

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 13

Ver. 1. *There were present at that season*, etc.] Among the innumerable multitude of people, (^{<211>}Luke 12:1) that were then hearing the above discourses and sayings of Christ:

some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. These Galileans were very likely some of the followers of Judas Gaulonitis, or Judas of Galilee; (see ^{<415>}Acts 5:37) who endeavoured to draw off the Jews from the Roman government, and affirmed it was not lawful to give tribute to Caesar; at which Pilate being enraged, sent a band of soldiers, and slew these his followers; who were come up to the feast of the passover, as they were offering their sacrifices in the temple, and so mixed their blood with the blood of the passover lambs: this being lately done, some of the company spoke of it to Christ; very likely some of the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he had just now taxed as hypocrites; either to know his sense of Pilate's conduct, that should he condemn it as brutish and barbarous, they might accuse him to him; or should he approve of it, might traduce him, and bring him into contempt among the people; or to know his sentiments concerning the persons slain, whether or no they were not very wicked persons; and whether this was not a judgment upon them, to be put to death in such a manner, and at such a time and place, and which sense seems to be confirmed by Christ's answer. Josephus^{f409} relating a slaughter of the Samaritans by Pilate, which bears some likeness to this, has led some, though without any just reason, to conclude, that these were Samaritans, who are here called Galileans. This history is neither related nor hinted at, by any other writer but Luke. The phrase of mingling blood with blood, is Jewish; it is said of one Trogius the wicked (perhaps the Emperor Trajan), that he slaughtered the Jews, ^{^mdb ^mdbry[w}, “and mingled their blood with their blood”; and their blood ran into the sea, unto Cyprus^{f410}. The Jews^{f411} have a notion, that

“in the age in which the son of David comes, Galilee shall be destroyed.”

Here was a great slaughter of the Galileans now, (see ~~4157~~ Acts 5:37) but there was a greater afterwards by the Romans: it may be that the Pharisees made mention of this case to Christ, to reproach him and his followers, who were called Galileans, as his disciples chiefly were.

Ver. 2. *And Jesus answering, said unto them,* etc.] Neither approving, nor condemning Pilate's action; and though he allowed the Galileans to be sinners, which could not be denied, he does not bear hard upon them, but improves the instance for the conviction of his hearers, and in order to show them the necessity of repentance, and to bring them to it:

suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? such a supposition they seem to have made, by their speaking to Christ concerning this matter; and concluded from their violent and untimely deaths, that they had been notorious and uncommon sinners, and guilty of the most enormous crimes, which had brought upon them the just judgments of God: whereas this is not a rule of judging; oftentimes the best of men suffer exceedingly in this life; God's judgments are a great deep, and not to be fathomed by us, nor is it to be easily known, when any thing befalls persons in a way of judgment; there is nothing comes by chance, but every thing by the wise disposal of divine providence, to answer some end or another; nor are persons that are punished, either immediately by the hand of God, or by the civil magistrate, to be insulted, but rather to be pitied; besides, love and hatred, the characters and states of men, are not to be known by these effects in providence.

Ver. 3. *I tell you, nay,* etc.,] They were not greater sinners than others of their neighbours, nor is it to be concluded from the bloody slaughter that was made of them; others might be much more deserving of such an end than they, who yet escaped it:

but except ye repent; of sin, and particularly of the disbelief of the Messiah: *ye shall likewise perish;* or perish, in like manner, as these Galileans did: and so it came to pass in the destruction of Jerusalem, that great numbers of the unbelieving Jews, even three hundred thousand men were destroyed at the feast of passover^{f412}; and that for sedition, as these men very likely were.

Ver. 4. *Or those eighteen,* etc.] Men; the Persic version reads, “those twelve”; but all copies, and other versions, agree in this number:

upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them; there was a pool near Jerusalem, called the Pool of Siloam, (^{<430>}John 9:7) near, or over which, was a tower built, which fell down and killed eighteen men; very likely as they were purifying themselves in the pool, and so was a case very much like the other, and might be a very late one: and this Christ the rather observes, and puts them in mind of, that they might see that not Galileans only, whom they had in great contempt, but even inhabitants of Jerusalem, died violent deaths, and came to untimely ends; and yet, as not in the former case, so neither in this was it to be concluded from hence, that they were sinners of a greater size, or their state worse than that of other men:

think ye that they were sinners; or debtors; for as sins are called debts, (^{<402>}Matthew 6:12) so sinners are called debtors:

above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? there might be, and doubtless there were, as great, or greater sinners, in that holy city, and among such that made great pretensions to religion and holiness, as they were.

Ver. 5. *I tell you, nay*, etc.] I affirm it, and you may depend upon it, they were not greater sinners than others: though such a melancholy accident befell them, not without the providence of God:

but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; or perish in the same manner; that is, shall be buried under the ruins of the city and temple of Jerusalem, when one stone should not be left upon another; just as these eighteen men were buried under the ruins of the tower of Siloam, of which it was a pledge and emblem; and accordingly great numbers of them did perish in the temple, and were buried under the ruins of it ^{f413}.

Ver. 6. *He spoke also this parable*, etc.] That is, Jesus spake, as the Persic version expresses it, that which follows; and at the same time, and upon the above occasion; setting forth the patience of God towards the Jewish nation, their unfruitfulness, and the danger of their being destroyed, in case of non-amendment:

a certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. This was not at all contrary to the law in (^{<620>}Deuteronomy 22:9) “thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds”: for according to the Jewish canons ^{f414},

“the prohibition on account of divers seeds in a vineyard, concerned divers sorts of corn, (as wheat, barley, etc.) and divers sorts of

herbs only: but it was lawful to sow other sorts of seeds in a vineyard, and there is no need to say other trees.”

