

# Notes on Luke

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## Introduction

### WRITER

Several factors indicate that the writer of this Gospel was the same person who wrote the Book of Acts. First, a man named "Theophilus" was the recipient of both books (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Second, Acts refers to a previous work by the same writer. Third, both books have several common themes, some of which do not receive the same emphasis elsewhere in the New Testament. Fourth, there are general structural and stylistic similarities, including the use of chiasms and the tendency to focus on specific individuals.

The writer also acquired his knowledge of Jesus' life and ministry from research rather than from eyewitness observations (Luke 1:1-4). Therefore he was not one of the disciples who traveled with Jesus.

The early church identified the writer as Luke (probably shortened from "Lukios" or "Lukanos"<sup>1</sup>). The heretic Marcion is the earliest witness we have to Luke's authorship (ca. A.D. 135). The Muratorian Canon (ca. A.D. 180) mentioned Luke as the writer too. It described him as the physician who accompanied Paul on his journey (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1—28:16; Col. 4:14; Phile. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11). Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180-185) also believed Luke wrote this Gospel and called him the "inseparable" companion of Paul.<sup>2</sup> Later church fathers likewise referred to Luke as the writer of this Gospel.

Luke was evidently a Gentile (cf. Col. 4:10-14). However, some scholars believed that Colossians 4:11 and 14 do not necessarily mean that Luke was a Gentile, and that he may have been a Hellenistic Jew.<sup>3</sup> Church tradition identified Antioch of Syria as Luke's hometown, but this has not been validated. Philippi also has some traditional support.<sup>4</sup>

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The main doctrines of systematic theology that Luke stressed were God, Jesus, salvation (especially redemption), the Holy Spirit, angels, and things to come.

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<sup>1</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 2:ix.

<sup>2</sup>*Against Heresies*, 3:14:1.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., R. P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty*, p. 146; and John Wenham, "The Identification of Luke," *Evangelical Quarterly* 63:1 (1991):16.

<sup>4</sup>Robertson, 2:x. Cf. John Nolland, *Luke 1—9:20*, p. xxxix.

"Luke is the only synoptic evangelist to use the noun 'salvation' (*soteria* four times [1:69, 71, 77, 19:9]; *soterion* twice [2:30; 3:6]) and 'savior' (*soter* [1:47; 2:11]), and he used the verb 'save' (*sodzo*) more than any other book in the New Testament (although this is mainly because of Luke's greater length)."<sup>5</sup>

"In the gospel of Luke the phrase *praising God* occurs oftener than in all the rest of the New Testament put together."<sup>6</sup>

There is also much emphasis on the glory of God, prayer, miracles, the divine plan that Jesus fulfilled, Israel, believing, discipleship, forgiveness, and God's Word. About 20 of Jesus' parables are unique to this Gospel. Luke also related certain events in Jesus' life to secular history, and he emphasized Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

Luke stressed Jesus' concern for all people, especially for individuals that Jewish society of His day despised, such as Gentiles, the poor, women, children, and "sinners." He wrote "the gospel of the underdog."<sup>8</sup> Luke used the Greek term *nomikos*, which means "lawyer," rather than the Hebrew term *grammateus*, meaning "scribe." He emphasized Jesus' practical teachings, such as what He taught about money (cf. chs. 12 and 16).

"In terms of its worldview, its theology, and its practical presentation of principles, this Gospel explains how we can serve God better."<sup>9</sup>

Luke showed interest in purpose, fulfillment, and accomplishment. He documented the joy that resulted from Jesus' saving and healing works. He stressed Jesus' call for people to become His disciples. He portrayed Jesus as dependent on the Holy Spirit and on the Father through prayer. Finally, Luke recorded many examples of Jesus' power.<sup>10</sup> Muslims respect the Gospels, and probably more Muslims have been brought to faith in Christ through Luke's Gospel than any other, because of its emphases.

"Luke's Gospel gives a reader a more comprehensive grasp of the history of the period than the other Gospels. He presented more facts about the earthly life of Jesus than did Matthew, Mark, or John."<sup>11</sup>

Luke is the longest book in the New Testament (1,121 verses), Matthew is second (1,071 verses), and Acts is third (1,007 verses). (John has 879 verses, and Mark has 678 verses.) Luke and Acts combined comprise about 27 percent of the Greek New Testament.

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<sup>5</sup>Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 220.

<sup>6</sup>William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. xvi.

<sup>7</sup>For an excellent summary of Luke's theology, see Darrell L. Bock, "A Theology of Luke-Acts," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 87-166.

