

Luke 13:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Analysis

Jesus concludes with a reversal principle: 'And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.' This paradox appears throughout Jesus' teaching (Matthew 19:30, 20:16, Mark 10:31) and illustrates kingdom values inverting worldly values. The 'first' (privileged, powerful, prestigious by worldly or religious standards) will be 'last' if they trust their status rather than God's grace. The 'last' (marginalized, despised, powerless) will be 'first' if they humbly receive God's mercy. In context, many Jews who claimed privilege through Abrahamic descent will be excluded, while Gentiles who were excluded from covenant promises will be included. Merit-based religion always inverts grace-based salvation.

Historical Context

This principle was scandalously countercultural in first-century Judaism, which emphasized hierarchies of holiness, ethnic privilege, and religious achievement. The Pharisees claimed superior standing through law observance; Jesus declared tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom before them (Matthew 21:31). The early church struggled to apply this principle, initially maintaining Jewish-Gentile distinctions until Paul insisted on equality (Galatians 2:11-21). The reversal principle continues to challenge every generation—God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the first/last reversal expose the danger of trusting religious privilege, theological knowledge, or moral achievement for salvation?
2. In what ways might contemporary Christianity create false hierarchies that contradict gospel grace?
3. How should the certainty that God judges hearts, not external status, shape Christian humility and compassion toward those society deems 'last'?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἰδοὺ, εἰσὶν ἔσχατοι οἱ ἔσονται πρῶτοι καὶ
And behold there are last which shall be first And
G2532 G2400 G1526 G2078 G3739 G2071 G4413 G2532

εἰσὶν πρῶτοι οἱ ἔσονται ἔσχατοι
there are first which shall be last
G1526 G4413 G3739 G2071 G2078

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 19:30 (Parallel theme): But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Mark 10:31 (Parallel theme): But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Matthew 20:16 (Parallel theme): So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

