (12:56). Perhaps those present in the crowd thought that Pilate’s killing of the Galileans was such a sign, and they were proposing that Jesus interpret it. (Note that Jesus himself introduces the second example.) (CC p. 533)

The mixing of the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices was a heinous crime. The best explanation for such a bizarre sequence is the Passover context, for it provides the only occasion

for laypeople to sacrifice in the temple precincts. Pilate violated all holiness codes by sending his troops into the temple area to murder Galilean Jews while they were slaughtering their lambs for the Passover Seder. During this holy feast the blood of these Jews was mixed with the blood of the lambs. (CC p. 533)

K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 75–76, evokes outrage at the sacrilege of this incident by offering a hypothetical modern equivalent:

A modernization of this same incident would be to go up into a Christian village in the Lebanese mountains and announce, “They came into the church with their machine guns and gunned down the faithful *in the very act of participating in the Holy Eucharist! The blood of the worshipers was mingled with the holy wine on the altar! NOW WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?!*” (CC p. 533)

Those who reported this incident probably hoped to elicit from Jesus a strong rebuke against Pilate and the Roman occupation of Israel. Perhaps they thought this incident was a sign that God’s intervention to bring political freedom from Rome was near. But Jesus sees it in a religious context and speaks not of the sin of Pilate, but of the sin of the Jews—not just the martyred Galileans, but *all* of them. The issue here is not political, nor does it concern drawing a one-to-one correspondence between sin and suffering.

A cause-and-effect relationship between sin and suffering was a common doctrine among the Pharisees and one that Jesus has already encountered. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 553, notes: “In general the Pharisees believed that calamity was a punishment for sin.” C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 145, says: “As any good Jew knows, trouble is God’s punishment for sin, while tranquility is a sign of God’s blessing.” J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 719, refers to “the standard Jewish association of calamity and sin.” L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 211, notes: “In popular piety ... disaster is taken as punishment for sin.” These commentators list passages such as Deuteronomy 28–30; Job 4:7; 8:20; chapter 22; Ps 1:4; Ezek 18:26; cf. Lk 5:20–24; Jn 9:1–3. The Pharisees’ beliefs were based on their misunderstanding of OT passages such as these.

Some commentators have noted the resemblance between the theology of Job’s “friends” and that of the Pharisees, though the theology of Job himself and his book is quite different. See T. Gorringer, “Job and the Pharisees,” *Interpretation* 40, no. 1 (1986) 17–28. It must be stated that the theology of Deuteronomy as well as the other passages just cited is not a mechanical system of rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience, but a theology of Law and Gospel in which human sin is overcome by divine grace. The promises of blessing and curse are eschatological, and so not necessarily fulfilled immediately or even in this life. (CC p. 533)

These Galileans were no more “sinners” (ἁμαρτωλοί) than the other Galileans, and their tragedy cannot be connected with any specific or exceptional sin. (CC pp. 533-534)

Neither the NT nor extrabiblical records shed light on this tragic event, which must have recently occurred. (TLSB)

13:2, 4 *worse sinners*. In ancient times it was often assumed that a calamity would befall only those who were extremely sinful (see Jn 9:1–2; see also Job 4:7; 22:5, where Eliphaz falsely accused Job). But Jesus pointed out that all are sinners who must repent or face a fearful end. (CSB)

Many thought that tragedies happened to people as divine punishments for specific sins. (TLSB)

Jesus says that these particular incidents of suffering and tragedy are not signs of God’s judgment on individuals, but of his wrath against all sinful mankind. The signs of this time say that you are on the way to appear before the judge (12:54-59). And present on that journey is Jesus and his messianic ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God. All must repent and believe that the kingdom has come in Jesus. (CC p. 534)

13:3 *I tell you* – On λέγω ὑμῖν. This expression is used again in 13:5 and throughout this discourse. (Lk 12:4, 5, 8, 22, 27, 37, 44, 51) In this section, it begins Jesus’ responses to the two examples of suffering and tragedy, both of which he interprets as a call to repentance. (CC p. 531)

unless you repent – Thus Jesus’ strong adversative, “No, I say to you” (13:3), introduces his call to repentance. Jesus says that these particular incidents of suffering and tragedy are not signs of God’s judgment on individuals, but of his wrath against all sinful humankind. The signs of this time say that *you* are on the way to appear before the judge (12:54–59). And present on that journey is *Jesus and his messianic ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God*. All must repent and believe that the kingdom has come in Jesus. That is exactly what John’s ministry called Israel to do. Jesus’ words remind the reader of John’s baptism of repentance (3:3) and his call for fruits of repentance (3:8) lest the tree be felled by the axe and the tree thrown into the fire (3:9). No less urgent is Jesus’ call for all to repent lest they perish (ἀπολειθθε) in sin as the Galileans did (see textual note on “perish” in 13:3). Repentance includes sorrow for sin and trust in the one who brings forgiveness and release (4:18). Jesus will explain that to rescue humanity from perishing, it is necessary (δεῖ) for *Jesus*, the Prophet, to “perish [ἀπολέσθαι] outside Jerusalem” (13:33). Suffering is connected to sin ultimately in Adam, whose sin precipitated all human suffering. But a son of Adam—the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God (3:23, 38), brings forgiveness and the promise of release from all suffering. To that end, Jesus will perish on behalf of all humankind, including also those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. (CC p. 534)

Jesus uses this tragedy to spur His audience into self-examination and an honest assessment of their walk with God. If they do so, they will see that they might experience the same kind of misfortune. “The term *repentance* is not used in the Holy Scriptures in one and the same sense. In some passages of Holy Scripture it is used and taken to mean a person’s entire conversion” (FC SD V 7). (TLSB)

will all likewise perish – ἀπολειθθε—This verb, used also in 13:5, often has the connotation of eschatological perdition, i.e., “to perish (in unforgiven sin).” (It does in 4:34; 6:9; 9:24–25, 56 [variant reading]; 15:4–9, 17, 24, 32; 17:27, 29, 33; 19:10; 20:16; 21:18; but not in 11:51; 13:33.). (CC p. 531)

13:4 *those eighteen*. Another unknown incident. (CSB)

ἐκεῖνοι οἱ δεκαοκτώ ... αὐτοὶ ὀφειλέται ἐγένοντο—The article, with the demonstrative pronoun, suggests that these eighteen were well known to Jesus’ hearers. They are the subject of ἐγένοντο and are referred to in the second clause by αὐτοὶ ὀφειλέται, placing them in the same category of “sinners” as the Galileans. (CC p. 532)

the tower in Siloam. Built inside the southeast section of Jerusalem’s wall. (CSB)

Another incident for which we have no other historical record. (TLSB)

ὁ πύργος ἐν τῷ Σιλωάμ—The tower of Siloam was in Jerusalem, so those killed in this incident were probably Judeans. The histories of the northern and southern regions were such that a Jewish audience might assume that Galileans were more likely to be punished by God than Judeans. The northern region had a longer and more pronounced history of apostasy. Jesus' reply, citing Judeans, could imply that Galileans and Judeans were equally sinful in God's estimation. Tragic accidents can strike anyone, anywhere; none, including God's people (faithful or unfaithful) are exempt. The Galileans could well have been faithful pilgrims offering sacrifice in Jerusalem according to God's own instructions in the Torah, but that would not necessarily prevent suffering and tragedy from coming their way. (CC pp. 531-532)

After his response to the report about the Galileans, Jesus adds a word about the accident at the tower of Siloam. That accident closely parallels the story of the Galileans in its grammatical structure, showing the similarity between these two incidents. However, the Galileans suffered a tragedy caused by a human event; the eighteen from a tragedy with a natural cause. The Siloam incident evidently lacks political or religious overtones—no Roman villain or Jewish martyrs. (CC p. 534)

A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (Chicago: W. P. Blessing, 1912) 222, speculates, however, about possible historical connections:

A tower at the Siloam-Pool had fallen on eighteen persons and killed them, perhaps in connection with that construction of an aqueduct into Jerusalem by Pilate, which called forth, on the part of the Jews, the violent opposition, which the Roman so terribly avenged. As good Jews, they would probably think that the fall of the tower, which had buried in its ruins these eighteen persons, who were perhaps engaged in the building of that cursed structure, was a just judgment of God! For Pilate had used for it the sacred money which had been devoted to Temple-purposes (the *Qorban*), and many there were who perished in the tumult caused by the Jewish resistance to this act of profanation. (CC p. 534)

But Jesus describes it as a sign *just like* the preceding one. Jesus refers to the eighteen as “debtors” instead of using the term “sinners” as he did with the Galileans.

K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 78, notes:

In the first stanza we read of “sinners” [13:2] and in the third of “debtors” [13:4]. The same shift with the identical words can be found in the two versions of the Lord's Prayer. Matthew gives us, “Forgive us our *debts* as we forgive [our debtors]” (Matt. 6:12), and in Luke the same prayer is recorded, “Forgive us our *sins* as we forgive [everyone in debt to us]” (Luke 11:4). Marshall observes that the presence of these two words in parallel texts demonstrates the Semitic background of the story (Marshall, [*The Gospel of Luke*] 554). Simply stated, the first (*debts*) are the believer's unfulfilled duties in discipleship and obedience; the second (*sins*) are the overt evil acts that the believer commits. It has long been noted that the Aramaic word *hoba'*, which occurs in both texts in the Old Syriac, carries both meanings. ... we do have this two-sided nature of evil expressed in the words for sin that are parallel in these verses. The evil of which the political enthusiasts are urged to repent is described first as “sins” (v. 2) and then as “debts” (v. 4) (emphasis Bailey). (CC p. 535)

But Jesus' call to repentance here is in the same words as his call to repentance after the report of the Galileans (except that ὡσαύτως, "likewise" [13:5], replaces ὁμοίως, "in the same way" [13:3]). For Jesus, any such tragedy should be seen *not* as a sign of God's judgment *on specific people for specific sins*, but as a sign of his judgment of *all people*. Jesus calls not for speculation, but for contrition and faith. His summons here is for *all of you* to repent lest *you* perish (13:5). The correct interpretation involves judging "what is righteous" (12:57). The Christian conclusion is not "they must have deserved it," but rather, "I deserved the same," yet also, "Thank God that Jesus perished on behalf of me and of all, so that I might not perish eternally." (CC p. 535)

worse offenders – ὀφειλέται—Literally "debtors," this is a synonym for ἀμαρτωλοί, "sinners," in 13:2. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus spoke of forgiving "everyone owing debt" (11:4; ὀφείλοντι). (CC p. 532)

13:1–5 Jesus points out tragedies as occasions for self-examination and reflection on our sinful frailty. Contrary to popular thought, tragedy does not always strike people because they somehow deserve it. Rather, in His wisdom God allows and uses even tragic events to warn of judgment, that He might bring us to repentance and eternal life through faith in Jesus. • Lord, increase my faith in what You have given me to know. Grant me humility before those mysteries that surpass my understanding. Amen. (TLSB)

