

October 26th, 2008 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 21”

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Luke 13:31-35

That day some Pharisees came to [Jesus] and said, “Leave at once, and get away from here! Herod intends to kill You.”

[Jesus] said to them, **“Go and tell that fox, ‘Look, today and tomorrow I’m casting out demons and healing people, and the third day I will reach My destination.’ Even so, I must move ahead today and tomorrow and the day after. How unthinkable that a prophet should die anywhere but in Jerusalem!”**

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who have killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings – and you refused! Look! Your house will be left desolate. I tell the truth, you will not see Me anymore until you say, ‘Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

Prayer

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

As I mentioned in our last lesson, Jesus dealt with several recurring themes as He taught through this part of His ministry. Our text for today highlights Jesus’ recurring theme that the religious leadership of Israel has turned against God because of their preoccupation with their own status. He says, in **Luke 13:34**:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who have killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings-and you refused!”

Why would the leaders of Israel have done this? What would be their logic in killing the prophets, the men sent from God to educate them to the truth?

The intellectual foundation for this heresy was laid with the division of the Kingdom of Israel after the death of King David’s son, King Solomon. Rehoboam, King David’s grandson and King Solomon’s son, became King of Israel.

Jeroboam, who was a man of valor that served under Solomon, rebelled against Rehoboam, and took political control of the ten northern tribes of Israel away from him, making them

into an independent nation under his leadership, called Israel. The two southern tribes that did not follow Jeroboam, but remained under the leadership of Rehoboam, were known as Judah.

Unfortunately for Jeroboam, God's Temple, the national seat of Israelite worship, was in Jerusalem, which is the capital of Judah, in the geographical territory that Rehoboam controlled.

1Kings 12:26-31 tells us Jeroboam's reaction to this fact:

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

31 He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

Idol worship in the land of Israel started because King Jeroboam was afraid that he would lose his influence over the people of Israel if they went to Jerusalem, which was in King Rehoboam's territory, to worship God in the way that God ordained. The worship of God was a secondary concern to King Jeroboam, as it was more important to him that he solidify his political kingdom than it was for him to maintain his allegiance to God.

Those in leadership positions need to recognize that they are actually in charge because of their placement in leadership by God, not in spite of God, and that they need to maintain their allegiance to God. Of course, people in leadership positions are sinners, as are we all. **Romans 3:23** still says:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Leaders should not lead their people in opposition to God or His commandments because of fear of that which their followers might do if the leader applies the commandments, which was the case with Jeroboam, or simply because of their own sinful desire to do that which they want, which is the case with most leaders.

God may not strike the leader down immediately, but may allow the leader space to repent. That is why God sent prophets. The prophet's job was to give the leader a message from God designed to convince the leader to humble himself and return to God's program. But prophets in Israel had mixed results. Listen to an episode of two of the later kings of Israel and Judah, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, as they allied with one another to fight against Ramoth Gilead.

2Chronicles 18:1-4 reads:

1 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.

2 After some years [Jehoshaphat] went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for [Jehoshaphat] and the people who were with him, and persuaded [Jehoshaphat] to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead.

3 So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against

Ramoth Gilead?” And [Jehoshaphat] answered [Ahab], “I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war.”

4 Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.”

It was commonplace for kings to seek the counsel of the Lord through the prophets before undertaking military action. **2Chronicles 18:5** continues:

5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” So they said, “Go up, for God will deliver it into the king’s hand.”

Israel was worshipping idols rather than the Lord, and the prophets that Ahab consulted were not called by God. King Ahab appointed them. **2Chronicles 18:6-8** records:

6 But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?”

7 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say such things!”

8 Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, “Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!”

Micaiah is the only prophet of God left in the court of Israel, as Ahab has killed the rest. He never prophesies anything good concerning the one that opposes God, as Micaiah is there to tell Ahab that he is off track. Jehoshaphat, however, still worships the Lord, and Jehoshaphat wants to hear that which the Lord has to say. Ahab’s prophets know what Ahab wants to hear, and so they oblige. **2Chronicles 18:9-12** records:

9 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

10 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.’ ”

11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, “Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king’s hand.”

