

# The Parables of Jesus

## - The Persistent Widow and the Unjust Judge

- Luke 18:2-8

This parable is found only in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus and His disciples were still on their journey to Jerusalem from Capernaum. They were now in an area which bordered Samaria and Judea - Luke

17:11. This parable in its context is brought forth out of a question by the Pharisees found in Luke 17:20, concerning when the Kingdom of God would come. Jesus answers their question in Luke 17:20-21, "...*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*"

Jesus then turns to His disciples and goes on to tell of the "signs" of when they would know that the Kingdom of God as at hand. (Luke 17:23-37) This parable is not solely concerning prayer but it is also about Jesus' return and the coming of the Kingdom of God on the earth. It is about God "avenging" His people

The Parable of the "Persistent Widow and Unjust Judge - Luke 18:2-8 - *"...There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"*

The first thing we need to address, as we did in Luke 16:1-8 concerning the parable of the "unjust steward," is Jesus' use of a person who did not have any "fear" or respect for God. Again, it would seem odd that He would be comparing anyone or anything of the Kingdom of Heaven with something or someone who has no respect or reverence towards God.

Jesus, Himself calls this judge, "unjust." He would certainly not be referring to Himself or Father, God as "unjust." There is absolutely, no shadow of turning nor is there any darkness found in our God. Our God is a "just" God as well as being a God of "justice." The scriptures are very clear in that.

Therefore, we must immediately take the thought that Jesus is somehow using the image of an "unjust judge" to represent God's ways and character, out of our thinking, as we go forward with this parable. Again, if this was the case and God's character would sometimes be unjust, then a few things would happen.

First, the Pharisees and religious leaders would definitely have had real good ammunition against Jesus. If He would characterize God as being "unjust," even in the least way, even in a parable, that would have been all the proof they would need to charge Him with heresy - and they would be right.

Secondly, again this is exactly the kind of lifestyle, behavior and shady judicial practices that the publicans and sinners were used to. If Jesus gave the idea that God was "unjust" in any way then He would be condoning and giving permission to all those listening that "at times" it is okay to be "unjust." That would mean that there would be no need to change their lifestyle. If Jesus were using that image of God as being "unjust," it would be giving each of them a "loophole" to continue in any aspect of "unjustness" and "unrighteousness."

That, again, just as in the parable of the "unjust steward" should be another "red flag" to really delve into what Jesus was actually saying in this parable. We should be alert to the fact that Jesus would not be using an "unjust judge" to be representative of God as we go forward in discussing this parable.

Let's review the "characters" in the parable

- The "unjust judge" - Knowing what we just discussed, this "unjust judge" could be representative of any Roman or City (Jewish) official acting as a judge over civil matters within their civil jurisdiction. This "unjust judge" could also be representative of Jewish leaders who were involved in the Jewish judicial system that was established at that time

We need to keep in mind, that the Roman government allowed the Jewish custom of using the Pharisees and other Jewish religious leaders to officiate as "judges" in deciding matters between Jewish people. This is found within the scriptures. The Mishnah also established guidelines for the Jewish court.

Unfortunately, but yet not surprisingly, there was tremendous corruption that abounded, both within the Roman courts, as well as in the Jewish judicial system. It came to be so bad that most judges would only hear cases in return for bribes. This may give us another clue to why the judge was so obstinate in not hearing the widow's case. She may not have been willing to pay the needed "bribe." This is another reason why we cannot equate this "unjust" judge to a most holy God.

- The "widow" - Jesus specifically uses the character of a "widow" within this parable. Why? Because this would be a person who would be desperate. A widow would usually be thought of as one who would be in tremendous need. Being a widow obviously meant that her husband had died and she would be left to herself. She may or may not have had children. Whatever the case may have been, the widow represented a person who was in desperate need and who was being taken advantage of by an "adversary." She was in desperate need of someone to help her and hear her case.
- The widow's "adversary" - The word used for "adversary" is the Greek word, "*antidikos*," which literally means, an opponent in a lawsuit with the emphasis being that this was not just an "opponent" but one who would be considered an "enemy."

A brief synopsis of the parable reveals that the widow goes before the judge and pleads with this judge to, "...*avenge me of my adversary*." The word "avenge" used here is from the Greek word, "*ekdikeō*" which means to vindicate the person; to protect, defend one person from another; bring punishment to my offender. She continually goes to the "unjust judge" to hear her case.

The "unjust judge" did nothing for a time. He then thought to himself, that he would "avenge" this widow of her adversary, not because it was his job and the right thing to do but rather it was because He did not want to be bothered by her. The word "*troubleth*" means to bother. The judge could care less about this widow and he really did not want to be bothered with her problem. Rather than doing what he was supposed to do, he did nothing. The attitude of his heart was all wrong. Does this sound like God???

However, as time went on, he began to think to himself that she was most likely going to continue after him on this matter. And why not? After all it was her right and it was his job. He finally decided that rather than be bothered with what would come to consistent nagging by her, he relented to his own lack of patience. For fear of losing his own "peace and quiet," he finally decided to do his job. He actually relented and "avenged" the woman for the wrong reasons and with the wrong "attitude of heart."

