To Seek and To Save the Lost

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

Luke 18:31-34

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July 19, 2015

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Scripture

In his book *Future Babble*, journalist Dan Gardner explores our obsession with "experts" who claim to predict future events. Gardner relies on the work of Philip Tetlock, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who produced a massive 20-year analysis of 27,450 predictions from 284 "experts." Tetlock concluded that as a group the "experts" did little better, and sometimes considerably worse, than "a dart-throwing chimpanzee"!

Gardner's book lists a number of examples of these inaccurate predictions:

- In 1914 the British journalist H. N. Norman proclaimed that "there will be no more wars among the six great powers." There have been two world wars since his prediction.
- In 1968 the president of Anaconda Copper Mining Company predicted that his company would be successful for 500 years. Less than ten years later, fiber optics trumped copper and Anaconda was out of business.
- Also in 1968 Paul Ehrlich predicted that overpopulation would produce a total collapse in the world's food supply. Instead, the world's food supply has increased dramatically.
- In 1974 Ehrlich confidently asserted, "If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000." England, of course, is still in existence today.
- In 2008 experts at Goldman Sachs predicted that oil prices would surge to over $200 per barrel within six months. Instead, the price for petroleum fell to $34 per barrel.

So why do we keep listening to these "expert" predictions even when they're wrong? According to Gardner, people hate uncertainty. "Whether sunny or bleak," Gardner wrote, "convictions about the future satisfy the hunger for certainty. We want to believe. And so we do [keep listening to these 'expert' predictions]."[1]

While on his final journey to Jerusalem Jesus made yet one more prediction about his upcoming passion. We shall learn how accurate Jesus was about predicting his own future.

Let's read about Jesus foretelling his death a third time in Luke 18:31-34:

> **31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." 34 But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.** (Luke 18:31-34)

Introduction

Jesus was on his final trip to Jerusalem. In fact, he was only a few days from arriving in Jerusalem. The closer he got to Jerusalem the clearer Jesus became about his upcoming passion.

The word "passion" is interesting. We usually think of passion as referring to an emotion that is deeply stirring, such as love or sexual desire. And that is its usual meaning in our modern English. However, the Latin root of the word "passion"

[1] Trevor Butterworth, "Prophets of Error," *The Wall Street Journal* (4-30-11); Ronald Bailey, "It's Hard to Make Predictions, Especially About the Future," *Reason* (4-5-11).

(*passio*) means "suffering."[2] Understood in this sense, the word "passion" refers particularly to the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Jesus wanted his followers to understand his upcoming suffering. He did not want them to be alarmed or confused about what was about to happen to him. And so Jesus made another prediction about his upcoming passion.

Lesson

Jesus' passion prediction in Luke 18:31-34 teaches us that what happened to him was in fact a fulfillment of prophecy.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Prediction of Jesus (18:31-33)
2. The Perplexity of the Apostles (18:34)

I. The Prediction of Jesus (18:31-33)

First, let's look at the prediction of Jesus.

Jesus had been teaching about the entry requirement into the kingdom of God in Luke 18. He wanted people to understand that to enter the kingdom of God and inherit eternal life a person needed a dependent humility on the mercy of God. There is nothing that any person can do to merit or earn entrance into the kingdom of God by good works, righteousness, or obedience to God's Law. "All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6), and there is nothing in any one of us to make us acceptable to God. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6a). That is why God sent Jesus "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

In the previous section in Luke's Gospel, Jesus had just explained to the rich ruler how to inherit eternal life. Eternal

[2] Frederick C. Mish, "Preface," *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

life is received by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. In the case of the rich ruler, he had to repent of his attachment to his riches, and follow Jesus. The rich ruler was unwilling to do so, and thereby forfeited eternal life. Peter then wondered if he and the other disciples would receive eternal life. Jesus assured Peter and the other disciples that because they had surrendered everything (as an evidence of their repentance) and followed him (as an evidence of their faith), they would received eternal life (Luke 18:30b).

Then, **taking the twelve** apostles aside by themselves, Jesus **said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem"** (18:31a). Luke noted that Jesus began his journey to Jerusalem back in Luke 9:51, where he wrote, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem." At that time Jesus was in Galilee and he began his journey to Jerusalem to face his death by crucifixion. Several times in the next few chapters Luke noted that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. For example, Luke wrote in Luke 13:22, "[Jesus] went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem." Luke also noted in Luke 17:11, "On the way to Jerusalem [Jesus] was passing along between Samaria and Galilee."

