

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Luke

SB_19A&B_Zacchaeus and the Entry into Jerusalem

Jesus and Zacchaeus (19:1-10)

We have already established the fact in previous lessons that the tax collector in Israel was despised. The reason is that tax collectors were known to charge the citizenry an amount above the amount due to the government – a “commission” charge. Without knowing any of the facts about this man’s life and character except his occupation, the crowd judged him to be unworthy and a sinner (v. 7). Surely a “righteous” man would have nothing to do with such an unrighteous person.

However, Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’ message in exactly the opposite manner as the rich young ruler (18:18-25). Zacchaeus knew that he was a sinner. Zacchaeus was a wealthy person who believed and as such, Zacchaeus is a good example of the correct understanding of Luke 18:25 – “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Jesus never intended this statement to be an indication that a rich person cannot enter the kingdom.

Finally, this passage is not teaching that a person has to give his goods to the poor in order to be saved (v. 8). Rather, Luke is merely presenting Zacchaeus’ actions in such a way as to provide commentary on Jesus’ statements regarding the attitude needed to enter the kingdom of God (see 18:17 where Jesus indicates that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter it). The fact that Jesus knew Zacchaeus’ name in verse 5 evidently without any prior interaction with Zacchaeus probably helped Zacchaeus come to faith in Jesus.

The Parable of the Minas (19:11-27)

Jesus is near Jerusalem in Luke’s narrative at this point. The disciples evidently believed that Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem would signal or inaugurate the kingdom (v. 11). After all, John the Baptist had preached that the kingdom of heaven was near (Matt 3:2) and Jesus had preached the same message (e.g. Matt 4:17). Jesus’ teaching of the parable of the minas is designed to dispel this erroneous notion held by His disciples and others perhaps (e.g. verse 37). The phrase “do business till I come” (v. 13) shows that Jesus’ return would not be immediate. In addition, the return would not be until “a certain nobleman” (i.e. Jesus, the Messiah/King) went away into a far country (i.e. heaven) to receive a kingdom (v. 12). The kingdom would not be received until after a delay for a period (i.e. the period between His death, resurrection & ascension and His 2nd Advent).¹

This parable may have had a connection to an actual historical event. Archelaus, the son of Herod, went from Jericho, the town in which Jesus is currently located, to Rome to obtain the right to rule over Palestine. Archelaus was granted his kingdom by the Roman emperor Augustus. The palace of Archelaus was in the neighborhood of Jericho.² The connection to

¹ Many scholars have used this passage to justify a prophecy by Jesus of an interregnum reign (i.e. between the advents) that includes the period of the Church Age and the Tribulation (see the other set of notes associated with this lesson – “SB_LK19_Addendum” – for examples). In other words, Jesus was anticipating the formation of the Church as a unique body and dispensation of believers.

² J. W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1946), 473 quoted in J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1981), 367.

Jesus' parable is that like Archelaus, the nobleman did not remain in the far away place, but he returned to rule.

The kingdom that Jesus receives is the Messianic/Millennial kingdom. The Father grants Him the kingdom; therefore, we see many references to the kingdom as the kingdom of the Father and the kingdom of the Son (Dan 2:44; 6:26; 7:14; cf. Matt 6:10, 13; 13:43; 16:28; 26:29; Lk 1:33; Acts 1:3; 1 Co 15:24; Eph 5:5). As we have seen in previous studies, Jesus ministered with the anticipation that the kingdom would be established in accordance with prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament – 2 Sam 7:16; 1 Chron 17:14; 2 Chron 7:18) once He had fulfilled prophecies related to His death (e.g. Psa 22; Isa 52:13-53:12).³ Therefore, in our passage here in Luke, the period of time in which the “nobleman” (i.e. Jesus) would have been away in a far country would have corresponded to Daniel’s 70th Week (i.e. the seven year Tribulation – Dan 9:24-27).⁴

The principle that Jesus taught in verses 15-27 relates to reward in His Messianic kingdom. Reward in the kingdom will be related to service in one’s life. This principle is true of any believer who inherits the kingdom regardless of dispensation (Ex 19:6; Matt 5:3-12 cf. 1 Co 3:11-15; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 2:11-13). Nevertheless, bad hermeneutical precedent is established whenever such a passage as Luke 19:15-27 is interpreted as if Jesus was prophesying the Church Age in a veiled manner just because there are spiritual principles that are common to both the dispensation of the Age of Israel and the Church Age.

The “mina” was equivalent to about four month’s wages. By analogy, the mina represents the spiritual heritage and responsibility (cf. Rom 9:3-5; 11:11-36) of the Jew within the last days of the Age of Israel (i.e. Daniel’s 70th Week or the Tribulation) In verse 20, we see a servant who did nothing with the mina that he had been given. One can almost picture the Jew during the Tribulation period, who under the pressure of deprecation, suffering and even death at the hand of the anti-Semitic forces of the Anti-Christ, does not execute his responsibility as a Jew to believe the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 24:14) and claim the privileges associated with that kingdom as his own as prophesied in Scripture. He is an unbeliever. This is evident in his lack of understanding of the Messiah as manifest by His statement in verse 21 that “I feared you because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.” The implication is clearly that the servant did not really expect the king to come back. He was not concerned about the king’s return so he did not bother with the king’s business. He belonged with the group of unbelievers who did not want the king to reign over them (v. 27). Such a servant (Jew) in the Tribulation period will have effectively become a follower of the Anti-Christ either blatantly or through deception and coercion.

