



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Luke

Chapter 13

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Introduction

Chapter Outline

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Repent or Perish 13:1-5

- Who were these Galileans?
- Neither St. Cyril the great nor St. Ambrose offered any comment on this part of the chapter
- But in a quote of St. Cyril the great he mentioned that those Galileans were followers to Judas the Galilean, Acts 5:7
- Judas the Galilean was the one who said that no one should be called master or lord
- He was surrounded by many who refused to call Caesar lord to them, and so Pilate punished them



Repent or Perish 13:1-5

- Pilate was enraged, sent a band of soldiers, and slew them who came up to the feast of the Passover, as they were offering their sacrifices in the temple, and so mixed their blood with the blood of the Passover lambs
- Some were telling Jesus about this incident
- Most likely they were some of the Scribes and Pharisees, whom He had just now called as hypocrites
- They wanted either to have Jesus condemn Pilate's cruel and vicious conduct, so they might report Him to Pilate



Repent or Perish 13:1-5

- Or should He approve of it, so they might criticize Him, and bring Him into contempt among the people
- Or to know His thoughts and feelings concerning the people who were slain, whether or not they were not very wicked persons; and whether this was not a judgment upon them, to be put to death in such a manner, and at such a time and place, and which sense seems to be confirmed by Christ's answer
- Neither approving, nor condemning Pilate's action; and though He agreed indirectly that the Galileans were sinners, which could not be denied
- He told them expressly that these Galileans were not to be viewed greater sinners than others, because they had been overtaken by so severe a tragedy



Repent or Perish 13:1-5

- Jesus answered to an indirect question
- They probably thought that *the Galileans* were worse
- Those who told the story expected Him to make some remarks on it; not such doubtless as He did make
- Jesus turned His focus *from* the question “why did this happen?” and turned it *to* the question, “what does this mean to me?”
- *I tell you, no*, They were not greater sinners than others of their neighbors, nor is it to be concluded from the bloody slaughter that was made of them; others might be much more deserving of such an end than they, who yet escaped it



Repent or Perish 13:1-5

- Jesus talked about two disasters that were well known in His day
- One was an evil done by the hand of man, Pilate, and the other was seemingly a natural disaster
- We normally think of some people as good and some people as bad and find it easy to believe that God should allow good things to happen to good people and bad things to bad people
- Jesus corrected this thinking
- But Jesus' point was not that the Galileans in question were innocent; His point was that they were simply not *more* guilty than the others; all were and are guilty



Repent or Perish 13:1-5

- Jesus asks the crowd to view such tragedies as providential invitations for continual change by examining one's own life and relationship to God and responding with humble repentance for one's own sins
- One never knows when a similar tragedy can claim one's life
- In that case, there is no longer the opportunity to repent and make one's life right with God before one has to face God's divine judgment and give a final accounting for one's sins
- By noting the ancient Greek grammar, we see that Jesus here mentioned two kinds of repentance, and both are essential
- *unless you repent* verse 5, described a once and for all repentance
- The verb tense in, *unless you repent*, verse 3 described a *continuing* repentance

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree 13:6:9



- The people had been warned of the danger of perishing, unless they repented
- They are now taught that the forbearance and long-suffering of God are leading them to repentance
- Jesus used this parable to illustrate principles of God's judgment
- The first point was simple: *God looks for fruit*
- The fruit of our life shows what kind of person we really are
- What fruit is God looking for?
- It certainly has to begin with the fruit of the Spirit, mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree 13:6:9



- The barren fig-tree is the symbol of a fruitless work of godliness
- This image of a fig tree as the symbol of Israel, the chosen people, was no doubt selected to show those Pharisees and other Jews, proud of what they considered their unquestionable position as the elect, that, after all, the position they occupied was but that of a fig tree in the corner of the vineyard of the world - planted there and watched over so long as it promised to serve the Lord of the vineyard's purpose
- If it ceased to do that, if it gave no further promise of fruit, then it would be cut down without mercy

