

Comparison of Luke and Matthew

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon compares the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, highlighting the themes of grace, judgment, and the nature of true discipleship in Christ's ministry.

Scripture: Luke 3:6-9, Luke 4:18-21, Luke 6:20-23, Luke 10:25-37, Luke 12:22-32, Luke 15:1-7, Luke 18:9-14, Luke 19:10, Luke 22:42, Luke 24:46-47

Topics: "Grace", "Judgment"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the distinct characteristics of the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, emphasizing Luke's focus on the Remnant and the manifestation of salvation through Christ's person rather than His works. He highlights the themes of sovereign grace, judgment, and the moral implications of Christ's ministry, illustrating how Luke presents Jesus as the dependent Man who engages with sinners and challenges the religious elite. The sermon also contrasts the teachings of Jesus in both Gospels, noting how Luke emphasizes grace and moral principles over strict adherence to the law, ultimately revealing the heart of God towards humanity. Darby concludes by underscoring the importance of self-judgment and the call to follow Christ in a world that often rejects Him.

Transcript

After the lovely picture of the Remnant in chapters 1 and 2, we have salvation made manifest to all, the nation warned, and the Remnant recognised, sovereign grace in electing love, and complete judgment just ready, and the axe laid to the root of the trees; verses 6 - 9. This is important as regards the character of Luke's gospel. It is to be remarked too, that Luke, when replying to the musings of the people, does not speak of Christ's work, only of the active glory of His Person. He baptises with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, power of life, and blessing, and judgment, and then the present judgment of Israel (though the same thing will take place with the professing church). Then in Luke we find immediately the rejection of the testimony by the existing powers in Israel, and Christ traced up not to Abraham and David, or the roots of promise, but to Adam; so that the dealing with Israel continues up to the genealogy. It is a Remnant, a testimony of warning to the nation of immediate judgment, but Christ there, the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost, and judging His floor. The first two chapters were the Remnant when He came - this the testimony of His precursor, and coming judgment, and the testimony rejected. It is after this that we have the Lord owned as Son, the heaven opens, and the Spirit descends, and here manifested as the dependent Man, for it is not only as baptised, but as He was praying that this occurred. And then He is traced up to (Son) of Adam (Son) of God. "Of Eli" is connected with Jesus Himself, I believe ("being, as was supposed, Son of

Joseph," being a parenthesis) and here traced up naturally not legally. Even in the expression: "Full of the Holy Spirit" we find the Man.

Then (chap. 4) in the power of the Spirit, as in Person Second Adam, He goes into the temptation, being led of the Spirit, and overcomes. The order is moral, as noticed, as much craving of nature as could be sinlessly, the world, and then spiritual temptation. Here no ministering angels, but the devil departs for a season, i.e., till Gethsemane and the Cross. And He pursues His service in the power of the Spirit. He presents Himself in Nazareth, His natural home on earth as the fulfilment of the coming one in its moral blessing. But, as noticed before, Israel though first addressed dispensationally, is the object of grace not of promise here, and sovereign grace to the widow of Sarepta, and the Syrian leprous man, is held up as the example of God's ways, exciting the wrath of all in the synagogue. Still He continues His ministry of grace, nothing changed by this, going His way unharmed through them. He drives out devils, and heals all under the effects of His power, but goes on, not stayed by the people, to preach the kingdom of God, being sent for that. This gave His ministry as a whole or service.

365 He then by the revelation of His Person in power, bringing the consciousness to man of what he also was, gathers disciples round Himself. They leave all for Him. We have thus the character of His ministry, the power of Jehovah in grace, the leper cleansed yet subjected to an unchanged law as yet. But He is the dependent Man withal, as constantly in Luke, and diligent as such. He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed, away from the multitude, quod nota. Then again, there is forgiveness and power, Jehovah, according to Psalm 103, meeting the faith of man. The receiving of sinners whom He came to call; the unsuitableness of His disciples fasting then, for He was the Bridegroom Himself, and the impossibility of putting divine power in grace into the old bottles of Judaism. As Son of man He is Lord of the Sabbath. The rejected Son of David makes all common. Grace reigns, not Law. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. This, as to His ministry, was conclusive as to its place in respect of Israel. We then find Him again the dependent Man earnestly praying, continuing at it all night. When day is come, He chooses the twelve, surrounding Himself with the chosen and constant companions of His ministry; only Judas was there. And then descending to a level place, people from outside Israel being there too, come to hear and to be healed, and then declares (not as in Matthew, the character of the kingdom, and what men must be to enter it, but) the blessedness of the separated Remnant. For in the wider sphere of grace, in the Son of man, Israel is now looked at as morally judged as to promises. Pronounces woe on the contented world, and teaches, to those that hear, the path of the spirit of grace. The blind leaders of Israel could only lead the blind people into the ditch. He leads those who follow Him wholly into the same walk as His own. Self-judgment is for us the first element of truth.

