

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
VVV. Christ's Exposure Of Religious Hardness
(Luke 13:10-21)

I. Introduction

- A. Jesus Christ faced not only unbelief, but chronic unbelief of great hardness in Israel's leaders that hid behind the mask of religiosity. Such unbelief can become so universal that it seems impossible to root out
- B. Luke 13:10-17 presented such a case, and the way Christ handled it and His theological commentary on it that followed in Luke 13:18-21 gives godly believers edifying insight on how to face such religious hardness.
- C. We thus view Luke 13:10-21 for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Edifying Exposure Of Religious Hardness, Luke 13:10-21.

- A. Jesus used a healing event to expose the religious hardness of Israel's religious leaders, Luke 13:10-17:
 - 1. While He was teaching in one of the Hebrew synagogues on a Sabbath day, He encountered a woman in the meeting who had a spirit of infirmity that had crippled her for eighteen years, and she was bent over so far that she could not lift herself up, Luke 13:10-11. We know from Luke 13:16 that she had been "bound" by "Satan" all this time in terrible discomfort and humiliation.
 - 2. Jesus saw her and responded to her need by calling her to Him and telling her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity," Luke 13:12. He then put His hands on her and she immediately straightened up and praised the Lord, Luke 13:13.
 - 3. However, the ruler of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day in violation of the extra-biblical rules of the religious leaders, and he told the people that there were six days in which men were to work, and they could come then to be healed, but they were not to work on the Sabbath day, meaning they could not be healed then as he considered healing a violation of the Sabbath, Luke 13:14.
 - 4. Jesus critiqued the religious rulers for this teaching, condemning them as hypocrites, for they each one on the Sabbath released his ox or donkey from the stall to lead it away to drink water, Luke 13:15. Yet, they critiqued the release of this woman, a daughter of Abraham, from bondage to Satan to be released from her bond on the Sabbath day, Luke 13:16. The glaring inconsistency of giving more care to an ox or a donkey in its daily needs than to a woman who had suffered for eighteen years was thus exposed, and all of Jesus' foes were ashamed while the people rejoiced over all the glorious things being done by Him, Luke 13:17.
- B. Christ then explained the development of such religious hardness in Luke 13:18-21:
 - 1. Some commentators believe that the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven in this context of Luke 13 were parables about positive things that occur in the kingdom (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 240-241).
 - 2. However, these parables followed Christ's exposure of the spiritual hardness of Israel's religious leaders in Luke 13:10-17, and wherever "leaven" (*zume* in the Greek) is used in the Bible, it always refers to negative entities such as false teaching or hypocrisy (Luke 13:15; cf. *zume*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 340; J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible With J. Vernon McGee, 1983, Volume IV: Matthew-Romans, p. 307).
 - 3. Thus, the Parable of the Mustard Seed that sprouts from a small grain of seed and grows into a large tree where the birds lodge in its branches describes how religious entities that start small and upright typically become huge and corrupt so that Satan's ministers (and demons) lodge in them, Luke 13:18-19.
 - 4. Then, the Parable of the Leaven that a woman takes and hides in three measures of meal until the whole batch was leavened (Luke 13:20-21) teaches the hypocrisy and false teaching that accompanies the vast organizational growth of religious entities that start out small and upright.
 - a. The Greek word for "measures" is *saton*, the equivalent of "nearly three English gallons" (Moulton & Milligan, The Vocab. of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 570). Thus, the three "measures" of meal is equal to over 8 gallons of dough, a very large amount that would be used for a wedding feast or reception!
 - b. Since the Parable of the Mustard Seed deals with the vast growth of religious institutions, the huge amount of dough that gets thoroughly leavened pictures the great amount of hypocritical and doctrinal corruption that will occur to the huge religious organizations that have become infested evil ministers and demons!

Lesson: *The religious hardness in Israel's religious leaders that Jesus faced is typical of the growth of that same kind of hardness that affects all religious entities that start small and upright only to become huge and corrupt.*

Application: *May we not rely on religious leaders or institutions for our spiritual welfare, but only on the Lord!*