



LAST CHANCE • God's Kingdom Plan

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Luke 12:35-13:35

Overview

This section in Luke's gospel is comprised of several stories and teachings of Jesus that appear to be disconnected but are actually centered on a common theme. In this study, you and your group will look at each one (or most of them anyway) and try to figure out what the point of the vignette is. As the pieces come together the overall purpose should emerge. It's a different sort of study with a very high value on self discovery.

Your challenge will be to keep things balanced. Leave enough room for people to theorize and genuinely discover, but don't let them drown in frustration if they can't figure out what is going on. You might want to put this leaders guide down and go try to figure it out on your own so you'll know what they'll be going through. Keep two questions in mind:

1. What is the message in each scene?
2. What is the overall message Luke is giving by putting all these scenes together?

Then come back and read the tips below.

The Context

Jesus is inexorably headed for Jerusalem, and Israel is receiving their final opportunity to respond. The window of opportunity is closing fast, and Jesus is pleading and warning them that this is their last chance to accept Him and avert national judgement. At the same time, Jesus unveils to His disciples how the kingdom of God will be manifested in light of His rejection.

Scene 1. 12:35-40

This is the first time that Jesus addresses the theme of His Second Coming. When we read this from our historical vantage point it's not all that shocking, but to His disciples it must have sounded very odd. "What do you mean 'The Son of Man will come when you don't expect Him.' You're right here."

They were expecting that the Messiah was about to set up His Kingdom and all would be good for Israel. Instead there is talk of significant time passing and a surprise visit. It must have all been very disorienting. Notice, though, that when the master does return, great blessing awaits. He will serve His servants.

What's the Big Idea?

This study looks at Jesus' final call to the nation of Israel to repent, while at the same time it introduces God's new program to advance His kingdom

What's the Problem?

Our hearts incline away from recognizing and submitting to God and His Messiah even when we are confronted by evidence of reality and presence.



Scene 2. 12:41-48

Peter hears all this talk about some secret plan that he's not privy to and he wonders if he's among the rabble that will not be given the inside scoop. As usual Jesus doesn't directly answer the question but continues to describe what it will be like when He returns.

Again there will be blessing for those who are faithful and wise in His absence. But there will also be severe judgment against those who are not. Jesus' point to Peter seems to be that he knows enough and would do well to act on his knowledge of what the master wants.

Scene 3. 12:54-59

In this scene Jesus is raising the level of warning for those who aren't ready now, but should be. They are unable to read what Jesus thinks should be self evident, and they are ignoring an urgent problem. He is telling them that they are missing something and time is running out.

Scene 4. 13:1-5

Here Jesus is discussing some current events. These weren't Old Testament stories, just recent news items. Jesus' point here is pretty clear. Judgement is coming, and Israel needs to repent, or else perish.

By now your group should feel the intensity rising. What started as some shocking news about a delayed kingdom is now pretty clearly a warning and rebuke. Luke's purpose in organizing these stories should be getting clearer.

Scene 5. 13:6-9

This is very similar to scene 4. It's useful to know that fig trees were a common symbol for Israel. God has given ample time for them to produce fruit, and they are receiving their last opportunity before judgement comes, symbolized by the cutting down of the tree. See Jeremiah 24 for more insight.

Scene 6. 13:10-17

Now we move from teaching about Israel's need to repent to illustrating it. Here's Jesus miraculously healing somebody who has suffered for 18 years and all the synagogue rulers can see is that He did it on the sabbath which they mistakenly think is illegal. They are blind. The Messiah is right in front of them but they can't see Him for Who He is.

Scene 7. 13:22-30

Now the final insult. Not only are the Jews being judged and excluded, but a bunch of Gentiles dogs (people from the east and west and north and south – pretty much everywhere except Israel) are entering the Kingdom.

Scene 8. 13:31-35

The entire section aptly closes with the picture of Jesus' lament for Jerusalem and the nations' coming judgment. Here Luke brings us back to the narrative theme: Jesus' final trek to Jerusalem. We see that He is drawing near to the city that He loves, the city that will put Him to death.

Summary

While faithfully holding out the invitation to repent and follow Him, Jesus is painting a picture of Israel's rejection of their Messiah and God's subsequent judgment of Israel. The door is closing and they are on the outside refusing to come in. While some Jews will be faithful, our attention is drawn to the Gentiles whom God is graciously going to invite to the banquet to feast in the kingdom of God.

What's Our Response?

You want your group to consider to what extent they would identify with Israel in heart and heed Jesus' invitation to repent if needed.

Further you want them to consider if they are among the "ready" for whom it will be good when the master returns.

What Are the Questions?

Luke 12:35-13:35

LAUNCH

What is the biggest warning your parent's ever gave you. Did you heed it?

EXPLORE

Read 12:35-40.

1. What's weird about this?
2. What's the message?

Read 12:41-48.

3. What is the answer to Peter's question?
4. What's the message?

Read 12:54-59.

5. One reason people didn't recognize Jesus as Messiah is that they were looking for more of a political leader, or majestic king. In what ways do people misidentify Jesus today?
6. What's the message?

Read 13:1-5

7. Do you know anything about the events He is referring to?
8. What's the message?

Read 13:6-9.

9. Who or what do you think the fig tree represents?
10. What's the message?

Read 13:10-17.

11. What does Jesus do in this scene? What do the synagogue leaders see Him do?
12. What's the message?

Read 13:22-30.

13. Who are the people from the "east and west and north and south?"
14. What's the message?

Read 13:31-35.

15. What emotions do you perceive in Jesus in this scene?
16. What's the message?

APPLY

17. This is about Israel's rejection of the Messiah. Is it possible that this same rejection can take place in our lives? How, even as Christians, can we be hard-hearted toward Christ?

18. Do you believe Jesus is Who He said He is?

19. If He were to come back tonight, would you be ready?

20. What do you think it means to be ready? Are there any changes that you need to make in your life?

What Are the Answers?

1. They would have no reason to expect or understand His allusion to the Second Coming. God's delight in the possibility of fruit and the disappointment of fruitlessness.
 2. The consummation of the Kingdom is delayed. Be ready whenever He comes back because great blessing awaits! He will serve the ready. 10. Time is short, judgement is coming!
 3. The parable is for everyone. No one gets special knowledge, but all must be ready when He returns. 11. He heals a woman. All they can see is (supposedly unlawful) work on the sabbath.
 4. There will be judgement at His coming. Be ready! 12. You're blind. He's right here and you can't see it.
 5. Mere social reformer, nice guy that doesn't really care about how you live, Democrat, Republican. 13. Gentiles.
 6. You're missing something and time is running out. 14. Israel will be excluded, but foreigners included.
 7. Probably not. They were just current events that His immediate audience would have been familiar with, and thus useful as illustrations. 15. Jesus probably was experiencing a range of emotions. Anger over their rebellion, resolve regarding His death and sorrow over Israel's coming judgment.
 8. Repent or perish! 16. Desolation is coming for Jerusalem because they have rejected their Messiah.
 9. Israel. See Jeremiah 24 for a clear example of this. Both here and in Jeremiah you can see 17. We have the same hardness of heart they do and are reluctant to submit to Jesus.
- 18.-20. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Luke 12:40