

# Repent Or You Will Perish!

**H**ave you ever had an illness and then worried that God might be disciplining you because of some sin that you committed? We know that God disciplined Cain for killing his brother. In Genesis 4:11-15 a discussion between God and Cain is recorded and we discover that God told Cain that he would have difficulty growing crops, be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth for the rest of his life because he murdered his brother. Cain wasn't the only one God disciplined, He also disciplined Moses' sister Miriam because she challenged Moses' authority. Number 12:9-10 tells us that as a result, God caused her to have leprosy. There are many examples of people suffering because of sin that they committed. God disciplines us in different ways. Sometime He denies people wealth if they do not give some of their wealth to Him (Malachi 3:8-11). God withholds prosperity and allows evil when people abandon Him (Hosea 4:1-6). People often forget that God knows everything we do. We forget that God sees everything that we do in secret (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18) and knows our thoughts. Yet one of the greatest heartaches a person can have is to believe that every minor or major trial, tragedy, illness or financial trauma is due to some sin that they have committed. If you think that most of your problems are due to some intentional or unplanned sin that you committed, then you will benefit from this study. Our study comes from Luke 13:1-9.

**WHY THE GALILEANS SUFFERED.** In the opening verse of Luke 13 we are told that the events that follow in verses 1-9 occurred on the same day as the events reported in Luke 12. It is important to understand that Luke 13:1-9 follows Jesus' warning that people who reject Him will be judged and suffer the eternal consequences of not believing in Christ and rejecting Him.

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Luke 13:1 (NASB)



Historical records do not give us any information about this event. Yet, there are those who claim there are historical records. The noted biblical author Ian Howard Marshall in his commentary on Luke provides the following insights for us.

The situation reported concerns certain Galileans - the number, unspecified, need have been no more than a couple . . . who had been offering sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem. The occasion could have been Passover, the only time when the laity slaughtered their own animals (Jeremias, Words, 207 n. 4), and

When we are told "on the same occasion," we are to understand that on the same occasion that the events described in Luke 14 occurred, some people told Jesus that Pilate had slaughtered some Galileans and mixed their blood with the sacrifices.

incident involved the killing of the men while they were sacrificing. Thus Pilate could be said to mix (*mignumi*, Mt. 27:34; Rev. 8:7; 15:2\*\*) their blood with that of their sacrifices . . .

A number of events to which allusion is possibly being made are discussed by J. Blinzler\*, 32-37). These include: 1. the affair of the ensigns in Jos. Bel. 2:169-174; Ant. 18:55-59, but this took place in Caesarea in AD 26; 2. the tumults associated with the building of an aqueduct (Jos. Bel. 2:175-177; Ant. 18:60-62), but this incident involved the murder of Judeans with cudgels outside the temple; 3. an attack on some Samaritans (Jos. Ant. 18:85-87), but this took place in AD 36; 4. the slaughter of about 3,000 Jews offering Passover sacrifices by Archelaus in 4 BC (Jos. Bel. 2:8-13; Ant. 17:213-218). This incident, however, took place some thirty years earlier and was committed by a different ruler; moreover, the murder of 3,000 men would not bear comparison with an accident to 18. It is wisest to conclude that the event is not attested from secular sources. This, however, is no argument against its historicity, since Josephus' account of Pilate's career is very incomplete (cf. Philo, Leg. 299-305). Pilate would have been in Jerusalem at Passover time, and the Galileans had a reputation for rebelliousness.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, there are no reliable historical accounts that we know about that can give us more information on this event described to Jesus. Maybe some day someone will find an ancient manuscript in some cave or unbroken pottery that sheds more light on this event. However, history tells us that Pontius Pilate was a ruthless ruler and the description of his atrocities in verse 1 should not surprise us.<sup>2,3</sup>

In summary, Jesus was told that Pilate had murdered some Galileans and then performed a horrible act, but Pilate's behavior was nothing new. This event did not occur during Luke 13:1 since this occurred in approximately the fall of A.D. 32 and Passover had already occurred in the spring or April A.D. 32. Therefore, this event could have occurred during one of the Fall feasts (Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles) or during one of the daily morning and evening sacrifices. The messenger reported that Pilate had murdered these Galileans at the

same time that some sacrifices were being offered and had literally mixed some Galilean blood with some of the temple sacrifices. It would appear that the last view is the correct view. What a horrendous and unnecessary act. Pilate must have wanted to offend the Jewish leaders. It was a power play.