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

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. 7 And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' 8 And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9 Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

13:6 *fig tree*. Probably refers to the Jewish nation, but it may also apply to the individual soul. (CSB)

This unproductive tree symbolizes Jews who were not producing the fruit of faith. (TLSB)

συκῆν—It would not be unusual to find a fig tree in a vineyard. (Cf. Joel 2:22; Micah 4:4; Hos 9:10; Zech 3:10) (CC p. 532)

Jesus' parable of the fig tree supports his call to repentance by illustrating how God will be patient—for a little while longer—with a community that does not yield the fruit of repentance. The Christian catechumen will again be reminded of John's exhortations to produce fruits corresponding to repentance before the tree is cut down at the root and thrown into the fire (3:8–9). "This generation" (11:50), a "brood of vipers" (3:7), has signs to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. God's forbearing patience is meant to give them opportunity to repent (cf. Rom 2:4; 3:25–26; 2 Pet 3:9). The focus is on whether there will be fruit (repentance) before removal (destruction in the final judgment). (CC p. 535)

a vineyard – Symbol of Israel, God's chosen people (cf Is 5:1–7; Mt 21:33–46). (TLSB)

Both a vineyard and a fig tree are common OT metaphors for Israel. (E.g., Is 5:1–7; Jer 8:13; 24:1–10; Hos 9:10; Micah 7:1) In Jesus' parable the fig tree is planted *in the vineyard*, and this

has led some interpreters to suggest that the tree might represent a group *within* Israel, such as the leadership. However, the audience for this parable still seems to be the crowds (Lk 12:54), and it would be contrary to the message of the whole pericope for any individual or group to deflect Jesus' call to repentance by applying it to another instead of to oneself. Jesus' words are pointedly addressed to any and all hearers. But they certainly had particular pertinence for Jesus' immediate audience. (CC pp. 535-536)

came seeking fruit – ἤλθεν ζητῶν—The emphasis is on continual seeking. This same participle will be repeated in the next verse (13:7; ἔρχομαι ζητῶν). (CC p. 532)

13:7 The owner symbolizes God; the vinedresser represents a religious leader. (TLSB)

For three years. A period of ample opportunity. (CSB)

Very patient, giving his plant every opportunity to produce fruit. (TLSB)

The Jews, led by the religious establishment of Israel, need to listen to Jesus' catechesis, read the signs of this critical time, and bear fruits of repentance, as John called them to do in his ministry (3:8–9). So far they have been a recalcitrant generation and have not produced fruit. For three years—perhaps an allusion to the length of Jesus' earthly ministry—God has looked for fruits of repentance, a sign that his patience is justified, but now the judgment of God is demanding that they be dug up so that there might be more room in the vineyard for other trees that might bear fruit. (CC p. 536)

K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 82, gives some helpful background on the meaning of the three years:

The common understanding of the time sequence is that the tree would have three years in which to grow. Then for three years the fruit was considered forbidden, according to Leviticus 19:23. The fruit of the fourth year (that is, the seventh year of the tree's life) was considered clean and was offered to the Lord (Lev. 19:24). The details in this brief parable are scanty, but the probable intent is that the master is seeking this seventh-year fruit specified in Leviticus 19:23 as an offering to the Lord. Indeed, he has been seeking it for three years. ... Thus for three years he sought the first fruits and has been disappointed three times. Now nine years have passed since the planting of the tree. The situation seems hopeless. ... The master has waited patiently, long beyond the expected time of fruit-bearing. (CC p. 53[^])

The clearing of the ground for others may be an allusion to the incorporation of Gentiles into the Israel of God (cf. Romans 9–11). (CC p. 536)

cut it down – ἔκκοψον [οὔν] αὐτήν—In the East, “cut out, dig out” is the idiom for removing trees. Cf. 3:9, where the ax is laid at *the root* of the tree. (CC p. 532)

13:8 Augustine: “The gardener who intercedes, is every saint who within the Church prays for those who are without the Church” (NPNF 1 6:444). (TLSB)

let it alone – ἄφες—The verb ἀφίημι and the noun ἄφεσις often denote the forgiveness of sins. See textual note and comments at 4:18. However, the passage here refers to God's patience and forbearance. The people represented by the tree do not actually receive the forgiveness of

their sins (subjective justification) unless they are brought to repentance and faith in Jesus. Hence the verb here means “leave, let alone, tolerate.” (CC p. 532)

The vinedresser intercedes to gain yet another period of time when the tree might receive nourishment from an outside source. The intercession suggests that the vinedresser may represent Jesus himself as well as the early apostolic mission to the Jews, but certainly all who proclaim the Gospel of God’s merciful clemency in Jesus and who prayerfully intercede for the perishing are carrying out the role of the vinedresser. “The *vinedresser* must act to save the tree and at the same time the tree must respond to those acts or they are of no avail.” All who are alive—Jews and Gentiles—now have time to see and hear that God’s judgment falls on Jesus at Calvary and that is the basis for the hope of the penitent (see comments on 12:49–50). *The themes of judgment and mercy must always be viewed through the lens of God’s judgment on Jesus and God’s mercy on humankind through him.* Only this Gospel has the power to bring forth fruits of repentance. For those who remain fruitless after Jesus’ departure into the heavenly places and his abiding presence in the church’s life, the time of judgment will come. It came for the Jewish religious establishment in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, if this warning applies to Israel, the original tree in God’s vineyard, how much more should Jesus’ words be taken to heart by the church, particularly Gentile Christians, who have been transplanted in at the expense of others (cf. Romans 11). (CC pp. 536)

Ultimately, then, Jesus’ words are not about Israel’s obduracy, nor the hubris of Pilate and the other Romans. Neither does Jesus address the age-old debate about a correspondence between individual sin and individual punishment (cf. the book of Job). Rather, Jesus speaks of sin and judgment in terms of all humankind and tells the parable of the fig tree to explain the proper way to understand God’s mercy. Jesus calls for repentance and reveals God’s merciful forbearance during “this critical time” (12:56). *Anyone* who does not repent will perish (13:5). (CC p. 537)

Yet the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ is also *for anyone and everyone*. That Gospel offers comfort and hope even when God’s justice remains hidden in a world of sin, suffering, and death. One must “examine this critical time” (12:56) to see that one’s own judgment is imminent and so flee through repentance into the kingdom that is coming through the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of God’s Son. One must view massacres and accidents from the perspective of the cross. The forgiveness of sins is present in the risen One, who *remains* present in his church through the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. It is here that the suffering Christian meets the suffering Christ and sees in Christ’s sufferings his own comfort, his peace, his redemption, and his life everlasting after his “release” (4:18) from every pain in this world. (CC p. 537)

dig around and fertilize – The best way to fertilize the tree, that it might bear fruit. Aug: “The basket of dung understand in its good effects. It is filthy, but it produces fruit. The gardener’s filth is the sinner’s sorrows. They who repent, repent in filthy robes; if, that is, they understand aright, and repent in truth” (NPNF 1 6:444). (TLSB)

13:9 The people hearing Jesus may still have time to repent and trust in Him. If they do not, they will face God’s wrath and eternal destruction. (TLSB)

The Faithful Gardener

And he answered him, “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.” Luke 13:8

Robbers Die in Getaway Crash,” the headline reads. “Just what they deserved,” we say. Jesus says, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). “Not fair! We’re not the bad guys!” Jesus: “Oh, but you are.” We are “bad guys” because of sin. We deserve the robbers’ fate. Jesus warns against justifying ourselves by thinking there are worse sinners. You know the saying “I’m not as bad as so-and-so.” Paul’s saying is better. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Timothy 1:15). In acknowledging himself as a bad guy, Paul points to the Good Guy. Our salvation does not depend on our being better than so-and-so, but on our good and faithful Savior. That leads to Jesus’ parable. The parable is about a bad tree. More important, it’s about a good and faithful gardener. The gardener’s faithful pleading pictures Jesus interceding with the Father on our behalf. The gardener’s faithful toil pictures Jesus patiently working in our lives to bring us to repentance, faith, and fruitful living. He points us to the tree of the cross, where He forgave us our “badness” and gave us His goodness.

Jesus, thank You for Your patient and faithful work in my life. Amen.

13:6–9 Jesus warns that His audience needs to begin producing works consistent with the Gospel. Today, many fail to live their lives according to God’s will. The One who commands us to such works also bestows His Spirit. He enables us to repent and to produce the fruit that flow from His salvation. • Lord, show me the shortness of my time and the nearness of eternity, so I do not fail to redeem the time. Amen. (TLSB)

A Woman with a Disabling Spirit

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

This is the third of six miracles in the journey narrative (10:17–20; 11:14–23; 13:10–17; 14:1–6; 17:11–19; 18:35–43): it is the third miracle in a row that deals with the power of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan. Here Jesus releases a woman who had a “spirit of weakness” (13:11) for eighteen years from this chain of bondage to Satan. (CC p. 539)

The miracle also sparks the second Sabbath controversy in Luke's gospel. This Sabbath controversy is like the first one (6:1–11): both begin with Jesus teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath (6:6), followed by a healing that takes place there (θεραπεύω, “to heal,” at 6:7 and 13:14). (See comments on the Sabbath at 6:1–11. The third and final Sabbath controversy is at 14:1–6.) (CC p. 540)

Jesus' teaching and healing in the synagogue on the Sabbath is another example of the juxtaposition of teaching and miracles. Jesus' teaching governs his miracles; the miracles demonstrate the truth and reality of his teaching. Jesus' Sabbath healing gives him an opportunity to reveal in the synagogue his Sabbath theology, which finds its fulfillment on Easter. “Sabbath healings are a prelude to the greatest Sabbath miracle of all, the resurrection.” The teaching of Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath foreshadows the preaching and teaching of the church on Sunday, the eschatological day of resurrection. With its change of scene (13:10), this passage is loosely related to the preceding material. But it is best to read it as part of the unit of teaching that extends from 12:1 to 13:21. This preserves the structuring of the travel narrative around the time notices, even though the topics of the various sections overlap. (CC p. 540)

The evangelist's artful report opens with the introductory setting (13:10), continues with a chiasmic structure that includes the miracle (13:11–13) and the discussion (13:14–16), and concludes with the twin reactions (13:17). (CC p. 540)

The introduction gives the hearer the framework of time, persons, and place, along with the occasion and other various details for the main point of the story. The place is the synagogue, the time is the Sabbath, and Jesus is teaching. This immediately reminds the hearer of the beginning of the Galilean ministry, where teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath is so prominent, as are the miracles that accompany it (4:14–44). Correspondingly, the concluding verse (13:17) acknowledges that Jesus' teaching and miracle brought either opposition (cf. 2:35 and Is 45:16; 66:5 in the LXX) or praise. In both the first and last verses, the teaching of Jesus is prominent; it lies at the core of this section. (CC p. 540)