What was Jesus teaching His disciples with this parable? We must remember the context in which Jesus used this parable. It was in response to the Pharisee's question concerning when the Kingdom of God should come. (Luke 17:20)

In Luke 17:21-37, Jesus explained to them, as well as His disciples (verse 22), what some of the "signs" will be that would signal when the Kingdom of God is coming. Jesus actually prophesies the events immediately preceding His return to this earth. Jesus then makes this statement in Luke 17:37, when asked by His disciples concerning "where" those He mentioned in verses 31-36 are taken? - *"And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord?" He answers, "And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."* What does Jesus mean by this?

The first thing we must consider is that the phrase, *"...where the carcass is the eagles gather,"* was another Jewish idiom. The idiom was meant to put across the idea that animals are compelled to go where their inner nature leads them. Jesus most likely was loosely quoting, Job 39:27-30 - *"Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and **where the slain are, there is she.**"*

In Luke 17:22-36 Jesus is speaking about a "separating" that will take place in the end time. Some will stay; some will be taken. It brings to remembrance the parable of the "wheat and the tares" when we see that they both grow together. However, when it is time the angels will come and separate the "wheat from the tares." Jesus uses this "Jewish idiom" in answering the question by the disciples concerning, where will those He mentioned in verses 31-36, be taken.

The answer that they would have understood by the use of this idiom was that they would go to where their "inner nature" would lead them. If their "inner nature" were full of wickedness and hard-heartedness towards God and His precepts then their "sinful nature" would lead them to be taken to a place where there is separation from God. If their "inner nature" was open and receptive to Jesus and what He was saying concerning the Kingdom He was bringing, they would be then taken into the presence of God.

Jesus continues this thought with the use of this parable of the "Widow and the Unjust Judge." The context of this parable therefore is really about the end times and the coming of the Kingdom of God and continually being in prayer concerning these signs of the end times.

In Luke 18:1, we have a preface for the parable - *"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* We see the phrase, "to this end" used. This refers us back to Luke 17:37 in keeping this parable in context with what Jesus just spoke concerning the end times.

In our parable, the widow was asking the unjust judge to *"avenge her of her adversary."* We said that the word "avenge" meant to "vindicate the person; to protect, defend one person from another; bring punishment to my offender/adversary."

Jesus said to *"pray and not faint."* He was telling His disciples, as well as believers today that we are to pray that our Just and Righteous God would "avenge," - vindicate us, protect us, defend us and bring punishment to our adversary - on our behalf. In other words we are to pray for God to protect us from our adversary - the devil and all his forces of darkness, because it is our adversary's desire to "take" as many as possible with him to that "place" of separation from God. (*"...deliver us from evil..."* - Matthew 6:13)

However, unlike the "unjust judge," our God **does** care for us and is always willing to protect His people. That is our Righteous God's character and nature. That is what Jesus was referring to when He said in Luke 18:7, 8 (Amplified Version) - *"And will not [our just] God defend {and} protect {and} avenge His elect (His chosen ones), who cry to Him day and night? Will He defer them {and} delay help on their behalf? I tell you, He will defend {and} protect {and} avenge them speedily."*

Jesus was saying that, "**unlike**" the unjust judge in the parable, God would **not delay** in protecting His people against our adversary, the devil, when these "signs of the end times" occur. When the Kingdom of God comes, and Jesus returns, His angels will come to separate the "wheat from the tares." They will know whose are His. Luke 17:34-36 - *"I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; **the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.** Two women shall be grinding together; **the one shall be taken, and the other left.** Two men shall be in the field; **the one shall be taken, and the other left.**"*

It is at that time that the One and only Righteous Judge will "**speedily avenge**" and protect His people from their "adversary," the devil. God's people will be "taken" to that place in the heavens where we will meet with Jesus and return with Him to rule and reign with Him during the millennial.

Jesus concludes the parable with, "*...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*" Jesus was simply asking the question that when He does return bringing the Kingdom of God, will those who call themselves His disciples be standing firm in their faith in what He just told them. Would they be confident in believing, without a shadow of a doubt, that their God **WILL** "*avenge them speedily from the adversary?*"

Jesus was actually saying that it was not persistence that causes God to "avenge our adversary" but rather it is a simple faith believing that He is a God who cares for His people. He is a God who not only desires to avenge (vindicate, protect and defend) His people from their adversary (the enemy, the devil), but **He will**.

Another aspect of "avenging" the adversary is that the adversary is "brought to punishment" for their attack of their victim(s). God will "speedily" avenge (punish) our adversary (the enemy, the devil) for he will be cast into the "lake of fire" forever and ever.

This parable, traditionally, has been thought of and used as a parable concerning how we are to pray. It has been used to teach the concept that if you persist at and keep after God long enough that He will relent to your petitions and answer your prayer. However, as we have seen in its context, this parable is really about believers in the end time standing fast in their confidence, trust and faith in who their God is. If the believers would stand fast in their faith in their God, they will be "taken to that place," that "secret place" with Jesus.

Jesus was saying that when He returns, He would be looking for those "people of faith." Will He find them? Will each of us be found by Jesus to have this kind of faith that He will avenge us of our adversary's desire to bring us to destruction? Will He find faith? Hmmm....