12 Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.”

However, the prophet of God is there to reveal the word of the Lord to Jehoshaphat and to Ahab, and he does so, in **2 Chronicles 18:13-27**:

13 And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.”

14 Then [Micaiah] came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” And he said, “Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!”

15 So the king said to [Micaiah], “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

16 Then [Micaiah] said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no

shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.' "

17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

18 Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left.

19 And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.

20 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?'

21 So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so.'

22 Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?"

24 And Micaiah said, "Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!"

25 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son;

26 and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I return in peace." ' "

27 But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

The Lord planned disaster for Ahab, and let Ahab know through the prophecy of Micaiah. Did Ahab would heed the admonition of Micaiah and refrain from the battle? Of course not. Ahab thought that he had sufficient military power, especially with Jehoshaphat as an ally, to defeat Ramoth Gilead without the intervention of God. Ahab did take precautions against being killed in the battle, but man's preparation is not sufficient to thwart the power of God, as 2Chronicles 18:28-19:1 records:

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead.

29 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.

30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who were with him, saying, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel."

31 So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "It is the king of Israel!" Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him.

32 For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

33 Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded."

34 The battle increased that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset he died.

1 Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem.

The example of Ahab did not persuade Israel and Judah to follow God. Eventually, both Israel and Judah became secular kingdoms under the leadership of corrupt kings, and all twelve of the tribes of Israel turned away from God. God allowed the Assyrians to carry the ten northern tribes into captivity in 721 BC, and then God allowed Babylon, under the leadership of Nebuchnezzar, to carry two southern tribes into captivity in 576 BC.

Of course, the Israelite leaders at the time of Jesus were aware of this history, but their sinful nature convinced them that the worship of God was predominately geographical and ceremonial. Unlike Jeroboam, the scribes and Pharisees worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem, so a geographical problem did not exist. The scribes and Pharisees also majored in keeping up with the minutiae of the ceremonial law, the various rituals and ceremonies distinctive to Judaism. Their preoccupation with the minutiae was so great that they could not see the bigger picture, so much so that they failed to understand the works that Jesus did and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. Listen to that which the Old Testament prophesies about the Messiah, in several passages of Scripture, beginning with **Malachi 4:2**:

2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; And you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.

Psalms 103:2-3 says:

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:

3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,

Psalms 147:2-3 says:

2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Jeremiah 33:6-8 says:

6 Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth.

7 And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first.

8 I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.

The sign of the coming of the Messiah, according to the predictive prophecy of the Old Testament, is His forgiveness of sin and His healing ministry. Jesus' healing ministry should have identified Him as the Messiah to the Jewish leadership, but they ignored His healing ministry in order to focus on the fact that Jesus healed on the Sabbath, which they interpreted as breaking a ceremonial law. But Jesus explained His healing ministry to the Jewish leadership just as Micaiah explained to Ahab the reason that Ahab's prophets were prophesying success, in **Luke 14:1-6**:

1 Now it happened, as [Jesus] went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.

2 And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy.

3 And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

4 But they kept silent. And [Jesus] took him and healed him, and let him go.

5 Then [Jesus] answered them, saying, “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?”

6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

Jesus made the argument that the Scriptural prohibition against working on the Sabbath was not designed to inhibit people from doing good deeds on the Sabbath, and used the Jewish leaders' own activities as examples to make His point. However, just as Ahab chose to ignore Micaiah in order to act on his own authority rather than accepting the authority of God, the scribes and Pharisees rejected the teaching of Jesus to keep their own authority rather than accepting the authority of God. The scribes and Pharisees decided that Jesus was the bad guy, even with His great healing ministry, and there was no logic or prophecy that would change their minds, because Jesus threatened their self-concept of holiness.