The Triumphal Entry (19:28-40)

Timing of the Entry – This trip into Jerusalem occurred a few days prior to Passover during which Jesus was crucified. Luke alludes to Jesus’ stay at Bethany (John 12:1-10) where Jesus arrived “six days before Passover”. Most likely, Jesus went back and forth between

³ It is my opinion (as well as others) that Jesus did not anticipate the Church Age as a unique dispensation in any of His teaching. We have studied this issue in depth in our Matthew series and used such passages as Acts 1:3-8; 2:17-21 and 3:19 among others to support that position. Therefore, I will not elaborate or present that material again here.

⁴ Of course, we now know that the Church Age was intercalated into the timeline of human history due to Israel’s rejection of Jesus as the Messiah after His death (e.g. Acts 3:19 cf. Acts 13:46). However, this historical fact was not anticipated by Jesus in His teaching before or after His death (e.g. Acts 1:3).

Jerusalem and Bethany during this period leading up to His crucifixion since Bethany was so close.

The Geographical Setting – The Roman military road from Jericho (Mt 20:29) to Jerusalem was about seventeen miles long and climbed about 3,000 feet in elevation. It passed through Bethany and nearby Bethphage (“house of figs”). Bethphage was situated on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives. The Roman road crossed over the mount and the Kidron Valley and entered Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives is about 300 feet higher than the hill within Jerusalem upon which the temple is situated, therefore it provides a panoramic view of the city.

The Colt – The entry on a colt was a very deliberate symbol of peace. Normally, a king entered a city as a conqueror riding on a horse. Though all four Gospels include the entry into Jerusalem, only Matthew mentioned a donkey along with a colt. Evidently, when Jesus rode the colt, the mother donkey naturally went along. In the parallel passage (Matt 21:1-11), Matthew quotes portions of Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9 and indicates that they were fulfilled by Jesus. The Jews understood these passages to be referring to the Messiah. Therefore, for those with spiritual eyes to see, this action by Jesus would have been a proclamation of His Messiahship in very open and public fashion.

The Multitudes – The words of praise come from Psalm 118:25-26 and “Hosanna” is a transliteration of the Hebrew expression that was originally a cry for help and meant “Save”. Over time, it became an invocation of blessing and an acclamation. The people praise God in the highest heavens for sending the Messiah and they cry to him for deliverance. However, there were still plenty of unbelievers present – verse 39 – “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem (19:41-44)

Needless to say, this passage appears to be a prophecy of the destruction that Jerusalem experienced in 70 A.D. No doubt, there are some striking similarities. Jesus is predicting a complete destruction of the city in this prophetic passage. A complete destruction did occur in A.D. 70. However, I have a different perspective on how it is best to interpret this passage that allows me to remain consistent with the interpretive framework that we’ve studied so far in the Gospels, i.e. that Jesus did not anticipate any event associated with the Church Age during His ministry.

- First, Jesus understood the cycles of discipline that God promised Israel in Leviticus 26 should they reject Him and His plan for them.
- Second, Jesus also understood Daniel’s prophecy in Daniel 9:26 that “the people of the prince who is to come [the Anti-christ] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” was a reference to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple that will occur during the Tribulation or Daniel’s seventieth week, i.e. Israel’s last days.
- Third, based upon Jesus’ eschatological understanding of future events gleaned from Hebrew Scripture and based upon Jesus’ statements in Acts 1:3ff and Peter’s statement in Acts 3:19, it seems fairly clear that Jesus was anticipating the destruction of Jerusalem during Israel’s last days that would precede His Second Coming to establish the kingdom.
- Fourth, there could have been a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophetic statements in Luke 19:41-44 through the world powers and leaders in place at that time that would have also fulfilled Daniel’s prophecy regarding Israel’s last days, i.e. the Tribulation or Daniel’s 70th week.
- Fifth, the crucial point in the interpretation of this passage is whether Jesus was predicting an event that He knew would occur during the Church Age or whether He was predicting an event that He knew would occur during Israel’s last days due to their rejection of Him.
- Sixth, if the former is true, then we have a precedent that Jesus was aware of the intercalation of the Church which was yet to come. If so, we must adjust our understanding of Jesus’ statements in such passages as Matthew 16:17-19 and 18:15-20 among others. Furthermore, this view is more difficult to reconcile with Jesus’ teaching of His disciples in Acts 1 regarding the kingdom (1:3) for forty days and why Jesus did not mention the imminent Church Age when questioned by his disciples in Acts 1:6.

- Seventh, if the latter is true, then Jesus was simply acknowledging events that will occur relative to Jerusalem during Israel's last days based upon His understanding of Daniel 9:27 and Leviticus 26.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (19:45-48)

Two cleansings of the temple are recorded in Jesus' ministry – one in John 2:14-17 at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and one in the synoptic Gospels at the end of His ministry (Mt 21:12ff; Lk 19:45-48). Jesus demonstrates His authority over the corrupt religious leaders. Many were making their living from the temple and the sacrifices purchased there. First, they would exchange common currency for temple currency at a fee. Then, they would sell sacrificial animals at inflated prices. The Lord overturned their tables and disrupted their commercial venture while He quoted parts of two OT verses, i.e. Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Then, just to emphasize the point, Matthew records that He healed the blind and the lame who came to Him at the temple. Normally, such individuals were excluded from the temple area, i.e. the Court of the Gentiles.

Matthew's account notes that as Jesus healed the lame and blind, children with impressionable minds witnessed these events and began to sing Jesus' praises. The religious leaders respond with a question designed to prompt Jesus to command them to stop. After all, even Jesus must agree that this was not true about Himself. However, by receiving their praise, Jesus was in effect declaring that He was worthy of praise as their Messiah. The religious leaders, in rejecting Jesus, did not even have the spiritual insight of the children who were receiving Him. Jesus then abandoned the religious leaders and the city.