

Luke: 13:22–35

From Catena Aurea:

22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

25. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

GLOSS. Having spoken in parables concerning the increase of the teaching of the Gospel, He every where endeavours to spread it by preaching. Hence it is said, And he went through the cities and villages.

THEOPHYLACT. For he did not visit the small places only, as they do who wish to deceive the simple, nor the cities only, as they who are fond of show, and seek their own glory; but as their common Lord and Father providing for all, He went about every where. Nor again did He visit the country towns only, avoiding Jerusalem, as if He feared the cavils of the lawyers, or death, which might follow therefrom; and hence he adds, And journeying towards Jerusalem. For where there were many sick, there the Physician chiefly shewed Himself. It follows, Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?

GLOSS. This question seems to have reference to what had gone before. For in the parable which was given above, He had said, that the birds of the air rested on its branches, by which it might be supposed that there would be many who would obtain the rest of salvation. And because one had asked the question for all, the Lord does not answer him individually, as it follows, And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate.

BASIL. (in reg. ad int. 240.) For as in earthly life the departure from right is exceeding broad, so he who goes out of the path which leads to the kingdom of heaven, finds himself in a vast extent of error. (int. 241.). But the right way is narrow, the slightest turning aside being full of danger, whether to the right or to the left, as on a bridge, where he who slips on either side is thrown into the river.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. The narrow gate also represents the toils and sufferings of the saints. For as a victory in battle bears witness to the strength of the soldiers, so a courageous endurance of labours and temptations will make a man strong.

CHRYSOSTOM. (24, 40. in Matt.) What then is that which our Lord says elsewhere, My yoke is easy, and my burden is light? (Matt. 11:30.) There is indeed no contradiction, but the one was said because of the nature of temptations, the other with respect to the feeling of those who overcame them. For whatever is troublesome to our nature may be considered easy when we undertake it heartily. Besides also, though the way of salvation is narrow at its entrance, yet through it we come into a large space, but on the contrary the broad way leadeth to destruction.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now our Lord does not seem to satisfy him who asked whether there are few that be saved, when He declares the way by which man may become righteous. But it must be observed, that it was our Saviour's custom to answer those who asked Him, not according as they might judge right, as often as they put to Him useless questions, but with regard to what might be profitable to His hearers. And what advantage would it have been to His hearers to know whether there should be many or few who would be saved. But it was more necessary to know the way by which man may come to salvation. Purposely then He says nothing in answer to the idle question, but turns His discourse to a more important subject.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 111.) Or else, our Lord confirmed the words He heard, that is, by saying that there are few who are saved, for few enter by the strait gate, but in another place He says this very thing, Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there are who enter into it. (Matt. 7:14.) Therefore He adds, For many I say unto you shall seek to enter;

BASIL. (Hom. in Psalm 1, 15.) For the soul wavers to and fro, at one time choosing virtue when it considers eternity, at another preferring pleasures when it looks to the present. Here it beholds ease, or the delights of the flesh, there its subjection or captive bondage; here drunkenness, there sobriety; here wanton mirth, there overflowing of tears; here dancing, there praying; here the sound of the pipe, there weeping; here lust, there chastity.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 111.) Now our Lord in no wise contradicts Himself when He says, that there are few who enter in at the strait gate, and elsewhere, Many shall come from the east and the west; (Matt. 8:11.) for there are few in comparison with those who are lost, many when united with the angels. Scarcely do they seem a grain when the threshing floor is swept, but so great a mass will come forth from this floor, that it will fill the granary of heaven.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. But that they who cannot enter are regarded with wrath, He has shewn by an obvious example, as follows, When once the master of the house has risen up, &c. as if when the master of the house who has called many to the banquet has entered in with his guests, and shut to the door, then shall come afterwards men knocking.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. This refers to the Israelites, who, according to the practice of their law, when offering victims to God, eat and are merry. They heard also in the synagogues the books of Moses, who in his writings delivered not his own words, but the words of God.