13:10 *in one of the synagogues* – ἐν μιᾷ τῶν συναγωγῶν—This is Jesus' last appearance in a synagogue in Luke's gospel; the earlier ones were in 4:15, 16, 33, 38, 44; 6:6. (CC p. 538)

Jesus customarily taught in synagogues on the Jewish day of worship (4:16). He also performed numerous healings on the Sabbath, which provoked His critics' wrath (6:6–11). (TLSB)

13:11 *disabling spirit*. Various disorders were caused by evil spirits. The description of this woman's infirmity suggests that the bones of her spine were rigidly fused together. (CSB)

The evil spirit possessing this woman caused her a physical ailment. *bent over*. Lit, “bent double”; a crippling affliction. (TLSB)

πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας—By describing her illness in this way, Jesus shows his holistic view of spirit and body in the life of a person. “A spirit of weakness” contrasts with the power of the Holy Spirit. (Lk 1:17, 35; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38; cf. also Lk 4:36) (CC p. 538)

The evil spirit causing weakness contrasts with the Holy Spirit, with whom Jesus was anointed at his baptism (3:21–22; see also 4:18–19; Acts 10:38). Jesus was conceived when “the Holy Spirit ... and the power of the Most High” overshadowed Mary (1:35), and Jesus carries out his ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14). The disciples will receive “power” when the “Holy

Spirit” comes upon them at Pentecost (Acts 1:8; cf. also “the Spirit and power of Elijah” in Lk 1:17). (CC pp. 540-541)

eighteen years – ἑτη δεκαοκτώ—This expression is used twice in this passage and follows upon the reference to eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them. Perhaps the recurrence of the number “eighteen” suggests a connection between the two pericopes, particularly how suffering comes to some through natural causes. (CC p. 538)

13:12–13 Jesus released her from her physical symptoms by eliminating the cause of the problem: the unclean spirit. (TLSB)

13:12 *are free*. The spirit had been cast out, and the woman was freed from the bond of Satan and from her physical handicap. (CSB)

ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου—This is part of Jesus’ language of release that also includes the forgiveness of sins. See comments on ἄφεσις in 4:18. ἀπολύω in this context is a synonym, and it occurred earlier in this sense in 6:37 (see comments there). λύω will be used in 13:15–16. ἀπολέλυσαι is another theological passive, where God is the agent of the release through the ministry of Jesus. The verb is a perfect passive as are the forms of ἀφίημι denoting forgiveness of sins in 5:20, 23; 7:47–48 (cf. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 212). (CC p. 538)

Jesus sees the woman, has compassion on her plight, and declares that she is released (ἀπολέλυσαι) from her infirmity. Here Jesus teaches about the release he brings (4:18–19) by announcing absolution to her. As in earlier healings, physical restoration is accompanied by the forgiveness of sins (see comments on 5:17–26). The repetition of ἀπολύω, “release” (13:12), and λύω, “release” (13:15–16), reinforces this major theme. This is all Gospel. Jesus lays his hands on the woman, and immediately she is healed and glorifies God (13:13). The length of illness (eighteen years) stands in stark contrast to the immediacy of the healing Jesus brings. Here is Jesus, the agent of creation coming to God’s creation and working on the Sabbath his new creation. This too is all Gospel. (CC p. 541)

Correspondingly, the chief of the synagogue is mired in legalism. He looks at this healing from the perspective of the old fallen creation. He despises the new wine and prefers the old (5:39). (CC p. 541)

13:13 *was made straight...glorified* – ἀνωρθώθη καὶ ἐδόξαζεν τὸν θεόν—ἀνωρθώθη is another theological passive; God is the one responsible for her being made straight. Here is a good example of the dynamic of worship, as in the Divine Service. God gives his gifts and those who receive the gifts immediately give glory to God. The imperfect ἐδόξαζεν indicates continuous action. On δοξάζω, see comments at 2:20. (CC pp. 538-539)

13:14 *healed on the Sabbath*. A focal point of attack against Jesus was his conduct on the Sabbath (see 6:6–11; 14:1–6; Mt 12:1–8, 11–12; Jn 5:1–18; see also Ex 20:9–10). (CSB)

to the people – τῷ ὄχλῳ—The crowd here must be the assembly of worshipers in the synagogue for their Sabbath observance. (CC p. 539)

Jesus’ critics vie for the hearts of the people to keep them from following Jesus, whom they considered a false prophet and Law-breaker. (TLSB)

13:15 *you hypocrites* – ὑποκριταί—Although Jesus addresses the chief of the synagogue (αὐτῷ), he uses the plural (“hypocrites”) to include those who might support this synagogue leader. “Hypocrite(s)” occurred earlier in 6:42; 12:56; “hypocrisy” in 12:1; and ὑποκρίνομαι, “hypocritically suppose” occurs in 20:20. These are the only occurrences of these words in Luke. (CC p. 539)

Jesus’ opponents are so intent on putting Him in a bad light that they adopt an obviously wrong position. (TLSB)

untie his ox. They had more regard for the needs of an animal than for the far greater need of a person. Jesus called his critics “hypocrites” because they pretended zeal for the law, but their motive was to attack him and his healing. (CSB)

τὸν βοῶν ... τὸν ὄνον—Work by an ox or a donkey was prohibited on the Sabbath according to Deut 5:14. These two beasts of burden will provide a link to the final Sabbath controversy at Lk 14:5 (ὄνος occurs there in several variants). (CC p. 539)

13:16 *daughter of Abraham* – θυγατέρα Ἀβραάμ—Note that at the end of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, Zacchaeus is called a “son of Abraham” (19:9). In the next chapter, there is a healing of a man with dropsy on the Sabbath (14:1–4). Luke often incorporates into his narrative various pairs of pericopes that are parallel, one about a female character, the other featuring a male character, as in the infancy narrative: Zechariah and Mary; Simeon and Anna. (CC p. 539)

An affirmation of her faith, which would remove a stigma caused by her infirmity (cf Jn 9:3). (TLSB)

In the ensuing discussion (13:14–16), the chief of the synagogue stands as one who does *not* understand the meaning of the Sabbath. He may well be a Pharisee and is “indignant” that Jesus should heal on the Sabbath. Perhaps relying on Jewish oral tradition (but not the OT) he equates healing with work and states his case plainly to the crowd: “There are six days in which it is necessary [δεῖ] to work.” By using the word for necessity (δεῖ), the chief of the synagogue shows that he is convinced that this understanding of the purpose of the Sabbath is connected to the eternal and divine plan. This as divine necessity is at the core of his religion. (CC p. 541)

The center of this passage is a hermeneutical question about the Sabbath, which allows Jesus to reiterate that he has come to proclaim release to the captives (4:18), meaning all humanity, as illustrated by those who are in bondage to Satan (4:33–37) and those who are captive to sickness and sin (5:17–26). From the beginning of his Galilean ministry, miracles of healing, exorcisms, and absolutions from sin have been Jesus’ agenda in fulfillment of prophecy (4:18–19). Now he proclaims once again at the end of this miracle the divine imperative of his messianic role: “Was it not necessary [for this woman] to be released [ἔδει λυθῆναι] from this chain on the day of the Sabbath?” (13:16). This agenda stands in stark contrast to that of the synagogue ruler, whose “necessity” resides in stringently following the ridiculous notion that healing constituted the sort of work God prohibited on the Sabbath. This “law” against healing on the Sabbath completely lacks any support from the OT. The laws regarding healing and cleansing in Leviticus 12–15, for example, say nothing that would prevent the rites from being carried out on the Sabbath (neither “Sabbath” nor the verb נָצַח, “to rest, cease work,” occurs in those chapters). Moreover, this synagogue leader misses entirely the point of the Sabbath. “The essence of the Sabbath was to be a ‘rest,’ that is, a time of ‘liberation.’” Support of this concept—and OT precedence for Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath—may be found in the Sabbath year, when even the land was released from servitude (Lev 25:1–7), and in the Jubilee year, when debts were canceled, Israelite slaves

(children of Abraham, like the woman in Lk 13:16) were freed, and land that had been sold was returned to its original owner (Lev 25:8–55). Therefore, Jesus’ ministry was “the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk 4:19), a Jubilee in which God’s creatures were to be returned to his rightful ownership. (CC pp. 541-542)

13:17 *adversaries*. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians opposed Jesus. (TLSB)

13:10–17 Though Jesus’ critics saw His miracle as a clear violation of the Sabbath, Jesus’ work, in fact, fulfilled the Sabbath Day’s purpose: to provide blessing for God’s people. He still calls us to keep the Sabbath by gladly receiving God’s Word, which delivers to us the blessings of Jesus’ victory over sin and death. How great a privilege to enter His presence in worship. • “Open now thy gates of beauty; Zion, let me enter there, Where my soul in joyful duty Waits for Him who answers prayer. Oh, how blessed is this place, Filled with solace, light, and grace!” Amen. (LSB 901:1) (TLSB)

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

18 He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19 It is like a grain of mustard seed that 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? 21 It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.”

13:18 *kingdom of God*. Jesus teaches that it is sown in seeming powerlessness and grows only gradually, over an extended period of time. (TLSB)

The parables of the kingdom bring to a close the unit that began at 12:1. In the next verse (13:22), Luke will give his second travel notice; the second stage of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem will begin. (The first stage began at 9:51.) Although the scene of the narration of these parables seems loosely connected to the preceding, the contents of the teaching fit in the flow of thought and provide a commentary on the entire discourse. (CC p. 544)

The two parables are parallel in structure. Both begin with an introductory question by Jesus. Both contrast the small beginning of the kingdom with its grand scope at the end of the age. (CC p. 544)

Luke mentions no change in audience, so the hearer is led to assume that the synagogue crowd hears these parables in the context of Jesus’ healing of the woman and his sharp exchange with the chief of the synagogue concerning the Sabbath. This forces the hearer to look for a link between the necessity of the release that Jesus works in the great Sabbath age and the parables of the kingdom. At the same time, the reference to the leaven provides the hearer with a frame that goes back to the first verse of the discourse, where the disciples are warned about “the leaven, which is hypocrisy, of the Pharisees” (12:1). What could be the relationship between these parables and the entire discourse? (CC pp. 544-545)

The meaning of the two parables is quite clear. What begins in a humble fashion will give way *in time and through a mysterious process* to a far greater and more encompassing reality. A small mustard seed will produce a large mustard tree in which birds may dwell; a small amount of leaven in three measures of flour will leaven the whole lump. The point of emphasis is not simply the dramatic growth, but the mysterious process by which something great results from such humble beginnings. When God is at work redemptively in Jesus to establish and extend his reign

among people, that whole *process* is like the *process* unfolding when ... a man sows a seed or a woman puts leaven in a lump. It is a hidden process, a mystery, beyond human ken. In neither parable does the human observer cause the growth. God built into his creation the miraculous power of a seed to grow and of leaven to cause dough to rise. Even with modern scientific knowledge of the biological processes involved, people cannot create such living growth, and so it remains a mystery and a miracle. Likewise in redemption, God expands his kingdom through the means he has chosen and given to his church—his Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. The smallness and hiddenness of the kingdom *now* (represented by the mustard seed and the leaven) are foretastes of the fullness of the kingdom *not yet* (represented by the mustard tree and leavened lump). (CC p. 545)