And there are cases put, and instances given, which express, or suppose fig trees, particularly, to have been planted in vineyards; for it is said ^{f415},

“if a man carries a vine over part of a tree for meat, he may sow seed under the other part of it — it happened that R. Joshua went to R. Ishmael to Cephaz Aziz, and he showed him a “vine”, carried over, **hnat hxqm**, “part of a fig tree”.”

Again, more than once it is said in a parabolical way ^{f416},

“this is like unto a king that has a paradise, or orchard planted, **μννpg l çw μνnat l ç hrwç**, “a row of fig trees, and of vines”, and of pomegranates, and of apples, etc.”

By the “certain man” may be meant, either God the Father, who is sometimes called an husbandman; or rather the Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly man, as well as properly God; and “by his vineyard” may be meant, the Jewish nation; (see ^{210E} Isaiah 5:1,2,7) which were his own nation and people, from whence he sprung, and to whom he was particularly sent, and among whom he had a special property; and may also be applied to the church of God in any age or nation, which is often compared to a vineyard, consisting of persons separated from the world, and planted with various plants, some fruitful, pleasant, profitable, and valuable, and are Christ's by his Father's gift, and his own purchase. And by “the fig tree planted” in it, may be principally meant the Scribes and Pharisees, and the generality of the Jewish people; who were plants, but not of Christ's Father's planting, and therefore to be cut down, or rooted up: and may be accommodated to professors of religion; some of which are true and real, and may be compared to the fig tree, because of its large and green leaves, expressive of their profession; and become fruitful, as they are, being filled with the fruits of the Spirit, of righteousness, and of grace; and because it puts forth its fruit before its leaves, as there should be the fruit of grace before a profession of faith is made. Others are only nominal professors; and are like a fig tree, of which sort was this in the parable, that has large leaves, but no fruit; make a large profession, but bring forth no fruit to the glory of God; and though they are planted in the house of God, yet not by God the Father, nor by Christ, only at best by ministers and churches hoping well of them, but mistaken in them:

and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. This, if understood of God the Father, designs his coming to the Jewish people by his servants and prophets, time after time, and at last by John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, and his apostles, seeking and requiring fruits of holiness, righteousness, and judgment, but found instead thereof the wild grapes of wickedness, oppression, and violence: but if of Christ, which sense is rather to be chosen, it denotes his incarnation, or his coming into the world in human nature, and seeking by his ministry, the fruits of faith in himself, and repentance towards God among the people of the Jews, but found none; at least instances of faith in Israel were very rare, and few repented of their evil works; and hence he upbraided many with their impenitence and unbelief; (see ^{<D12>}Matthew 11:20).

Ver. 7. *Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard,* etc.] If by the owner of the vineyard is meant God the Father, then by the dresser of the vineyard Jesus Christ is intended; but as he seems rather designed by the owner, the vinedresser, or “the gardeners”, as the Persic version reads, in the plural number, may signify the ministers of the word, to whom Christ, who is Solomon's antitype, lets out his vineyard to dress and cultivate it, and to keep the fruit of it; (see ^{<D11>}Song of Solomon 8:11,12),

behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; or “behold, there are three years since I came”; so read the Vulgate Latin and Persic versions, and Beza's most ancient copy. Some think Christ here refers to the three years of his public ministry, which he had now gone through among the Jews with little success; but he seems rather to allude to the nature of fig trees, which, if fruitful, bear in three years time; for even *ἰ ῥῆ τῶν β*, “a sort of white figs”, which are the longest before they bring forth fruit to perfection, yet their fruit is ripe in three years time. These trees bear fruit once in three years; they bear fruit indeed every year, but their fruit does not come to maturity till after three years^{f417}; and this may be the reason why this number is fixed upon; for if such fig trees do not bring forth ripe fruit in three years time, there is little reason to expect any from them: and thus it was time after time with the Jewish nation; and so it is with carnal professors: hence it follows,

cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? or “that it may not cumber”; or “render the ground useless”, as read the Arabic version, and one of Beza's copies; for unfruitful trees suck up the juices of the earth, and draw away nourishment from other trees that are near them, and so make the earth

barren, and not only hurt other trees, but stand in the way and place of fruitful ones; and therefore it is best to cut them down. So barren professors, as were the Jews, are not only useless and unprofitable themselves, being fruitless, but make churches barren, and stand in the way of others, who are stumbled by them; they are grieving to God, to Christ, and to the blessed Spirit, and are troublesome and burdensome to churches, ministers, and true believers: and the cutting them down may regard the judgment of God upon the nation of the Jews, which Christ would not have his apostles and ministers interpose for the averting of; or the excommunication of such worthless and hurtful professors out of the churches by them.

Ver. 8. *And he answering, said unto him, Lord,* etc.] Which, if understood of God the Father, may intend the intercession of Christ with him, who not only intercedes for his elect, for those that are unconverted, that they may be converted; and for converted ones, for the carrying on of the work of sanctification; for fresh discoveries of pardoning grace; for consolation and support under trouble; for their final perseverance, and eternal glorification: but also for his enemies, for profane sinners, and for formal professors; for the sake of his own people among them, and for their preservation, and for the averting of divine judgments from them, at least as yet: and so the Jewish nation was spared for some time after this, though now deserving of immediate destruction. But rather, the intercession of the ministers of Christ, and other good men, may be here meant; who, as Abraham interceded for Sodom, and Moses and Aaron for Israel, so do they for a sinful nation, a barren and unfruitful church and people, and particular persons, that they may be spared, at least a little longer, as here:

let it alone this year also; have patience one year more, or a little while longer. The Ethiopic version renders it, “until the winter”, that being a time for digging about, and dunging of trees, as follows,

till I shall dig about it, and dung it; these same phrases are used in the “Misna”^{f418},