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree 13:6:9



- Some scholars see in this period of three years an allusion to the narrative of Hebrew life, and in the number 3 understand the three marked eras, each lasting several centuries, of the high priests, judges, and kings
- This, however, is a very doubtful reference, owing to the impossibility of separating the first two periods of the rule of high priests and judges, as these interchange and overlap each other
- Another school of interpreters sees a reference to the three years of the public ministry of Jesus
- Another reference was to God's successive calls to Israel by the Law, the prophets, and by Christ

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree 13:6:9



- The period of three years in which the Lord of the vineyard came seeking fruit, represents by the number 3 the symbol of completeness - a period of full opportunity given to the tree to have become fruitful and productive
- He will do what can be done by “digging” into the unfertile ground of the soul, and by instilling new sources of nourishment or fruitfulness
- If it did not help, well *Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?* It is an unproductive tree and occupies the place which another and a fertile tree might fill

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree 13:6:9



- *A certain man* in verse 6 represents God
- *Sir, let it alone this year also*, Here we have, Christ, the vine-dresser's intercession for the barren fig-tree
- Thus He the great Intercessor interceded for the Jewish people and He continues to intercede for all unfruitful people and all sinners
- And all faithful ministers and servants of the gospel are intercessors for their flocks also



A Spirit of Infirmary 13:10-17

- The narrative that follows is peculiar to St. Luke
- St. John Chrysostom says that He was teaching in the synagogues peacefully, so as to declare He did not come to resist the law, but rather to fulfil it
- Though the opposition against Jesus continued to rise, apparently He was still welcomed into some *synagogues* – even at this late time in His ministry
- Jesus sees a woman crippled by a demon and in His compassion He heals her on the Sabbath
- Her presence in the synagogue that day gives us a hint, at least, that this poor afflicted one loved to be close to God



A Spirit of Infirmary 13:10-17

- Doubtless the faith and trust on her side necessary to the cure were there
- It does not appear that she had made any request to Him, or had any expectation of relief from Him
- Although she did not call, He answered
- She came to Him to be taught, and to receive spiritual benefit, and He gave Her deliverance from her bodily infirmity
- Thus, those whose first and principal care is for their souls, do best promote the true interests of their bodies likewise
- She was filled with thankfulness for the mercy and gave God the glory of it



A Spirit of Infirmary 13:10-17

- Jesus spoke a word of both compassion and authority to the woman; He also *laid His hands on her*, giving a compassionate touch
- This woman was a symbol of a poor sinner held in the bonds of iniquity by Satan, and led captive by him at his will, who can by no means raise himself; nor is he able to lift up his head to heaven, or look upwards to Christ for deliverance
- When Christ, in His own time, meets with him under it, and manifests His power and grace, breaks his bonds apart, delivers him out of Satan's hands, and from the bondage of his own corruptions, sets him straight, and causes him to lift up his head, and look to Him for life and salvation
- And so puts a new song into his mouth and praise to God



A Spirit of Infirmity 13:10-17

- The people, as usual, were stirred to enthusiasm by this glorious act of power and mercy
- Afraid, before the congregation of the synagogue, to attack the Master personally, the "ruler," no doubt influenced by members of the Pharisee party who were present, attempted to represent the great Physician as a deliberate scorner of the sacred Law
- Jesus did not respond with gentleness
- With authority He confronted the ruler of the synagogue who valued extreme additions of Biblical commands more than the compassionate and life-changing power of Jesus to heal a long-afflicted woman



A Spirit of Infirmary 13:10-17

- Jesus' reply was simple
- If you can help an animal on the Sabbath, why can't you also help a suffering person on the Sabbath?
- Jesus gave several compelling reasons why it was appropriate to show her mercy, and more appropriate than helping a distressed animal
- She was a *woman* – made in the image of God
- She was *a daughter of Abraham*, a Jewish woman, with a covenant connection to Abraham
- This may also indicate that she was a woman of *faith*, as well as her attendance at synagogue



A Spirit of Infirmary 13:10-17

- She was one *whom Satan had bound*, and every day is a good day to oppose the work of Satan and to set free his captives
- She was afflicted *for eighteen years*, long enough to suffer greatly and to draw forth the compassion of Jesus and others
- The woman was so obviously healed, and the ruler of the synagogue was so obviously wrong that all *rejoiced* in Jesus' victory
- Jesus' healing of this "daughter of Abraham" is also symbolic of His desire to heal the children of Israel who are Abraham's descendants from the power of Satan and to restore the Jews to a healthy spiritual relationship with God