Throughout this discourse, Jesus has warned the disciples against hypocrisy and the love of possessions (12:1, 15). He has called them to repent and prepare for eschatological judgment by discerning the signs of this present, critical time, signs visible in Jesus’ ministry (12:56). The disciples were warned not to succumb to the *evil leaven* of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (12:1), a hypocrisy that refuses to read the signs of the kingdom that are *already now* present in Jesus’ ministry. Instead, the crowds are to perceive the *divine leaven* of Jesus. His teaching and miracles are signs that the kingdom of God is already a present reality, even though they may seem small, insignificant, and hidden. No matter how small and hidden these signs may appear to be, they are powerful, like the leaven, and point to a greater reality. These signs of the kingdom are the release of captives from sickness, greed, and Satan. They are a signal that a greater release is coming. It comes through Jesus’ death and resurrection, and all creation will be freed. In the cross, Jesus takes upon himself the bondage of all creation (12:49–50), buries it in the tomb, and rises on the third day, portending the restoration of all of creation. On the Last Day, when the Master returns (12:35–48), faithful servants will inherit an immense treasure (12:33–34, 44), the size and value of which are hidden for now. The crowds must learn to examine the signs of the coming wrath and to receive the gift hidden in Jesus and his signs of the kingdom. They must not be fooled by the humble beginnings of the kingdom but trust that the great victory of liberation over Satan is already present in Jesus and that the scope of that victory one day will be fully revealed. (CC pp. 545-546)

13:19 *then* – οὖν—“Therefore” shows continuation between these parables and the Sabbath miracle of healing. (CC p. 544)

mustard seed. Trees in Scripture are sometimes symbols of nations (see Eze 17:23; 31:6; Da 4:12, 21). (CSB)

a man – ἄνθρωπος—Luke shows his propensity for balance, beginning with a parable involving a man followed by one with a woman (13:21). Other examples where Luke alternates accounts of a man and a woman include Zechariah (1:5–25) and Mary (1:26–38), Simeon (2:25–35) and Anna (2:36–38) in the infancy narratives, and the Sabbath healing of the crooked woman (13:10–17), then the man with dropsy (14:1–6). (Cf. H. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 234; R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity I*, 132 ff.) (CC p. 544)

birds of the air – τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ—Some have suggested that the birds represent the nations or Gentiles of the world who make their nests within the worldwide kingdom of God. (Cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 561, on nations; R. Stein, *Luke*, 376, and J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 729, on Gentiles. Cf. also Dan 4:12, 21.) (CC p. 544)

13:21 *leaven*. Its permeating quality is emphasized here as it works from the inside to affect all the dough. This parable speaks of the powerful influence of God’s kingdom. (CSB)

Yeast or a bit of leavened dough retained from previous baking. Parable repeats the point of vv 18–19. Given enough time, even the tiniest pinch of leaven permeates an entire batch of dough. (TLSB)

13:18–21 Though the kingdom of God has humble beginnings, it grows to embrace all creation. Like Jesus' first hearers, we, too, tend to wish for a more powerful kingdom and more rapid growth. But this kingdom is God's, not ours. He extends His realm in His way with His timing. • Lord, give us wholeheartedly to the task of extending Your reign, even though we may never see the growth that we would like. Keep us focused instead on the final consummation. Amen. (TLSB)

The Narrow Door

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, 24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ 26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ 27 But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’ 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. 29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

A new discourse (13:22–14:24) and the second major division in Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in Luke begin at 13:22. This is Luke's second travel notice (the third will be at 17:11 and the fourth at 19:28), and the hearer cannot help but pause here and recall that this journey began back at 9:51, when the evangelist announced that “it came to pass as the days of his being taken up [ἀναλήψεως] were being fulfilled, and he himself set his face in order to journey to Jerusalem.” At both the transfiguration in 9:31, where Jesus' destiny is described as an “exodus” (ἐξοδος), and at 9:51, where it is a “being taken up” (ἀναλήψεως), Luke pictures Jesus' work of salvation as a movement out of this world through suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus is reenacting Israel's exodus from Egypt. See comments at 9:31, 51. References to Jesus' movement to Jerusalem immediately suggest his work of atonement there. His atoning sacrifice will be his own life, as implied in 13:33, where Jesus speaks of the necessity of a prophet dying in Jerusalem. Jerusalem becomes increasingly prominent as both Jesus' destination (13:31–35) and the place for feasting (13:26–30; cf. the Last Supper). The setting for these teachings in 13:22–30 is the eschatological table fellowship of Jesus, where people “will come from east and west and from north and south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God” (13:2). (CC pp. 548-549)

3:22 *through the towns and villages.* Somewhere between the events of 11:1 and 13:21 Jesus left Judea and began his work in and around Perea, which is recorded in 13:22–19:27; Mt 19:1–20:28; Mk 10; Jn 10:40–42. During the last part of the Perea ministry, it appears that he went north to Galilee and then traveled south again through Perea to Jericho and to Jerusalem. Some of Jesus' sayings that Luke attributes to the period of ministry in Perea are found in different settings in Matthew (7:13–14, 22–23). Perhaps he repeated various sayings on different occasions. (CSB)

διεπορεύετο—This imperfect is part of Luke’s journey vocabulary, a reference to the journey that began in 9:51. See comments at 1:6, 39 and 9:51. διαπορεύομαι occurs also in 6:1; 18:36, while πορεύομαι occurs fifty-one times in Luke. (CC p. 547)

κατὰ πόλεις καὶ κώμας—This phrase is used in the singular at 8:1, where Luke gives a veiled travel notice in connection with Jesus’ preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God and the support he received from the women. Cf. also 9:6. (CC p. 547)

teaching and journeying – διδάσκων καὶ πορείαν ποιούμενος—These two present participles are dependent on the main verb. They describe Jesus’ teaching and his consciousness that he is not just “in motion” but *on a journey*. This ties Jesus’ teaching to his passion. The circumlocution πορείαν ποιούμενος emphasizes the journey (πορείαν) even more than the single verb earlier in the verse. On Jesus’ teaching, see 4:15, 31; 6:6; 11:1; 13:10. διδάσκω is also used again in this passage at 13:26. In Luke only Jesus teaches, but in Acts, after Pentecost, the disciples will teach, fulfilling Lk 12:12. (CC p.547)

toward Jerusalem. Where he would die. Although Jesus was ministering throughout Perea, his eyes were constantly set on the Holy City and his ultimate destiny. (CSB)

dieporeuto – This denotes continued action that was first mentioned in Luke 9:51. He knows his goal and will not be distracted but continues to teach even as he is going. – Luke heightens the tension and emphasizes again the significance of Jesus’ heading for Jerusalem. It is in Jerusalem that Jesus’ ministry will appear to unravel and fail – his arrest, trial, condemnation, and crucifixion. It is also in Jerusalem that the risen and victorious Lord will charge his apostles to preach “repentance and forgiveness of sins...in his name to all nations” (Lk 24:47). – Luke tells us in 9:51 that “Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” In the present section the fact is noted that Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem. In 17:11 we will read that “on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.” This journey to Jerusalem is hardly in a straight line; it is rather a spiritual pilgrimage interrupted by much teaching and several miracles. But there can be no doubt as to the ultimate goal. Jerusalem will finally be reached. This is the city where the salvation of the world will be accomplished. (PBC)

13:23 *will those who are saved be few* – Perhaps the questioner had observed that in spite of the very large crowds that came to hear Jesus’ preaching and be healed, there were only a few followers who were loyal. Jesus did not answer directly, but warned that many would try to enter after it was too late. (CSB)

Jesus directs His followers’ attention away from the plight of others and toward an honest self-appraisal and spiritual housecleaning (cf vv 1–5). (TLSB)

οἱ σωζόμενοι—While Luke sometimes uses a present participle for events that will be completed in the future (1:35; 22:19, 20, 21), the present participle, “those who are being saved,” indicates that salvation has already come through the ministry of Jesus. Cf. Acts 2:47. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 564, notes: “οἱ σωζόμενοι ... is a stereotyped phrase in the early church (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15). ... It refers to the obtaining of eschatological salvation, and is tantamount to entry to the kingdom and the gaining of eternal life (Mk. 10:26 ...).” (CC pp. 547-548)

After Luke’s second travel notice comes a section about those who will be received into the kingdom of God. The previous discourse ended with two parables about the kingdom of God

(13:18–21). This new discourse is introduced by this question in 13:23: “Lord, are those who are being saved few?” (CC p. 550)

The question is one in a series of questions at critical moments in Luke’s narrative. These questions help the catechumen reflect on the significance of the theological discourse. As Jesus’ journey draws to a close, Jesus himself fires a pointed question at his disciples that drives home his teaching: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith on the earth?” (18:8). On a literary level, the rhetorical purpose of that question is similar to that of the question put to Jesus in 13:23 and his answer in 13:30. Both occur at key junctions in Jesus’ journey and require the hearer to pause and consider his own standing in relation to the kingdom of God: “Am *I* one of the many or one of the few?” (CC p. 550)

In Luke questions often serve to provoke the hearer to deeper reflection and/or to introduce a teaching of Jesus that is an especially important authoritative revelation (10:29; 12:41; 18:8). Provocative statements made to Jesus in the narrative may serve a particular purpose (11:45; 12:13; 13:1); cf. F. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, p. 160 (CC p. 550)

Framed in the third person, the question represents a certain type of “theological discussion” current among the Jews. (CC p. 550)

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 219–20, makes this comment on the Jewish context of this question:

The question put to Jesus is cast in the distinctive Christian language of “salvation,” but it derives from a central preoccupation of Jews in the first century concerning the relationship of historical Judaism to the people of God. Were all those calling themselves Jews really part of the chosen people? The concept of a *remnant* chosen by God from a larger population is found clearly in the writings of the Essenes who saw themselves as that “saved” group (cf. *CD* 1:4) and who scorn[ed] other Jews, the “ungodly of the covenant” (*IQM* 1:2). We can find the same perception in writings more frequently associated with the Pharisees, as in 4 Ezra 8:1: “This age the Most High has made for many, but the age to come for few.” Such discussions about who will find their way into the age to come are continued in *m. Sanhedrin* 10:1–6, and *bT Sanh.* 99b; 105a. (CC p. 550)

kurie ei oligoi oi sozomenoi – In ancient Greece the word sozo (I save) could take any of five different meanings. (1) saving (human or divine), from serious peril; (2) keeping alive, protecting, keeping from want; (3) benefiting, keeping in good health; (4) preserving the inner being; (5) religious usage where all the nuances occur. In the synoptic gospels the concept of salvation is associated with entrance into the kingdom of God. – Some of the rabbis taught that all Israelites would have a share in the world to come. Jesus answers the question in quite a different way. (PBC)