“*yr̄d[mw ʿyl bzm*, “they dung and dig” in gardens of cucumbers, and gourds, until the beginning of the year:”

upon which their commentators say^{f419}, that they carry dung into their gardens to moisten the earth, and dig about the roots of the trees, and lay them bare, and cover them again, and prune them, and smoke them to kill

the worms. And by these phrases may be signified the various means Christ made use of by his own ministry, and by the ministry of his apostles, to make the Jews a fruitful people; and rather the means Christ's ministers make use of, as did the apostles with the Jews, to reach the cases of barren professors; as by "digging", striking at, and exposing some secret sin or sins, which are the root and source of their barrenness; showing them, that they have no root in Christ, nor the root of the matter in them; and declaring to them the insufficiency of a mere profession of religion to save them: and "dunging", which as it supposes want of heat, or coldness, which is the cause of barrenness, and signifies, that such professors are without spiritual life, and without spiritual heat, or real warmth of love to Christ, his truths, ordinances, and people, and discharge their duty in a cold and lifeless manner; so it may design the means they make use of to warm and fire them with zeal for God, and true religion; by preaching the soul quickening doctrines of the Gospel, and by laying before them the agreeableness of a becoming zeal, and the disagreeableness of a lukewarm spirit and disposition, an indolence and unconcern for the glory of God, and interest of Christ.

Ver. 9. *And if it bear fruit, well*, etc.] If hereby barren professors, as the Jews, become fruitful, it is well, a good thing is done; it is well for themselves, they shall eat the fruit of their doings; it is well for the churches where they are, for good works are profitable to men; and it is well for the owner of the vineyard, and the dresser of it too, for when Christ has his fruit from his churches, his ministers have theirs also:

and if not, then

after that; "for the time to come", as the Vulgate Latin; or "year following", as the Persic version renders it:

thou shall cut it down; do with it as thou pleasest, nothing more will be said or pleaded in its behalf; full consent shall be given, and no more intercession used: any trees might not be cut down, only barren ones; there is a law in (⁶³¹⁹Deuteronomy 20:19,20) about cutting down trees, and which the Jews explain thus ^{f420};

"they may not cut down trees for meat without the city, nor withhold from them the course of water, that so they may become dry; as it is said, "thou shall not destroy the trees"; and whoever cuts any down is to be beaten, and not in a siege only, but in any

place: whoever cuts down a tree for meat, by way of destroying it, is to be beaten; but they may cut it down if it hurts other trees, or because it hurts in the field others, or because its price is dear; the law does not forbid, but by way of destroying. Every barren tree it is lawful to cut down, even though a man hath no need of it; and so a tree for meat, which does hurt, and does not produce but little fruit, and it is not worth while to labour about it, it is lawful to cut it down: and how much may an olive tree produce, and it may not be cut down? the fourth part of a “Kab” of olives; and a palm tree which yields a “Kab” of dates, may not be cut down.”

Much such a parable as this is formed by the Jews, upon Moses's intercession for the people of Israel ^{f421}

“Says R. Abin, in the name of R. Simeon ben Josedech, a parable, to what is it like? to a king that hath an uncultivated field; he says to his gardener, go and manure it, and make it a vineyard: the gardener went and manured that field, and planted it a vineyard; the vineyard grew, and produced wine, and it turned to vinegar; when the king saw that the wine turned to vinegar, he said to the gardener, go, *htwa* *wtqw*, “and cut it down”, why should I seek after a vineyard that brings forth that which is sour? the gardener replied, my lord, the king, what expense hast thou been at with this vineyard before it was raised? and now thou seekest to cut it down; and shouldst thou say because its wine turns sour; the reason is, because it is young, therefore its wine turns sour, and it does not produce good wine: so when Israel did that work (of the golden calf), the holy blessed God sought to consume them; said Moses, Lord of the world, hast thou not brought them out of Egypt from a place of idolatry, and now they are young, or children, as it is said, (~~2100~~ Hosea 11:1) wait a little for them, and go with them, and they will do good works in thy presence.”

Ver. 10. *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues*, etc.] That is Jesus, as the Syriac and Persic versions express it; which was his work, he being a teacher sent from God, and who took all opportunities of instructing men in the truths of the Gospel; this was done either in Galilee, or in Judea, in one of the synagogues of some city there, for in their larger cities there were more synagogues than one. In Jerusalem, we are told ^{f422}, there were three hundred and ninety four synagogues; and other writers ^{f423}

increase their number, and say, there were four hundred and eighty: and it was

on the sabbath; which was now in force, and was religiously observed by Christ.

Ver. 11. *And behold there was a woman*, etc.] In the synagogue, who, as infirm as she is hereafter described, got out to the place of worship; and which may be a rebuke to such, who, upon every trifling indisposition, keep at home, and excuse themselves from an attendance in the house of God:

which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; or a weakness that was brought upon her by an evil spirit, by Satan; as appears from (~~236~~Luke 13:16) who, by divine permission, had a power of inflicting diseases on mankind, as is evident from the case of Job; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “whom a demon had made infirm”: and this disorder had been of a long standing; she had laboured under it for the space of eighteen years, so that it was a known case, and had been given up as incurable, which made the following miracle the more illustrious and remarkable.

And was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself; or lift up her head, look up, or stand upright; it was a thing utterly impossible, which she could by no means do; her body was convulsed, and every part so contracted, that, as the Persic version renders it, “she could not stretch out a hand or foot”.