The Parable of the Mustard Seed 13:18-19



- St. Luke may have introduced these parables here either because the joy of the people was in his view the occasion of their being spoken, Jesus taking it as a good sign for the future
- Or because he found in his source the two things, the cure and the parabolic speech, recorded together as incidents of the same meeting in the synagogue
- In either case it is implied that the parables were spoken in a synagogue, in the latter case as a part of a regular synagogue address
- This is the interesting feature in Luke's report of these parables

The Parable of the Mustard Seed 13:18-19



- It is the only instance in which parables are connected with synagogue addresses as their occasion
- They were fit and edifying parables at any time; not least so, assuredly, at this
- When proof had been given that the Kingdom of God had indeed come approaching unto men, it was well to set before them something as to its nature, its extent, its mode of working inwardly and outwardly
- What contrast is Jesus making between the mustard seed and the Kingdom He has come to establish?

The Parable of the Mustard Seed 13:18-19



- The contrast is between the small beginnings of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and its future expansion when it will encompass the whole earth
- When the Kingdom has grown to spread to every corner of the earth, it will shelter all who come to dwell in the household of Jesus that is the Church, Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
- The kingdom of God on earth then was composed of Jesus and His few wavering followers
- To the eye of sense it seemed impossible that this little movement could ever stir the world, could ever become a society of mighty dimensions

The Parable of the Leaven

13:20-21



- Jesus used a surprising picture here
- Many, if not most, regard this as a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God working its way through the whole world
- This is one of the two times Jesus uses leaven as a positive symbol
- In Luke 12:1 He used it as a negative image as leaven is often used in Scripture to represent sin, Exodus 12:15,19, 13:7; Matthew 16:6; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
- As mentioned previously, leaven is a fermenting agent that, when mixed with flour into a dough, causes the dough to rise and expand

The Parable of the Leaven

13:20-21



- Just as a little bit of leaven can cause an amount of dough to expand to a much greater size, so will the teaching of the Gospel of salvation cause the kingdom to expand from its small beginning to become much greater in size
- We may say that the first of these two little parables of the kingdom, "the mustard seed," portrayed its strangely rapid growth
- The second, "the leaven," treats of the mighty inward transformation which the kingdom of God will effect in the hearts of men and women

The Parable of the Leaven

13:20-21



- *three measures of meal*, Perhaps referring here to the well-known division of man into body, soul, and spirit
- More likely, however, the number 3 is used as the symbol of completeness, signifying that the Divine purpose was then influencing the whole mass of mankind
- This parable, like the Parable of the Mustard Seed, illustrates the same point "the promised amazing growth of the Kingdom from its small beginnings"

The Parable of the Leaven

13:20-21



- St. Ambrose mentions in his comments on St. Luke's gospel several interpretations to this parable among which are:
- Some think the Lord Jesus Himself is the 'Yeast' offered by the church, that is, the woman here, so He leavens us the flour by His righteousness and thus we bear His qualities in us
- The Word of God became incarnate, bearing our human nature but by the power of His divinity He works in us, not to change our mere outer appearance but rather our inward nature
- For He says, "The yeast changes the nature of the flour and not only its appearance, in this way Christ works in us."

The Parable of the Leaven

13:20-21



- Some think the three measures of flour that have accepted the yeast, refer to the law, the prophets and the gospel; where Christ was hiding by means of the symbols of the law and the prophetic prophecies, and was manifested through the gospel
- In this way the believer appropriately bears in his heart these three measures, so he discovers his Christ inside himself
- Or, as St. Ambrose says 'we have to search diligently and accurately in the law, the prophets and the gospel for Christ to be declared to us

The Parable of the Leaven

13:20-21



- St. Ambrose also mentions elaborately, the interpretation of the 'Yeast', being 'the church edification', Matthew 16:6, which is different than the yeast of the scribes and the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy
- St. Paul the apostle says, *"Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* (1 Corinthians 5:8)
- By means of the church yeast, which is the gospel edification, the three measures of flour are leavened, which is man's body and his spirit and his soul
- Thus he is blessed with the sanctification of life in every aspect of his life