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13:24 *strive to enter* – But theoretical questions framed in the third person “put off repentance and do not lead to faith.” Jesus will not let a questioner examine others without examining

himself. So Jesus responds with direct warnings in the second person: an imperative (“you”; 13:24), a condition (“when ... then you”; 13:25–27), and a prediction (“there will be ... when you will see”; 13:28–29). These warnings seem to ask, “O questioner, will you be saved?” (CC p. 551)

Jesus begins with an imperative cast in catechetical language: “Struggle [ἀγωνίζεσθε] to enter in through the narrow door, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter in and they will not be able” (13:24). The command to “struggle” does not mean “that moral effort is necessary in order to enter the kingdom,” nor does it mean entrance is gained by exercising “human responsibility.” (CC p. 551)

J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 734. R. Stein, *Luke*, 379, says: “The reason some are not able to enter does not have to do with being good enough but with the willingness to repent (cf. 13:3, 5), which they refuse to do. The main point of the verse centers on the need to make sure one is part of the ‘few’ who have, through repentance and faith, experienced God’s mercy and grace.” (CC p. 551)

Rather, the struggle through which one enters is repentance, which is a work of God in the human heart. The struggle is produced when the Word of God—such as the teaching of Jesus here—calls one to repent and trust in Christ, but sinful human nature wars against God’s Word. The struggle is resolved as the old Adam is put to death by the Law and the person of faith is raised to new life with Christ by the power of the Gospel. St. Paul offers a window into this inner struggle and how it is resolved in Rom 7:7–8:11, with a concise summary in Rom 8:13. *This ongoing, lifelong struggle characterizes the lives of all who are baptized into Christ (Rom 6:1–11).* (CC p. 551)

The struggle is not against other people but rather against our own sinful flesh and the temptations of the devil. (PBC)

narrow door – A narrow door prevent great crowds of people from entering all at once. Entrance into the banquet is gained by going through the door one at a time. That narrow door is a symbol for Jesus Himself. One enters the banquet hall by way of Jesus. (PBC)

Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (Jn 14:6). All other hopes are misplaced. (TLSB)

This interpretation agrees with the previous discourse, which was a call for preparation for the coming of the Son of Man by repentance (Lk 13:3, 5) and for discernment of the signs of Jesus’ ministry—signs that are perceived only by faith and that also strengthen faith (12:56). *Entrance through the narrow door is gained by those who repent and see in Jesus the Lord of the eschatological banquet*, for this door opens up into the house in which the end-time feast is about to be celebrated. In this way a constellation of classic catechetical themes about “the way” are focused on the one final door that is the goal and the end of catechesis. Jesus is about to talk about the moment when the door is closed and the opportunity for entrance through catechesis is over. (CC p. 551)

In Mt 7:13–14, Jesus refers to both the narrow gate and a wide one leading to destruction. Luke sometimes employs the “two ways” catechetical method of the OT (Deuteronomy 27–28; 30:15–20; Psalm 1; Proverbs; etc.): a way of life and a way of death (cf. Lk 6:20–26). But here he chooses to emphasize only the one way to life. (CC p. 551)

This first warning of Jesus states that since the door to the banquet is narrow, many will seek to enter in and will not be able. (CC pp. 551-552)

As it is narrow and one must struggle, there is no possibility to crawl through this door wearing medals or bearing trophies awarded for good works before people. Nor do people come through in groups (“the Jews,” “the Pharisees,” etc.), but one by one (cf. F. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, 160). (CC p. 552)

The many (πολλοί; 13:24) who try and fail are contrasted to the few (ὀλίγοι; 13:23) who will be saved. Although Jesus may have the Pharisees in mind here for the “many,” it applies to everyone who does not repent and see in Jesus the coming of God’s salvation. (CC p. 552)

William Arndt writes, “Heaven is a gift of divine grace, but accepting the gift and clinging to it imply a constant struggle with the forces of evil inside and outside seeking to induce us to refuse or droop the gift.” Lenski says, “But does this not contradict the teaching that man is spiritually dead and cannot struggle and strive? This struggle is not one on the part of man’s corrupt natural powers – they never could or would struggle to enter that narrow door. The struggling is caused by the law and the gospel when they operate upon and in the heart and move it mightily. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

Entrance through the narrow door is gained by those who repent and see in Jesus the Lord of the eschatological banquet, for this door opens up into the house in which the end-time feast is about to be celebrated. In this way a constellation of classic catechetical themes about “the way” are focused on the one final door that is the goal and the end of catechesis. (CC p. 551)

Therefore, the answer to the question of whether those being saved are few is a resounding yes—*few indeed!* But the hearer need not despair or exhaust himself attempting to “struggle” through the door by his own efforts. Luke’s narrative will continue to provide examples of those who pass through the door by grace, and these examples encourage as well as instruct. One of the clearest examples is given to those who ask a similar question but in the first person (in reference to themselves): “What should we do?” The answer given is that Baptism in the name of Jesus—a Baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of sins with the gift of the promised Spirit—provides all that is necessary for entrance (Acts 2:37–39). Those that were baptized were added to the number of those being saved. They also remained steadfast “in the apostles’ doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The regular reception of the Lord’s Supper anticipates the end-time feast of Lk 13:29. (CC p. 552)

13:25 *once* – Greek (from the time when) – ὅτε οὗ ἄν—This temporal prepositional phrase acts like a subordinating conjunction and governs the four main verbs that follow: ἐγερθῆ, ἀποκλείσθῃ, ἄρξῃσθε, and ἐρεῖ. Everything in 13:25 (including the two reports of direct discourse) is subordinate; the prior events describe the situation at which point “*then* [τότε] you will begin to say ...” (13:26). (CC p. 548)

has risen – ἐγερθῆ—L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 216, has an intriguing suggestion as to Luke’s use of this word here: “Does it have the sense of the biblical idiom ‘rise and do something’ (cf. 1:39; 4:29; 6:8), or does it mean ‘rise up’? Luke uses *anistemi* for the former idiom, and *egeiro* for the latter (cf. 11:8). (CC p. 548)

open the door to us – the time to repent and receive the Lord is fleeting. Accordingly, people need to make entry into God’s kingdom their first priority, before the door to life suddenly slams shut. (TLSB)

ὕμῖν—This is a dative of advantage, i.e., open the door for our advantage so that we might enter the banquet hall. It is repeated again in 13:27. (CC p. 548)

The second warning begins with a pronouncement by Jesus: “From the time when the master of the house arises [ἐγερθῆ] and locks the door ...” (13:25). (CC p. 552)

If the door is shut at the parousia and the master’s rising refers to the resurrection of Christ, these two things do not happen simultaneously. But the hearer should be warned not to assume that the time between them is long! (CC p. 552)

The master of the house is Jesus; he is the one who ate and drank with them and taught in their streets (13:26). In the second warning, the narrow door of the first warning is *now shut* by the master. The time of patient forbearance, given in order to evoke repentance, is over. (CC p. 552)

The catechumen has already been instructed about shut doors in the previous two chapters (11:5–13; 12:35–40), and some of the parallels are striking. In the parable of the friend at midnight (11:5–13), the friend, from behind a locked door (11:7) and against his inclination (11:8), will rise up (ἐγερθείς) and give bread to his neighbor to avoid the shame of not showing hospitality to a stranger. How much more will God show hospitality as he supplies salvation in his Son and thereby opens the narrow door to the banquet. This is why, after the friend opens the door to his neighbor, Jesus concludes the parable by urging the disciples to persistently ask, seek (11:9—ζητῶν; cf. 13:24—ζητήσουσιν), and knock (11:9—κρούετε; cf. 13:25—κρούειν). The time frame in Luke 11 is prior to that in Luke 13, for in Luke 11 there is still time to repent, seek, and knock. The other previous reference to a shut door occurs in the parable where the servants are ready to open (12:36—ἀνοιξωσιν; cf. 13:25—ἄνοιξον) the door at the knock (12:36—κρούσαντος) of their Lord when he returns from the feast. Here it is the servants who open the door for the Lord; their action represents their repentance, their readiness by faith, and their recognition of him as their Lord. Then contrary to all expectations, they do not serve the banquet. Instead, the Lord girds his loins and serves them as they recline at the table (12:37—ἀνακλινεῖ; cf. 13:29—ἀνακλιθήσονται). (CC p. 552)

I do not know you – οὐκ οἶδα ἡμᾶς – God disavows any relationship between himself and the unbelievers. – That God would not know someone or from where they come is not due to God’s inability or failure, nor from His lack of knowledge about anyone or anything. Being known by God is a matter of his grace, as his word works humble contrition (we acknowledge our sin) and faith (we trust in God’s mercy and love in Christ toward all people) Without this grace, which comes to us through Christ, God would not know or recognize us as being His redeemed children. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

To know often has the connotation of an intimate relationship, both on a human level and of God’s knowing His people. – The time will come when the owner of the house is going to close that door. There will be some who come knocking on the locked door demanding entry. But just knowing the owner of the house will not cause him to open. Jesus is obviously picturing himself as the owner since the people speak of his teaching in their street. Just as the time will come when the unfruitful tree will be cut down (13:0), so also the time will come in each individual’s life and in the history of the world when the entrance to salvation will be closed. The message is plain: don’t delay but strive to enter now. (PBC)

In the OT, when getting to know a person, it was common to ask where the person had come from, since a person’s hometown, tribe, nationality, or prior activity often revealed something

about the person's character. Here the Master says that He does not know the people, and moreover, He has no familiarity with their place of origin. He has nothing in common with them, no ties to them whatsoever. (CC p. 548)

Matthew 25:1-13 is the story of the 10 virgins. Five of them were not ready when the bridegroom came and wanted oil from the other 5's supply. We cannot be saved by someone else's faith. Too many people want to eat drink and be merry and hope to come to faith in time. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Where you come from – πόθεν ἐστὲ—In the OT, when getting to know a person, it was common to ask where the person had come from, (E.g., Gen 16:8; 1 Sam 30:13; 2 Sam 1:3, 13; 15:2; Jonah 1:8; Job 2:2) since a person's hometown, tribe, nationality, or prior activity often revealed something about the person's character. The Greek renders the Hebrew idiom in those OT verses: אֶת־מִצְרָיִם. Here the master says that he does not know the people, and moreover, he has no familiarity with their place of origin. He has nothing in common with them, no ties to them whatsoever (cf. Jn 8:41–47). (CC p. 548)

13:26 *we ate and drink in your presence* – They did indeed do so, but they wanted him all to themselves and were offended when he ate and drank with “sinners and tax collectors.” What they didn't say “we believe in you.” Jesus had no effect on their lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

They lay claim that He taught in their streets; sadly they cannot claim that he taught them – Matthew 7:21-23,”²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Here as in our text “doing” is presented as a means to entrance. They are ignoring Jesus as Savior and bringing Him down to their level or leaders. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 3)

