Luke 18

Verses 1–8: The chapter division here (an artificial division not in the original text) makes us overlook the connection between the end of Luke 17 and the beginning of 18. Might Luke have any particular prayers in mind in verse 1? How about the desire mentioned in Luke 17:22? In other words, does the context of verse 1, which we know from the previous chapter, inform its meaning?

In verse 1 Luke portrays Jesus telling us the teaching of the parable before he gives the parable. Why? After reading the parable, ask yourself whether there are other ways to read it, perhaps ways that Luke wants to forestall.

We will later see that Paul particularly likes the language that Luke uses here, “pray always” (see, for example, 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Romans 12:12; and Ephesians 6:18) and “do not faint.”

The word translated faint means “to become weary or exhausted” and can mean “lose heart.” (For examples of places where Paul uses the term, see 2 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 16; and Galatians 6:9.) What kind of fainting or exhaustion do you think Luke has in mind?

What does constant prayer have to do with being a Christian? Does it have anything to do with seeing the world with Christ as the light that makes sight possible (John 9)?
What does not getting exhausted have to do with being a Christian?

In verse 2 we find that the judge neither fears God nor regards man. What does the second mean? Are the two phrases parallel, and if they are, does understanding the first help us understand the second? What does “feared not God, neither regarded man” tell us about this judge? Is that a positive or a negative description?

The King James Version (verse 3) says that the woman “came unto” the judge, but a more accurate translation might be “she kept coming to him.” A better translation than *avenge* is *defend, plead my case*. What is the woman asking, and why do you think she has to keep coming to the judge?

In verse 6, why does Jesus tell his listeners to pay attention to what the judge said? What is the import of verse 7 and the first half of verse 8? How does the parable explain God’s defense of his elect? Why compare the Father to an unjust judge? Isn’t that blasphemous?

The last part of verse 8 is poorly translated in the King James Version. As we have it, the verse says “though he bear long with them,” but most agree that something like “Will he be slow to answer them?” is more accurate. How does that change of translation change the meaning of the verse?

How is the question in the second half of verse 8 related to the parable and its explanation? This is the only parable that ends with an explicit question. Why? What is the answer to the question? How is that answer relevant to the context in which Jesus has told this parable?
Verses 35–43: When Mark recounted this story, he placed it immediately after James and John’s request to sit at the Lord’s right and left hand and Jesus’s discussion with the apostles about what it means to be great in the kingdom. Luke puts the event after Jesus’s encounter with the rich young man who could not give up his riches, the discussion with Peter about what things those who follow him are blessed with, and Jesus’s prophecy that he would soon be killed in Jerusalem. Do the different contexts into which Mark and Luke place this story give it different meanings?

How do Jesus’s “handlers” deal with the blind man (verse 39)? To whom might we compare those people in our own experience? Are we, probably without knowing it, ever among those who tell people crying for the mercy of God to hold their peace? If so, how do we do so?

To whom might we compare the blind man with his cry for mercy? Are we blind? Do we need mercy? What can heal our blindness?

The blind man calls Jesus “Son of David” (verse 39). What did he mean by that title? How is it relevant to the coming events, such as Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem?

Verse 43 describes the response of both the blind man and the people who saw him cured as praising and glorifying God. Is that part of our worship? If so, where and when does it occur?

Luke 19

Verses 1–10: The name Zacchaeus (Zaccai in Hebrew) means “pure” or “innocent.” Is that relevant or irrelevant to the story?
Why does Luke tell us that Zacchaeus was the chief publican and that he was rich? Does that suggest anything about his character? Which suggestion, that of his name or that of his occupation, turns out to be more accurate? When we hear his occupation, “rich tax collector,” how does Luke expect us to think of Zacchaeus?

Compare this parable to that of the blind man. How are Zacchaeus and the blind man in the same position relative to their culture?

Do you think that Luke places this story near the story of the rich young man so that we can contrast the two? If so, in how many ways do you see a contrast?

Of what significance is it that Jesus calls someone to him whom it would seem impossible for him to know about (verse 5)?

Why was Zacchaeus joyful (verse 6)? Who do you think murmured (verse 7)?

What does verse 8 tell us about Zacchaeus? Is he describing what he has done all along or what he will do from now on? How do you decide? Compare Numbers 5:5–7, which gives the law of restitution. What does that tell us about Zacchaeus’s offer?

In verse 9, what does Jesus mean when he says, “This day is salvation come to this house”? Is he using the word salvation to refer to himself or to what has happened to Zacchaeus? If the latter, why does Jesus say “to this house [or household]” rather than “to Zacchaeus”? 

THE NEW TESTAMENT MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY QUESTIONS

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Explain Jesus’s explanation of what has happened: “forsoo-
much as he also is a son of Abraham” (verse 9).