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- Jesus was journeying He taught in every place He came, where He could have an opportunity, not by an exemplary life only, but by word of mouth
- His delight was to do good both to the bodies and souls of men; and He was constant and diligent in it
- Many people wonder about the salvation of *others*
- The question seems to reflect a debate that existed among Jews at the time of Christ
- Or, perhaps the general tone of the Master's later teaching, especially on the subject of His kingdom of the future, had disturbed the vision of many in Israel



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- The Master, as was frequently His custom, gave no direct answer to His questioner, but his teaching which immediately follows contained the answer to the query
- From the beginning of God's relationship with man, through the gift of free will, man has always had the choice between two paths or two gates/doors: to travel the way of obedience to God or to go one's own way
- Moses spoke of the two ways in his last homily to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 in choosing the path of life in obedience to the commandments of the Lord or the path that leads to death



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- In fact, in the early Church, before the name "Christian" was applied to believers at the Church of Antioch in Syria, the followers of Jesus were referred to as the followers of "The Way", Acts 9:2
- *Strive*, Because the way is *narrow*, it takes effort and purpose to enter into it
- *strive* literally means "*agonize*"
- *for many*, They seek - wish and desire; but they do not strive; therefore, because they will not agonize - will not be in earnest, they shall not get in
- A *narrow gate* also implies that we can't bring with us unnecessary things; pride, self-centeredness and hypocrisy



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- Christ is the master of the house and it now seems as if He left things at large and made no distinction between His faithful servants and those who falsely pretend to be such
- But the time is coming when He will rise up *and shut the door*
- Namely, a door of distinction and separation between hypocrites and true believers who are truly alive to God
- They call Christ, *Lord*, as if they were His servants
- And in token of their confidence and persistence, they double the expression, *Lord, Lord*



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- There is a real difference between a mere *seeking* and *striving* to enter
- A casual wish to be saved is not enough, because there are too many obstacles on the way
- Now is the time to repent and accept Jesus' invitation to enter the Kingdom, because the time will come when it will be too late to accept His Gospel message of salvation and pass through the narrow door



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- To eat with one is evidence of acquaintanceship or friendship
- So the sinner may claim that he was a professed follower of Jesus, and had some evidence that Jesus was his friend
- In speaking of those who are excluded from God's presence, Jesus said they would protest that they knew something of Jesus and had heard something of His teaching
- *We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets,* None of these things will benefit in the day of judgment
- It will be only true love to God, a real change of heart, and a life of devotion and faithfulness, that can save the soul from death



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- How important it is that all should search themselves and see what is the real foundation of their hope that they shall enter into heaven!
- *Depart from Me*, This is repeated, and with a strong confirmation, to denote the certainty of the truth expressed, and to cast off all hope in them of ever succeeding by their appeals and begging
- In speaking of those excluded from the Kingdom of God, Jesus said that they would be in hell, the place of *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, and that they would see that others enter instead of them



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- Verse 29 points to an aggravation of the misery of the outcasts
- Men coming from every quarter of the globe to join the festive company and finding admission
- The shut door and the too late arrival are now out of view
- This completes the answer to the question about who will be saved
- It forbids any limitation to the numbers of the saved
- It distinctly includes in those blessed ranks men from all parts of the world including the Gentiles
- Verse 30 is an expression, which apparently was more than once used by the Lord, in this place clearly has an historical reference, and sadly predicts the rejection of Israel, not only in this present world



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- Jesus reminded them that those who are in the kingdom, or out of the kingdom may be different than what they or others expected
- These few words of Jesus tell us a little something of what heaven is like
- It is a place of rest; we *sit down* in heaven
- It is a place of good company to sit with; we enjoy the friendship of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets* in heaven
- It is a place with people from all over the earth; *from east and the west, from the north and the south* they will come to heaven
- It is a certain place; Jesus said *they will come*, and when Jesus says it *will* happen, it will happen