If I see myself as holy, then, by definition, anything that opposes me must be unholy. There have been many splits in the church over points of doctrine that, like healing on the Sabbath, do not rise to the level of being important enough for us to fall out with one another, but, we tend to become competitive rather than cooperative and want to be right so that we can designate the person that disagrees with us as wrong.

Dana had a similar problem when she called her counselor. She said, “My daughter is 20 years old. She and I were really, really close for all these years, but I’m feeling uncomfortable, uneasy, angry, resentful, and all kinds of negative feelings.”

The counselor said, “About what?”

Dana replied, “Her father and I have never gotten along. We’ve always had our issues, and he has never been her dad, or tried hard enough to provide for her. I’ve raised her on my own all her life. I’ve bent over backwards to make sure she had a good life, and I’ve struggled with everything. Basically, my question to you is: I have a lot of anger and resentment towards him, and I feel like a lot of that did come out. I didn’t tell my daughter how I felt about him to her face, but I would say it on the telephone and she would hear it. I’d call him a sorry loser. I think that in some ways she knows that he has not been the father that he should have been for her but at the same time, I know that I hurt her by saying those things and...”

The counselor responded, “Well, apologize.”

“I have”, Dana replied.

The counselor responded, “Then what more is there to this conversation? You goofed, you apologized. Don’t repeat your error, and go on to the next phase of your life.”

Dana said, “Well, that’s what I’m reaching for, and...” Dana hesitated.

The counselor asked “What? The next phase of your life?”

Dana hesitated again. “Well...”

The counselor asked, “Are you wondering about the next phase of your life, because you seem to have done the correct thing so far?”

Dana responded, “Well, what I’m really trying to say is that I suffer with a lot of anger.”

“Well”, the counselor observed, “You’re holding on to your anger. It’s your badge of honor. Every time you get angry about him, you say to yourself, ‘I am the heroine of the story’. You’re not going to give up your badge of honor easily.”

Dana considered. “Right”, she said.

The counselor continued “As long as he is the villain, you’re the heroine. Of course, never mind that you picked him and you may not have treated him very well, but as long as he’s the villain, you’re the heroine. And that’s why you’re holding it so dearly.

Dana asked, “So what do I do about it?”

The counselor replied, “I guess you have to abdicate being the heroine, recognize that you are a flawed human being like everyone else, take responsibility for your part in destroying the family, and start thinking about the next phase of your life. Your kid’s grown, unless you have another kid.”

Dana replied, “I do. I have an eleven year old son.”

The counselor asked, “By the same guy?”

Dana said, “No.”

The counselor asked, “Are you get married to your son’s father?”

Dana said “I was. But that relationship failed as well.”

The counselor began diagnosing the situation, “Do you understand that you have two failed relationships? That says something about you, not about the men.” Dana took a deep breath but said nothing.

The counselor continued, “You need to understand that some of this is your fault, which is probably is the bitterest of pills to you. You were courted twice, you picked them, you made babies with them, then you complained about them, and then you got rid of them. That’s all you. You can’t blame that on anyone else. That’s you. But in your mind, your ex-husbands are the villains and you’re the heroine. So take me back to your childhood and tell me how this role became important to you. Take me back to when you were five.”

Dana started, “My father left my mother and all four of us. Me and my brother and sisters. Mom met another man and he became my stepfather and he raised us.”

“And?” said the counselor.

Dana continued “It was...not fun. It wasn’t easy; it was hard on everybody, not just my mother, but my brothers and sisters as well.”

The counselor said, “So what made it important for you to become like your mother? What did you think you could create or have by being like your mother?”

Dana responded, “Love?”

The counselor questioned, “From whom?”

Dana said, “Someone having love to give, I guess.”

The counselor said, “Dana, now you’re being illogical.”

Dana responded, “Well, I don’t know.”