The language of verse 10 suggests that this event is related to
the parables of the sheep, the coin, and the two sons (Luke 15).
What specific connections can you see? (Notice, for example,
the parallel between Luke 18:7 and Luke 15:2.) How does re-
membering that parable help us understand this event? How
does understanding this event help us read that story?

John 11

Recall from the study questions for lesson 12 that many see
the first part of the Gospel of John as organized around seven
miracles and accompanying sermons:

1. Turning water into wine at the wedding feast and
the discourse on being born again (John 2:1–12;
3:1–21)

2. Raising the nobleman’s son to life and a discourse
on Jesus as the living water (John 4:43–51; 4:1–42)

3. Healing the man by the pool of Bethesda on the
Sabbath and explaining that Jesus is Lord of the Sab-
bath (John 5:1–14; 5:19–47)

4. Feeding the five thousand and teaching that Jesus is
the bread of life (John 6:1–15; 6:22–66)

5. Walking on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus comes to
Capernaum mysteriously and the discourse on the
inability of the Pharisees to understand him (John
6:16–21; 7:14–39)
6. Healing the man born blind and the teaching that Christ is the Light of the World (John 9; 8:12–59)

7. The material for this lesson: raising Lazarus from the dead and the teaching of the resurrection (John 11; 10:1–18).

Why do you think John uses miracles as the signs of Jesus’s ministry and of his teaching?

Four of the seven miracles are healings. Why is healing such an important sign of Jesus’s ministry? Does it have symbolic significance as well as physical benefit?

The second part of John’s Gospel focuses on Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem, trial, death, and resurrection. How do these seven signs and sermons prepare us for that story?

As you read the story of the raising of Lazarus, ask yourself how Lazarus is a type for every person: in what various ways can we be said to be dead? Brought back to life?

Verses 1–2: The name Lazarus (Eleazar: “God has helped”) was a common name at the time.

Why is it important that we know that Jesus has gone to the town where Mary and Martha live? Why is it important that we know which Mary it is? (See John 12:3; it does not seem to be the woman in Luke 7:37–38.)

Verses 3–6: What do the Gospels mean when they describe a person as someone whom Jesus loved? Didn’t he love everyone? Does Jesus love the true Christian differently than he does the unrepentant person? If not, why not? If so, how?
In verse 4 Jesus says, “This sickness is not unto death.” Since Lazarus does, in fact, die, what could Jesus have meant by that? To what does this sickness lead?

What would you normally think of someone who delayed coming to the bedside of an ill person whom he could heal? What would you think if that person said, “Waiting and letting him get worse before I heal him will show what a good doctor I am”? Is that what Jesus was doing?

How do you think a non-Christian might respond on hearing this much of the story? Why would John tell the story this way? (Notice that he is the only Gospel writer who tells the story at all, though the other Gospels tell of other persons restored to life.) Why don’t we think the same things of Jesus that we might think of another person who acted in a similar way? Why is it important for Jesus to bring someone to life at this particular point in his ministry?

**Verses 7–10:** How is what Jesus says in verses 9–10 an answer to the disciples’ worry in verse 8? How would you explain what Jesus is saying in verse 9? (Note that there were twelve hours in the daylight during Jesus’s time, regardless of the season. So during the winter, daytime hours were shorter than they were during the summer.)

What does Jesus mean by “There is no light in him” (verse 10)? Do you think that the disciples understood Jesus’s answer? Why or why not?

**Verses 11–15:** How do the disciples misunderstand Jesus? How is their misunderstanding nevertheless a kind of prophecy? Does that misunderstanding teach us anything about our relation to the Father and the Son?
Verse 16: When Thomas says, “Let us also go, that we may die with him,” is he speaking of dying with Christ or with Lazarus? (See the footnote in the LDS edition.)

Why does John put Thomas’s exhortation at this point in the story, where it seems out of place, rather than earlier?

Verses 17–19: There appears to have been a common belief at the time that the spirit of a person hung around its body for three days after death. The idea was that a person might die but revive during the first two or three days afterward. If that was a common belief, would that help us understand why Jesus waited as long as he did?

It seems that Jesus came to Bethany on the seventh day after learning of Lazarus’s illness. Are those seven days significant? If so, how?

Why is it important that we know how far it was from Jerusalem to Bethany? How far was it from the Jordan, where Jesus was baptized, to Bethany? (See the map in the LDS edition of the Bible.)

Who are “the Jews” who came to comfort Martha and Mary? To whom does John often refer with that name? (See passages such as John 2:6; 3:25; 5:10–18; 6:41, 52; 7:1, 11–13; 8:48, 52, 57; and 9:18–22; also compare verse 18 to verse 13.) It is important to recognize that in John’s Gospel the term “the Jews” does not refer to all who were from the tribe of Judah. Rather, it refers to a specific group of people in Jerusalem at that time, a particular social caste or political power. (Failure to see that has caused countless deaths and horror: Christians killing and otherwise tormenting those whom they took to be among “the Jews.”)
What does the fact that many of the Jews came to comfort Martha and Mary suggest about their social standing? How is that relevant? Why is their presence in the story important?

