



## The Gospel of Luke - Chapter Eighteen

V. [Luke 9:51-19:27 - The Journey to Jerusalem \(continues\)](#)

V.c [Luke 17:11-19:27 - The third mention of the journey to Jerusalem \(continues\)](#)

### Summary of Chapter Eighteen

Jesus again reminded the disciples of the need for persistent prayer. God will always hear our prayers and will be concerned about them. One day all prayers will be answered. God sees our hearts and knows who really cares about following his will.

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector shows that when one man thinks he is better than another, it is rarely true, at least, not in the eyes of God. In order for God to honour him, the man must first humble himself in the sight of God and all other people. Only when a man humbles himself to become like a little child will the kingdom belong to him.

The parable of the Rich Ruler shows how frequently money or other earthly desires become a barrier to us getting really close to God. The people become concerned and wonder how anyone could enter. Jesus instructs them that there are certain things that man cannot do but that God can accomplish all things. With God all things are possible.

Jesus again mentions his pending death. He tells his disciples that they are on their way to Jerusalem, where he would be handed over to those who would kill him. At the end of three days, he told them, he would rise from the grave. The disciples still did not understand what they were being told and they discussed this among themselves.

En route to Jerusalem, Jesus continues to heal people. He heals a blind man and when the crowd witness this, they praise God.

V.c.iii [Luke 18:1-8 - The parable of the persistent widow](#)

The parable consists of a 'lesser to greater' argument, i.e. if A, the lesser, is true then how much more B, the greater, must be true. We have similar arguments in Luke 11:11-13, 12:6-7, 12:25-27 and 13:15-16. The comparison here is between the reluctant action of an unjust judge, the lesser, and 'how much more' just will be the action of a just God, the greater.

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

#### Luke 18:1

Jesus told his disciples they should always pray as confirmed by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 <<pray continually>>, and not give up or lose heart because of a perceived delay in the Lord's return. We looked at this in the section 'The coming of the kingdom' in Luke 17:20-37. As in v.9 and Luke 19:11 <<While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once>>, the introduction of the parable serves as the guide to its interpretation, i.e. to pray persistently for justice for God's people, just as the woman did who pleaded persistently with the judge for justice.

<sup>2</sup> He said: In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.

#### Luke 18:2

Nor cared about men shows the judge had no special deference toward anyone whether great or small. If a man has no fear of his creator, it follows that he will have little regard for his fellow creatures. This is bad in any person but in a judge it bodes ill indeed: <<In the place of judgment — wickedness was there, in the place of justice — wickedness was there>> (Ecclesiastes 3:16), whereas, he was required to: <<plead for the widow>> (Isaiah 1:17e).

<sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary'.

#### Luke 18:3

The widow represents the poor, needy and oppressed as in: <<They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely>> (Luke 20:47).

Kept coming refers to her persistence that is her only asset in seeking justice from the unjust judge (v.6). Although she came before an unjust judge, we stand before a Righteous Father, which is how Jesus addressed him in his prayer recorded in John 17:25 <<Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me>>.

<sup>4</sup> For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

#### Luke 18:4-7

If an unjust judge finally grants the widow's prayer, how much more will God hear the prayers of his elect? Jesus gives a similar indication of the Father's love in the 'Do not worry' discourse in Luke 12:22-31. Scripture tells how God has always cared for his people Israel, the 'apple of

his eye': <<In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye>> (Deuteronomy 32:10), and: <<Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings>> (Psalm 17:8).

Day and night or always, as in v.1. We see examples of this with Anna at the temple: <<She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying>> (Luke 2:37b), the Jewish authorities in Damascus who wanted to kill Paul: <<Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him>> (Acts 9:24), Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders: <<So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears>> (Acts 20:31), and Paul before Festus and King Agrippa: <<This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O King, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me>> (Acts 26:7).

Justice for his chosen ones or elect refers primarily to God rescuing his people from suffering and injustice in the world. Zechariah recognised this in his song of praise to God in Luke 1:68-74: <<Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us – to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear>>.

Will he keep putting them off? This probably means 'Will God be patient much longer as he sees his elect suffer?' The implied answer is no.

<sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

#### Luke 18:8

From God's perspective, justice will come to his elect quickly, as confirmed in v.7. From a human perspective, of course, justice may seem to be a long time coming. Therefore, God's people must persist in prayer, as the widow persisted until she received justice (vv.2-5).