So, while on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus said, in Luke 18:31b, that **"everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished."**

I would like to note a couple of things about Jesus' statement. First, note that the title **"Son of Man"** is used 82 times in the Gospels. Interestingly, **"Son of Man"** is not a title that others gave to Jesus but, rather, a titled that he used of himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13-14 where God the Father eventually gives an eternal kingdom to the Son of Man. Jesus understood that he was the one to whom the Father would give the eternal kingdom, and that is why he so often referred to himself as the **Son of Man**.

Second, note that Jesus was going to Jerusalem so that **everything that is written about** him **by the prophets will be accomplished**. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to fulfill what was written about him. As John MacArthur said,

> Jesus was not a well-intentioned victim of a plan that surprised Him when it went horribly wrong. He knew exactly how His life would end, down to the minutest detail, and had known it since before the foundation of the world, when the plan of salvation was formed. The heart of the Christian faith is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in the history of redemption in the Old Testament moves toward the cross; everything that has happened since moves from the cross.[3]

Jesus knew that **everything that is written about** him **by the prophets will be accomplished**. There are scores of predictions in the Old Testament about the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In fact, Floyd Hamilton in *The Basics of Christian Faith* says, "Canon Liddon is authority for the statement that there are in the Old Testament 332 distinct predictions which were literally fulfilled in Christ."[4] Not a single prediction about Jesus failed to come true.

And third, note that this was not the first prediction by Jesus about his passion. The title of this message is, "Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time." That comes from the sub-heading in the *English Standard Version* of the Bible. In fact, the footnote in the *ESV* states, "Having predicted his suffering and death twice before (9:22, 43b-45), Jesus again reminds his followers that the way to Jerusalem will be the way to the cross."[5]

So, Jesus first predicted his death in Luke 9:22, where he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected

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[3] John F. MacArthur, *Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Macarthur New Testament Commentary Series (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 47.
[4] Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1979), 175.
[5] Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1996.

by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

The second time Jesus predicted his death was in Luke 9:44, where he said, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

And then, of course, the third occasion on which Jesus predicted his death is the present one in Luke 18:31-34. However, some scholars, such as Darrell Bock, say the following about Jesus' current passion prediction, "Luke here records the sixth announcement of Jesus' death in his Gospel."[6] Admittedly, the other three predictions of his death (in Luke 12:49-50, 13:32-33, and 17:25) were not as clear as the first three. I suppose I would call them "allusions" to his death. At the time that Jesus told them to his disciples, they might not have clearly understood what he meant. However, after his passion it is clear that Jesus was predicting his death. The point is that Jesus made at least six announcements of his death that are recorded in *The Gospel of Luke*. Jesus' death was no accident!

Jesus went on to specify exactly what was about to happen to him in Jerusalem. Jesus predicted seven things that would happen to him in due course. I would like to list each item of Jesus' prediction for you, as well as its fulfillment.

First, Jesus would be delivered over to the Gentiles. He predicted in verse 32a, **"For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles . . . ."** This prediction was fulfilled after Jesus' arrest, when the Jewish council handed him over to Pilate. We read in Luke 23:1, "Then the whole company of them arose and *brought him before Pilate*."

Second, Jesus' arrest and custody would be accompanied by mocking. He predicted in verse 32b, **" . . . and will be mocked . . . ."** The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in Luke 22:63, "Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody

[6] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1494.

were *mocking* him as they beat him." Later, we read in Luke 23:11a, "And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and *mocked* him." And finally, the Roman soldiers also mocked Jesus, as we read in Luke 23:36, "The soldiers also *mocked* him."

Third, Jesus would receive shameful treatment. He predicted in verse 32c, **" . . . and shamefully treated . . . ."** Everything that was done to Jesus was shameful, and therefore a fulfillment of his prediction. But, one text pointing to a fulfillment is found in Matthew 26:67, where we read, "And some *slapped* him."

Fourth, Jesus would be spit upon. He predicted in verse 32d, **" . . . and spit upon . . . ."** The fulfillment of this prediction is found in Matthew 27:30, "And they *spit on him* and took the reed and struck him on the head."

Fifth, Jesus would be flogged. He predicted in verse 33a, **"And after flogging him . . . ."** This prediction was fulfilled in John 19:1, "Then Pilate took Jesus and *flogged him*."

Sixth, Jesus would be killed. He predicted in verse 33b, **" . . . they will kill him . . . ."** Jesus' death is recorded in all four Gospels. However, Luke specifically noted when Peter preached in Solomon's portico, in Acts 3:15, that Jesus was killed, "And you *killed* the Author of life."

And seventh, and most gloriously, Jesus would rise on the third day. He predicted in verse 32a, **" . . . and on the third day he will rise."** Three days after Jesus' crucifixion, on the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared to anoint his body. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Re-

member how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and *on the third day rise*" (Luke 24:1-7).