**Verses 20–22:** Compare Martha’s and Mary’s behavior in Luke 10:38–42 to their behavior here. Do Luke and John portray them the same, or do you see differences?

Why does Martha go to meet Jesus? Why do you think Mary stays in the house?

Does Martha accuse Jesus in verse 21?

**Verses 23–27:** Why doesn’t Jesus tell her straightforwardly that he will bring Lazarus back to life?

Is Jesus giving this event a double meaning, showing two ways that the miracle will glorify the Father and, therefore, the Son (compare verse 4)?

What are some of the purposes that this miracle serves? Do we see one of those purposes in these verses?

In verse 24 Martha confesses her belief in the resurrection and Jesus responds, “I am the resurrection.” How would she have most likely understood that response? What is Jesus telling her when he says what he does?

Why does verse 26 say that everyone who is alive and believes in Jesus “shall never die”? Why do we need already to be alive? Alive in what sense? Why is it important that Martha believe this teaching? How is her belief related to the story as a whole?

**Verses 28–32:** Did Jesus call for Mary, or was this Martha’s idea? What would the former suggest? What would the latter suggest?
Why does Martha go to Mary secretly? Can we see Mary as a type for the Christian in verse 28? If so, for whom is Martha a type?

Is Jesus waiting outside the town? If so, why?

Is Mary accusing Jesus in verse 32?

**Verses 33–37:** What troubled (and the best translation here is probably *angered* rather than *troubled* or *groaned in the spirit*) Jesus about this event (verse 33)?

If weeping at death is appropriate (D&C 42:45), what was wrong with the weeping of this group? Is 1 Thessalonians 4:13 relevant? Why did Jesus weep (verse 34)? Presumably he knew that he was going to raise Lazarus, so what was there to weep about?

Do some of the Jews accuse Jesus in verse 37? Is what they say different from what Martha and Mary have said (verses 21 and 32)? If so, how?

**Verses 38–44:** Why does John again tell us that Jesus was “groaning in himself” or angry (verse 38)?

Why does Martha think that Jesus wants the tomb opened?

When did Jesus tell Martha that if she would believe, then she would see the glory of God (verse 40)? If he is referring to what he said in verse 26, then “shall never die” and “shouldest see the glory of God” are parallel. Does that tell us anything about what he was saying in verse 26? What kind of life was he promising those who believe? What does it mean to believe?

In verse 41 we see them take away the stone from the tomb; then we hear Jesus speak to the Father as if he has *already*
said a prayer asking that Lazarus be returned to life. Is that what has happened? If so, why doesn’t John explicitly tell us about that previous prayer?

The word translated people in verse 42 could perhaps better be translated crowd or multitude. Is Jesus putting on a show for them? How do you explain verse 42?

John shows us Lazarus coming out of the tomb (verse 44), but nothing of his reunion with his sisters and friends. Why does John end the story so abruptly and move on to a related topic?

**Verses 45–46:** We’ve seen this division among “the Jews” before (e.g., John 9:16). What does it tell us about these events and about Christ’s effect on those who experienced his earthly ministry?

**Verses 47–48:** At this time, what was the relationship like between the priests and the Pharisees? Does that relation shed any light on the gathering that we see here?

Do the priests and the Pharisees believe that Jesus performs miracles (verse 47)? If so, why are they opposed to him?

What two things are the priests and Pharisees worried about losing (verse 48)?

Why would they believe that if people follow Jesus the Romans are likely to take over the rule of Judea? The Romans already oversaw the Judean government and had troops in Jerusalem and other cities to enforce their power. So what would it mean for them to “take away both our place and nation”? When did the priests and Pharisees lose their place and nation? What brought that about?
Verses 49–52: In verse 50 Caiaphas uses the same reasoning—and perhaps exactly the same wording—that the Lord used with Nephi when he told Nephi to kill Laban (1 Nephi 4:13). How do you explain that? What do you make of it? Would Caiaphas have seen the two circumstances as different?

Verses 51–52: The first clause of verse 51 suggests that we could understand Caiaphas to have been referring to himself in verse 49. How so? What irony is John exploiting? When did the high priest ever die to save Israel? To think about that, consider that Hebrews speaks of Jesus as “the great high priest” (Hebrews 4:14). What Jewish ritual made that parallel explicit?

In verse 52, to whom would early Christians have thought “that nation” referred? Does it refer to the phrase “the children of God that were scattered abroad”?

How is Jesus’s death related to the gathering? Given the importance of the resurrection, why does John speak here only of Jesus’s death?

Verses 53–57: How is the raising of Lazarus related to the decision to kill Jesus?

Why does Jesus go to Ephraim to wait for Passover (verse 54)? How was Passover a purifying festival?

For what reason or reasons might Jesus’s passion and resurrection have taken place at Passover rather than at the fast commemorating the atonement, Yom Kippur?