Will he find faith on earth? The answer is, of course, yes, but Jesus poses this as a question in order to encourage his disciples to constant watchfulness and prayer, as confirmed in v.1 and v.7. When he returns, Jesus will be looking for those who are praying and watching for him. On a similar matter David pleads: <<Help, LORD, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. Everyone lies to his neighbour; their flattering lips speak with deception>> (Psalm 12:1-2).

#### V.c.iv Luke 18:9-14 - The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector

This parable contrasts a Pharisee boasting in his self-righteousness, and a tax collector confessing his sins and seeking God's mercy.

<sup>9</sup> To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

#### Luke 18:9

Again, as in v.1, Luke interprets the parable before the parable itself is given.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness. The audience addressed by the parable are probably Pharisees, who had an unrealistic sense of self-worth, as they took pride in outward conformity to many extra-biblical regulations but still had impure hearts.

Falsely confident of their own righteousness, they looked down on everybody else or treated others with contempt.

<sup>10</sup> Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

#### Luke 18:10

Two men, as with the Prodigal in Luke 15:11, which starts: <<Jesus continued: There was a man who had two sons>>, and at the time of the rapture: <<I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left>> (Luke 17:34-35).

Two men went up to the temple. Even if a person is in Jerusalem, he or she still must go up to the temple, and down from there, because the temple was situated on an elevated mount, with the rest of Jerusalem below it.

Temple denotes the area surrounding Herod's temple, including the Court of the Gentiles, in distinction from the temple building proper from which non-Jews were excluded.

The Pharisees were the most influential of the three major Jewish sects. A relatively small but highly influential group of Jews who emphasised meticulous observance of God's law as understood both from the OT laws and from their accumulated extra-biblical traditions as the means by which one attains righteousness before God and retains his favour. Many Pharisees opposed Jesus, see Matthew 23:1-36, where Jesus condemns their hypocrisy but some followed him.

As previously noted, a tax collector collects tolls, tariffs and customs, and were notoriously dishonest and despised. They were not told to quit their profession but to be honest in carrying out their duties. In Palestine, tax collectors were representatives of the Roman governing authorities. Their tendency to resort to extortion made them despised and hated by their own people, as seen in Luke 19:8; the story of Zacchaeus.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector.

#### Luke 18:11

The Pharisee stood up, which was the normal posture of prayer, as opposed to teaching, which, except for addresses in formally meetings: <<Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" >> (Matthew 26:62), <<In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)>> (Acts 1:15), and: <<Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious">> (Acts 17:22), was normally done while sitting down: <<He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat>> (Luke 5:3), and: <<At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them>> (John 8:2).

God, I thank you that I. The five I's in this passage reveal the egocentricity of the Pharisee. Rather than thanking God for what God has done for him, the Pharisee arrogantly brags to God about his own moral purity and religious piety.

<sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get'.

### Luke 18:12

I fast twice a week. The OT law did not require this much fasting but, apparently, only one fast a year and that on the Day of Atonement.

Various kinds of fasts were commonly practiced in OT times, although the law required only one fast a year at Yom Kippur, held on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> ecclesiastical month. In addition to abstention from food, people were to humble themselves by praying, mourning and wearing sackcloth. As with giving and praying, fasting is to be a matter of the heart between the Christian and God. Jesus states that his disciples will fast after he has left this world. Pharisees often deliberately appeared disfigured by leaving their faces unwashed and sprinkled with ashes, with the sole intention of publicising the physical hardships of fasting.

Give a tenth or tithes of all I get. Deuteronomy 14:22-26 required a tithe of the crops, fruit and livestock; some of it for God and some of it to be enjoyed by the family: <<Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice>>. This is confirmed in Leviticus 27:30-32 <<A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock – every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod – will be holy to the LORD>>. This is then used to allow the Levites and priests to undertake the work of God in the temple and elsewhere throughout the land, as they had no inheritance with the other tribes; God was their inheritance. This is stated in Numbers 18:21-24 <<I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. From now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offences against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites'>>, and confirmed in Deuteronomy 14:27 <<And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own>>.

<sup>13</sup> But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'.