The warning focuses on the future experience of those who are standing *outside* when the door has been shut. The baptism of John and the preaching of the kingdom by Jesus *had provided them with a narrow but opened door*. Because they refused to repent and recognize Jesus as the Master of the banquet, they now stand on the outside. He denies that he knows them, even as they have failed to confess him. He will not open to them, for the time of patient forbearance, of preaching and catechesis, when they were invited to know (believe in) Jesus, is finally over. These shut-out guests then have the audacity to appeal to Jesus' table fellowship; he came among them as a teaching and eating Messiah. But table fellowship with Jesus during his earthly ministry does not *guarantee* a place at the eschatological banquet if those who feast with him in the here and *now* do not recognize him as the Lord of the *not yet* banquet. (CC p. 553)

Apparently such was the case with Simon the Pharisee (7:36–50), other Pharisees who ate dinner with Jesus (11:37–54), and the Pharisees and lawyers who will eat with him at a Sabbath meal in the next chapter (14:1–24). (CC p. 553)

Even some who partake of the Lord's Supper may do so to their own condemnation because they do not recognize the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27–31). (CC p. 553)

taught you in the streets – Mere acquaintance with Jesus and His teachings will not avail on Judgment Day; a wholehearted trust is needed. Luth: “For even though you know that He is

God's Son, that He died and rose again, and that He sits at the right hand of the Father, you have not yet learned to know Christ aright ... [until you also] believe that He did all this for your sake, in order to help you" (AE 30:30). (TLSB)

13:27 *depart from me all you workers of evil* – Lit, “workers of injustice.” Without faith in Jesus Christ, it is impossible to produce works that please God (Heb 11:6). (TLSB)

ergatai adikias – It is unlikely that the unbelievers in Jesus' parable would acknowledge themselves as evildoers. They are, nevertheless, the one who will recognize Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. But they will be excluded from the festive celebration. – The Judge will repeat Himself, not because He is giving a second chance, but because they were not listening when He first spoke. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

The table was one of the prime locales for Jesus' instruction to the people about his identity as the messianic King and his coming to usher in God's kingdom through death and resurrection. After Jesus' ascension, the preaching, teaching, and table fellowship of Jesus will continue in the worship life of the church. Jesus is still present to teach through his Word and to serve guests at his Table. For those who *now* ignore this “open door,” it will be too late to enter when the final feast arrives at the Son of Man's return. The master of the house reiterates that they had no true communion with him during this life. To such as these, Jesus will command, “Depart from me, all you workers of unrighteousness” (13:27). They are workers of unrighteousness because they did not discern the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ (see comments on 12:57). They have traveled the unrighteous way. They rejected the Righteous One who alone opens the narrow door to the banquet where righteousness reigns. Jesus has threatened judgment in the previous discourse (12:57–59), but now that threat becomes a reality for those who rejected him and his kingdom. (CC pp. 553-554)

13:28 *there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* – Refers to the torment of eternal separation from God and His goodness—hell. (TLSB)

o klauthmos kai o Brugmos twn odonton – The emotional and spiritual pain of discovering that they are not true children of Abraham and the devastating experience of being thrown out of the kingdom of God will cause weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Their eternal consignment will bring dire distress. This description of the outward expression of physical pain and agony is found six times in Matthew, but only here in Luke. The anguish is in response to seeing “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out” The emotional and spiritual pain of discovering that they are not true children of Abraham and the devastating experience of the being thrown out of the kingdom of God will cause weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

ἀπόστητε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, πάντες ἐργάται ἀδικίας—This is a variation of Ps 6:9 in the LXX *ἀπόστητε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, πάντες οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν*. (CC p. 548)

The third and final warning continues the catechetical language of the “two ways.” It predicts the conditions that result when one has either continued down the way of death or has been led along the way of life (cf. Ps 23:3). (CC p. 554)

Here the catechumen is reminded of the many sayings in Luke that speak of these two ways, beginning with Simeon's prophecy that Jesus “is destined for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel” (2:34). These include such teachings of Jesus as the

beatitudes and woes (6:20–26) and the two categories of people who are either with Jesus and John or against them (7:29–30). (CC p. 554)

For those who choose death by rejecting (John and) Jesus, “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves being thrown outside” (13:28). This seems to be pointed directly at the Jewish religious establishment. (CC p. 554)

The earliest appeal by the Jews to John the Baptist was when they claimed Abraham as their father (3:8), naively thinking that this guaranteed them a seat at the end-time table with Abraham in the kingdom of God. (CC p. 554)

The eschatological banquet is a grand reunion of all the OT saints, including the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and “all the prophets” (Luke’s unique touch). Instead of receiving an invitation to the final feast, those who rejected Jesus are cast outside to the place of death, where there will be only weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is a time of inconsolable sorrow because the judgment is irreversible. (CC p. 554)

all the prophets – πάντας τοὺς προφήτας—This does not appear in the Matthew parallel (8:11). It is a favorite Lukan formulation. See also 11:50 and 24:27, where it occurs in crucial positions in Luke’s prophetic pattern. (CC p. 548)

kingdom of God – Restored creation, after the new heaven and new earth are revealed and people behold God face-to-face (Rv 21:1–5). (TLSB)

13:29 *People ... from east and west and north and south.* From the four corners of the world (Ps 107:3) and from among all people, including Gentiles. (CSB)

Those redeemed by Christ through faith. (TLSB)

On the other hand, 13:29 is *the* classic Lukan statement on the nature of Jesus’ eschatological table fellowship. This feast is also a time of joy because of the consummation of the kingdom. Those rejoicing at the heavenly table of Jesus in the kingdom of God will include the patriarchs and the prophets and even Gentiles (e.g., Is 19:23–25; 66:19–23) from east and west, north and south, as well as the outcasts of Israel—the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind (14:13, 21). They have heard the word of repentance from John and Jesus, and they believe that in Jesus God is bringing his eschatological salvation. The irony is that those guests who will participate in this eschatological banquet are more likely to be the outcasts of Israel and Gentiles. This fits Luke’s Great Reversal motif where the last will be first and the first will be last (13:30). To human eyes, the Pharisees and the other religious luminaries (the first) appear to be the most fit for the kingdom, and the most unfit (the last) appear to be the unclean Gentiles and outcast Jews. But these Pharisees, who want first seats in the synagogues (11:43) and at the table (14:7–11), and lawyers, who held in their hands the key of knowledge that opened the narrow door to the final banquet (11:52)—they will be shut outside when they seek a seat at the final banquet because Jesus does not know them. Conversely, Gentiles and sinners (the last) will enter. (CC pp. 554–555)

will recline at the table – The joy of eternal life is repeatedly compared to that of a great feast (e.g., Is 25:6–9). (TLSB)

ἀνακλιθήσονται – “they will recline.” This is what people would do when invited to a banquet, only in this eating it will be the Gentiles who get to do so. – Jesus is moving on from the Jews to Gentiles, whose conversion was prophesied in Is 49:12; 59:19. Yet the very thought was repugnant to the unbelieving Jews of Jesus’ day, and initially to some of His apostles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 3)

13:30 *behold* – kai idou – Means to take note. – Jesus is talking about Jews who according to God’s plan were first to hear the Gospel, made themselves last by excluding themselves from the promises. And Jesus is talking about the Gentiles who were the last to hear the Gospel (and were last in the opinion of many Jews) but became among the first and foremost members of the kingdom through Christ. This interchange of position is one more example of the Gospel theme of the great reversal, so prominent throughout both testaments (the humble will be exalted, and the proud humbled; the poor will be enriched, the wealthy impoverished; etc). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 3)

As we hear these warnings, our Savior does not want our hearts to be filled with fear. Instead, He would have us examine our hearts to make sure we rely on Him and Him alone for our salvation. (LL)

last/first...first/last – Outsiders and people from the dregs of society (tax collectors, sinners, and Gentiles) will be saved, while supposed insiders and important people (religious and civil leaders) will lose out. The determining factor is faith in Jesus, not wealth or social status. (TLSB)

ἔσχατοι/πρῶτοι—The absence of the article indicates that not *all* who were last will be first, and vice versa. (CC p. 548)

Jesus’ Great Reversal logion (13:30) concludes this description of the eschatological banquet and provides a frame with the evangelist’s travel notice (13:22). The catechumen knows that the Great Reversal language of the gospel prepares the hearer for God’s *ultimate* reversal in Jerusalem. God’s *ultimate* hospitality will be shown when Jesus is rejected on the cross in order to open the eschatological banquet door to all humanity. In Jerusalem, God’s firstborn shall be last, and God’s exalted one shall be humbled (14:8; 18:14). But three days later will come the greatest reversal. (CC p. 555)

13:22–30 People can enter God’s kingdom only through Jesus Christ. Moreover, the time for every human being—and indeed the world—is quickly slipping away, and soon the door will slam shut. Accordingly, the Lord beseeches one and all to come into the great wedding banquet of His Son, without cost and without delay. • “Today Your gate is open, And all who enter in Shall find a Father’s welcome And pardon for their sin. The past shall be forgotten, A present joy be giv’n, A future grace be promised, A glorious crown in heav’n.” Amen. (LSB 915:2) (TLSB)

Lament over Jerusalem

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, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,

and you were not willing! 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!’”

The importance of this episode in Luke’s gospel cannot be overstated. It is possible to structure the travel narrative in such a way that this passage stands at the center of the entire journey. The theme of this pericope and this section is Jesus, the rejected prophet. This theme was already introduced in Jesus’ first sermon, which took place at Nazareth (4:16–30), and has been reiterated throughout his Galilean ministry (4:14–9:50) and his journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:28). Lk 13:31–35 is yet another statement on the rejection of Jesus, the miracle-working prophet who teaches on his journey to Jerusalem (13:22). This passage also restates that Jerusalem is the city of destiny and the place of his final rejection. Luke typically casts significant passages in chiasmic frames, and he has structured this climactic pericope chiasmically, after a brief introduction that records a dialog between Jesus and a group of Pharisees. (CC p. 557)

13:31 *some Pharisees came* – Luke carefully provides the hearer with a framework of the time, place, and persons. The time reference “in that very hour” (ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ) connects the previous teaching about the end-time banquet with this prophecy of Jesus’ destiny in Jerusalem. Luke uses the time notice of “hour” frequently in his gospel. (Lk 1:10; 2:38; 7:21; 10:21; 12:12, 39, 40, 46; 14:17; 20:19; 22:59; 23:44) But of particular theological significance are his references to the “hour” of the Last Supper (22:14), the moment of arrest (22:53), and the Emmaus meal (24:33). (CC p. 557)

There is a close relationship between Lk 13:31–35 and Luke 24, especially in the time reference in 13:32, “and on the third day I am brought to my goal,” another proleptic demonstration during the ministry of Jesus of the eschatological fulfillment of Jesus’ work on Easter, the third day as recorded in Luke 24. There is, however, another time connection with Luke 24 that illustrates the crucial role Luke 13 plays in Luke’s thematic development. Lk 13:31 begins “in that very hour,” the same way in which Luke begins his conclusion of the Emmaus narrative in 24:33. This phrase conveys a sense of urgency and focuses on the particular event. (CC p. 557)

