

## Confronting Jesus on the Road to Jerusalem - Study 7

# Will He Find Faith?

Luke 17:20-18:8



### Previously in 'Confronting Jesus'...

In the last episode we left Jesus on the road to Jerusalem with a solitary Samaritan ex-leper who came back to say thank you. Nine Jewish lepers who had been healed at the same time were nowhere to be seen. "Was no one found to give praise to God except this foreigner?" asks Jesus. "Rise and go, your faith has saved you." Jesus' has been on a mission to search for fruitfulness and faith in the land of Israel – and there's not much around!

### The Einstein Factor – Become an Instant Old Testament Expert

To understand what's happening in Luke 17, we need a little bit of Old Testament background. Fortunately, it's not too hard to become an OT expert – at least enough to catch on to what the land of Israel should have expected when their Lord came to visit. All you have to do is take a look at the last couple of pages of the Old Testament and you'll soon get the idea.

○ According to Malachi 2:17, how has Israel 'wearied God'?

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○ According to Malachi 3:1, what does God plan to do as a result?

● First I will send \_\_\_\_\_

● Then \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Earlier in Luke we saw John the Baptist identified as God's promised messenger, preparing the way for the Lord. Now, Jesus (the Lord) is slowly but surely making his way towards Jerusalem and his temple. This is the day that Israel long hoped for a desired. But Malachi gave a warning...

○ According to Malachi 3:2, what is in store for Israel?

○ Malachi the Prophet expands on this in chapter 4. What will "the day" be like?

○ What two groups will there be?

Even though God's people are complacent and expect only good things, the day of his coming to the temple will bring purification – division, fire and destruction for some, but righteousness and purification 'for those who

revere his name.' As Jesus draws closer to the temple, the tension mounts. What will he find there? How will the people of Israel respond? "The Day" Malachi spoke of is drawing very near! ...

**Now read Luke 17:20 to 18:8.** In some Christian traditions, this passage is very famous. For example, the book "Left Behind" by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left\\_Behind\\_\(series\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Behind_(series))) takes Luke 17:34-35 to refer to a future time when some Christians will be "raptured" – two women are grinding grain, and one is taken (by God to heaven) while the other is left behind in a godless world. For those with long memories, 70s Christian rocker Larry Norman's song "I Wish we'd all Been Ready" (revised more recently by DC Talk) took the same view. **This study takes a very different view – that Jesus is warning of the much closer destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70AD.** This becomes much clearer in Luke 21:20.

In summary, the future things that Jesus warned Israel of **now lie in our past.** History shows how his warnings were fulfilled. Let's take a closer look...

1. "Careful observation" means meticulous keeping of religious rules and laws. What is the Pharisee's question, and what did they think was the answer?
  
2. Verse 21 has a footnote. "The Kingdom of God is within you" can equally be translated "The Kingdom of God is among you." (The Greek text literally reads 'in-of you-plural.') Which option would you vote for, and why? (What would he mean in each case?)
  
3. Terrible times are coming. Jesus calls them "The Days of the Son of Man." Compare 17: 22-26 with 21:8-22. These are the days ahead when Israel will be judged for rejecting God's visit to Jerusalem.
  - a. In the years between his death and resurrection (33AD) and the final destruction of the temple in 70AD, what will some people say and do? (17:23,21:8)
  - b. What must happen to Jesus before judgment falls on Jerusalem? ("The Day of the Son of Man")
  - c. Look back to the summary of Malachi in the introduction to this study. What are the parallels?
  
4. How were things similar in "The Days of Noah"? (v26)
  
5. How were things similar in "The Days of Lot"? (v28)
  
6. What warnings does Jesus give for the days when God's judgment falls? (v30,31)



In Ancient times, Eagle was the symbol of the Roman Army and was carried ahead of the army to instill pride in the soldiers as well as fear in their enemies. The word translated “vultures” in verse 37 is the same word used for ‘eagle.’ A number of commentators suggest that’s the picture Jesus is bringing to mind in verse 37. If this is the case, where is the ‘carcass’ they will gather around?

The Pharisees thought the Kingdom of God was all about the restoration of Israel from Roman rule. But according to Malachi and to Jesus, the first enemies God was going to deal with were the **enemies within the ranks of his people**. There was going to be a great separation – some would be taken, some would be left. When Jesus says “The Kingdom of God is among you”, perhaps he’s making exactly that point... that some of them will be part of it, and others won’t. Among the crowd, there are some who will be Kingdom members, and others who will not. As we’ve seen before in Luke, the Pharisees think they’re all invited to the party. Jesus tells them that many of them will be shut out.

## Justice At Last?

Malachi said Israel had wearied God by saying “Where is the God of justice?” (Mal 2:17). **Read the parable in Luke 18:1-8.**

- a. What does the woman cry out for to the unrighteous judge?
- b. What will God – who is a righteous judge – more surely do? What will justice actually look like for unfaithful Israel at this point?
- c. “. . . *on the earth*” in verse 8 is equally translated “in the land” (as it is in Lk 21:23 – ‘there will be great distress *in the land*.’) At this point the focus is not global, so much as on what *The Lord* will find when he comes to his temple in the promised land of Israel. What will Jesus be looking for “in the land”?

## A Simple Summary

Why is Jesus heading to Jerusalem? He’s fulfilling the words of the prophet Malachi, who said God would come... and bring about a final division between the righteous and the unrighteous in the nation. The Pharisees think that by meticulously keeping God’s laws in an external way, God will restore their empire. Jesus says that God is much more interested in righteousness of heart, and that only a few of them will be included in the Kingdom. When Rome crushes Jerusalem in 70 AD, most of them will be dragged away. The real rule of God from this point on will be defined by those who submit to King Jesus in humble faith. Will he find faith in the land? We’ll need to keep reading to find out. So far, he’s found it in a Samaritan leper – a foreigner – and he’s about to find it in a despised tax collector, a blind beggar and a short man who climbs a tree.

The bigger question is, has he found humble faith in YOU yet?