### Luke 18:13

Because of shame, the tax collector; would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast, which was a sign of sorrow and contrition as in Luke 23:48, when they stood before the scene of Christ's passion: <<When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away>>, and he said God have mercy on me a sinner. The 'sinner's prayer' seeks God's mercy. As David writes in Psalm 51:1 <<Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions>>. The stark contrast between the contrition of the sinner and the self-righteousness of the Pharisee is key to understanding the central point of the parable.

<sup>14</sup> I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

### Luke 18:14

He who humbles himself will be exalted. Jesus pronounces a shocking reversal of common expectations: <<For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted>> (Luke 14:11). The Pharisee thought that he was righteous (v.9), and tried to justify himself: <<He said to them, You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight>> (Luke 16:15), but the tax collector depended on God's mercy and, as a result, received God's gift of righteousness and was pronounced justified.

This is rather a sad tale in many ways. It is not really a parable as it is played out in churches every day. The Pharisee was probably a good man but had been brought low by Satan due to his pride and puffed-up self-esteem, causing him to be critical of all others who did not reach his own benchmark. On the other hand, the tax collector realises his frailty and comes before God in all humility. Even the great man Paul recognised this in himself, when he exclaimed: <<What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?>> (Romans 7:24). Through his humility and honesty it was the tax collector who went home justified in the sight of God, which is the only one it counts with. We have a case here where the last shall be first but the first comes nowhere at all because through his blindness to his own faults, the Pharisee is rejecting all hope of salvation.

### V.c.v Luke 18:15-17 - The little children and Jesus

Only those who humble themselves like children shall enter the kingdom. We have this account recorded in Matthew 19:14 and Mark 10:14.

<sup>15</sup> People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.

### Luke 18:15

People brought babies or even infants to Jesus in order to have him touch them, i.e. bless them. Jesus touched a man with leprosy and healed him (Luke 5:13), and when crowds gathered round they would touch him and be healed (Luke 6:19).

Were also bringing confirms this as a frequent occurrence in Jesus' ministry.

They rebuked them. The disciples thought they were protecting their Lord and master but were actually doing the opposite to what he wanted of them. A lesson for us all!

It is interesting to note the disciples attempt to stop children being brought to Jesus. They also tried to stop the blind beggar from attracting his attention as they come near to Jericho at the end of this chapter. Surely, as disciples of Christ, we must never become a barrier to others who wish to access his loving grace and mercy!

<sup>16</sup> But Jesus called the children to him and said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

<sup>17</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

#### Luke 18:16-17

Let the little children come. Jesus' attitude toward children contrasted significantly with that of other religious leaders in Judaism. In most ancient cultures, children were regarded as a burden until they were physically strong enough to contribute to the family.

Belongs to such does not mean children automatically belong to the kingdom but that the kingdom belongs to such. That is to those who possess childlike trust.

In Mark 10:13, the disciples consider children to be an annoying distraction. Jesus reacts emphatically. To Jesus children are as important as adults and equally worthy of love. Children do not belong automatically to the kingdom but must come to Jesus and receive him the same as adults.

Although these latter comments seem to be held by many commentators, my own opinion is that babies and young children are automatically covered by the promise of eternal life until they have the capability to make that decision for themselves. If, at that stage, they do not then come to Jesus they will be lost to the kingdom. This would apply also to adults who never achieve the reasoning capacity to make such a decision for themselves.

Like a little child. This is in childlike faith and trust in Jesus. A child should be able to place their absolute trust in the person who is there to care for them. This may not always be possible in the world but it is more that possible with kingdom relationships, it is guaranteed.

#### V.c.vi Luke 18:18-30 - The rich ruler

The report of Jesus' encounter with the rich ruler answers the question with which it begins: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' (v.18).

<sup>18</sup> A certain ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

#### Luke 18:18

As a ruler he may have been a religious lay leader, quite possibly a Pharisee, or even a member of the Sanhedrin, because of the diligence he displays in following the law. After addressing Jesus as Teacher, a title of respect, he asks what good deed he must do to have eternal life. 'Eternal life' is virtually synonymous with expressions such as 'entering the Kingdom of God' and 'being saved'.

Good Teacher, what must I do? A good question, as acknowledged when an expert in the law posed a similar question about neighbours in Luke 10:25. It is about inheriting and not meriting eternal life, as we see in v.30 and in Acts 13:46-48, which covers ministry in Pisidian Antioch: <<Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: We had to speak the word of God to you

first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed>>.

<sup>19</sup> Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No-one is good — except God alone.