These events are so momentous that Luke saw fit even to record the times at which they occurred. With this time reference (13:31), Luke places this passage in select company. Since the events in this passage occur “in that very hour,” and there are no other place references, they must also take place “on the journey.” The participants in the story are Jesus and some Pharisees. The relationship of these Pharisees to Jesus has been debated by scholars for centuries and deserves comment. (CC pp. 557-558)

Luke’s introduction to this passage is a dialog between the Pharisees and Jesus in which the Pharisees use *imperative* language, and Jesus responds in kind. What are the Pharisees’ motives here? Are they sympathetic to Jesus? Or are the Pharisees still bitter opponents, having chosen a different tack to trap Jesus and ultimately put him to death? (CC p. 558)

On the surface, the Pharisees seem to be positively inclined toward Jesus when they warn him in strong words to “depart from here and continue on your journey, because Herod wants to kill you” (13:31). This would signal a remarkable turn of heart after Jesus’ harsh words against them (11:37–52), his accusation concerning “the leaven, which is hypocrisy, of the Pharisees” (12:1), and their equally rigorous attack on Jesus (11:53–54). (CC p. 558)

Those who favor seeing the Pharisees in a more positive light appeal to Luke’s clear desire not to mention them by name in the Jerusalem narrative during Jesus’ final week. (There they are called

“the scribes” instead of “Pharisees.”) The evangelist apparently did not want to *explicitly* implicate *Pharisees* in Jesus’ death. In Acts some Pharisees have become members of the Christian community (Acts 15:5), and some even support Paul before the Sanhedrin because they believe in the resurrection, angels, and spirits, whereas the Sadducees do not (Acts 23:6–12). One could easily argue that the figure of Jesus would be more appealing to Pharisaic Judaism than to the Judaism of the chief priests and Sadducees. (CC p. 558)

Others conclude that the Pharisees are acting in a hostile manner toward Jesus here. This is preferable because it is consistent with the Lukan characterization of the Pharisees elsewhere in his narrative. (CC p. 558)

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 221, says:

Up to this point, our reliable narrator has given us *no* indication that the Pharisees ... have any interest in Jesus. Quite the opposite; they do not accept him as a prophet, and after his attack on them, have a “deep resentment” against him which they put into action by seeking to trap him in what he says (11:53). Furthermore, neither before this scene or after are we given any indication that Herod wants to kill Jesus. Just the opposite: he “seeks to see him.” In light of these characterizations, it is imperative that we take the Pharisaic message as intended hostilely, however difficult that may make it for us as readers. If we do not, then we have betrayed the only reliable guide we have to the story as a whole, which are the authorial directions given by the narrator. (CC p. 558)

The Pharisees are guilty of malice and hypocrisy; the motive for their warnings about Herod’s evil intents may be to turn Jesus from his appointed path, to keep Jesus from completing God’s plan of salvation—a plan they have already rejected “for themselves” when they rejected the baptism of John (7:30). It is also possible that they simply wanted to scare Jesus out of their environs. If the Pharisees were speaking out of one of these hostile motives, then were Jesus to heed their warnings, he would be a false prophet who seeks to avoid the suffering and martyrdom of the prophets before him (cf. 11:47–52). But if he ignores their warnings, then he faithfully continues his ministry, even though he knows it will lead directly to Jerusalem and the specter of the cross. (CC pp. 558-559)

leave this place – ἐντεῶθεν—This adverb goes with both imperative verbs. ἔξελθε is an aorist imperative that denotes the simple action of Jesus’ departure, whereas πορεύου is a present imperative that expresses continuous action. (CC p. 556)

Herod wants to kill you. Jesus was probably in Perea, which was under Herod’s jurisdiction. The Pharisees wanted to frighten Jesus into leaving this area and going to Judea. (CSB)

The Pharisees’ motive for warning Jesus is not clear. If sincere, they wished to move Him from their territory. On Herod Antipas, cf 3:19–20; 9:7–9. (TLSB)

13:32 *go* – πορευθέντες—This participle functions as an imperative and is placed next to the imperative εἴπατε. The Pharisee’s command in 13:31, πορεύου, will not cause Jesus to deviate from his divinely ordained journey. Instead, Jesus tells *them* to set out on a journey. (CC p. 556)

fox. A crafty animal. (CSB)

Ironically, this clever tyrant would serve God’s plan of salvation. Cf 23:11. (TLSB)

Jesus calls Herod a “fox,” literally a “she-fox” or “vixen,” perhaps hinting at Herod’s well-known unsavory reputation. Jesus shows both His prior knowledge of and His contempt for Herod’s tricky plan. In Greek literature “fox” was a by-word for slyness. In the OT a fox is usually considered destructive, but more of an aggravating nuisance than a mortal threat (Jud 15:4; Song of Songs 2:15). Jesus may have been saying in effect, “Go and tell your puny little king....” The plot of Herod and the Pharisees does not intimidate Him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 2)

τῆ ἁλώπεκι—The description of Herod as a “fox” would be understood as a reference to his cunning and craftiness by both Jews and Greeks—since ancient literature often portrayed foxes as having these characteristics (cf. Talmud, *Berakot*, IX, 61b; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1:3, 7–9; Plutarch, *Solon* 30:2). (CC p. 556)

Jesus responds with imperatives of his own: “Go, tell [πορευθέντες εἶπατε] that fox ...” In close proximity in the narrative are references to two of the chief characters who will figure in Jesus’ trials and death: Pilate and Herod. Herod (the Pharisees say) wishes to kill Jesus (13:31), but when Herod finally meets Jesus in Jerusalem he simply heaps contempt upon Jesus and ridicules him (23:6–12). Although Herod is capable of killing Jesus, as his beheading of John the Baptist attests, in 9:9 and 23:8 Herod only wishes to *see* Jesus. Pilate shed the blood of some Galileans (13:1), and he will be the one who sentences Jesus to death (23:1–6, 13–25). (CC p. 559)

Jesus’ words “Go, tell that fox” introduce his prophetic speech. This message to Herod via the Pharisees (13:32b–33, unique to Luke) are combined with the lament over Jerusalem (13:34–35; cf. Mt 23:37–39) in such a way as to create a prophetic utterance in chiasmic form. The center is the condemnation of Jerusalem; it is the locale of the rejection and death of the prophets and apostles (13:34a). Leading up to the climax, like Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, are the things that Jesus is doing (and will do) that will bring about his own demise (13:32b–33). (CC p. 559)

behold – Jesus begins these Christological statements with “behold” (ἰδοῦ [13:32]), alerting the hearer to a particularly significant passage. This is followed by three verbs in the *present* tense. (CC p. 560)

today and tomorrow. In Semitic usage this phrase could refer to an indefinite but limited period of time. (CSB)

perform cures – ἰάσεις—Both the physical healing of disease *and* the spiritual healing of sin through forgiveness are embraced by this word (see BAGD). (CC p. 556)

The first two statements are progressive presents that describe Jesus’ ministry of releasing those captive in bondage to Satan, sickness, and sin. These acts of release are representative of all the liberation that Jesus brings by his gracious presence in the world. *Miracles always testify to the gracious presence of God*. Exorcisms and healings pertain to the first phase of Lukan Christology, which includes both teaching and miracles. But where is the teaching? One could point back to the travel notice in 13:22 that begins this second stage of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. This notice refers to his teaching as he traveled. And yet, is not Jesus also teaching at this very moment as he describes his miracles of release to the creation he has come to re-create? (CC p. 560)

reach my goal. Jesus’ life had a predetermined plan that would be carried out, and no harm could come to him until his purpose was accomplished (cf. 4:43; 9:22). (CSB)

ἐκβάλλω ... ἀποτελῶ ... τελειοῶμαι—The first two of these three present verbs indicates Jesus' continuous, ongoing ministry of release. The third present verb, τελειοῶμαι, is a futuristic present. It is a theological passive; God is the agent: "I am [will be] brought to my goal" by God (R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity I*, 154). (CC p. 556)

This teaching culminates in the climactic statement "on the third day I am brought to my goal." Luke's hearers would certainly recognize "on the third day" as an allusion to Jesus' resurrection. It comes at the beginning of the third Greek clause for emphasis. It is a proleptic testimony to the eschatological fulfillment of Jesus' work "on the third day." (CC pp. 560-561)

In Jesus' passion predictions in Matthew and Luke, the expression "on the third day" designates the day of resurrection (Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46; cf. also 24:21). Instead of "on the third day," Mark has "three days" (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Mark's "three days" seems to refer to the totality of the passion, including Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, whereas "on the third day" emphasizes the final day of the three-day sequence, when Jesus rises from the dead. Luke shows his interest in the three-day sequence of passion and resurrection by clearly demarcating the days. Luke 24 twice refers to Jesus' predictions of his resurrection "on the third day" (24:7, 46) and also notes that the Emmaus episode occurred on the third day (24:21). Luke is the only gospel to record Jesus' use of the phrase after his resurrection. This third day is especially significant to Luke because it is the day of resurrection and the day on which the Christian church now gathers to celebrate the eschatological Meal.

"Three days" is also used in Mt 26:61 and Mk 14:58 in Jesus' prediction that he will destroy and rebuild the temple in three days and in Mt 27:40 and Mk 15:29 at the cross when the crowds quote the same prediction. Luke does not include these references to the resurrection in his passion narrative. Mt 12:40 alone also uses "three days and three nights" twice concerning the sign of Jonah. Luke does not use "three days" in reference to the resurrection anywhere in his gospel. (CC p. 561)

The third day is the day of the final release of all creation. Jesus, after assuming the world's bondage while on the cross and burying it in the tomb at his death, rises from the dead, and his death and resurrection *once and for all* are the basis for all exorcisms and all healings. As humanity's substitute and representative, he accomplishes salvation for all. (CC pp. 560-561)

Jesus states that this is the goal of his journey, and it is the goal to which he is brought by *the Father* (13:32, with the theological passive τελειοῶμαι). Jesus has already described his passion in Jerusalem in the language of "accomplishment" when he referred to his "baptism" on the cross and his distress until "it is accomplished" (12:50; τελεσθῆ, another theological passive). The "third day," when Jesus is brought up out of the grave, is consistent with Luke's language for the whole complex of events that happen in Jerusalem as an "exodus" (9:31) or a "being taken up" (9:51); all three expressions entail his journey, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. This is the plan of salvation (βουλή; 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28) that God the Father is working out through Jesus, his Son. Jesus will reach the goal of his death, resurrection, and ascension because God the Father will sentence him to death as the bearer of creation's bondage, raise him from the dead to set the creation free, and enthrone him at his right hand so that our re-created flesh may reign with him in the heavenly places. The vicarious suffering and death and subsequent glorification of Christ—in his humanity as well as his divinity—make possible the glorification of his human disciples as well (Eph 1:20–23; 2:6; 4:4–10). (CC p. 561)