**GALILEANS WERE NOT GREATER SINNERS.** Jesus' response is very surprising. Unlike many of us or some politicians, Jesus does not condemn Pilate's action. Instead He uses it for an opportunity to teach us that we are all sinners deserving punishment.

*And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?" Luke 13:2-4 (NASB)*

Jesus asks two rhetorical questions in these three verses, and the answer to both questions is the same, leaving us with a serious conclusion. How would you answer Christ's first question? Do you think that the Galileans were worse sinners because this horrible event happened to them? Many people would answer that the Galileans were worse sinners!

What is your answer to the second question? Did the tower of Siloam fall on the eighteen people because they were more evil or wicked than others? The last time that you were sick, were you sick because you had just exploded on someone in anger against someone?

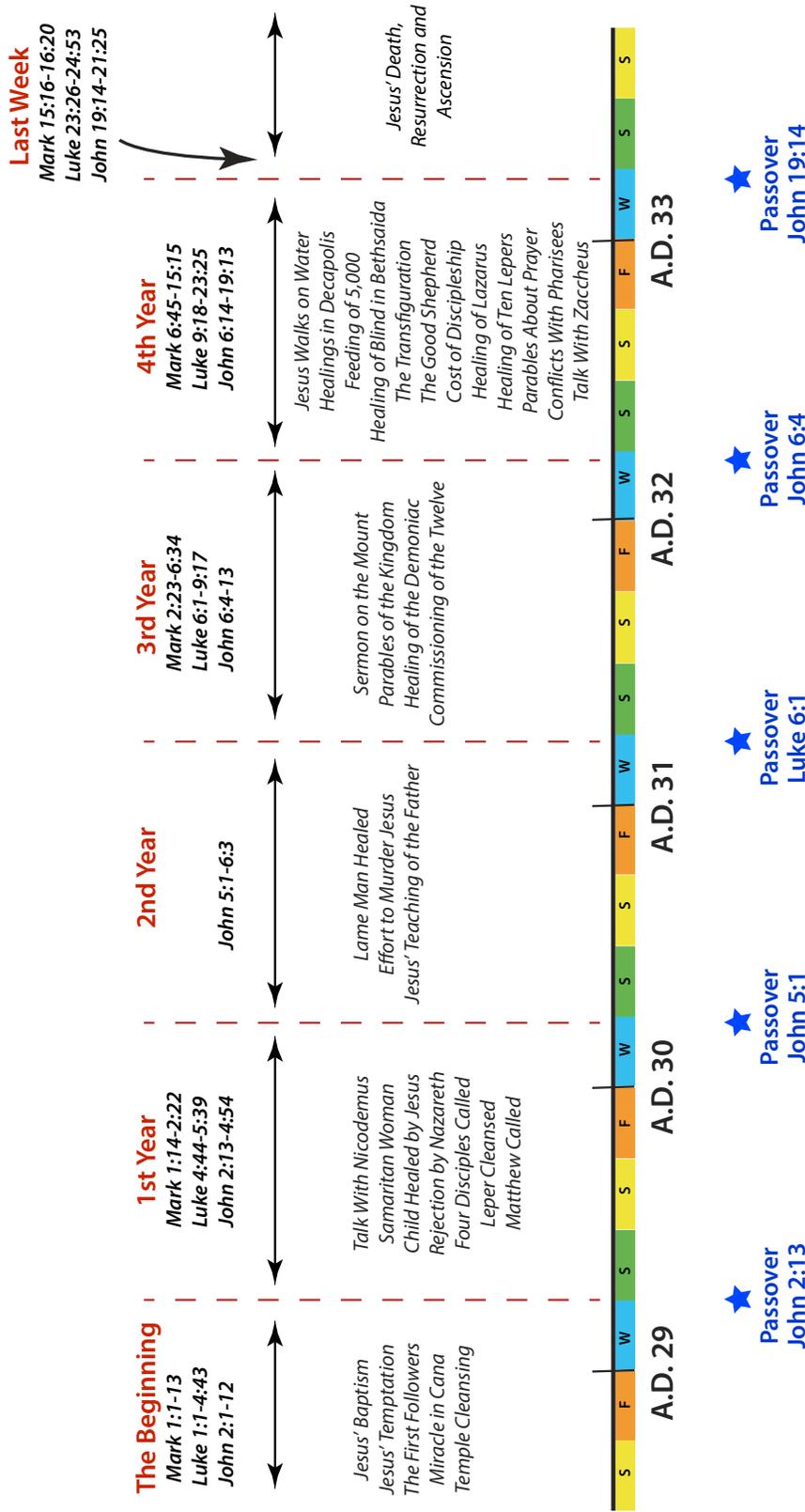
What do you think are the correct answers? When some tragedy, disaster, illness or trial occurs to someone, do you think they are being judged by God? In the introduction of this study, we gave a number of examples in which God punished someone because they had sinned. But notice Jesus' answer. He says "No!" to both questions. The reason these extraordinary events occurred was not because they were more wicked. This means that these events happened simply because we live in an evil world and evil things will happen. The root problem is that sinful people are proud and self-centered and do not care about others. The physical universe is no longer perfect and it inflicts pain and suffering