Ver. 12. *And when Jesus saw her*, etc.] In the synagogue among the people, either whilst, or after he had done teaching:

he called her to him, to come nearer him, and said unto her; of his own accord, without being asked by the woman, or any other for her, out of great compassion to her, seeing her in this miserable condition, and knowing full well the nature, cause, and long continuance of her disorder:

woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity; which had not only bowed her, but it had bound her, as if she had been bound with cords; but Christ by saying these words, with his hands laid upon her, burst her bonds asunder, dispossessed the evil spirit, and delivered her from her long affliction.

Ver. 13. *And he laid his hands on her*, etc.] As he spoke the above words, which he sometimes did when he healed diseases.

And immediately she was made straight; she lift up herself, stood upright, and her body, and all the parts of it were as straight as ever they had been, or as any were in the synagogue.

And glorified God; that is, “the woman” glorified God, as the Persic version expresses it; she was filled with thankfulness for the mercy, and gave God the glory of it. This woman was an emblem of a poor sinner held in the bonds of iniquity by Satan, and led captive by him at his will, who can by no means raise himself; nor is he able to lift up his head to heaven, or look upwards to Christ for deliverance; and yet attends upon the outward ministry, when Christ, in his own time, meets with him under it, and manifests his power and grace, breaks his bonds asunder, delivers him out of Satan's hands, and from the bondage of his own corruptions, sets him straight, and causes him to lift up his head, and look to him for life and salvation; and so puts a new song into his mouth, even praise to God, to whose free grace and favour he readily ascribes his deliverance.

Ver. 14. *And the ruler of the synagogue*, etc.] For there never was but one in a synagogue, whatever some writers have observed to the contrary; (see Gill on “~~40:18~~ Matthew 9:18”) the Ethiopic version reads, “the chief priests”, but wrongly; these dwelt at Jerusalem, and in Galilee:

answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day; his indignation was at Christ, and the miracle he had wrought, being filled with envy at the honour it would bring unto him; though he covered it under pretence of its being a violation of the sabbath, and that it ought not to have been done on such a day, and in such a place, which were appropriated not to servile works, but to religious worship;

and said unto the people; over whom he had an authority, and who stood in awe of him, because of his office and dignity; and not daring to attack Christ himself, at least not directly, though he struck at him through the people, whose doctrine and miracles were so extraordinary.

There are six days which men ought to work, in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day; referring to the fourth command: but this observation and reproof were impertinent and needless, for the people did not come to be healed; for ought appears, the cure was unthought of and unexpected; nor was healing, especially as performed by

Christ, by a word and a touch, a servile work, and therefore could not be any breach of the law referred to. The Ethiopic version reads, “is there not a sixth day? — — come on that day”; the day before the sabbath.

Ver. 15. *The Lord then answered him and said,* etc.] Though he did not direct his speech to him, he knew that he struck at him, and suggested that he was a violator of the sabbath, as well as the people: and therefore in defence of himself, and of what he had done, and to expose the hypocrisy of this man, made answer as follows,

thou hypocrite; the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read in the plural, “hypocrites”; as do the Complutensian edition, and four ancient copies of Beza's, and the Alexandrian copy; but the Syriac and Persic versions read in the singular, “hypocrite”; as this man was, who covered his malice and envy at Christ, with a show of zeal for the sabbath day; and yet did that upon it, which must be allowed by themselves, and others, to be a much greater violation of the sabbath, than this cure could ever be thought to be:

doth not each one of you, on the sabbath day, loose his ox, or his ass, from the stall, or rack, where he is fastened with a rope;

and lead him away to watering? to some place of water, where he may drink, after having filled himself at the rack: and that this was agreeably to their own canons and practice, that beasts may be led out on a sabbath day, is certain; for they deliver various rules concerning leading them out, with what they might, and with what they might not be brought out; and particularly, among others, mention asses and heifers^{f424}; and they speak^{f425} of leading them to water, not only to drink of it, but to wash their chains in it, which, it seems, received pollution, and needed washing, and might be done on a sabbath day; yea, they allow, that not only a beast may be led out to watering, but a man might fill a vessel of water, and pour it out into a trough for it, provided he did not directly set it before it: the rule is this^{f426}

“a man may not fill water (a vessel of it), and put it on a sabbath day before his beast, but he may fill it, and pour it out, and it may drink of it.”

And particularly on a feast day, their rule is^{f427}, that

“they do not water nor slay beasts of the desert, but they water and slay domestic ones. Domestic ones are such as lie in the city (i.e. as Maimonides says ^{f428}, within the sabbatical border, 2000 cubits from the city), and those of the desert are such as lie in pastures.”

And therefore very justly does our Lord observe to the ruler of the synagogue their own practices towards a beast, in defence of his works of mercy to men.

Ver. 16. *And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham,* etc.] Not only a woman, or rational creature, and much preferable, as such, to an irrational one; but a descendant of Abraham, of whom the Jews gloried, and in descent from him prided themselves, and trusted; and chose to call their women by this name ^{f429}, which gave them a character above others: and who, besides all this, was doubtless a good woman, a spiritual worshipper of the God of Israel; who, in a spiritual sense, was a daughter of Abraham, that walked in the steps of his faith, and was now a believer in Christ, and appeared to be a chosen vessel of salvation:

whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years; with a bodily distemper that none could loose her from in so long a time. The Persic version, very wrongly, reads “twelve years”; though in (^{ⲉⲗⲓⲑⲓⲛ}Luke 13:11) it observes the right number.