#### Luke 18:19

Why do you call me good? Jesus does not let the ruler's superficial view of goodness go unchallenged. To ask this question Jesus assumes the perspective of the rich young man. No one is completely good except God alone. Therefore, it is not proper for the young man to address Jesus as 'Good Teacher' until he is ready to acknowledge that Jesus is God.

No-one is good except God alone directs the ruler's attention to God in whom ultimate goodness resides. Only in understanding God as infinitely good can he discover that human good deeds cannot earn eternal life.

<sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother'.

#### Luke 18:20

You know the commandments. Jesus is not teaching that good works can earn eternal life for he shows the man how far short he falls of keeping the first commandment and the first of the two great commandments. But obedience to the law is also an expression of belief in the truly good God, who is the source of all good including eternal life. Scripture elsewhere clearly affirms that salvation is a gift of God's grace received through faith and not by works.

Do not. Although, only the second table of the law is mentioned, i.e. commandments 6-10, see Exodus 20:13-16, Luke expects his readers to assume that the first table of Exodus 20:1-12 is also included, as in Luke 10:25-28 <<On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the Law? he replied. How do you read it? He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. You have answered correctly, Jesus replied. Do this and you will live>>.

<sup>21</sup> All these I have kept since I was a boy, he said.

#### Luke 18:21

All these I have kept since I was a boy or from my youth is how the rich man answers Jesus' challenge affirmatively. From a human perspective his answer is plausible. However, once the righteousness of God sheds light on the human condition, human righteousness is seen to be no more than a thin cover-up for mankind's basic hostility toward God.

As a Pharisee, Paul's righteous keeping of the law from his youth was never in doubt: <<The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem>> (Acts 26:4), and: <<as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless>> (Philippians 3:6), yet he had to become completely transformed through an encounter with the risen Christ.

<sup>22</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said to him, You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

### Luke 18:22

You still lack one thing refers not to higher piety but to the Kingdom of God (vv.24-25), salvation (v.26), and eternal life (v.18).

Sell everything you have. Jesus shows that the ruler has not really kept the commandments and he clarifies the meaning of true repentance. The early disciples were willing to do what was necessary: <<So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him>> (Luke 5:11). 'They' probably being Peter, Andrew, John and James. Also: <<and Levi got up, left everything and followed him>> (Luke 5:28), <<In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple>> (Luke 14:33), <<Peter said to him, We have left all we had to follow you!>> (Luke 18:28), <<When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, Look, the Lamb of God! When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus>> (John 1:36-37), 'he' being John the Baptist, and: <<Finding Philip, he said to him, Follow me>> (John 1:43b). We now know from scripture and church tradition that Philip did follow him to his own death.

Jesus knows the man's wealth has become his means to personal identity, power and a sense of meaning in life and that it has become the idolatrous god of his life. Jesus' strategy is to turn this man from focusing on external conformity to the law to examining his heart thus revealing his ruling god. The man had no doubt given some money to the poor as the giving of alms was considered a pious duty especially among the Pharisees. But Jesus calls him to give everything away, exchanging the god of wealth for the eternal treasure found in following Jesus as the one true God. Jesus' ultimate answer to the question posed in v.18 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' is to follow him.

The man has replaced direct trust in God and its reward of treasure in heaven with earthly riches. He thus fails the first commandment: <<You shall have no other gods before me>> (Exodus 20:3). This does not mean that every disciple of Christ must sell all that he has; rather the heart must be focused on God and every possession yielded to God with the result that possessions will be handled as a form of stewardship.

Treasure in heaven has previously been discussed in Luke 12:33 <<Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys>>, that refers to the rewards believers will receive in heaven but here in v.22 it means eternal life itself and is confirmed in vv.24-25.

Follow me involves denying oneself, taking up one's cross and following Jesus, as confirmed in Luke 9:23 <<Then he said to them all: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me>>. In Matthew 10:38 we similarly have: <<and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me>>. As noted before, crucifixion is a shocking metaphor for discipleship. A disciple must deny himself or die to self-will, take up his cross, i.e. embrace God's will no matter what the cost, and follow Christ. The goal of self-denial and taking up one's cross is not pathological self-abasement or a martyr complex but being free to follow the Messiah. Self-denial means letting go of self-determination: <<No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough that he should live on for ever and not see decay>> (Psalm 49:7-9), and replacing it with obedience and dependence on the

Messiah. Disciples are required to make a commitment that will lead to their rejection and possibly even their own death.