1. Ian Howard Marshall. Commentary on Luke. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans. 1978. p. 553.

2. Flavius Josephus. Antiquities of the Jews. Kregel Publishing. 1974. Book xviii, Chap. iii, Sec. 1.; Book xviii, Chap. iv, Sec. 1-2.

3. Flavius Josephus. Wars of the Jews. Kregel Publishing. 1974. Book 11, Chap. ix, Sec. 4.

# Chronology of Jesus Christ's Ministry



Many manuscripts state that the Sabbath referred to in Luke 6:1 as the second Sabbath, which was a second Sabbath after Passover (Leviticus 23:15-21).

**References:**  
 1. Johnson M. Cheney. *Life of Christ In Stereo*. Western Baptist Seminary Press, 1969.  
 2. Thomas & Gundry. *A Harmony of the Gospels*. Harper Collins, 1978.

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on people. Dr. J. Vernon McGee states it this way,

... when a Christian has trouble beyond the average among (and many do), we are not to interpret it to mean that he is a greater sinner than others. Trouble does not always come to a person because of his sins.<sup>4</sup>

What a comforting truth to anyone who always thinks that they are being punished for every sin that he or she has committed. The truth is we often suffer because we live among sin infested people and in a sin-damaged world.

It is true that God punishes people for their sins; but He is also patient and not in a hurry to punish (Romans 2:4-5).

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God . . . Romans 2:4-5 (NASB)

When we sin, God warns us to stop. Otherwise we will suffer for our sins. For example, in Amos 5:14 God warned His people to “Seek good and not evil” so that they could live. God is not eager to judge us. He is not a cosmic kill-joy seeking to hurt us for our sins. Listen to God’s plea in Isaiah 1.

“Come now, and let us reason together,”  
Says the LORD,  
“Though your sins are as scarlet,  
They will be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They will be like wool.  
If you consent and obey,

You will eat the best of the land;  
But if you refuse and rebel,  
You will be devoured by the sword.”  
Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.  
Isaiah 1:18-20

God appeals to us to change our behavior and to seek Him. When Jesus Christ walked among us, He warned us to believe in Him. Otherwise, we face a life of eternal punishment.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NASB)

Sometimes God punished people immediately. One such example is the death of Herod after people praised him for

being like a god (Acts 12:21-23).

The reason for such swift punishment is Herod’s hard, unrepentant and stub-

Our suffering is not always due to our sin but due to the sin of others and our sin-damaged world.

born heart. Yet the Bible reveals that God delays punishment on other occasions. For example, the brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery and later he became a ruler in Egypt, second to pharaoh. Only then did God punish his brothers through fear when they visited Egypt seeking food (Genesis 42-44). Their punishment occurred years later.