Should not such an one be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? the force of Christ's reasoning is this, that if it was lawful, on a sabbath day, to lead out a beast to watering, to quench its thirst, that so it may not suffer so much as one day for want of water, how much more reasonable must it be, that a rational creature, one of Abraham's posterity, and a religious person, who had been for eighteen years under a sore affliction, through the power of Satan over her, by divine permission, should be freed from so long and sore an affliction on the sabbath day? if mercy is to be shown to beasts, much more to men and women.

Ver. 17. *And when he had said these things,* etc.] Had argued with them from their own practices, and in a way so strong and rational, that carried such evidence and conviction with it:

all his adversaries were ashamed; not only the ruler of the synagogue, but the Scribes and Pharisees, that were present, who followed him wherever he went, and were his implacable enemies; these were confounded and

silenced; shame appeared in their countenances; they could not lift up their heads, and look him in the face.

And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him; for the doctrines he taught, and the miracles he wrought, and his wise and close reasonings at this time, to the shame and confusion of all that opposed him: for his audience consisted of different sorts, and what he said, and did, had different effects upon them. Some were filled with joy, and others with wrath, malice, and envy. And this is true with respect to spiritual and eternal things. Glorious things have been done by Christ in eternity, by becoming the surety of his people, by entering into a covenant with his Father on their account, and by taking the care and charge of their persons, and of all grace, blessings, and promises for them; and in time, by assuming their nature, fulfilling the law, bringing in an everlasting righteousness, making peace and reconciliation, procuring pardon, and finishing the work of redemption and salvation; and now in heaven, by entering as the forerunner for them, appearing in the presence of God on their account, presenting their prayers, and making intercession for them: and these are glorious things; they make for the glory of all the divine perfections; they issue in the glory of Christ himself; and in consequence of them, the saints enjoy eternal glory and happiness: these are things of the greatest importance, are wonderful and amazing, and for which saints and angels will glorify God both here and hereafter; and these occasion joy, and gladness in the Lord's people now. For not carnal and profane persons, or hypocrites, and formal professors, or Pharisees, and self-righteous persons rejoice at these things; but such as are the Lord's own people, who are openly his; who have passed under a work of the Spirit of God, who have seen their need of these things, and are sensible of the value of them; who know Christ, and love him, and believe in him.

Ver. 18. *Then said he, unto what is the kingdom of God like?* etc.] The same with the kingdom of heaven, in (^{<OR>}Matthew 13:31) and so the Ethiopic version reads it here, “and whereunto shall I resemble it?” of this way of speaking, (see Gill on ^{<OR>}Mark 4:30”).

Ver. 19. *It is like a grain of mustard seed,* etc.] Both for its smallness at first, and its after increase; wherefore both the Evangelists Matthew and Mark observe, that it “is the least of all seed”: which is true of the ministry of the Gospel, of the Gospel church state, and of the grace of God in the hearts of his people:

which a man took and cast into his garden; the Ethiopic version renders it, “and sowed in his field”, as in (^{403B}Matthew 13:31) though mustard used to be sowed in gardens as well as in fields. ^{f430} Says R. Simeon ben Chelphetha, I have one stalk of mustard seed, *yl ç dwtb*, “in my garden”: so ^{f431} Buxtorf translates it. And by the place in the text, where this seed is cast, may be meant, either the “field” of the world, where the Gospel is preached, and churches are raised; or the “garden” of the church, where the word and ordinances are administered, and in the hearts of the members of it, the grace of God is implanted and increased; (see ²⁰⁴²Song of Solomon 4:12,13)

and it grew and waxed a great tree, which may design the spread of the Gospel in the world, the flourishing state of the church of Christ, and the growth of grace in the hearts of believers.

And the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it; the Syriac version reads in the singular number, “the fowl of the air”; not Satan, and his principalities and powers, which devour the seed sown by the wayside; nor the angels of heaven; but rather gracious men on earth, who sit under the shadow of a Gospel ministry with great delight; and “make their nests”, as the Persic version here renders the words, and take up their residence in Gospel churches; (see Gill on ^{403B}Matthew 13:31-32”) (see Gill on ⁴⁰⁶¹Mark 4:31-32”).

Ver. 20. *And again he said*, etc.] That is, Jesus, as the Syriac and Persic versions express it; besides the parable of the grain of mustard seed, that also of the leaven hid in three measures of meal:

whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God; either the Gospel of the kingdom, and the mysteries of it; or the church, which is Christ's kingdom; or the grace of God in the heart, which makes meet for the kingdom of glory; the first seems rather to be intended; (see Gill on ^{403B}Matthew 13:33”).

Ver. 21. *It is like leaven*, etc.] Which is small in quantity, but is of a swelling, spreading quality; and fitly expresses the small beginnings of the Gospel ministry, and its increase, also the state and case of Gospel churches, and the nature of the grace of God; unless false doctrine should rather be meant, which privately, secretly, and by little and little, got into the churches of Christ, the kingdom of God, and spread itself all over them, as in the times of the papacy:

which a woman took; Christ, and his ministers, Wisdom, and her maidens, understanding it of the Gospel; but if the leaven of error is intended, that woman, Jezebel, is meant, who calls herself a prophetess, and teaches, and seduces the servants of God, (~~REV~~ Revelation 2:20)

and hid in three measures of meal: among a few of God's people at first, both among Jews and Gentiles,

till the whole was leavened; until all the elect of God are gathered in, and evangelized by it; even the whole fulness of the Gentiles, and all the people of the Jews, which shall be saved in the latter day; but if the parable is to be understood of the false doctrine and discipline of the Antichristian and apostate church of Rome, it may denote the small beginnings of the mystery of iniquity, which began to work in the apostle's time by the errors and heresies then propagated, and the manner in which the man of sin was privately introduced; whose coming is after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, first among a few, and then more, until at length the whole world wondered after the beast, (~~SAB~~ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10, ~~REV~~ Revelation 13:3).