<sup>23</sup> When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

#### Luke 18:23

The ruler was very sad because he was a man of great wealth. He loved his riches more than he did God, showing that he had kept neither the first commandment nor the tenth, for riches were his god and he desired them more than he desired to serve God.

<sup>24</sup> Jesus looked at him and said, How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> Indeed, 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.

#### Luke 18:24-25

It is easier for a camel is an example of hyperbole. It is simply impossible for those who are rich and for anyone else to enter God's Kingdom on the basis of their works or to have the desire to seek God above all else apart from God's grace.



The camel is the largest land animal in Palestine and the eye of the needle is the smallest opening found in the home. Jesus paints a picture of something impossible in order to illustrate that even the seemingly impossible is possible with God. There is no evidence for the popular interpretation that there was a gate in Jerusalem called 'the eye of the needle', which camels had to stoop to their knees to enter. Such an interpretation would miss the point: it is not merely difficult for the wealthy, or anyone else for that

matter, to be saved; without God's grace it is impossible.

<sup>26</sup> Those who heard this asked, Who then can be saved?

#### Luke 18:26

Who then can be saved? Since riches were supposedly a sign of God's favour, Jesus' listeners must have wondered: if a rich man, who freely offer alms and sacrifices could not be saved, who could be?

<sup>27</sup> Jesus replied, What is impossible with men is possible with God.

#### Luke 18:27

What is impossible with men is possible with God. As it states in Luke 1:37 <<For nothing is impossible with God>>, and again: <<Is anything too hard for the LORD?>> (Genesis 18:14a).

Because of God's power and grace, repenting and following Jesus is possible, see vv.28-30; even for a rich man, as with the salvation of Zacchæus, the chief tax collector, the story of which is

given in Luke 19:1-10. Salvation is the work of the Lord, who does himself what would otherwise be impossible.

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to him, We have left all we had to follow you!

<sup>29</sup> I tell you the truth, Jesus said to them, no-one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.

#### Luke 18:28-30

Who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children. Jesus is not encouraging his disciples to abandon familial responsibilities. Paul confirms this in Ephesians 5:25 <<Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her>>, and, again in Ephesians 6:4 <<Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord>>. But sometimes family members turn against a believer, or there may be times of temporary separation due to Christian ministry. In the synoptic Gospels only Luke mentions wife, see Matthew 19:16-30 and Mark 10:17-31 for comparative versions.

Whatever someone has to sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom will be repaid many times as much by God. Regarding 'for the sake of the Kingdom of God' and 'for my sake and for the gospel' we read: <<I tell you the truth, Jesus replied, no-one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel>> in Mark 10:29; and 'for my name's sake' we have: <<And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life>> in Matthew 19:29.

In this age refers to the person who leaves house, lands and family for Jesus' sake and for the Gospel, and who can expect in this life now, in this time to enjoy fellowship with other believers, and to find a welcome in the houses and lands of other believers. But in this life, these blessings will also be mixed with persecutions, trials and tests. The future will yield an even better reward: eternal life. By answering in this way, Jesus assures the disciples that they have answered the call and are blessed.

Eternal life ensures that the scene ends where it began, with the question of eternal life (v.18) and Jesus' final answer (v.30).

#### V.c.vii Luke 18:31-34 - Jesus again predicts his death

In this passage, Jesus foretells his death a third time. Having predicted his suffering and death twice before in Luke 9:22 and Luke 9:43b-45, Jesus again reminds his followers that the way to Jerusalem will be the way to the Cross.

The suffering and death of Christ would be the fulfilment or accomplishment of OT prophecy. Peter writes: <<Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things>> (1 Peter 1:10-12). This provides verification that scripture is the word of God and that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God.

<sup>31</sup> Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

#### Luke 18:31

We are going up to Jerusalem: Jesus is aware of his impending death but proceeds resolutely toward Jerusalem like the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 50:7 <<Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame>>, and in Luke 9:53 (ESV) <<because his face was set towards Jerusalem>>. The Twelve were amazed to see Jesus' solemn determination in light of what he had already told them about his forthcoming suffering and death. As well as the Twelve, there were other followers travelling with them. The Twelve did not understand what Jesus was saying to them but according to Mark Chapter 10 they were afraid. This fear might have arisen from their belief that Jesus was a political Messiah. If so, they might be facing fierce battles in Jerusalem, as in the earlier Maccabean revolt. It is more likely that the larger group of followers saw Jesus' sober, deliberate progress towards Jerusalem and had heard from the Twelve something of his predictions of suffering, and thus concluded that, by following Jesus, they might face a similar fate.