The counselor replied, “Don’t say ‘I don’t know’. It makes you stop thinking. You gave me the wrong answer because you didn’t think about the question. Your mother screwed up twice in her marriages, her kids were miserable, and one of her daughters followed in her footsteps. Let’s take it out of you and make it general; why do you think that a daughter might try to do that?”

Dana said, "Because I was angry?"

The counselor asked, "At whom?"

Dana said, "My father?"

The counselor replied, "No."

Dana asked "My mother?"

The counselor responded, "Yes. Your mother was the one that sent your father away. Your mother was the one that brought your stepfather in. Women select the men. Men ask, women select. But your mother was the one parent that you had, and you couldn't be angry with her, because she was all you had. Being angry with men is the way you protect your relationship with your mother."

Dana asked, "Is that what it is?"

The counselor said, "Yes."

"Wow", Dana responded, "I couldn't figure it out."

The counselor replied, "It's a little hard to figure it out when your guts are in the middle of it. Mother is the one that you are mad at, but you're protecting her from your rage by blaming it on men. I don't even know if the men you married were particularly bad, or that either one of your divorces had to happen, but I do know that you need to sit down with your twenty-year-old daughter and have this conversation with her so that she won't duplicate your mistake."

Dana replied, "I will."

The counselor said, "Tell her, 'Don't be mad at men; I screwed up my relationships because I couldn't face how angry I was with my mother for putting us through what she did, so I blamed it on the men. I needed to have a relationship with my mom, and I thought that I would not be able to if I blamed her for breaking up my home and for my unhappy childhood, so, in my mind, I shifted the blame to men. But the men I married had nothing to do with my childhood, so I shouldn't have been so angry with them. And I don't want you to do the same thing that I did, because I want you to be happy with a nice man.' Have this discussion with her, and you will heal her, and that will help you."

"I'll do that", Dana said, "and thank you very much for the insight."

Dana was willing to accept the insight given her by her counselor and change her thinking, but the scribes and Pharisees were not willing to accept the insight and the impeccable logic of Jesus Christ, because if they did so, they would have to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and the Messiah was the last person that they wanted to see. If the Messiah came to Israel, the scribes and Pharisees would lose their authority, and they wanted their authority at all costs, just as Jeroboam and Ahab did, so they ignored the miraculous healings of Jesus prophesied in the Scripture and the explanation that Jesus gave them to explain that which God was doing. Jesus says, in **Luke 13:34-35**:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who have killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings – and you refused! Look! Your house will be left desolate. I tell the truth, you will not see Me anymore until you say, 'Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Jesus gives us all the same ultimatum. The Bible, as we have already read, tells us that we are all sinners, and the “a” portion of **Romans 6:23** tells us:

23 For the wages of sin is death.

The fact that none of us have lived lives worthy of going to heaven is an idea with which many people cannot agree, because they view themselves as good people. We grade our lives on the curve, and consider ourselves good in comparison to our friends and acquaintances, but we fail to realize that God is grading on the straight scale, and 100% is the only score that passes His test. **James 2:10-11** tells us:

10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

11 For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

Well, suppose you neither commit adultery nor murder? Think about it. There are many other things besides adultery and murder that we can do to break the law of God, and if we do just one of them, we are ineligible to enter heaven, the place in which the holiness of God dwells, on our own merits. The bar is set too high for us jump over it, but God, who is great in mercy, has made a way for us to be saved from the consequences of our sin. In its’ entirety, **Romans 6:23** says:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You and I can’t merit heaven, but we can receive the free gift of eternal life by our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And we need to have faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the historical truth of His resurrection from the dead to be saved, just as the scribes and Pharisees needed to believe that Jesus’ ability to heal was a sign of His Messiahship.

We have to receive the prophet rather than ignore him, disregard him or kill him. Let us not make the mistake of the Kings, and of the scribes and Pharisees, but let us acknowledge our personal sinfulness and our need for Jesus Christ to save us from the consequences of our sins. That is the only way to heaven.

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