THEOPHYLACT. Or it is said to the Israelites, simply because Christ was born of them according to the flesh, and they ate and drank with Him, and heard Him preaching. But these things also apply to Christians. For we eat the body of Christ and drink His blood as often as we approach the mystic table, and He teaches in the streets of our souls, which are open to receive Him.

BASIL. (reg. brev. ad int. 282.) He perhaps speaks to those whom the Apostle describes in his own person, saying, If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have all knowledge, and give all my goods to feed the poor, but have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. For whatever is done not from regard to the love of God, but to gain praise from men, obtains no praise from God.

THEOPHYLACT. Observe also that they are objects of wrath in whose street the Lord teaches. If then we have heard Him teaching not in the streets, but in poor and lowly hearts, we shall not be regarded with wrath.

GLOSS. Or the teeth will gnash which here delighted in eating, the eyes will weep which here wandered with desire. By each He represents the real resurrection of the wicked.

THEOPHYLACT. This also refers to the Israelites with whom He was speaking, who receive from this their severest blow, that the Gentiles have rest with the fathers, while they themselves are shut out. Hence He adds, When you shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, &c.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For to the Jews who held the first place have the Gentiles been preferred.

THEOPHYLACT. But we as it seems are the first who have received from our very cradles the rudiments of Christian teaching, and perhaps shall be last in respect of the heathens who have believed at the end of life.

13:31–35

31. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

32. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

33. Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

35. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. The preceding words of our Lord roused the Pharisees to anger. For they perceived that the people were now smitten in their hearts, and eagerly receiving His faith. For fear then of losing their office as rulers of the people, and lacking their gains, with pretended love for Him, they persuade Him to depart from hence, as it is said, The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee: but Christ, who searcheth the heart and

the reins, answers them meekly and under figure. Hence it follows, And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Or else the discourse seems to change here, and not to refer so much to the character of Herod as some think, as to the lies of the Pharisees. For He almost represents the Pharisees themselves to be standing near, when He said, Go tell this fox, as it is in the Greek. Therefore he commanded them to say that which might rouse the multitude of Pharisees. Behold, said He, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and on the third day I shall be perfected. He promises to do what was displeasing to the Jews, namely, to command the evil spirits, and deliver the sick from disease, until in His own person He should undergo the suffering of the cross. But because the Pharisees thought that He who was the Lord of hosts, feared the hand of Herod. He refutes this, saying, Nevertheless I must walk to day and to morrow, and the day following. When He says must, He by no means implies a necessity imposed upon Him, but rather that He walked where He liked according to the inclination of His will, until He should come to the end of the dreadful cross, the time of which Christ shews to be now drawing near, when He says, To day and to morrow.

THEOPHYLACT. As if He says, What think ye of My death? Behold, a little while, and it will come to pass. But by the words, To day and to morrow, are signified many days; as we also are wont to say in common conversation, "To day and to morrow such a thing takes place," not that it happens in that interval of time. And to explain more clearly the words of the Gospel, you must not understand them to be, I must walk to day and to morrow, but place a stop after to day and to morrow, then add, and walk on the day following, as frequently in reckoning we are accustomed to say, "The Lord's day and the day after, and on the third I will go out," as if by reckoning two, to denote the third. So also our Lord speaks as if calculating, I must do so to day, and so to morrow, and then afterward on the third day I must go to Jerusalem.

AUGUSTINE. (con. Julian. lib. 6. c. 19.) Or these things are understood to have been spoken mystically by Him, so as to refer to His body, which is the Church. For devils are cast out when the Gentiles having forsaken their superstition, believe in Him. And cures are perfected when according to His commands, after having renounced the devil and this world until the end of the resurrection, (by which as it were the third day will be completed,) the Church shall be perfected in angelical fulness by the immortality also of the body.