It is well to remark here that perfection is not in nature here, it is connected with teaching or leading. A man is "perfected," not perfect; and having heard what his master teaches, he is, in his mind and thoughts, what his master is, because he has received what is in his master's, and this is the Christian state. Still it looks to realising what Christ was. His word forms us into what He was practically. We live by, and so according to it. We suffer with Him too. Next Gentiles are recognised as having faith such as Israel had not, but we have nothing of their sitting in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is more dispensational; here moral. Then power to set aside death in compassionate love. This brings about the putting John Baptist and Christ into their true place. But the sinners were there who profited by John, and so received Christ; the Pharisees not - they judged crookedly in self-righteousness, or absence of conscience - conscience judges rightly. Of this we have then that most striking example of the Pharisee and the woman. She was a child of Wisdom, and Wisdom's heart and hers perfectly met for eternal peace

and rest. The Pharisee had the Lord in his house, and never knew it. The instruction is as beautiful as deep, where man's heart meets God's who is Light and Love; not one trace of either in the Pharisee - simple darkness, man judging - both in Christ and both operative in the woman who, reached in conscience, got into both, or both fully into her heart. The full answer too is given of them through Christ, forgiveness, peace and salvation. It is, in every respect, the heart that clings close to Christ that gets true knowledge. The Lord, even though He reproach us not, is sensible to the neglect of Himself.

366 We see the different tone of the instruction of Matthew and Luke in what follows. There, the Sower is consequent on judgment (chap. 12) of Israel. Here it is merely the real character of His service. Grace, not Judaism, was at work, and the rejection of mother and brethren is merely taking the word as the ground on which He owned relationship with Himself, not natural relationship. Chapter 8 gives some other elements of His power as Son of man, and ministry, without the dispensational order of Matthew, but, with some of the dispensational truth as to the actual state of things, the moral scene is given. The order is, as we have seen elsewhere, historical till chapter 9 and after chapter 18:34. First, He commands the elements of nature, Satan's power, I apprehend, alarming the disciples in their want of faith, but proving only the perfect calmness of His soul, and His power over it all. Then Satan's power comes out in possession, which man would bind if he could but cannot. A word drives the Legion away; it is the deliverance of man, in fact of the Remnant. Only in Luke (so in Mark) we have details as to the state of man, and the position of the world, the delivered one, and, I doubt not, the Jews given up for the time to their ruin. The man would have been with Jesus when he left the world that would not have Him, but is sent back as a witness of the deliverance of which he had been the object. Besides the great facts of power revealing the Person of Christ, Son of man, we have had, as we have seen, man wholly under Satan's power, whom man cannot bind or deliver from, and then, instead of going with Christ away, he is left as a witness when Christ does. The Jews rush to destruction, so that is, so to speak, Christian ground; what follows is Jewish. Christ is called to go to a dying person; thronged by the multitude in Israel for present benefits, virtue goes out only when touched by faith (this form only in Mark and Luke). He has to raise the dead when Israel is concerned, as with all. It is grace towards Israel, not as in the other judgment where Christianity is in view.

367 I think in chapter 9 we begin a new section quite of this gospel. The result in Christianity and Judaism has been stated. His place as Son of man, and then connection with Judaism and the Law, or rather impossibility of it, and the blessing of the Remnant, had been shown, Judaism being morally set aside as unfit for it. There are no kingdom-parables, quod nota; we shall soon have grace-parables. The Sower there is, which is Christ with the Word, and individual. We are now going to look out to the suffering Son of man. But it begins with His personal and coming glory, and then insists on the Cross. Hitherto it was the gracious Son of man present, and its effect - a Remnant gathered and blessed. Now it is a source of mission, authoritatively requiring recognition. And grace is connected with salvation, and another world, and the cross here. He could bring the dead back here; now He is going to die and go away Himself. Grace and goodness had been manifested too, and that even to Gentiles, to the miserable, to sinners, and power before which all evil disappeared (see chapter 4:18-21, and chapter 7:22, 23). Still, with Israel morally set aside, by sovereign grace, chapter 4:25-27, where it goes over Israel's head to Naaman and to Sidon, and that Israel could not bear. It was grace, and grace is sovereign, and sovereign love. Now, the grace being even greater, He takes another character, higher and lower. Nor could grace confine itself to Jews, for it is God. Nor is He presented, after chapter 3, as Son of God, truly as He was so, save in the temptation by Satan, and by devils whom He silenced. In the first two chapters, in Israel He is. For He had taken the lowly place. The evil spirits could not help owning Him, only He received no such testimony, but Himself, when He begins His own testimony in chapter 4, takes the lowly, but soon to be exalted place of