Will be fulfilled or accomplished refers to the Cross and is seen as the fulfilment of prophecy, not some horrible accident. The offence of the Cross thus becomes something of honour.

<sup>32</sup> He will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him.

#### Luke 18:32

Jesus will be turned or delivered over to the Gentiles. Jesus speaks of a double deliverance: God will hand him over to the Jewish leaders, who in turn must hand him over to the Gentiles, i.e. the Roman authorities. The details of mistreatment were well known to Jews living under Roman occupation. Just as Israel was handed over to Gentiles for punishment of their sin in the OT, so Jesus was handed over to bear God's wrath for the sins of his people. This is confirmed in Luke 20:20 <<Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor>>, in Luke 23:2 <<And they began to accuse him, saying, We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Cæsar and claims to be Christ, a king>>, in Acts 2:23 <<This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross>>, and, in Acts 13:28 <<Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed>>.

Although what they did provided us with a means of eternal salvation, for all who would now turn to God through Jesus, the ignominy and disgrace done to Christ in his sufferings are here most insisted upon. A much stronger portrayal is given by Luke than the other Gospel writers, who speak of him being mocked. Isaiah 50:6 is even more explicit: <<I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting>> (Isaiah 50:6).

In modern times, even in tough sports such as professional football, spitting is considered disgraceful. How much more so when it is done to the Author of Salvation?

<sup>33</sup> On the third day he will rise again.

<sup>34</sup> The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

### Luke 18:33-34

The disciples did not understand any of this. Although they understood the meaning of Jesus' words, they could not understand why Jesus was predicting this or how it could possibly fit into God's plans for the Messiah. The fact that the Messiah must first suffer and die was still hidden from them. Jesus, once again, does not dwell on his suffering and death but on the glory of his resurrection that would come through the awesome power of God's Holy Spirit.

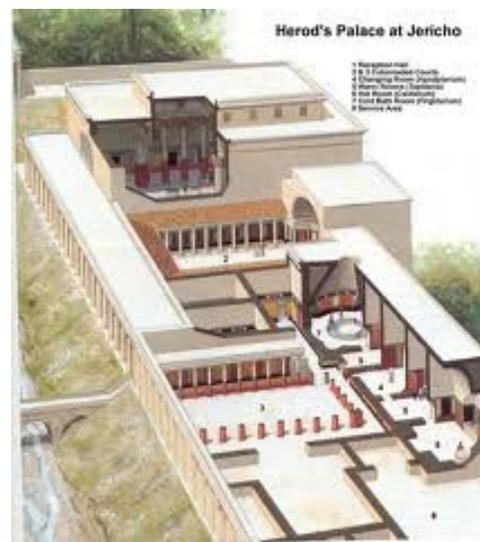
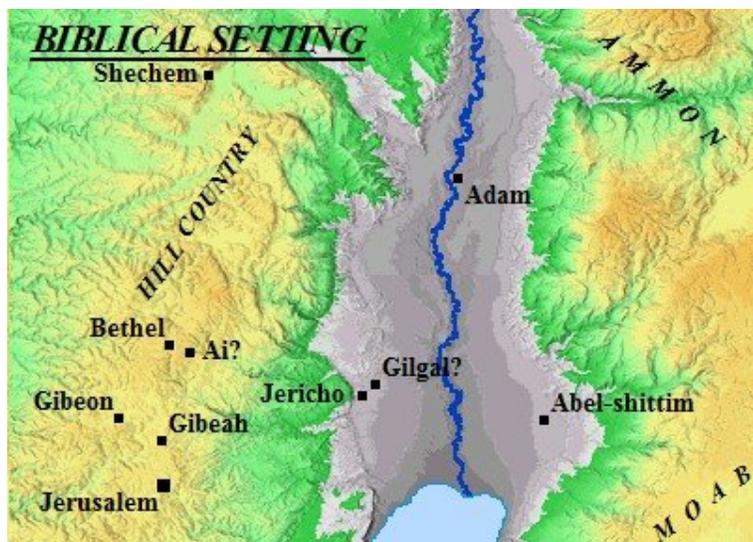
### V.c.viii Luke 18:35-43 - A blind beggar receives his sight

This and Luke 19:1-10 are the last two reported incidents before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in Luke 19:28.