THEOPHYLACT. But because they said unto Him, Depart from hence, for Herod seeks to kill thee, speaking in Galilee where Herod reigned, He shews that not in Galilee, but in Jerusalem it had been fore-ordained

that He should suffer. Hence it follows, For it can not be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. When thou hearest, It can not be (or it is not fitting) that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem, think not that any violent constraint was imposed upon the Jews, but He says this seasonably with reference to their eager desire after blood; just as if any one seeing a most savage robber, should say, the road on which this robber lurks can not be without bloodshed to travellers. So also no where else but in the abode of robbers must the Lord of the prophets perish. For accustomed to the blood of His prophets, they will also kill the Lord; as it follows, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 75. in Matt.) For the twice repeated word betokens compassion or very great love. For the Lord speaks, if we may say it, as a lover would to his mistress who despised him, and was therefore about to be punished.

GREEK EXPOSITOR. (**Severus.**) But the repetition of the name also shews the rebuke to be severe. For she who knew God, how does she persecute God's ministers?

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now that they were unmindful of the Divine blessings He proves as follows, How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not. He led them by the hand of Moses full of all wisdom. He warns them by His prophets, He wished to have them under His wings, (i. e. under the shelter of His power,) but they deprived themselves of these choice blessings, through their ingratitude.

AUGUSTINE. (Enchir. 97.) As many as I gathered together, it was done by my all prevailing will, yet thy unwillingness, for thou wert ever ungrateful.

BASIL. (in Esaia c. 16. §. 301.) He compared also the sons of Jerusalem to birds in the net, as if He said, Birds who are used to fly in the air are caught by the treacherous devices of the catchers, but thou shalt be as a chicken in want of another's protection; when thy mother then has fled away, thou art taken from thy nest as too weak to defend thyself, too feeble to fly; as it follows, Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

THEOPHYLACT. Or your house, (that is, temple,) as if He says, As long as there was virtue in you, it was my temple, but after that you made it a den of thieves, it was no more my house but yours. Or by house He meant the whole Jewish nation, according to the Psalm, O house of Jacob, bless ye the Lord, (Psalm 135:20.) by which he shews that it was He Himself who governed them, and took them out of the hand of their enemies. It follows, And verily I say unto you, &c.

AUGUSTINE. (de Cons. Ev. lib. 2. c. 72.) There seems nothing opposed to St. Luke's narrative, in what the multitudes said when our Lord came to Jerusalem, Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord, (Mat. 21:9.) for He had not as yet come thither, nor had this yet been spoken.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For our Lord had departed from Jerusalem, as it were abandoning those who were unworthy of His presence, and afterwards returned to Jerusalem, having performed many miracles, when that crowd meets Him, saying, Osanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

AUGUSTINE. (de Cons. Ev. ubi sup.) But as Luke does not say to what place our Lord went from thence, so that He should not come except at that time, (for when this was spoken He was journeying onward until He should come to Jerusalem,) He means therefore to refer to that coming of His, when He should appear in glory.

THEOPHYLACT. For then also will they unwillingly confess Him to be their Lord and Saviour, when there shall be no departure hence. But in saying, Ye shall not see me until he shall come, &c. does not signify that present hour, but the time of His cross; as if He says, When ye have crucified Me, ye shall no more see Me until I come again.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Luke must be understood then as wishing to anticipate here, before his narrative brought our Lord to Jerusalem, or to make Him when approaching the same city, give an answer to those who told Him to beware of Herod, like to that which Matthew says He gave when He had already reached Jerusalem.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

13:22–29 Warnings on the Journey

Not How Many are Saved.

Cyril of Alexandria: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." This reply may seem perhaps to wander from the scope of the question. The man wanted to learn whether there would be few who are saved, but he explained to him the way whereby he might be saved himself. He said, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." What do we answer to this objection?... It was a necessary and valuable thing to know how a man may obtain salvation. He is purposely silent to the useless question. He proceeds to speak of what was

essential, namely, of the knowledge necessary for the performance of those duties by which people can enter the narrow door. Commentary on Luke, Homily 99.

To Enter the Narrow Gate.