Son of man. In chapter 1:35, the angel calls Him so as come on earth; chapter 3:22, He is so owned. So in fact Himself in chapter 2:49.

368 Christ then in chapter 9 is the Sender of servants, and Giver of power, but follows continually His patient and blessed service. (It was a testing mission to Israel, but its confinement to Israel is not specifically defined as in Matthew.) So He tells the disciples to give them to eat, for they had seen His power with them. They reckon by sight, but He satisfies the poor with bread. But in verse 18 we find Him again the dependent Man, praying, forbids them to announce Him as the Christ of God, telling them the Son of man must suffer. This was the path He was now actually entering on; a suffering Son of man in Him who could show Jehovah's power, and not Israel's Christ, is what now comes before us. And this was to be the disciples' path, and blessing was in resurrection after death. This is evidently a great moral change in the whole position. Besides the folly of losing one's soul for the world, the appearing of Christ in glory is the answer to the Cross. (I note in verse 26, it is not "His" Father's but "the" Son of man's glory in the Father's "Thou in me.") And what constituted the glory of Jehovah now made subservient to the Son of man. This to confirm their faith was to be shewn to some of His disciples. But He went up to the mountain in human dependence, went up to pray. So, constantly, when power is to be displayed through us. In the transfiguration we have much more detail in Luke. In all, the kingdom-glory is revealed, but it is the general fact in Matthew; here more. It was "As he prayed," the dependent and living Man. Many other interesting details are here. Moses and Elias speak of His decease; this is the great point now. Glory brings this in. It is in the counsels of God, but in the intimacy of intercourse (note too it is the same with the disciples on earth). The disciples are asleep (as they were too in Gethsemane). But Moses and Elias go into the cloud where the Father spoke. This revelation of Christ brings on, connected with the unbelief of His disciples, His leaving the world (v. 41) but grace wrought in it even while He was here. But the Lord, in the midst of power which amazed all, insists on His death and the Cross. In presence of this also we have man and the disciples contending for greatness in the kingdom, which in its then form was passing away. This gives occasion to the Lord's exposing self in every form, however subtle, and pressing the paramount claim of the Saviour to nature, however strong the tie. It was only nature, not the power of God to salvation. Note that here the Lord (v. 51) is on His last journey up to Jerusalem.

369 Grace (chap. 10) sends a final message before His face, but carrying judgment with it if rejected; but the messengers must now have their joy in Heaven where Christ was going. And Christ accepts in perfectness His Father's orderings as to it, and gets thus into the sense of the true and glorious secret - He was the Son, and no man could know Him but the Father He was revealing, and none could but He the Father, and that the world would not. He revealed Him to whom He would. Still, blessed the eyes which were given to see what was then seen. Then the Law is morally turned into grace as to man down here. It is not: "Who is my neighbour?" But to whom am I neighbour as the good Samaritan was? Priests and Levites are not grace.

We have in what follows a remarkable mixing up of the principles that should govern His disciples, and warnings of impending judgment. All was changing in His death, and they needed to be taught how to walk, while, though dispensational changes are not systematically taught as in Matthew 13:16, 17, yet the warnings presently needed for Israel and its leaders are given. First comes the diligent hearing of Christ's word, and prayer, and again the importance of hearing God's word the only relationship He owned now. Chapter 11:27, 28, this is connected with the attributing His casting out a demon to Beelzebub, and the warning of the bearing of so saying. If it was not Beelzebub, which was absurd as well as wicked, then the kingdom of God was come to them. Then He warns the people, pointing out who was there, the testimony

lifted up, the secret of having light or a single eye, and then denounces Pharisees, scribes and lawyers, and the result for that generation. Accumulated guilt would thus far close its career.