<sup>8</sup>Barclay, p. xvii.

<sup>9</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>For other characteristic features of Luke's Gospel, see W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 366-81.

<sup>11</sup>John A. Martin, "Luke," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 201.

Furthermore, Luke wrote more verses in the New Testament than anyone else: 2128 in Luke and Acts. Paul wrote the second largest number of verses (2032), then John (1416), then Matthew (1071), then Mark (678), and finally the lesser contributors.<sup>12</sup>

"The gospel according to St. Luke has been called the loveliest book in the world. . . . It would not be far wrong to say that the third gospel is the best life of Christ ever written."<sup>13</sup>

## **PURPOSES**

The Gospel of Luke is one of the books of the Bible that states the purpose of the writer. Luke said that he wrote to inform Theophilus about the truthfulness of the gospel that Theophilus had heard (1:4).

In Acts, Luke said he had written previously about the things that Jesus began to do and teach before His ascension (Acts 1:1-2). He then proceeded to record the things Jesus continued to do and teach after His ascension—through His apostles—in Acts. Presumably Luke wrote both his Gospel and Acts with a larger audience than just Theophilus in view.

The distinctive emphases of the Gospel help us to identify secondary purposes. Luke demonstrated a strong desire to convince his readers of the reliability of the facts that he recorded, so they would believe in Jesus and become Christians, as well as the significance of what God had done in Christ.<sup>14</sup> These concerns are also clear in Acts.<sup>15</sup> Obviously he wrote to preserve the record of events that happened during Jesus' earthly ministry, but few ancient writers wrote simply to narrate a chronicle of events.<sup>16</sup> They wrote to convince their readers of something, and they used history to do that. Nevertheless, historical accuracy was important to them.<sup>17</sup> We believe that Luke's Gospel is an accurate continuation of biblical history that God preserved in Scripture. This Gospel constitutes an apologetic for Christianity that would have been of special interest to Greeks because of Luke's selection of material, vocabulary, and style.<sup>18</sup> It would give them a reason for the hope that was in them (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15).

"Luke's purpose was apparently not to provide an historical foundation for the Christian message. . . . He has 'ordered' the events of his narrative so as to bring out their significance, to persuade Theophilus—who is not so much concerned with the issue, Did it happen? as with the queries, What

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<sup>12</sup>See Bock, *Luke*, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>Barclay, p. xiii.

<sup>14</sup>Carson and Moo, p. 212.

<sup>15</sup>See I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*.

<sup>16</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *Matthew-Luke*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 800.

<sup>17</sup>See A. W. Mosley, "Historical Reporting in the Ancient World," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-66):10-26.

<sup>18</sup>See William J. Larkin Jr., "The Recovery of Luke-Acts as 'Grand Narrative' for the Church's Evangelistic and Edification Tasks in a Postmodern Age," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:3 (September 2000):405-15, for suggestions for using Luke-Acts in a postmodern age.

happened? and What does it all mean? By providing a more complete accounting of Jesus in his significance, Luke hopes to encourage active faith."<sup>19</sup>

### ORIGINAL AUDIENCE

Evidently Theophilus was a real person.<sup>20</sup> His name is Greek and means "lover of God." He appears to have been a fairly recent convert to Christianity from Greek paganism. Consequently it appears that Luke wrote for people such as Theophilus originally. Before his conversion, Theophilus may have been one of the Gentile God-fearers to which Luke referred several times in Acts. The "God-fearers" were Gentiles who had a certain respect for, and who wanted to learn more about, the God of the Jews. They came to the Jewish synagogues and listened to the Jewish Scriptures read there. Luke's orientation of his Gospel to the secular world and his references to Judaism also suggest that he wrote his Gospel with these people in mind.

"Much about Luke-Acts would well suit Cornelius-like readers."<sup>21</sup>

His use of the Septuagint version and his interest in the God-fearers suggest this too. The God-fearers had turned from Greek polytheism to Jewish monotheism, but many of them were not familiar with Palestinian geography and culture. Luke clarified these matters for his readers when necessary. The God-fearers were the Gentiles whom Paul found to be the most receptive soil for the gospel seed. Luke himself may have been one of this group, though there is no way to prove or to disprove that possibility.