13:33 *today...tomorrow...and the third day* – Why is Jesus compelled to travel “today and tomorrow and the coming day?” The second half of the clause explains why: “Because it is *impossible* that a prophet perish outside Jerusalem.” Here the title “prophet” describes *the rejected prophet* who is in solidarity and continuity with the OT prophets. Jesus uses parallel expressions for the necessity (δεῖ) of his journey and for the necessity (οὐκ ἐνδέχεται ... ἔξω, “it is impossible ... outside”) of his death in Jerusalem. This is the only time ἐνδέχομαι, “it is possible, acceptable,” is used in the NT. This links together Jesus’ journey and his death in the city which is the goal of the journey. Both must transpire according to the divine plan, as affirmed in John the Baptist’s words that “every valley will be filled in and every mountain and hill made low, and the crooked will be made straight and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh will see the salvation of God” (3:5–6). If not even mountains can stand in the way and the temptations of Satan himself are unsuccessful (4:1–13), how much less will the Pharisees’ scare tactics be able to derail Jesus from the faithful completion of his journey. (CC p. 563)

third day – τῆ ἑχομένη—Luke is unique in the NT in using a form of the verb ἔχω in this way for a time reference, “the coming day.” (CC p. 556)

away from Jerusalem. Jesus’ hour had not yet come (see 2:38; Jn 7:30; 8:20; cf. Jn 8:59; 10:39; 11:54). He would die in Jerusalem as had numerous prophets before him. (CSB)

Irony. Jerusalem was the Judean capital and the site of the temple. Yet, the people had a history of killing God’s prophets there (cf. Ac 7:51–53, 58). (TLSB)

13:34 *kills the prophets and stones* – ἀποκτείνουσα ... λιθοβολοῶσα—These two present participles characterize Jerusalem’s ongoing behavior in a “present general” sense (cf. E. Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, §§ 123–26). (CC p. 556)

how often ... ! This lament over Jerusalem may suggest that Jesus was in Jerusalem more often than the Synoptics indicate (cf. Jn 2:13; 4:45; 5:1; 7:10; 10:22). However, the statement in vv. 34–35 may have been uttered some distance from Jerusalem, i.e., in Perea. According to Mt 23:37–38, the same utterance was spoken on Tuesday of Passion Week. Jesus repeated many of his teachings and sayings. (CSB)

Jesus’ prophetic destiny of rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection must take place in Jerusalem, the holy city, the place where God dwells and atonement must take place. Jerusalem, then, is in the center of this prophetic passage. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem embraces both the tragedy of Jerusalem’s sin and the method God has chosen to deal with that sin. In the Greek text (and in many English translations), the word “Jerusalem” occurs three times in a row: “... a prophet perish outside *Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, the one who kills ...” (13:33–34). The centrality of Jerusalem is also suggested by the shape of this lament in chiasmic form, giving us a chiasm (13:34a) in the midst of a chiasm (13:32b–35):

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
the one who kills the prophets [ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας]
and stones those who have been sent [λιθοβολοῶσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους]
to her [πρὸς αὐτήν].” (CC p. 563)

After countless years, the “holy city” of Jerusalem became known as the place that kills prophets and stones apostles. These two participial phrases, set side by side, recall Jesus’ words in his woes to Pharisees and lawyers that the Wisdom of God said, “I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute” (11:49). Jerusalem’s history is a bloody

one. That is why, when Jesus arrives at the city, he will weep over it and lament once again: “If only you—even you—had known in this day the things that have to do with peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes” (19:42). But Jerusalem’s bloodiest moment is yet to come when God’s eschatological wrath is placed on Jesus and he is offered up on the cross according to the plan of the Father. Jesus is not only referring to himself here, but to all the prophets who were rejected by unbelieving Israel and all the apostles who will be rejected, beginning with Stephen in Acts 7, who will be *stoned* in direct fulfillment of Jesus’ lament here. (CC p. 564)

Jerusalem is now the focus of Jesus’ prophetic words. By means of the same word, Jesus contrasts his “desire” (ἠθέλησα) for Jerusalem with Jerusalem’s lack of “desire” (οὐκ ἠθέλησατε) for him. Jesus compares his longing for his holy city to a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings to shield and protect them from all harm. This recalls the soldier’s psalm: “He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge” (Ps 91:4). This is the very psalm, concerning the angels’ protection (91:11–12), that Satan twisted in Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness (Lk 4:10–11). Jesus’ willingness to travel to Jerusalem (B—13:33) to die and his victory over temptation stand in contrast to Jerusalem’s children who “were not willing” (B’—13:34b) to be gathered by the Savior and who succumbed to temptation. (CC p. 564)

gathered – Often used to describe God’s gracious return of His people after the exile (e.g., Jer 32:37). (TLSB)

as a hen gathers – When a hen senses danger, she draws her chicks together and protects them with her outstretched wings. Cf Ps 36:7 for another image of God offering refuge under His wings. (TLSB)

you were not willing – Like wayward chicks, the people stubbornly resist God’s will for their lives. (TLSB)

13:35 *house is forsaken*. God will abandon his temple and his city (see 21:20, 24; Jer 12:7; 22:5). (CSB)

The people’s obstinacy sealed a disastrous fate for Jerusalem. The Romans utterly destroyed it in AD 70, after a Jewish revolt. Jesus would not visit the city again until He triumphantly entered it on Palm Sunday (cf 19:28–44). (TLSB)

This is a foretelling of the description of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 2)

ἀφίεται ... οἶκος—This theological passive indicates that Jerusalem’s “house” is forsaken to judgment *by God*. “House” could mean Jerusalem as the house of God’s people, or it could refer specifically to the Jerusalem temple. (CC p. 557)

I tell you – On λέγω ὑμῖν, see comments at 4:24. This expression highlights the significance of these final words about Jerusalem. (CC p. 557)

The final statement (A’—13:35), like the first one (A—13:32b), contains “behold” (ἰδοῦ). This is significant because it is Jesus’ pronouncement on Jerusalem concerning her future: “Behold, your house is being abandoned [ἀφίεται] to you.” Jesus is engaging in an extraordinary play on words here, one that the Greek-speaking hearer would readily recognize. This verse speaks of abandonment to judgment and condemnation. But elsewhere throughout the gospel, ἀφήμι, “to forgive, release, let,” and ἄφεσις, “forgiveness, release,” are customarily used to describe the

ministry of release in forgiveness. (Lk 1:77; 3:3; 4:18, 39; 5:11, 20, 21, 23, 24; 7:47, 48, 49; 11:4; 12:10; 13:8; 24:47) Jesus comes to bring release to the captives, but those who are not receptive to his ministry will be “released”—abandoned, forsaken, separated from God. They forfeit the new status of freedom and forgiveness. Jesus described exactly this in the previous passage: “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” when “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God” recline with those who enter the kingdom through Jesus, the open narrow door, but those who refuse God’s portal will be “thrown outside” (13:28). “Is being abandoned,” ἀφίεται (13:35), is a theological passive: it is God who forsakes Jerusalem’s house. The destruction of Jerusalem’s temple is already determined, since Jesus’ atonement will render further sacrifices gratuitous and insulting to God. Yet for Jerusalem’s inhabitants, the narrow door (13:24) remains open even while Jesus warns that those who refuse to be gathered under his outstretched arms will be forsaken. (CC pp. 564-565)

not see me until. The rejection of Jesus by Israel builds throughout Jesus’ ministry and will eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (19:43–44; 21:5–24). Thus, there is both a present and a future aspect to Jerusalem’s forsakenness. It is open to debate whether “house” (οἶκος; 13:35) refers to the temple or the people of Jerusalem/Israel. Ultimately, whether it is “temple” or “people,” the meaning is similar because Israel derived her identity from God’s call to be his people and God’s promise to dwell in her midst. By the time the temple is razed, Israel has ceased to be the people gathered around God’s means of grace. The new temple is Christ himself, and all those—Jews and Gentiles—gathered around Jesus receive grace and mercy through him; they constitute the true Israel (Rom 9:6–33; 11:25–26), the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). They will inhabit the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21–22). (CC p. 565)

Jesus closes with an enigmatic saying, introduced by another significant marker, “I say to you.” Jesus prophesies that Jerusalem’s children “will surely not see me until you say, ‘Blessed [εὐλογημένος] the Coming One [ὁ ἐρχόμενος] in the name of the Lord’ ” (Lk 13:35). This is not a beatitude (μακάριος), but a blessing (εὐλογέω). Blessedness is a *condition* for which God alone is responsible and which is given as a gift of God’s grace. “The Coming One” is a messianic title (see 7:19–20). The Messiah Jesus is blessed as he comes “in the name of the Lord,” that is, as the Lord’s representative and spokesman, the one on whom the Lord has put his name, as voiced at Jesus’ baptism and transfiguration. This is a citation of v 26 of Psalm 118, a psalm that figures prominently in Luke-Acts, particularly v 22: “The stone that the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner” (cf. Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11). The blessedness of the Coming One who enters in the name of the Lord must be seen in the context of his rejection by Israel herself (“the stone *that the builders rejected*”). (CC p. 565)

But *on the third day* God exalts “the Coming One” to the highest place of honor (“the head of the corner”). In Luke’s gospel, the day when Jesus is acclaimed as the blessed Coming One is Palm Sunday, when Jesus enters Jerusalem and the disciples use similar words: “Blessed the Coming One, the King, in the name of the Lord” (Lk 19:38). On this triumphant day of entrance, Jesus is brought to the brink of reaching his goal. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones the apostles, will receive the eschatological prophet with triumphant words on the first day of that final week in which he will be brought to the goal of God’s eternal plan of salvation. (CC pp. 565-566)

In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus laments over Jerusalem *after* his entrance on Palm Sunday (Mt 23:37–39). In that context, the occasion on which they shall “see him again” when they say, “Blessed ...” would be the parousia. But does not this saying indeed apply both to Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem and to his coming again in glory? And could not Luke have intended the verse to point both to Jesus’ first entry into Jerusalem and to his second coming? Once Christ has ushered

in the kingdom by his death and resurrection, the parousia may arrive today, tomorrow, or the next day. The kingdom is already present wherever the church gathers around Jesus' Word and the Sacraments he has instituted: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (CC p 566)

blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord – Jesus quotes Psalm 118:26 here. He thereby identifies Himself as the cornerstone who upholds the entire house. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 2)

13:31–35 Jesus repeats His determination to press toward Jerusalem and God's will for Him there. Unfortunately, the impenitence mentioned in this passage continues today, keeping people out of God's kingdom. That makes the imagery of this episode all the more poignant, for the Lord still reaches out to His wayward children, earnestly seeking to gather them under His protective wing. • “Delay not, delay not! Why longer abuse The love and compassion of Jesus, your God? A fountain is opened; how can you refuse To wash and be cleansed in His pardoning blood?” Amen. (LW 349:5) (TLSB)