We must realize that the prophets of old did not deserve to suffer the atrocities described in Hebrews 11:30-38. The apostles did not deserve to die horrible deaths, but they did. Christians who live godly lives do not deserve to suffer, but they do (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; 2 Timothy 3:12). Scripture reveals that people do not always deserve to suffer horribly. Yet, they do! Sometimes we suffer due to our sin and other times we suffer because of the horrible world in which we live. That is, our suffering is not always due to our sin but at times due to the sin of others and our sin-damaged world.

**WE ARE SINNERS LIKE THE GALILEANS.** After telling the crowd that the Galileans did not suffer because they

4. J. Vernon McGee. Matthew through John. Thru the Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1983. p. 305.

were greater sinners, then like shooting an arrow with a sharp point, He made His point.

I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.  
Luke 13:5 (NASB)

Notice Jesus' words. He said, "No, unless you repent." The Greek word that He used for "no" is *ouchi*. It is a strong negative. He is making a strong contrast to His question. Were the Galileans greater sinners? Is that why they suffered and died? Jesus' point was a simple, strong "No!" They were not greater sinners! They were just like all of us is the message. We will perish just like the Galileans because we are sinners as they were. The Galileans suffered and died because they lived in a sinful world and deserved to die! In Romans 6:23 God warns us with these words.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

Because we sin, we deserve both physical death and spiritual death. Yet, God has made it possible for us to escape through Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23 states the fact that everyone is a sinner.

. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .  
Romans 3:23 (NASB)

That is, everyone is spiritually dead because everyone has sinned. Earlier Jesus reminded us that we are sinners in John 8:24. Once again Christ is warning the crowds that we will remain dead spiritually unless we repent and seek God's forgiveness. Unless we repent and seek God's forgiveness we will suffer punishment for eternity.

**PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE.** So far Jesus has challenged individuals to repent. Then He used a parable to warn the crowd that unless the nation of Israel repents it will be punished too!

And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit

on it and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'" Luke 13:6-7 (NASB)

Fig trees produce figs which are sweet and rather filling. They are a common ingredient in food. In the parable we are told that a man planted a fig tree and it grew. Fig trees grow two to three feet a year and usually produce fruit the first year. In the parable we are told that the farmer came looking for fruit. The farmer was disappointed because the tree had not produced any fruit. Therefore, he ordered the tree to be cut down. For three years he had looked for a crop of figs on his tree but none were found.

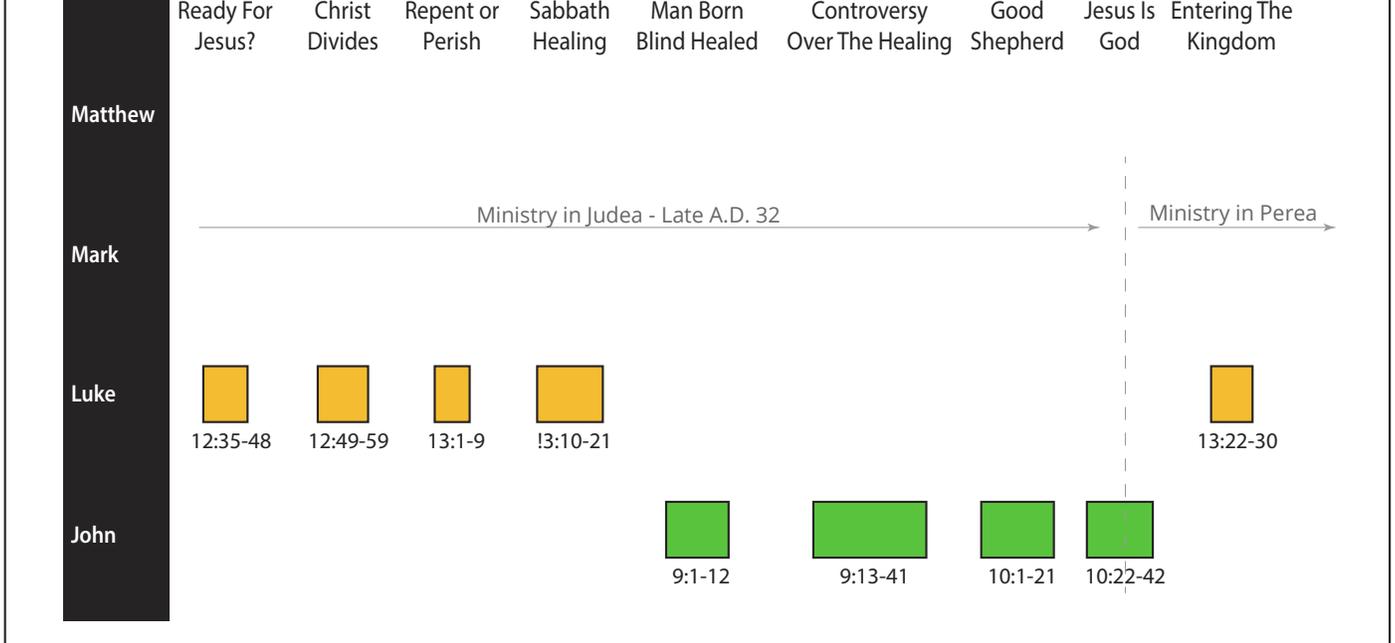
There are two applications from this parable. The first application applies to the nation of Israel. In the Old Testament the fig tree was often symbolic of the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 24:4-7; Hosea 9:10). That is, Christ sent a message to the nation of Israel. It was time to repent and turn to Him.