Ver. 22. *And he went through the cities and villages*, etc.] Either of Galilee, or of Judea, or both; since he was upon his journey from Galilee, through Judea, to Jerusalem, as it follows:

teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem; as he was journeying he taught in every place he came, where he could have an opportunity; his delight was to do good both to the bodies and souls of men; and he was constant and assiduous in it.

Ver. 23. *Then said one unto him*, etc.] Not one of his disciples, but one of the company, in some one of the cities or villages he passed through, or as he was in the road to Jerusalem:

are there few that be saved? It is a received opinion among the Jews ^{f432}, that all Israel shall have a part in the world to come; and this man might put the question to know whether Christ was of this sentiment or not. And by some things he had observed drop from him, and it may be the foregoing parables, which express the small beginnings of his kingdom, and seem to signify, that at first his Gospel should be received but by a few, though it should afterwards spread, he might collect, that his sense was, there would be but a few saved; or this might be a question of mere curiosity and speculation, as it seems to be, by Christ's treatment of it, who does not give

a direct answer to it, but puts him and others upon showing a concern for their own salvation.

And he said unto them; not to the man only that put the question, but to the whole company; though the Persic and Ethiopic versions read, “he said unto him”, as follows.

Ver. 24. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*, etc.] What is meant by the strait gate, and by entering in at it, (see Gill on “^{<4073>}Matthew 7:13”). To “strive”, is to be diligent in the use of means; to search the Scriptures with care; to attend on the preaching of the word with constancy, neglecting no opportunity; to pray earnestly for spiritual light, knowledge, and grace; to contend with every enemy that opposes the salvation of the soul, as sin, Satan, and the world; to bear all reproaches and persecutions, and press through all difficulties, for the prize of the incorruptible crown: the metaphor seems to be taken from the striving, wrestling, and combat in the Olympic games, for a corruptible crown:

for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able: either when it is too late, when the door is shut; or else before, very faintly, in a superficial manner, from a mere natural affection, from a principle of self-love, which leads every one to desire happiness; and by very indirect and improper methods, by their own civility, morality, and righteousness; by works of the law, moral, or ceremonial; or by a profession of religion, and an outward compliance with the ordinances of the Gospel, and not by Christ, and faith in him.

Ver. 25. *When once the master of the house is risen up*, etc.] From table, or off of his couch, the entertainment being over: and so here, the Gospel feast, or dispensation, being at an end, and all the guests come in, who were effectually called, and long patience and forbearance being used towards others; or has entered in, as the Vulgate Latin version reads, and so Beza's ancient copy, and one of Stephens's; is come from the wedding; (see ^{<4126>}Luke 12:36) Christ having espoused all his elect to himself, by the ministry of the word: for by “the master of the house” is meant, the bridegroom of the church, the head of the body, the King of saints, who is Son over his own house, and high priest there; of whom the whole family in heaven and earth, is named:

and hath shut to the door; the door of mercy and of hope; the door of faith; the preaching of the word, and the administration of ordinances, when these shall be no more:

and ye begin to stand without; or “do stand without”; without the holy city, where dogs are; having no admittance to the nuptial chamber, to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the joys of heaven:

and to knock at the door; which shows how near some persons may come to heaven, and yet not enter there, even to the very door; and what an expectation, yea, an assurance they may have, of admission into it, not at all doubting of it; and therefore knock as if they were some of the family, and had a right to enter; but not finding the door opened to them, so soon as they imagined, they begin to call as well as knock:

saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; they acknowledge Christ to be Lord, as all will at the last day, to the glory of God the Father, even professors and profane; they repeat the word, to show the vehemency and earnestness of their entreaty; and according to the Syriac and, Persic versions, they claim an interest in Christ, which read, “our Lord, our Lord”; and on account of which they doubted not, but the door would be opened: but alas! he was only their Lord in a professional way; they had only called him Lord, Lord, but had never truly and heartily yielded obedience to him; their hearts had never been opened to him, and he had never had a place there, nor his Gospel; wherefore though they knock, he will not open;

and he shall answer and say unto you. The Persic version adds, “nay, but be ye gone hence”, for the following reason,

I know you not, whence you are: not but that Christ being the omniscient God, will know who they are, from whence they come, of what country and place they be, and to whom they belong; but the sense is, that he will not own them, and express any approbation of them, as his; but will treat them as strangers, that come, it is not known, from whence; he will reject them, as not being born from above, as not being the sheep of his fold, or members of his true church: they did not come from heaven, they were not heaven born souls, or partakers of the heavenly calling, and therefore shall not be received there; they belonged to the men of the world, and were of their father the devil, and shall be sent to him: so the foolish virgins, or formal professors of religion, and such as have been preachers of the Gospel, will entreat Christ at the last day, and shall have such an answer as

this returned to them, which will be very awful and startling; (see Gill on “⁴¹⁷³Matthew 7:23”), (see Gill on “⁴¹⁵²Matthew 25:12”).