370 The first twelve verses of chapter 12 encourage the disciples by various motives in the testimony in the midst of this hostile and evil generation. They were to be in the light with God, not in the plotting darkness of their enemies. Nor were they to fear them; they might kill the body - God's judgment went much farther. Besides the hairs of their head were all numbered by Him by whom a sparrow was not forgotten. Further, if they confessed the Son of man before men, He would confess them before the angels of God. Again, one who spoke of Him in humiliation might be forgiven, but they would speak by the Holy Ghost, and for those who spoke injuriously of Him there was no forgiveness. He was to speak in them in all their answers before rulers when accused. We have then the principles for the world and for the disciples, which do as to one, and should as to the other, govern our minds as to this world, while Christ rejects setting it right, and turns to the condition of the heart. Folly, even on their own ground, governs the world, faith and confidence in God should the Christian. The instruction as to disciples begins at verse 22. Down to verse 31, they are roused to confidence by looking at God's care of everything, and the infinitely gracious truth that we are of value to God. In seeking first the kingdom of God, their need would be met; their Father knew they had need of temporal supplies for the body. Verse 32 goes much further, not that life was something better than raiment, nor that their mere wants their Father took notice of, but the special privileges that belonged to them in grace. They need not fear, it was their "Father's good pleasure to give" them "the kingdom." Then to verse 48, we have heavenly joy for watchers, the inheritance of all things for service, but the judgment of the professing Church, if in heart they said: "My Lord delays his coming." Its portion would be with unbelievers, and judgment according to possessed advantages. From verse 49, we have the then present state of things. The Cross would bring persecutions and conflict, but the fire was already kindled. But then what is outwardly trial and conflict has an inward object and blessing according to God's purpose. A rejected Saviour brought conflict not peace on the earth, but then the love, in which He came alive here, was driven back by the unbelief and ill-will of man. He was straightened till the Cross, the baptism of death, opened the floodgates of divine love in the gospel. Still this would produce division and in families, and a rejected Christ bring out the worst evil of the human heart. From verses 54 to 58, we have the then question in Israel. And if they did not agree with Jehovah thus pleading with them on the way, they would be delivered to judgment till fully chastened, as it is at this day, though Isaiah 40 relents so graciously over them.

371 In the first ten verses of the following chapter, their present judgment is confirmed after the fullest patience and pains of the Dresser of the Vineyard. From verses 11 to 17 grace is affirmed, their hypocrisy shown, and the Sabbath, seal of the covenant, treated as ever by the Lord. Then the character of the kingdom briefly shown. Again, the warning as to the true character of the kingdom, the entrance is narrow, and soon the door would be shut. Many would seek to enter in (not by the strait gate) and not be able. Still the Lord must continue for His allotted time, and a Prophet was not to perish out of Jerusalem. The pride of being near God ecclesiastically is the greatest enemy of the truth and word of God. Often would the Lord have gathered Jerusalem's children, and they would not, now her judgment coming, and they would not see Him any more till ready to receive Him with thanksgiving. The Sabbath, as Israel, is again put in its place, a lowliness of deportment and grace presented as the path of the disciple. The distinct resurrection of the first being brought out, the present rejection of Jerusalem, and introduction of the gospel in the way of grace stated in a parable; so far different from Matthew, that grace to the poor of the flock among the Jews is introduced, not the second appeal to the nation, while judgment passes on those first bidden but more terribly, not dispensationally in destroying the city, but not tasting the supper. Then for all, it is

pressed that they must take up their cross - that is the way now. If the cross were lost practically, the salt had lost its savour, quod nota, and savourless salt is good for nothing,

We have then the chapters which bring out distinctly grace and its fruits and bearings. Grace that seeks, and grace that receives. The Good Shepherd, the Spirit, the Father, with the details of bringing back. This goes deeper than all dispensation and Judaism. It is God's nature and joy. Israel, man, who had a stewardship with God, has lost his place, but remains with power over his Lord's goods; his wisdom is to use them for his future hope, not for his present enjoyment. Then the veil is drawn, and the other world brought in, for Jews' blessing in this world was the sign of favour. Eternal moral truth tells another tale. Man's heart had received his good things, and that was over for ever. This is characteristic of Luke - what is moral, and consequently eternal.