Yes, some believed in Him and some were His followers. But it was only a small number of people. The nation of Israel had not responded in mass to Christ. The truth was that there was no real fruit. The Pharisees and Sadducees had but rejected Him. The massive crowds wanted His healing and were impressed with His miracles, signs and wonders. They were in awe of His teaching, but they were spectators who were not going to follow Christ. Consequently, Jesus said. "Cut it down!" That is the result of any nation or any person who ultimately rejects Jesus Christ. That is God's judgment on any nation or person who does not show the fruit of belief in Christ.

Since everyone is a sinner and the wages of our sin is spiritual death, then the only way to escape eternal punishment - not being cut down - is to obtain eternal life in Jesus Christ. Jesus said this in John 3,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who

# Life and Heart of Jesus



believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18 (NASB)

Then the vineyard-keeper encouraged the owner of the farm land to leave the fig tree alone one more year.

And he answered and said to him, "Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down." Luke 13:8-9 (NASB)

The message was that Israel would be given one more year to repent. That is, God is not in a hurry to punish those who reject Him, unlike some today. God loves even His enemies! Israel was given another year to accept Christ, who was God in human flesh. Imagine four years of incredible teaching, amazing and awesome miracles, signs and wonders. Since the religious leaders could not explain away what He did, they created the excuse that He did these things through demonic power. The message? He really did these things and they rejected Him anyway!

As a side note, it seems that when Christ referred to three years, He implied that for three years He had been teaching and performing miracles, signs and wonders in Israel but there was no real fruit. This appears to indicate that He had already been ministering for three years. The request to leave the fig tree alone for another year and to see if it will produce fruit corresponds to the fact that He will die on the cross in about one more year. Altogether this implies that Jesus had a ministry that may have lasted for four years.

**CONCLUSION.** There are four important lessons for us to learn from this parable. The first lesson is that we are sinners just like the Galileans who were slaughtered by Pontius Pilate. They were not slaughtered because they were greater sinners than other people. They were killed simply because they were sinners living in a sinful world and suffered a sinful act by Pilate who decided to murder them.

The second lesson is that all of us must repent or we will suffer eternal punishment. The Galileans suffered but that is nothing compared to an eternity of spiritual punishment in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10, 14). We must 1) repent of our sins and 2) ask our God to forgive our sins and 3)

surrender ourselves to Him.

Third, we should understand that God loves us. That is the message of the parable and John 3:16. Therefore, He patiently gives us time to repent and is not in a hurry to judge or punish us. But we cannot avoid eternal punishment if we do nothing.

Finally, the fourth spiritual truth is that we must believe that Christ is the only way we can gain eternal life. Jesus is the exclusive way to obtain salvation. There is no other way!

**And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12 (NASB)**

We must either repent and believe that Christ is the only way to have eternal life or we will perish.