"[Luke] writes to reassure the Christians of his day that their faith in Jesus is no aberration, but the authentic goal towards which God's ancient dealings with Israel were driving."<sup>22</sup>

By the first century, most of the pagan Greeks had stopped believing in the gods and goddesses of their mythology, and had abandoned fatalism. Many of them were following Eastern "mystery" religions that competed with Christianity for their allegiance. Both beliefs offered saviors, but the Savior of Christianity was a personal resurrected Lord, whereas the savior of the mystery religions was impersonal and ideal. Luke evidently wrote to persuade these people to believe in Jesus and to give them a solid factual basis for their faith.

"That he wrote for an urban church community in the Hellenistic world is fairly certain."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup>See my comment on 1:3.

<sup>21</sup>Nolland, p. 10. Cf. pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, p. 187.

<sup>23</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 33.

## LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS

Experts in Greek literary styles acknowledge Luke's style and structure as superb.<sup>24</sup> No one knows Luke's educational background, but clearly he had training in Greek composition as well as medicine, and a talent for writing. Luke used many words that the other Gospel writers did not, and many of them show a wide literary background. He also used several medical and theological terms that are unique. Luke's use of Semitisms shows that he knew the Hebrew Old Testament well. However, his preference for the Septuagint suggests that it was the version his reader(s) used most. Perhaps Luke was a Gentile who had much exposure to Semitic idioms from Paul and other Jews. He was a skillful enough writer to use chiasms as a major structural device.<sup>25</sup> A chiasm was a literary device, used by both Jews and Greeks, that gave unity to a composition or section of text. Acts also contains them. Luke also repeated similar stories with variations (cf. 1:80; 2:40; 2:52). This literary device aids learning while giving additional new insights. He also tended to use a particular term frequently in one or more passages, and then rarely or never after that. This makes the term stand out and calls attention to it where it occurs.<sup>26</sup>

Luke identified the genre of his work as a narrative (orderly "account"; 1:1). It is a historical narrative in that it relates events that happened in the past in story form.<sup>27</sup>

## DATE

Practically all scholars believe that Luke wrote his Gospel before he wrote Acts. Many conservative scholars hold that he wrote Acts during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, during which the book's timeline ends (A.D. 60-62). Luke accompanied Paul during much of that apostle's missionary ministry. At times Luke was not with Paul, but he was ministering as Paul's representative in one or another of the churches that Paul had founded. Evidently Paul was Luke's primary source of information for his Gospel and Acts, as Peter was Mark's primary source for the second Gospel. Luke may have written his Gospel during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, along with Acts. However, it seems more likely, in view of how Luke introduced these two books, that he wrote the Gospel sometime earlier than Acts. Luke had the most time to write this Gospel during Paul's Caesarean imprisonment (A.D. 57-59, cf. Acts 24:1—26:32). This seems to me and some other writers to be the most probable date of writing.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>See Henry J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke*.

<sup>25</sup>See Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*.

<sup>26</sup>See Henry J. Cadbury, "Four Features of Lucan Style," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander Keck and J. Louis Martyn (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 87-102.

<sup>27</sup>See Green, pp. 2-6.

<sup>28</sup>E.g., J. S. Howson, in *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 612; Robertson, 2:xi; Mark L. Bailey, in *The New Testament Explorer*, p. 102. For additional introductory information, see Earle E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*; and Carson and Moo, pp. 198-224.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction 1:1-4
- II. The birth and childhood of Jesus 1:5—2:52
  - A. The announcement of John the Baptist's birth 1:5-25
    - 1. The introduction of John's parents 1:5-7
    - 2. The angel's announcement to Zechariah 1:8-23
    - 3. The pregnancy of Elizabeth 1:24-25
  - B. The announcement of Jesus' birth 1:26-56
    - 1. The introduction of Mary and Joseph 1:26-27
    - 2. The angel's announcement to Mary 1:28-38
    - 3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth 1:39-56
  - C. The birth and early life of John the Baptist 1:57-80
    - 1. The naming of John 1:57-66
    - 2. Zechariah's song of praise 1:67-79
    - 3. The preparation of John 1:80
  - D. The birth and early life of Jesus ch. 2
    - 1. The setting of Jesus' birth 2:1-7
    - 2. The announcement to the shepherds 2:8-20
    - 3. Jesus' circumcision 2:21
    - 4. Jesus' presentation in the temple 2:22-38
    - 5. Jesus' development in Nazareth 2:39-40
    - 6. Jesus' visit to the temple as a boy 2:41-50
    - 7. Jesus' continuing growth 2:51-52
- III. The preparation for Jesus' ministry 3:1—4:13
  - A. The ministry of John the Baptist 3:1-20
    - 1. The beginning of John's ministry 3:1-6
    - 2. John's preaching 3:7-18
    - 3. The end of John's ministry 3:19-20
  - B. The baptism of Jesus 3:21-22
  - C. The genealogy of Jesus 3:23-38
  - D. The temptation of Jesus 4:1-13
- IV. Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee 4:14—9:50
  - A. Jesus' teaching ministry and the response to it 4:14—5:11
    - 1. An introduction to Jesus' Galilean ministry 4:14-15
    - 2. Jesus' teaching in Nazareth 4:16-30
    - 3. Jesus' ministry in and around Capernaum 4:31-44
    - 4. The call of Peter, James, and John 5:1-11
  - B. The beginning of controversy with the Pharisees 5:12—6:11
    - 1. Jesus' cleansing of a leprous Jew 5:12-16
    - 2. Jesus' authority to forgive sins 5:17-26
    - 3. Jesus' attitude toward sinners 5:27-32