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- This is a question, whether the Pharisees reported what they actually knew, out of sincerity to our Lord, or invented a false tale in order that they might get rid of His presence among them
- Or perhaps were sent by Herod to announce his purpose as a threat
- However, it appears in the tone of our Lord's answer that any consideration for His safety was purely hypocritical
- In addition, perhaps the signs that Jesus spoke of about Gentiles in verses 29 & 30 provoked the Pharisees to anger



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- Jesus response was very strong to prove His courage by sending them to Herod, calling him the 'fox'
- He wished to declare to them He would not withdraw from serving the multitudes however dangerous this might be
- He called Herod 'fox', for He knew the cruelty of his heart and his love for shedding innocent blood in great malice
- Jesus indicates that His mission will be over soon but not yet
- *I shall be perfected*, Jesus knew that before long, He would reach the goal on the third day – resurrection would be His
- Jesus speaks of the "third day" and a three-day period in verses 32 and 33



The Narrow Way 13:22-33

- This is a reference that probably signifies a short period of time before Jesus' mission is completed, but it can also refer to the significant three days that will mark His Passion and the victorious climax of His mission in the city where God's prophets are destined to die
- Jesus probably spoke with a touch of irony in verse 33
- Of course there were times when a prophet died *outside of Jerusalem*, but there was special irony in the fact that the Messiah of Israel would be rejected and executed in Jerusalem
- As if Jesus is telling them, "Go tell him I neither flee from him nor fear him, but Jerusalem is the prophets' slaughter-house"

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

13:34-35



- *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, Jesus spoke with special feeling, repeating the name for emphasis and depth
- When God repeats a name twice, it is to display deep emotion, but not necessarily anger, as in the *Martha, Martha* of Luke 10:41 and the *Saul, Saul* of Acts 9:4
- He is speaking of God's relationship to the holy city in which He dwells as the God of Israel
- Jesus speaks tenderly of how He has longed for Jerusalem's repentance and restored communion with Him but the city has resisted

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

13:34-35



- This picture of *a hen* and *her brood* tells us something about what Jesus wanted to do for these who rejected Him
- He wanted to make them safe
- He wanted to promote their growth
- He wanted to them to know His love
- The problem was not the willingness of Jesus to rescue and protect them; the problem was that they *were not willing*
- Therefore the predicted destruction would come upon them
- Jesus prophesies that God's house, the Jerusalem Temple, will no longer be the dwelling place of God among His people

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

13:34-35



- *Your house*, He called here your house, not My house; “I acknowledge it no longer; I have abandoned it and will dwell in it no more for ever
- Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and never rebuilt
- *‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’*, From the earliest years of the Church, Christians have spoken of the Eucharist as the *coming* of Christ
- In the liturgy, the faithful speak these words prior to the Eucharistic procession

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

13:34-35



- Then, the blessed "see"/perceive Christ who has "come" to us in the Eucharist and who is present among His people
- *Blessed is ...* Jesus quotes verse 26 from Psalm 118; a psalm that will be sung in the Temple at the festival of Passover, *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD."* (Psalm 118:26)
- The verse Jesus' quoted will be shouted by the crowd when they see Jesus ride through the gate into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday



Discussion

- What common idea was Jesus confronting in verse 2? Do bad things only happen to bad people?
- Read Romans 2:4-5. What is it that God usually uses to bring us to repentance? How can even community disasters like the tower falling be a reminder of God's patience with those who survive?
- Who is the fig tree that Jesus is referring to? What similar agricultural picture did God use to describe Israel (Psalm 80:8-13; Isaiah 5:1-4; Jeremiah 2:21)? What is the main concern of the master (God)? Is His concern justified? Is it reasonable?



Discussion

- Read Luke 13:7-9. Describe the parable in your own words. What is unusual about the master's actions? What does the master say will happen to the tree that does not bear any fruit? What warning did John the Baptist give about the urgency of repentance (Luke 3:9)?
- How could we summarize the main focus of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:15-16, 43-44)?
- How is the kingdom like that mustard seed?



Discussion

- To what is the kingdom compared in 13:21? Explain the point.
- According to – 13:24,27, why will many not be able to enter? Explain.
- What warning was given in 13:31-32? How did Jesus reply? (Think: In what sense was Herod a fox?)
- What do verses 34-35 tell us about the heart of Jesus even for those who would never turn to him (also Luke 19:40-41)?