

Luke 13

The Entwined Fates of Jesus and Jerusalem

Study Summary and Learning Objectives

In this study, we will spend time talking about Jesus' mission to go to Jerusalem and learning more about the Kingdom of God.

Objective

- Consider the implications for us as believers that God is coming to establish His Kingdom.

Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Reflect on the opening activity.
- Consider your group dynamics and revise some of the optional questions accordingly.
- Not all the Scripture passages are provided on this study's handout. Make sure you have Bibles (or devices)/remind people to bring theirs to look up those passages.

Questions for Discussion

Pray to open your group time.



Imagine explaining a giraffe to someone who has never seen or heard of one. What are some tools you can use when explaining difficult concepts?

Possible Answers: Pictures, comparisons (like "a giraffe's neck is like a tree trunk"), drawings.

Leader's Note: This a long passage; try to break it up by having multiple people read.

Read Out Loud: Luke 13 (NIV)

¹ Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

⁶ Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

⁸ "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

¹⁰ On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, ¹¹ and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” ¹³ Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

¹⁴ Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.”

¹⁵ The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? ¹⁶ Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?”

¹⁷ When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

¹⁸ Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.”

²⁰ Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? ²¹ It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³

Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”

He said to them, ²⁴ “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

²⁶ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

²⁷ “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

²⁸ “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

³² He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ ³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

³⁴ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’

Activity

Read Out Loud: What do you know about the Kingdom of God?

Let's break into groups and split up the verses. Then, we'll report back on what each passage says about the Kingdom of God to the whole group!

Leader's Note: If you don't have enough people, assign verses to individuals.

Did you know?

In the Old Testament, Jerusalem is sometimes called Mount Zion, and it refers to the place where God will one day reign.

Verse(s)	What it says about the Kingdom of God
Example: John 18:36	Example: The Kingdom of God is not like any kingdom on this earth.
Isaiah 24:23; 25:6-9	Hint: the feast in 25:6 is important! Jesus refers to it in Luke 13:29. <i>Possible Answer: All the people of God will come and feast at the banquet table of God. God will swallow up death.</i>
Isaiah 40:9-11	<i>Possible Answer: God Himself comes to Jerusalem to save His people; people are supposed to praise God that He has come to Zion.</i>
Luke 17:20-21	<i>Possible Answer: The coming of the Kingdom isn't in a specific place or time; right now it dwells within us.</i>
John 3:3-7	<i>Possible Answer: To enter the Kingdom of God one must be born again, born of the Spirit.</i>
Matthew 19:16-26	<i>Possible Answer: The Kingdom of God is a place that cannot be entered if we refuse to let go of our worldly attachments (specifically in this case wealth).</i>

Questions for Discussion

? Throughout the book of Luke, Jesus is slowly working towards Jerusalem. In the past, how have you thought about the coming of the Kingdom of God?

? Optional: What do you think is Jesus' mission?

Possible Answers: To go to Jerusalem and die on the cross and then rise again, to go to Jerusalem like God said He would do in Isaiah 40 to save His people.

Leaders' Note: You may prefer to just state this information as a transition rather than ask it as a question based on your group's level of maturity.

? How is the Kingdom of God like a mustard seed and yeast?

Possible Answers: Jesus indicated that the Kingdom of God would grow quickly, and indeed it did. By the time Paul was preaching the Gospel in Asia, he said the entire region had heard the Gospel. The Kingdom of God may have small beginnings, but it will increase. Jesus' domain started with twelve men in an obscure corner of Galilee, but it has spread throughout the world.

Facts about the Mustard Tree:

- The mustard tree grows very quickly, reaching its full size in only a few years.
- The mustard tree produces a purple, fleshy, sweet fruit that is edible. The leaves and roots are also edible.
- The mustard tree grows to about 20', quite large for a garden shrub, thereby providing good shade cover for sun-sensitive plants.
- The mustard tree is native to Iran and likes dry, well-drained soil. As such, it doesn't need any watering.
- The tree is also known as the "Toothbrush tree" as locals use its branches for natural toothbrushes because of their antibacterial properties and stiff nature.

Yeast is microscopic in size, and only a little is kneaded into the dough. Yet, given time, the yeast will spread through all the dough, working from the inside, making it increase.

? According to verse 34, how had Jerusalem responded to God and His prophets in the past?

Possible Answers: They had not wanted to hear what God was really saying through the prophets, they killed the prophets.

? Despite the fact that in the past Jerusalem has not wanted to hear God *and* the fact that Herod will likely try to kill Jesus (verse 31), Jesus is still dead set on heading to Jerusalem. What does this say about God's plans for Jerusalem now?

Possible Answers: Jesus wants to rescue Jerusalem from its wickedness. Jesus wants to make sure people hear the word of God and accept it now. Jesus wants to let them know that their ideas about the Kingdom of God are flawed.

? Sometimes in movies or pictures, Jesus is portrayed as a kind of stoic or pietistic figure who is walking around being holier than the people around Him. How does it make you feel when you consider that instead, He was doggedly pursuing a divinely inspired plan to rescue the world?

Possible Answers: Good in that He came to do something about the problems in the world. Joyful because He is someone who does something, and doesn't condemn by putting Himself above others.

Read Out Loud: Revelation 21: 1-4 (NIV)

¹ Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

? What does this passage say about what the Kingdom of God will look like when it comes in its fullness?

Possible Answers: God will dwell with His people fully. God will dwell on earth. The world will be made new. God will wipe away every tear from the faces of His people.

? Jesus is coming to establish a kingdom on the earth! How does the description of that kingdom (Rev. 21:1-4) change the way you think about the ‘kingdoms’ set against God now or the evil and suffering on the earth?

Possible Answers: Joyful, that Jesus/God is a King. A good king who will rule the earth and His people in love, and restore the earth to the way it was always supposed to be.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Later you will explore Jesus’ work in Jerusalem, but based on what you have learned so far, how do you see yourself participating in the coming of God’s Kingdom now?

Possible Answers: We are preparing the way for God’s kingdom on earth now through the spreading of the Gospel. We are like the mustard seed, helping the coming of the kingdom before it is a fully grown tree, or like the yeast mixing in the dough until it is a loaf of bread.