Cyril of Alexandria: I now consider it my duty to mention why the door to life is narrow. Whoever would enter must first before everything else possess an upright and uncorrupted faith and then a spotless morality, in which there is no possibility of blame, according to the measure of human righteousness... One who has attained to this in mind and spiritual strength will enter easily by the narrow door and run along the narrow way. Commentary on Luke, Homily 99.

Those Who Ignore the Law.

Cyril of Alexandria: "Wide is the door, and broad the way that brings down many to destruction." What are we to understand by its broadness? It means an unrestrained tendency toward carnal lust and a shameful and pleasure-loving life. It is luxurious feasts, parties, banquets and unrestricted inclinations to everything that is condemned by the law and displeasing to God. A stubborn mind will not bow to the yoke of the law. This life is cursed and relaxed in all carelessness. Thrusting from it the divine law and completely unmindful of the sacred commandments, wealth, vices, scorn, pride and the empty imagination of earthly pride spring from it. Those who would enter in by the narrow door must withdraw from all these things, be with Christ and keep the festival with him. Commentary on Luke, Homily 99.

The Food They Ate in the Streets.

Augustine: Christ has hidden enemies. All those who live unjust and irreligious lives are Christ's enemies, even if they are signed with his name and are called Christians. I mean the ones to whom he is going to say, "I do not know you," and they say to him, "Lord, in your name we ate and drank. In your name, we performed many deeds of power. What did we eat and drink in your name?" You see that they did not value their food very highly, and yet it was with reference to it that they said they belonged to Christ. Christ is the food that is eaten and drunk. Even Christ's enemies eat and drink him. The faithful know the Lamb without spot on which they feed, if only they fed on it in such a way that they are not liable to punishment! The apostle says, "Whoever eats and drinks unworthily is eating and drinking judgment upon himself." Sermon 308a.6.

Entering the Narrow Gate.

Cyril of Alexandria: You may count certain others among those able to say to the judge of all, "We have eaten and drunk in your presence, and you have taught in our streets." Who again are these? Many have believed in Christ and have celebrated the holy festivals in his honor. Frequenting the churches, they also hear the doctrines of the gospel, but they remember absolutely nothing of the truths of Scripture. With difficulty, they bring with them the practice of virtue, while their heart is quite bare of spiritual fruitfulness. These will also weep bitterly and grind their teeth, because the Lord will also deny them. He said, "Not everyone that says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Commentary on Luke, Homily 99.

From All Corners of the World.

Augustine: The shepherds came from nearby to see, and the magi came from far away to worship. This is the humility for which the wild olive deserved to be grafted into the olive tree and against nature to produce olives. It deserved to change nature through grace. They come from the farthest parts of the earth, saying according to Jeremiah, "Truly our fathers worshiped lies." They come, not just from one part of the world, but as the Gospel according to Luke says, "from east and west, from north and south, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Sermon 203.3.

13:30 The Surprising Reversal

The Gentiles First in the Kingdom.

Cyril of Alexandria: He showed that the Jews were about to fall from their rank of being in a spiritual sense his household and that the multitude of the Gentiles should enter in their place. He said that many who received the call would come from the east, west, north and south. They will rest with the saints. Commentary on Luke, Homily 99.

13:31 The Warning of the Pharisees

The Pharisees Full of Hatred.

Cyril of Alexandria: What hour does he mean as that in which the Pharisees said these things to Jesus? He was occupied in teaching the Jewish multitudes, when someone asked him whether there were many that are saved. He, however, passed by the question as unprofitable and turned to what he saw as a suitable topic, namely, the way by which people must walk to become heirs of the kingdom of heaven. He said,

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate,” and told them that if they refuse so to do, they will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves cast out. He also added that whereas they had been the first, they would be the last at the calling of the heathen. These remarks goaded the mind of the Pharisees to anger. They saw the multitudes already repenting and receiving with eagerness faith in him. They saw that now they needed only a little more instruction to learn his glory and the great and adorable mystery of the incarnation. Likely to lose their office of leaders of the people and already fallen and expelled from their authority over them and deprived of their profits—for they were fond of wealth, and covetous, and given to lucre—they made pretense of loving him, and even drew near, and said, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” Commentary on Luke, Homily 100.