4. Jesus' attitude toward fasting 5:33-39
5. Jesus' authority over the Sabbath 6:1-5
6. Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath 6:6-11
- C. Jesus' teaching of His disciples 6:12-49
  1. The selection of 12 disciples 6:12-16
  2. The assembling of the people 6:17-19
  3. The Sermon on the Mount 6:20-49
- D. Jesus' compassion for people ch. 7
  1. The healing of a centurion's servant 7:1-10
  2. The raising of a widow's son 7:11-17
  3. The confusion about Jesus' identity 7:18-35
  4. The anointing by a sinful woman 7:36-50
- E. Jesus' teaching in parables 8:1-21
  1. The companions and supporters of Jesus 8:1-3
  2. The parable of the soils 8:4-15
  3. The parable of the lamp 8:16-18
  4. The true family of Jesus 8:19-21
- F. Jesus' mighty works 8:22-56
  1. The stilling of the storm 8:22-25
  2. The deliverance of a demoniac in Gadara 8:26-39
  3. The healing of a woman with a hemorrhage and the raising of Jairus' daughter 8:40-56
- G. Jesus' preparation of the Twelve 9:1-50
  1. The mission of the Twelve to Israel 9:1-6
  2. Herod's question about Jesus' identity 9:7-9
  3. The feeding of the 5000 9:10-17
  4. Peter's confession of faith 9:18-27
  5. The Transfiguration 9:28-36
  6. The exorcism of an epileptic boy 9:37-43a
  7. Jesus' announcement of His betrayal 9:43b-45
  8. The pride of the disciples 9:46-50
- V. Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem 9:51—19:27
  - A. The responsibilities and rewards of discipleship 9:51—10:24
    1. The importance of toleration 9:51-56
    2. The importance of self-denial 9:57-62
    3. The importance of participation 10:1-16
    4. The joy of participation 10:17-20
    5. The joy of comprehension 10:21-24
  - B. The relationships of disciples 10:25—11:13
    1. The relation of disciples to their neighbors 10:25-37
    2. The relation of disciples to Jesus 10:38-42
    3. The relation of disciples to God the Father 11:1-13

- C. The results of popular opposition 11:14-54
  - 1. The Beelzebul controversy 11:14-26
  - 2. The importance of observing God's Word 11:27-28
  - 3. The sign of Jonah 11:29-32
  - 4. The importance of responding to the light 11:33-36
  - 5. The climax of Pharisaic opposition 11:37-54
- D. The instruction of the disciples in view of Jesus' rejection 12:1—13:17
  - 1. The importance of fearless confession 12:1-12
  - 2. The importance of the eternal perspective 12:13-21
  - 3. God's provisions for disciples 12:22-34
  - 4. The coming of the Son of Man 12:35-48
  - 5. The coming crisis 12:49-59
  - 6. A call to repentance 13:1-9
  - 7. A sign of Jesus' ability to affect change 13:10-17
- E. Instruction about the kingdom 13:18—14:35
  - 1. Parables of the kingdom 13:18-21
  - 2. Entrance into the kingdom 13:22-30
  - 3. Jesus' postponement of the kingdom 13:31-35
  - 4. Participants in the kingdom 14:1-24
  - 5. The cost of discipleship 14:25-35
- F. God's attitude toward sinners ch. 15
  - 1. The setting for Jesus' teaching 15:1-2
  - 2. The parable of the lost sheep 15:3-7
  - 3. The parable of the lost coin 15:8-10
  - 4. The parable of the lost son 15:11-32
- G. Jesus' warnings about riches ch. 16
  - 1. Discipleship as stewardship 16:1-13
  - 2. Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees for their greed 16:14-31
- H. Jesus' warning about disciples' actions and attitudes 17:1-19
  - 1. The prevention of sin and the restoration of sinners 17:1-4
  - 2. The disciples' attitude toward their duty 17:5-10
  - 3. The importance of gratitude 17:11-19
- I. Jesus' teaching about His return 17:20—18:8
  - 1. A short lesson for the Pharisees 17:20-21
  - 2. A longer explanation for the disciples 17:22-37
  - 3. The parable of the persistent widow 18:1-8
- J. The recipients of salvation 18:9—19:27
  - 1. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector 18:9-14
  - 2. An illustration of humility 18:15-17
  - 3. The handicap of wealth 18:18-30
  - 4. Jesus' passion announcement and the disciples' lack of perception 18:31-34

