

September 29, 2024 (Unit 24, Session 1)

Jesus Knew He Would Be Rejected

(Luke 13)

As the end of Jesus' ministry on earth was drawing nearer, large crowds of people followed Him from each town and village. So the question someone raised in Luke 13:23 may seem unusual: "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

Jesus had spent time with the crowds. He had fed them, taught them, and healed them; yet He knew that relatively few would follow Him as true disciples. He knew He would ultimately be rejected by the crowds.

Jesus said that the gate is narrow, and few will find it. Most people will not taste and see that the Lord is good. The simple answer to this probing question is, "Yes, the number of people who will be saved is significantly less than those who will not." Many people knew about Jesus. They had shared meals with Him and listened to Him, but they did not know Him personally as Lord and Savior.

Jesus was clear that being a Jew by birth or a zealot for the law was not enough to enter God's kingdom. God's heart is both for Jews and Gentiles. Jesus' honest response offers hope to those who will hear. He tells them that no matter the numbers, make every effort to be one who enters that narrow gate. You do not want to be left outside the entrance.

We are surrounded by people who wonder about this very same thing. Who will be saved? Though we are not armed with the eternal knowledge of God, we do have pictures like this in Scripture that remind us to point to the hope of Christ in all things. We don't know the future—and it's not for us to know—but we do know where hope is found. The subject line of our message should be as hopeful as the gospel that saved us. The invitation to God's kingdom is for all to place their trust in Christ, the One who was rejected and killed on a cross—so that we may be justified and fully accepted by His sacrifice on our behalf.

Jesus Raised Lazarus

(John 11-12)

The account of Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead is a foundational passage in the New Testament. Not only was a dead man brought back to life, this passage in John 11 also contains the shortest verse in the Bible and a glimpse into the humanity of Jesus. John 11:25 says, "Jesus wept."

In this historical account of the death of Jesus' dear friend, Jesus is questioned three times for not arriving sooner. The primary reason He is questioned can be found in the words of both Mary and Martha: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died." (John 11:21,32) Mary, Martha, and others around them had seen and heard of the miraculous things that Jesus was doing. They had only seen Him miraculously prevent death. Their framework for how Jesus worked was limited to their experience with Him.

Martha showed a glimmer of hope in John 11:22 when she said, "Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." However, she still seemed to limit what Jesus could do to her previous experience.

It can be easy to put God inside of a box, to limit what we believe He can do to what we've seen Him do before. Yet Jesus' delay served a greater purpose: to give Him the opportunity to perform an even greater miracle—and thus display God's glory.

Today, we often struggle to pray with confidence that God could heal physical ailments or save those that seem most unlikely to repent. In our minds, we limit what God can do to what we have seen or can explain.

What if we prayed with the confidence that God is a wonderworker, doing more than we could ever ask or imagine? What if we believed that God isn't bound by our opinions or perspectives? What if we demonstrated our confidence in a God who is beyond our full comprehension, but is always within our reach? Not only would this type of faith change us, but it would also greatly impact those around us.