Ver. 26. *Then shall ye begin to say*, etc.] Or ye shall say; in favour of themselves, and in order to be admitted within, the following pleas will be made by them:

we have eaten and drank in thy presence: which may be understood both literally of many, who were miraculously led by Christ, or at whose tables he had ate and drank, and they with him; as did not only publicans and sinners, but some of the Pharisees, who invited him to their houses; and in a religious sense, of many who eat of the legal sacrifices; and of others, who eat the bread, and drink the wine at the Lord's table; all which will be insufficient to introduce men into the kingdom and glory of Christ: natural relation to Christ, which the Jews may claim, being born of them, and personal acquaintance with him, and a bare profession of him, will be of no avail another day:

and thou hast taught in our streets; in the streets of many cities in Galilee and Judea: it was customary with the Jewish doctors to teach in the streets:

“says Rabba, behold I am as Ben Azzai, in the streets of Tiberias
^{f433},”

the gloss upon it is,

“who was *yqwçb çrwd*, “expounding in the streets of Tiberias.””

And it is said ^{f434} of Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai,

“that he was sitting in the shade of the temple, and expounding all the whole day;”

the gloss on the place is,

“the temple being an hundred cubits high, its shade went very far “in the street”, which is before the mountain of the house; and because “the street” was large, and held abundance of men, he was expounding there by reason of the heat, for no school could hold them:”

and it is also said of R. Chija ^{f435}, that

“he went out and taught his brother's two sons, **q̄wçb**, “in the street”.”

So that what our Lord did, was no other than what was usual with their doctors; nor is this contrary to what is said in (see Gill on “^{<4129>}Matthew 12:19”): this is also a fruitless plea and which will be of no service; it will signify nothing, to have heard Christ preached, or Christ himself preach, unless there is faith in him, which works by love; for not hearers of the word only, but doers of it are regarded.

Ver. 27. *But he shall say*, etc.] The Persic version adds, “be gone from my sight, and be far from my door”; expressing indignation at them, an abhorrence of them, as not being able to bear them in his sight, or near unto him:

I tell you, I know you not whence you are; this is repeated, and with a strong asseveration, to denote the certainty of the truth expressed, and to cast off all hope in them, of ever succeeding by their entreaties and importunity:

depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; or “of a lie”, as the Syriac and Persic versions render it: for they were deceitful workers, they professed what they did not from the heart believe; they said they were Christians, but were not, and now are found liars; they only attended on the word and ordinances in an hypocritical way, and trusted in, and depended upon, their outward profession of religion, and subjection to ordinances; and by so doing, instead of working righteousness, wrought iniquity; and so as they did not submit to Christ and his righteousness, they are bid to depart from him, as wicked and unrighteous men, as they were: the word “all” is here used, which is not in (^{<4073>}Matthew 7:23) which agrees with (^{<4068>}Psalms 6:8) to which there seems to be a reference, though it is omitted here, in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions; (see Gill on “^{<4073>}Matthew 7:23”).

Ver. 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<4082>}Matthew 8:12”). This will be upon hearing the above sentence and character, “depart from me”, etc. and will be increased,

when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: whose offspring they were, and to whom they stood related according to the flesh; and of descent, from whom they boasted, and even trusted in it, thinking themselves the favourites of heaven, and expecting to be admitted into the kingdom of

God, on account of it: sad will be the disappointment of such persons; a being born of religious parents, will neither give right unto, nor meetness for eternal glory; regeneration is not of blood:

and all the prophets in the kingdom of God; whose prophecies were transmitted to them, and whose books they had in their hands, and read; and who desired to see and hear what they did, and which they now plead, and yet they did not enjoy, but were nevertheless happy: and

you [yourselves] thrust out: with indignation and contempt, with shame and “ignominy”, as the Persic version adds; not suffered to go in with them, though their sons and successors; but bid to depart, and ordered to be for ever separated from them, as only fit company for devils and damned spirits.

Ver. 29. *And they shall come*, etc.] From all parts the world, from every nation under the heavens; meaning the Gentiles, and which will be a greater aggravation of the punishment of the Jews, and cause still more rage and madness: these shall

come from the east and from the west; from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, (^{<23816>}Isaiah 45:6, ^{<3011>}Malachi 1:11)

and from the north, and from the south; from the most distant parts of the world inhabited by men; (see ^{<23485>}Isaiah 43:5,6). God has his chosen ones, and Christ has a people in all parts of the world; and therefore his Gospel must be preached to all nations, for the gathering of them in, which will be done in the latter day; and in the resurrection morn, as these will be raised in the several places where they will have been buried, they will come from thence, and make one body, and will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and will be for ever with him:

and shall sit down in the kingdom of God; in Christ's kingdom, in the new heavens, and new earth, as persons that sit down at a table, to partake of a feast; (see ^{<4223>}Luke 22:30) and in the ultimate glory, where they shall have rest, peace, and joy, for evermore. The Ethiopic version renders it, “they shall rejoice in the kingdom of God”; they shall partake of the joys of heaven; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; and the Persic version, “and they shall take a repose, and sit and rest”; they shall rest from all their labour, and be in perfect ease and peace; (see Gill on ^{<4081>}Matthew 8:11”).

Ver. 30. *And behold, there are last which shall be first,* etc.] The Gentiles, the most mean and abject, afar from God, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, called last of all; these shall be first, and sit down among patriarchs and prophets, men of the first rank here on earth, in the kingdom of heaven, and enjoy the same glory and happiness with them:

and there are first which shall be last: the Jews, who were first the visible professing people of God, to whom the oracles of God, and outward privileges and ordinances were given; who had the Messiah first sent to them, and the Gospel first preached among them; these shall be last, be rejected and despised, and shut out of the kingdom of heaven, they thought themselves heirs of, and expected to enjoy; (see <193>Matthew 19:30 20:16).