Jesus' passion was no accident. Jesus knew what lay before him, and he willingly and voluntarily went to the cross. I don't think we will ever fully comprehend the depth of Jesus' passion on our behalf.

But why did Jesus suffer for us? John Bakewell put it well in his hymn titled, "Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus!":

> Hail, thou once despised Jesus!
> Hail, thou Galilean king!
> Thou didst suffer to release us;
> Thou didst free salvation bring.
> Hail, thou universal Savior,
> Bearer of our sin and shame!
> By thy merit we find favor:
> Life is given through thy name.[7]

II. The Perplexity of the Apostles (18:34)

And second, note the perplexity of the apostles.

Astonishingly, the apostles did not grasp what Jesus was telling them. Luke said it three times to show the apostles' lack of comprehension. First, Luke said in verse 34a, **"But they understood none of these things."** Then Luke said again in verse 34b, **"This saying was hidden from them."** And finally, for the third time he said in verse 34c, **"And they did not grasp what was said."**

In all likelihood Luke did not mean that Jesus' message was unintelligible to the apostles. More likely, Jesus' prediction did not fit their preconceived expectations for the Messiah.

[7] Paul Eckert, *Steve Green's MIDI Hymnal: A Complete Toolkit for Personal Devotions and Corporate Worship.*, Electronic ed. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1998).

They were expecting a Messiah who was a conquering ruler. They were not expecting a suffering Messiah. After all, their Scriptures, what we now call the Old Testament, pointed to a conquering Messiah, and that was their expectation. However, they failed to understand that the Messiah's *first* coming would be as a suffering Messiah. It would only be at his *second* coming that the Messiah would come as a conquering Messiah. And that is why they did not understand what Jesus was predicting about his upcoming passion. It was not until after Jesus' resurrection that they understood fully and clearly what Jesus was telling them in all of his predictions.

Do you have expectations about how Jesus works today? You expected that when you became a follower of Jesus that all of your problems would vanish. You expected that if you prayed for your unsaved loved one that he or she would be immediately saved. You expected that if you read your Bible and said your prayers that God would answer your prayers. You expected that if you gave your money to the church that God would bless you with an abundance of cash.

We often misunderstand the person and work of Jesus today, and then we wonder why we struggle so much. You know, the apostles had the Word of God, and they even had Jesus tell them what was going to happen to him, and they still misunderstood him. The only way to grow in a correct understand of Jesus and his work is to study the Word of God diligently and carefully, personally and together, and then in humility apply it to our lives daily.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Jesus' passion prediction in Luke 18:31-34, we should understand what Jesus did to save sinners.

In a sermon titled, "Long Live the King!" Dr. Philip Ryken

said the following:

> Most kingdoms do anything they can to protect their king. This is the unspoken premise of the game of chess, for example. When the king falls, the kingdom is lost. Therefore, the king must be protected at all costs.
>
> Another notable example comes from the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill desperately wanted to join the expeditionary forces and watch the invasion from the bridge of a battleship in the English Channel. U.S. General Dwight David Eisenhower was desperate to stop him, for fear that the Prime Minister might be killed in battle. When it became apparent that Churchill would not be dissuaded, Eisenhower appealed to a higher authority: King George VI. The king went and told Churchill that if it was the Prime Minister's duty to witness the invasion, he could only conclude that it was also his own duty as king to join him on the battleship. At this point Churchill reluctantly agreed to back down, for he knew that he could never expose the King of England to such danger.
>
> King Jesus did exactly the opposite. With royal courage he surrendered his body to be crucified. On the cross he offered a king's ransom: his life for the life of his people. He would die for all the wrong things that we had ever done and would do, completely atoning for all our sins. The crown of thorns that was meant to make a mockery of his royal claims actually proclaimed his kingly dignity, even in death.[8]

When Jesus predicted his death in Luke 18:31-33, he had not yet undergone all the suffering that awaited him in Jerusalem. So, we can understand the apostles' lack of understanding.

However, Jesus has now suffered, died, and risen back to life again. He did all of that to save sinners. If you know yourself to be sinner in need of a Savior, believe that Jesus suffered, died, and rose again for you and for your salvation. Believe that today, and you shall be saved. Amen.

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[8] See http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2008/august/4081108.html.

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAYER:

Our Father, how we thank you for the passion of Christ. Thank you that he willingly and voluntarily underwent suffering in order to save sinners like us.

O God, if there is anyone here today who is willing to repent of his or her sin and trust you, will you grant that person repentance and faith? Will you grant that person entrance into the kingdom of God and an inheritance of eternal life, along with all of the saints for whom our Savior suffered and died?

And for this I pray in your name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!