5. The healing of a blind man near Jericho 18:35-43
  6. Zaccheus' ideal response to Jesus 19:1-10
  7. The parable of the minas 19:11-27
- VI. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem 19:28—21:38
- A. The Triumphal Entry 19:28-40
  - B. The beginning of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem 19:41-48
    1. Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem 19:41-44
    2. Jesus' cleansing of the temple 19:45-46
    3. A synopsis of Jesus' teaching in the temple 19:47-48
  - C. Jesus' teachings in the temple 20:1—21:4
    1. The controversy over authority 20:1-8
    2. The parable of the wicked tenant farmers 20:9-19
    3. The question of tribute to Caesar 20:20-26
    4. The problem of the resurrection 20:27-40
    5. Jesus' question about David's son 20:41-44
    6. Jesus' condemnation of the scribes 20:45-47
    7. Jesus' commendation of a widow 21:1-4
  - D. Jesus' teaching about the destruction of the temple 21:5-36
    1. The setting and the warning about being misled 21:5-9
    2. The need for faithful perseverance 21:10-19
    3. The judgment coming on Jerusalem 21:20-24
    4. The second coming of the Son of Man 21:25-28
    5. The certainty of these events 21:29-33
    6. The concluding exhortation to watchfulness 21:34-36
  - E. A summary of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem 21:37-38
- VII. Jesus' passion, resurrection, and ascension chs. 22—24
- A. The plot to arrest Jesus 22:1-6
    1. The leaders' desire 22:1-2
    2. Judas' offer 22:3-6
  - B. The preparations for the Passover 22:7-13
  - C. Events in the upper room 22:14-38
    1. The Passover meal 22:14-18
    2. The institution of the Lord's Supper 22:19-20
    3. Jesus' announcement of His betrayal 22:21-23
    4. Teaching about the disciples' service 22:24-30
    5. Jesus' announcement of Peter's denial 22:31-34
    6. The opposition to come 22:35-38
  - D. The arrest of Jesus 22:39-53
    1. Jesus' preparation in Gethsemane 22:39-46
    2. Judas' betrayal 22:47-53

- E. The trials of Jesus 22:54—23:25
  - 1. Peter's denial of Jesus 22:54-62
  - 2. The mockery of the soldiers 22:63-65
  - 3. Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin 22:66-71
  - 4. Jesus' first appearance before Pilate 23:1-7
  - 5. Jesus' appearance before Herod 23:8-12
  - 6. Jesus' second appearance before Pilate 23:13-25
- F. The crucifixion of Jesus 23:26-49
  - 1. Events on the way to Golgotha 23:26-32
  - 2. Jesus' death 23:33-49
- G. The burial of Jesus 23:50-56
- H. The resurrection of Jesus 24:1-12
- I. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus 24:13-49
  - 1. The appearance to the disciples walking to Emmaus 24:13-35
  - 2. The appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem 24:36-49
- J. The ascension of Jesus 24:50-53

### **MESSAGE**

The first Gospel presented Jesus as the King. The second Gospel presented Him as the Servant. The third Gospel presents Him as the perfect Man. Matthew wrote to Jews about their King. Mark wrote to Romans about a Servant. Luke wrote to Greeks about the ideal Man. The title "Messiah" is most fitting for Jesus in Matthew. The title "Suffering Servant" is most appropriate in Mark. "Son of Man" is the title most characteristic of Luke's presentation of Jesus.

Luke stressed the saving work of Jesus in his Gospel. He presented Jesus as the Savior of humankind. He also proclaimed Jesus' work of providing salvation for humankind. Observe, first, the Savior that Luke presents, and then the salvation that the Savior came to provide.

Luke presented Jesus as the Savior in three different relationships. He presented Him as the firstborn of a new race. Second, he presented Him as the older brother in a new family. Third, he presented Him as the Redeemer of a lost humanity.