<sup>35</sup> As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

### Luke 18:35

The man was both poor and blind. This was part of the description given to the church in Laodicea; see Revelation 3:17.



The map shows Jericho in relation to Jerusalem

A sketch of Herod's palace in Jericho

The route of the Jericho road is near the pilgrimage path to Jerusalem and is still visible today. It included long stretches of rocky terrain that made it a useful base of operations for robbers. The road descended about 3,200 feet or 975m from Jerusalem to Jericho along this 18-mile or 29km route.

'He entered Jericho' ties this account closely with the preceding verses. Jericho, in this period, was quite different from the OT city and located about one mile or 1.6km to the south of it. The city was built around a huge palace complex, first built by the Hasmoneans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC, which Herod the Great expanded after he obtained Jericho from Cæsar Augustus and he proceeded to build aqueducts, a fortress, a monumental winter palace and a hippodrome in the vicinity of the more ancient town. Excavations have revealed much of the Herodian palace structures; they were built in stages by expanding on

a previous Hasmonean palace. One striking feature of the palace site is its huge pools, in one of which Herod probably had his own son drowned. Jericho boasted a tropical climate and excellent access to water for agriculture.

Matthew 20:29 says the healing of the blind men took place as they went out of Jericho and Mark 10:46 agrees, but v.35 says it was as he 'approached Jericho'. It is possible that Matthew and Mark refer to the new Jericho and Luke to the old Jericho nearby, or vice versa. Another possibility is that the blind men cried out to Jesus first when he was entering the city (v.35), but he did not respond and heal them until he was leaving the city. Since none of the accounts tell everything about the event this may simply reflect the selection of different details about the event by the different Gospel writers. None of the accounts tells everything about the event.

In my own opinion, arguments about whether the healing account took place going into or coming out of Jericho must never be allowed to detract from the amazing miracle itself!

A blind man, who is named Bartimæus in Mark 10:46.

Sitting by the roadside would be a good place to beg as pilgrims heading to Jerusalem would tend to be generous.

<sup>36</sup> When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. <sup>37</sup> They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

<sup>38</sup> He called out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

Luke 18:36-38

The blind man called out, which indicates that he had heard of Jesus.

The accounts of Mark 10:46 and v.35 both mention just one blind man and Mark gives his name as Bartimæus. This does not mean that Matthew's report of two blind men is inaccurate, only that Mark and Luke focused on the one, see Matthew 20:30.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. The blind man acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah.

<sup>39</sup> Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me!

Luke 18:39

He shouted out all the more. An example of persevering faith, as we also saw in Luke 8:15 <<But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop>>, and in Luke 21:19 <<By standing firm you will gain life>>. It is also confirmed in vv.1-8. The blind man is persistent in his plea for help from God. Thus this chapter concludes as it began, with persistent supplication to God.

<sup>40</sup> Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, <sup>41</sup> What do you want me to do for you? Lord, I want to see, he replied.

### Luke 18:40-41

I want to see confirms the man's great faith as in v.39. Rather than continuing to beg for money (v.35), he seeks a miracle.

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to him, Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.

### Luke 18:42

Receive or recover your sight is a single word in Greek (anablepson). For Jesus only a brief command is necessary for he speaks as one with authority.

Your faith has healed you. It literally means 'saved you'. The same Greek verb is used in Luke 7:50 and 8:48. The blind man was healed both physically and spiritually.

<sup>43</sup> Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

### Luke 18:43

More than healing takes place as indicated by the beggar's following Jesus in discipleship.

Praising God is something we saw when Jesus first started his ministry in Galilee: <<He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him>> (Luke 4:15). We should praise God for his mercy for all people not just for ourselves and for those around us.

All the people indicates that Jesus' popularity among the people is undiminished.

Jesus' fame spreads even more. For the great crowds that gathered: <<from every village of Galilee and Judæa and from Jerusalem>> (Luke 5:15), from: <<the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon>> (Luke 6:17), and: <<the whole of Judæa and all the surrounding country>> (Luke 7:17), are still very much in evidence as the journey nears its end.