

**Home : Sermons : August 13, 2006****The Bad News/Good News of the Kingdom of God – *Luke 13:01-21***

Introduction – The crisis of the coming Kingdom of God is this: when the gospel is truly preached, one cannot escape the bad news of the coming Judge who brings vengeance upon every evildoer. However, for those with faith, this judgment is good news, because this coming Judge is our great Deliverer. Jesus expected His listeners to see the outworking of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and in the rising and falling of nations. He expects the same of us, for this is the Good News.

Signs of the Times (vv1-5) – These verses must be considered in concert with 12:54-59. It is because of what Jesus said there that the question about the Galileans is raised. Remember too that Jesus is a Galilean leading a group of pilgrims to Jerusalem where Pilate is governor of Judea. Jesus wants the people to analyze the death of the Galileans and the fall of the tower – these are the “signs of the times” in Jesus’ day.

Context – Jesus isn’t talking or warning the crowd about what happens to people when they die. This isn’t a warning about perishing in hell after death. He is warning the people that those who do not repent (and believe upon Him as the God-Man) will perish under the hands of Rome as well. The arrival of the Son of God is the arrival of judgment upon Israel and this is very bad news indeed.

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (vv6-9) – The vineyard is clearly Israel (Is 5:2-7), the man who planted the vineyard is Jehovah, and the keeper may be the Lord. The man has come for three years (the time of Jesus’ ministry) but there has been no fruit. This final year is coming to an end, but the keeper has plead with the owner to wait and see if fruit will not finally come. “*But, if not, after that you can cut it down.*” This parable is directed at the generation Jesus is addressing. There are certainly other applications to be made, but the contemporary curse in Jesus day must be seen first. The rejection by Israel of their Messiah and their refusal to repent is evidence that the coming of the kingdom of God is very bad news.

Bad News/Good News: Great Contrasts – There was bad news involving the “*eighteen*” on whom the tower fell; but there is good news for another “*eighteen*.” The vineyard was the “*house of Israel* (Is 5:7)” but there is something wonderful happening in that house, that synagogue, as well.

Sabbath-Jubilee (vv10-17) – The world of the unbelieving Jews and the kingdom of liberty collide here in this synagogue scene. The synagogue and the Sabbath were to be places of release, rest and celebration (Deut 5:12). This woman represents the condition of Israel as a whole. She is a “*daughter of Abraham*” who has been in bondage to Satan (v16). Jesus continues to heal on the Sabbath because of the Sabbatical nature of His ministry, and He uses the occasion to show forth the hypocrisy of the religious rulers (vv14-15). They proclaim scruples for holiness; Jesus proclaims Jubilee. They set the Sabbath day aside in a twisted fashion; Jesus provides Sabbath and celebration for His day. The unbelievers hate it and Him, and those with faith see what He is doing and rejoice (v17).

Only the Beginning (vv18-21) – The fact that only one bent-over, infirmed woman was healed was a sign as well. She was a picture of what Jesus would do with the New Israel (healing the helpless) and how it would come to pass. The kingdom of God is like that: very small, often unseen beginnings. The kingdom of God is like certain kinds of small, hidden things: leaven and mustard seeds. The leaven eventually affects the whole lump. The mustard seed eventually becomes a large tree in the garden (Mark 4:30-32). This parable draws on OT passages that depict great empires as trees in which subject nations nest like the birds (Ezek 17, Dan 4:10-12). Though small and insignificant now, the kingdom will grow upon the earth, becoming the greatest empire, and the nations will find refuge in its branches.

Every time Jesus breaks another satanic chain that has tied up someone or some people, another victory is won, another jubilee is declared. And the repercussion of one small gospel-victory goes on and on.

Two Messages – Judgment is coming (message 1) and the salvation of God will cover the earth (message 2). People and nations will reap what they sow (Gal 6:7-8), but in all of this God will have His salvation of the world (John 3:17, Is 11:9, Rev 11:15). Jesus has come to bring division (Luke 12:51), but through this separation of darkness and light He is going to spread the light of His salvation to the ends of the earth.

What Should We See? – There are messages here for each of us to consider and for our generation to consider as well –

Judgment Begins in the Household of God – America may have just been spared another disaster, but we should never think that we missed “the Big One.” If we continue to refuse Jesus and His Word as our King and Law then there is no reason to believe that this nation will be spared. Jesus is at work in our church, like the worker in the vineyard. Are we faithfully bearing fruit?

Release/Rest/Celebration – These words describe our Lord’s Day celebration, where God meets with us, renews us in Him, rejoices over and with us, and equips us. It often can look so insignificant compared to the other events of our lives or the events in the world. But, like the mustard seed being planted or the leaven being hidden, this will have the most glorious outcome upon the earth.

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