Ver. 31. *The same day there came certain of the Pharisees,* etc.] Who dwelt in Galilee, for they were in all parts of the country: these being nettled and filled with indignation at Christ, because of the parables he had that day delivered, the miracles he had wrought, and the several awful and striking things which dropped from him, and which they knew respected them; contrived to get rid of him, by frightening him with a design of Herod's, to take away his life, should he continue there: for this seems to be rather a stratagem of theirs, than of Herod's; though it may be, that Herod might take this method, and make use of these men in this way, to terrify him; fearing to lay hold on him, and put him to death; partly because of the people, and partly because of the remaining uneasiness and terror of his mind, for taking off the head of John the Baptist:

saying, get thee out and depart hence; in all haste, as soon as possible:

for Herod will kill thee: he is resolved upon it, he has formed a design, and will quickly take methods to execute it. This was Herod the tetrarch, of Galilee; from whence we learn, that Christ was as yet in Galilee, though he was journeying towards Jerusalem, (<192>Luke 13:22) for Herod's jurisdiction reached no further than Galilee: this was either a device of Herod's, or of the Pharisees, or of both, to get rid of Christ in the easiest manner.

Ver. 32. *And he said unto them, go ye and tell that fox,* etc.] Herod, who it may be sent them, of which Christ was not ignorant, nor of his design in it; and who, as Nero, for his cruelty, is compared to a lion, so he for his subtlety in this instance, as well as in the whole of his conduct, to a fox; though some think Christ has a regard to the Pharisees, and their craftiness,

in forming this story, pretending good will to him, by acquainting him of Herod's malicious designs, when their view was only to scare him out of their country; so the false prophets and teachers, are for their cunning, subtlety, and flattery, compared to foxes, (²¹¹⁵Song of Solomon 2:15, ²⁵³⁴Ezekiel 13:4) as well as for their greediness and voraciousness: the word is used with the Jews, for a vain and empty man, in opposition to a good man; as in that saying ^{f436} of R. Jannai, ``be thou the tail of lions, and not the head of "foxes;”

or "vain men", as the gloss explains it:

behold, I cast out devils; or "I will cast out devils", as the Ethiopic version reads, in spite of him, let him do his worst:

and I do cures today and tomorrow; and so for some time to come; and which was doing good, and was what Herod and the Pharisees, had they any humanity in them, would have rejoiced at, and have chose that he should have continued with them, and not have threatened him with his life, or have took any methods to send him from them:

and the third day I shall be perfected; that is, in a little time after, I shall be made perfect by sufferings, my course will be finished, and I shall have done all the work completely, I came about; and till that time come, it is not in his power, nor yours, nor all the men on earth, or devils in hell, to take away my life, or hinder me doing what I am about.

Ver. 33. *Nevertheless, I must walk*, etc.] The Syriac version reads, "I must work", and so the Arabic: as going about doing good, casting out devils, and healing diseases:

today and tomorrow, and the day following: a few days more in Galilee, and towards Jerusalem: all the Oriental versions read, "the day following I shall depart"; either out of this world; or out of Galilee, and go to Jerusalem, and there suffer and die:

for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem; because the great sanhedrim only sat at Jerusalem, to whom it belonged to try and judge a prophet; and if found false, to condemn him, and put him to death; the rule is this ^{f437};

“they do not judge, neither a tribe, nor a false prophet, nor an high priest, but by the sanhedrim of seventy and one.”

Not but that prophets sometimes perished elsewhere, as John the Baptist in Galilee; but not according to a judicial process, in which way Christ the prophet was to be cut off, nor was it common; instances of this kind were rare, and always in a violent way; and even such as were sentenced to death by the lesser sanhedrim, were brought to Jerusalem, and publicly executed there, whose crimes were of another sort; for so runs the canon ^{f438},

“they do not put any one to death by the sanhedrim, which is in his city, nor by the sanhedrim in Jabneh; but they bring him to the great, sanhedrim in Jerusalem, and keep him till the feast, and put him to death on a feast day, as it is said (^{<461713>}Deuteronomy 17:13) “and all the people shall hear and fear.””

And since Jerusalem was the place where the prophets were usually put to death, it follows,

Ver. 34. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets*, etc.] These words, with what follow, as they stand in (^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37-39) were delivered by Christ, when he was in the temple at Jerusalem; but here they were spoken by him when in Galilee, in Herod's jurisdiction; so that it appears, that the same words were spoken by Christ at different times, in different places, and to different persons: unless it can be thought, that Luke transcribed them from Matthew, and inserts them here, on occasion of Christ's having mentioned the perishing of a prophet in Jerusalem; where many had been killed and put to death, in one way or another, and particularly in the following:

and stonest them that are sent unto thee; as Zechariah, (^{<440>}2 Chronicles 24:20-22)

how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? and therefore ought not to have been condemned as a false prophet by their sanhedrim, as he suggests he should be, and as he afterwards was; (see Gill on “^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37”).

Ver. 35. *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*, etc.] That is, would be in a little time, both city and temple; (see Gill on “^{<4238>}Matthew 23:38”)

and verily I say unto you; affirm in the strongest manner:

ye shall not see me; the Arabic version adds, “from henceforth”, and so some copies, as in (⁴²³⁹Matthew 23:39) and so the Ethiopic version, “from this time”; that he spoke these words, whether in Galilee, or in the temple:

until the time come; or “until he shall come”, meaning himself, and his second coming:

when ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; not they themselves in person, but their posterity, who will be converted in the latter day: and shall acknowledge the Messiah, the blessed of the Lord, who will come in his name, to judge the world in righteousness: or else the meaning is, that when Christ shall come a second time, and every eye shall see him, these Jews, among the rest, shall behold him, whom they have pierced, and mourn; and wish themselves among those, that shall receive him with joyful acclamations; and however, will be obliged to own him as the Messiah, and to confess that he comes in the name, and with the authority of the Lord, and that he is blessed for evermore.