

The Compass

Week 16

OT Readings – Joshua 13:1-24:33

NT Readings – Luke 18:1-21:28

Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

Old Testament

- This week's readings will complete the book of Joshua. While some of these chapters feel a bit tedious with descriptions of land allotments, don't miss some interesting insights interspersed throughout. E.g., notice the difference in the attitude of Caleb (14:6-15. 15:13-14.) and the attitude of the sons of Joseph (17:14-18).
- The building of an altar of "witness" almost incites war. (22:10-34.) What can you learn from this incident about Israel's attitude toward remaining loyal to God?¹
- Chapters 23-24 are significant. Joshua retells the story and charges Israel to stay true to God.²

New Testament

- In 19:45 Jesus finally arrives in Jerusalem, events will now come to a climax.
- Confrontation and conflict with the religious establishment will dominate this section. Notice how Jesus uses these situations to teach truth, especially His use of parables (story).
- Again, there are riches to be gleaned from Jesus' teaching; some of this material is only found in Luke.

Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

Luke 19:1-10. If you grew up in Sunday School it's hard to get past the little song we sang as children, "Now, Zacchaeus, you come down!" The story is far richer than that little song and Jesus is, as always, more radical. Zacchaeus was a "chief" tax collector, very rich, and much despised.³ Perhaps it is not too far out of line to equate him today with a pimp or drug dealer capitalizing on others misery. Jesus went to his house for a meal, hung out with him, and worse, calls him a "true son of Abraham." It scandalized not simply the religious, but everyone else present because Zacchaeus was such a "notorious sinner." Yet, Zacchaeus' repentance was genuine and he showed it by his restitution. Who do we walk by, look past, everyday without a second thought because in our minds they are "notorious sinners?" Yet, here is a critical truth – *God is at work in every life, everywhere, all the time.* Why? Because Jesus is out "to seek and save those who are lost." What have we missed in the way we see the world around us?

Application: "What about me? How does this apply?"

Joshua 14:6-15. For Caleb there is no blustering, posturing or arrogant boasting, only "give me the hard thing...perhaps God will be with me...I will do this thing." The Anakim were "giants," we know little more. They were a formidable foe. And Caleb had them in his craw for over forty years since he first saw them and their great fortified cities. Itching for a fight, eighty-five years old, you think he'd be looking for a nice date palm to rest under in the Promised Land.

What does it mean to be "great-hearted?" It means to be held in the grip of the great purposes of God, to be under their "spell," to be held fast by a vision not simply greater than your own life, but so utterly beyond you that *only* if "God is with you" will you survive, let alone win a victory for the kingdom. You might say, "Well, that's not me!" But it *is* you! We are meant to be envision-ers, dreamers, who see the world not only as it is, but as it *should* be - if only the "giants" are dispossessed and the healing, restorative power of God's kingdom becomes real through us into our world. So say it out loud, "I will drive them out, as the Lord has spoken!" What dream does God want to take root in your great heart? By the way, Caleb got 'er done. (Joshua 15:13-14)

Difficult Question of the Week

Luke 20:20-26. Q. "Is Jesus teaching that His followers should have no involvement in politics?"

Jesus is questioned by "spies" from the religious leaders in an attempt to put Jesus at odds with the Roman government which ruled over Judea in this time period.⁴ Jesus deftly points out the obvious, "Whose image is on this coin? Then give Caesar what belongs to him." But more importantly, "Give God what belongs to Him." There have been long debates in Christian history over the relationship of God's people to the state or civil government. How should we understand that relationship?

Should we be active in politics? Isn't politics "dirty?" Shouldn't believers stay focused on "the things of God?" But what are the things of God?? The question is best answered by an understanding of the *kingdom of God*. If Jesus is King over everything and it is His purpose to bring every area of life under His loving rule (M. 6:10), then civil government is not only "holy," but our responsibility as Christians. American Christians have opportunities/privileges (and therefore responsibilities) that most believers in the world do not, but wish they did.

We must bring our value system and voice to bear in the political sphere as we should in every area: medicine, economics, entertainment, etc. All of life is *sacred* and we should actively apply Biblical principles to civil government.⁵

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¹ This becomes important as we begin reading Judges. How could this generation that was so concerned to be faithful to YHWH die out and the following ones so quickly be caught up in idolatrous unfaithfulness to God?

² Look carefully at Joshua 24:14. Joshua charges them to remain "wholehearted" toward God (Hebrew "tamim"). Remember that this was God's instruction to Abraham (Gen. 17:1) and to Israel (Deut. 18:13).

³ Tax collectors were Jews who collected taxes for Rome. They at times practiced extortion because they could keep whatever they "raised" beyond what was actually due. Zacchaeus had other tax collectors working for him, a kind of twisted pyramid scheme.

⁴ The Romans were hated by the Jews and their rule resented. That had control of this region of the world for nearly 100 years by this time. Their rule was ruthless and their taxation policies created hardship.

⁵ The obvious thing is our vote. It is our responsibility to choose those candidates whom most closely align with Biblical principles and values even if we find ourselves forced to choose between alternatives none of whom do that well. Regardless, the kingdom of God, a Biblical view of the world, should determine our vote; not any loyalty to party, special interests, etc.