372 It is remarkable how Luke opens up general moral principles, and the passing away of Jerusalem in judgment in chapter 17, in the judgment of the latter days. But it is not the substitution of some other dispensational system, but what is essential and moral, and so eternal in its nature. Yet Judaism, as a system, must be judged for that. And even the parables of grace are in contrast with Judaism in their moral nature. The Lord, in chapter 17, opens up many of these moral principles. First, putting no trap before people, so that the weakest should be ensnared. Then comes the spirit of forgiveness. Then that whatever the labour of the disciples, they had only done their duty. The Samaritan stranger recognising God in Jesus is not subject to Jerusalem or Jewish order, but goes in peace having found the Lord in Him, while Jewish order is submitted to as yet, where faith does not rise above it. Next the kingdom of God was there in His Person, but the Son of man would be in His day as a flash of lightning. It would be as in the days of Noe, and the days of Lot; a day of trouble when men must escape judgment at all risks, but God would have His own safe, taking by judgment one of two out of the same bed, or from the same mill. Only that first the Son of man "must suffer many things, and be rejected of" that "generation." It is the judgment of the quick. Jerusalem is not marked in so many words. Wherever the object of judgment was, the Lord's judgment would be - the lifeless form of what should have been living to be owned.

Chapter 18, to the end of verse 34, continues the same moral displacing of Judaism. The first part, verses 1-8, has a special application to the Remnant at the end, but belongs to us all; verses 10-14, is a general truth too, but morally sets aside Judaism also; verses 15-17, the principle of the kingdom - who are to be received; verse 18, the whole principle of man's relationship with God is discussed; verses 28-30, the special answer on giving up all for Christ, and then the Cross fully pressed on them. All these are very important moral principles of the kingdom as it is; verse 35, as in the other gospels, begins the history of the last events connected with Jerusalem. Still the moral setting aside of the system is strikingly apparent all through, as contrasted with the dispensational. We have first the case of Zacchaeus; grace coming where the curse began - the valley of Achor is the door of hope. In Zacchaeus we have one, who in the Jewish point of view and Pharisaism, was the vilest of the vile. The money they could gain, by accepting the subjection of their country to Gentiles, made them their base instruments. Zacchaeus, though in this position, was an upright man, and acted uprightly according to the law, if he failed. He desired also to see Jesus, and so much so as to put himself in a position unfitting for his civil standing, and make the case public. The Lord invites Himself to his house, and we have the desire and uprightness met, but no account taken of them in the salvation. "This day," when Christ came there, "salvation" came to the house. Zacchaeus in honesty of heart would approve himself to the Lord. But the Lord takes account of promises; he was a son of Abraham, but lost, like the rest; but the Son of man was come to seek and save the lost. The Jews' judgment was wrong; Zacchaeus' ground was false, but promise and salvation for the lost were

the ground the Lord goes on. It is no question of Israel's recovery, but the general truth of salvation to the lost brought by the Son of man.

373 But nigh to Jerusalem, and some expecting the kingdom at once, He proclaims His own absence; He went to a far country to receive a kingdom and return. And here we have not all rested on their knowledge of the Lord's character, as in Matthew, and, whatever was gained, entering into the Lord's joy, though of different capacity and gift as workmen, but the command to "occupy" till Christ comes - the Christian servant's place - and each has his mina*; the responsibility in the workman is in relief, and one has ten cities, another two, reward according to effectual labour - and "to him that hath shall more be given." This is Christian service. Meanwhile His citizens, the Jews, hated, and sent a messenger after Him, that they would not have Him as their King. On His return, they are judged and destroyed. Yet grace was then at work; He returns to Jerusalem in the end and weeps over it, but it is not Jehovah who would often have gathered, but the then present grace which is in relief. His disciples celebrate Him as Messiah, but with the remarkable cry: "Peace in heaven." The kingdom cannot be till there is peace there, nor can that be till Satan is cast out. Testimony must be rendered to Him, but now peace was hidden from the eyes of Jerusalem, judgment was just coming. All this, though judgment be announced, goes further and wider than Matthew. The cleansing of the temple is briefly stated. The question of His authority is pretty much as in Matthew. In the husbandman and vineyard the responsibility of the Jews is much more minutely gone into. In verses 35 and 36, the Christian hope in the first resurrection is far more fully gone into, and the proof from the last contains an all important element, for the other world is much more before Luke. All here unto Him, not merely saints with whom God identifies His Name. Their part is in a certain sense deduced from, or identical at least with the fact that, for God, though the body be gone, none are dead. He has to do with their living souls, when it is. He then puts the testing question as to Psalm 110.

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