13:32–33 Jesus’ Response About His Destiny

Herod the Fox.

Augustine: The Lord said of Herod, “Go and tell that fox.” Because it [the fox] was troubled, what did it do? It slaughtered infants. What did it do? It slaughtered infants in place of the infant Word. They were made martyrs by the shedding of their blood, before they could confess the Lord with their mouths. And these are the first fruits that Christ sent to the Father. An infant came, and infants went. An infant came to us, infants went to God. From the mouths of infants and sucklings you have perfected praise. Sermon 375.1.

The Miracles of Jesus Point to His Passion.

Cyril of Alexandria: But what did he tell them to say? “Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.” You see that he declares his intention of performing what he knew would grieve the troop of Pharisees. So they drive him from Jerusalem, fearing that by the display of miracles he will win many to faith in himself. But inasmuch as their purpose there did not escape him since he was God, he declares his intention of performing what they hated and says that he shall also rebuke unclean spirits and deliver the sick from their sufferings and be perfected. This means that of his own will he will endure the passion on the cross for the salvation of the world. He knew, therefore, as it appears, both how and when he would endure death in the flesh. Commentary on Luke, Homily 100.

Jesus Must Die in Jerusalem.

Ephrem the Syrian: It was prophetic that Moses had given [the Israelites] the order to offer their sacrifices in one single place—there to offer the lamb in sacrifice and [there] to accomplish an image of the

redemption. Herod did not kill [the Lord] with the infants of Bethlehem, nor did the Nazarenes when they hurled him down from the mountain, since it was not possible for him to die outside of Jerusalem. For it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. Take note that although it was Jerusalem that killed him, nevertheless Herod and Nazareth were united with regard to his death, and vengeance will be required of both for his death. Learn also from this that not only will vengeance for his blood be required of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but also everyone who saw and denied him will be convicted for having killed him. In saying "between the sanctuary and the altar," he has indeed shown their perversity, in that they did not respect even the place of atonement. The words, "How often would I have gathered your children together," are similar to these, "See, these three years I have come, seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none." Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 18.10.

13:34–35 Jesus' Lament Over Jerusalem

Jerusalem Rejected Those Who Speak for God.

Cyril of Alexandria: He shows that Jerusalem is guilty of the blood of many saints, declaring that it is not possible for a prophet to perish away from it. From this it follows that its people were about to fall from being members of God's spiritual family, that they were about to be rejected from the hope of the saints and entirely deprived of the inheritance of those blessings which are in store for those who have been saved by faith. He showed them that they were forgetful of God's gifts, and stubborn, and slothful to everything that might have profited them, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken." He taught them through the most wise Moses, and ordained for them the law to direct them in their conduct, and to be their ruler and guide in a life worthy of admiration. Though this law was but as yet in shadows, it nevertheless possessed the type of the true worship. He admonished them by the holy prophets. He would have had them under his wings, that is, under the protection of his power, but they lost the valuable blessings by being disposed to evil, ungrateful and scornful. Commentary on Luke, Homily 100.

Jesus Foreshadows His Triumphant Entrance.

Cyril of Alexandria: "And I tell you," he says, "you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.'" What does this mean? The Lord withdrew from Jerusalem and left as unworthy of his presence those who said, "Get away from here." And after he had walked about Judea and saved many and performed miracles which no words can adequately describe, he returned again to Jerusalem.

It was then that he sat upon a colt of a donkey, while vast multitudes and young children, holding up branches of palm trees, went before him, praising him and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Having left them, therefore, as being unworthy, he says that when the time of his passion has arrived, he will then barely be seen by them. Then again he went up to Jerusalem and entered amidst praises, and at that very time endured his saving passion in our behalf, that by suffering he might save and renew to incorruption the inhabitants of the earth. God the Father has saved us by Christ. Commentary on Luke, Homily 100.