



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 16:14-18**

To understand more about the certainty of God's law coming to pass.

## A Shrinking Value

In a survey conducted just prior to the pandemic, the U.S. Census Bureau asked young adults what life transitions were “extremely important” to them:

- 62% said completing formal schooling
- 52% said becoming employed full time
- 50% said becoming capable of supporting a family financially
- 43% said being financially independent from their parents
- 26% said no longer living in their parents' house
- 12% said getting married

It seems that overwhelmingly, the goals and priorities of young people very much center around personal achievement and financial success, and have very little to do with getting married and starting a family. One could argue that 50% said “becoming capable of supporting a family” counts towards a kind of family value, but I would respond to that by pointing out that 50% is not a strong number to begin with, and that secondly, that value has more to do with being financially savvy than family oriented.

And yet, marriage (and by extension, the family) matters to the heart of God, and the Scripture has much to say concerning it. In Luke 16:14-18, Jesus shifts His attention back to the Pharisees and teaches about the enduring nature of the Law, and how it specifically pertains to marriage. Below is a closer examination of Jesus' words to the religious leaders of His day concerning the Law and marriage.

## The Law, the Prophets, and John

Verse 14 reveals the Pharisees' response to Jesus two parables directed towards them concerning the prodigal son and the dishonest manager. They clearly understood the underlying message because they responded poorly: "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him" (Lk. 16:14). Jesus responded: "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void" (Lk. 16:15-17). Jesus' words are loaded with meaning. Below is a breakdown of some of major concepts.

### **GOD SEES IT**

The reason why the Pharisees responded to Jesus "with ridicule" is that they were "lovers of money," and that had not escaped the LORD's notice, for "God knows the heart" (Lk. 16:15). While it should not come as a surprise, we would do well to remember this. There is no fooling God; He sees everything we think about, yearn for, and pursue. God told the prophet Samuel concerning David, "For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). The Psalmist says, "For he knows the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44:21). Jesus reminds them of what they should know but have failed to live by.

### **THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS**

Jesus mentions "the Law and the Prophets," a way of summing up most of, if not all of, the Old Testament. Typically this was as shorthand to mean all of it, but technically the Jewish Old Testament is divided into the Law (Torah), Prophets (Nevi'im), and Writings (Ketuvim). Either way, Jesus insinuates it has come to an end with the arrival of John (Lk. 16:16). But what does Jesus mean by this? One popular interpretation among evangelicals is that He is speaking of the entire Old Testament and all of its demands. Since John has arrived, and with him the New Testament era, the Old is rendered void. However, this would contradict what Jesus literally says in the next verse: "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void" (Lk. 16:17). It is not that the Old Testament is void; the Old Testament is God's revelation and it remains true and active. In fact, any time the New Testament references "Scripture," it has the Old Testament in mind.

### **JOHN**

More likely, Jesus means *the Old Testament age*. The arrival of John marks the beginning of a new age predicted by the Old Testament (Mal. 3:1; 4:5) wherein the Messiah will come and make atonement for God's people. This is an important distinction to understand. Rendering the Old Testament void strips much of the New Testament of its power since the New Testament is often a reflection of what has been fulfilled from the Old. Many will ask, "Well if the Old Testament is still binding, why do we not make sacrifices?" The answer to that question is found in the book of Hebrews. There is no longer a need for sacrifice, not because the Old Testament has been stripped of its relevance, but because Christ, our final High Priest has made a sacrifice "once and for all" (Heb. 7:27). Jesus says that as a result of the New Testament era, "everyone forces their way into" the kingdom. The word "force" connotes violence. Jesus likely is speaking to the reality that coming into the kingdom will be hard and require standing against the oppression of Satan, sin, and demons.

### **EARTH WILL PASS AWAY**

Jesus said, "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void." A dot in the Hebrew language represent one of the smallest markings in the entire orthography. In other words, it would be easier for the heavens and the earth to be destroyed than for the smallest part of God's written word

to be rendered meaningless? Why? Because God can destroy a corrupt creation (and will), but He cannot violate His own character and make a promise He doesn't keep. The apostle Peter speaks of the coming day when God will, in fact, destroy the heavens and the earth: "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:11-13). God's Word will never fail; the earth and the heavens someday will.

## Implications for Marriage

It's within this context that Jesus speaks to marriage. Verse 18: "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." This is a broadly spoken pronouncement and one that requires more qualification from the rest of Scripture that this present study doesn't have time nor space to account for. There are at least a few things that can be said, however, to help situate Jesus' words properly. For one, the cultural practice of divorce during Jesus' day was extremely abused. Rabbis of Jesus' day interpreted the divorce decree given to Moses (Deut. 24:1-4). Robert Stein writes, "Hillel interpreted this broadly and permitted divorce in such cases as a wife burning supper or if a husband found another woman more attractive. Shammi interpreted this more narrowly and permitted divorce only in the case of sexual unchastity on the wife's part."<sup>1</sup> One thing is certain - God hates divorce and this decree is given because of the hardness of heart, not because it's a good practice (Mal. 2:16). There are extenuating circumstances that both Jesus and Paul describe in other parts of the New Testament, so again, read this with the understanding that Jesus is speaking in generalities. As a whole, God disdains divorce and never desires it, and because His law will never pass away, this will never change.

## What About Now?

One takeaway is that when we have a problem with God's Word, we are supposed to change, not it. God's Word will never change nor will it pass away. We must be conformed to it, and not the other way around. Another takeaway is that God never desires divorce, nor should it ever be celebrated. Though there are circumstances wherein divorce is permitted, it should never be seen as a fall back or plan B.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 16:14. What were the Pharisees full of? How did they respond to Jesus' parables?

---



---

2. Read Luke 16:15. What does Jesus say God is aware of?

---



---

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery, vol. 24 of The New American Commentary. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 420.

### Day Two

1. Read Luke 16:15. What does the Lord think of that which is exalted among men?

---

---

2. Read Luke 16:16. What does “The Law and the Prophets” mean? What “ends” this era?

---

---

### Day Three

1. Read Luke 16:16. What does it mean that “everyone forces their way in” to the kingdom?

---

---

2. Read Luke 16:17. What is easier to occur over the Word becoming void?

---

---

### Day Four

1. Read 2 Peter 3:11-13. In your own words, summarize what Peter says here.

---

---

2. Read Luke 16:18. In your own words, summarize Jesus’ words concerning divorce.

---

---

## Week 59 Discussion: The Enduring Word

In Luke 16:14-17, Jesus speaks about the lasting nature of the Old Testament specifically. Talk about the importance of the Old Testament, and why you think so many people (and churches) avoid dealing with what it says.

1. Icebreaker: What promise of God in the Old Testament is most comforting to you? Why?
2. What is your favorite book of the Old Testament. Why?
3. What is your least favorite book of the Old Testament. Why?
4. How would avoiding the Old Testament be harmful to your theology?
5. What percentage of attention should be given to the Old Testament and the New Testament? Why?
6. How can the church better emphasize the enduring nature of the Old Testament?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus talks about the enduring nature of the Old Testament.
2. Jesus speaks to the importance of marriage and the reason why divorce was given.