We will consider first Luke's concept of Jesus as the firstborn of a new race. Luke's genealogy (3:23-38) reveals how the writer wanted the reader to regard Jesus. Matthew traced Jesus' lineage back to David and Abraham, in his genealogy, to show His right to rule as Israel's Messiah. Luke traced Jesus' ancestry back to Adam. He did this to show Jesus' true humanity.

However, Luke went back even further than that to God. This indicates that Jesus was not just like other humans who descended from Adam. He was, as the Apostle Paul called Him, the "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). The first Adam that God placed on this earth failed and plunged his race into sin and death. The last Adam that God placed on the earth did

not fail, but saved His race from sin and brought it new life. The first man begins the Old Testament, but the "Second Man," to use another Pauline title (1 Cor. 15:47), begins the New Testament. As Adam headed one race, so Jesus heads a new race. Both "Adams" were real men. Thus, both men *head* real races of mankind. Luke viewed Jesus as succeeding where Adam failed, as atoning for Adam's transgression.

For Jesus to undo the consequences of Adam's fall, He had to be more than just a good man. He had to be a perfect man, a sinless man. Therefore Luke stressed Jesus' sinlessness. He did this primarily in his account of Jesus' birth. Luke stressed the virgin conception of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, not a sinful human, fathered Jesus. God regards the male as responsible in the human family. Husbands are responsible for their wives (Eph. 5:23-24). Fathers are responsible for their children (Eph. 6:4). God held Adam, not Eve, responsible for his descendants (Gen. 3:17-19).

Human beings are sinners for three separate reasons. First, we are sinners because we commit acts of sin. Second, even if we never committed one act of sin, we would still be sinners because we inherited a sinful human nature. This nature apparently comes through our fathers (traducianism; cf. Heb. 7:9-10). Third, we are sinners because God has imputed the guilt of Adam's sin to us because he is the head of the race and we are his descendants. As an illustration of this three-fold influence, consider a child. He is what he is for three reasons: his personal actions, his parents, and his citizenship (the country in which he was born). These all make him what he is, not just his actions.

Jesus was not a sinner. He did not commit any acts of sin. Second, He did not inherit a sinful nature from His human father because God was His real Father. Third, God did not impute Adam's sin to Jesus because Jesus was the direct descendant of God and therefore the head of a new race. God gave the first Adam life by breathing the breath of life into the body that He had created. Likewise, God gave the second Adam life by implanting His divine life into a body that He had created, namely, Mary's body.

The doctrine of the virgin birth is extremely important because it establishes the sinlessness of Jesus in two of the three ways whereby people become sinners: an inherited sinful nature, and the imputation of Adam's sin. If a virgin did not conceive Jesus, then He was a sinner. If Jesus was a sinner, then He cannot be the Savior of sinners.

One way a person becomes a sinner is by committing acts of sin. Luke showed that Jesus did not commit sins in his account of Jesus' temptations (4:1-13).

In the wilderness, Satan subjected Jesus to the strongest temptations that humans face. Satan directed Jesus' three tests at the three areas of human personality that constitute the totality of human existence. These areas are doing (the lust of the flesh), having (the lust of the eyes), and being (the pride of life). These are the same three areas in which Satan attacked Eve (cf. Gen. 3:1-7).

The first man fell in a garden, a good environment conducive to withstanding temptation. The Second Man overcame temptation in a wilderness, a bad environment conducive to yielding to temptation. Rather than showing at every turn in Jesus' life that He did not sin,

Luke showed that in the supreme test of His life Jesus did not sin. However, he continued to note Jesus' conflicts with Satan, demons, and sin throughout His life. Luke's record of these encounters also demonstrates Jesus' sinlessness.

At the Transfiguration (9:28-36), God declared His Son acceptable to Him. This meant that He was sinless.

Second, not only did Luke present Jesus as the head of a new race, but he also presented Jesus as the older brother in a new family. Since Jesus was the head of a new race, we might think that Luke would have presented Jesus as a father. Jesus was the first and, therefore, the source of all that follow in the race that He established. Nevertheless, Luke stressed Jesus' likeness with those in the new race. He is like an older brother to us who have new life through Him. This is not to deny His deity. In one sense, Jesus is completely different from us, since He is God. However, Luke stressed the sense in which He is like us, namely, in His humanity. He is one of us—fully human.

Luke presented Jesus as a man among men. He, of all the Gospel writers, wanted his readers to appreciate the fact that Jesus was a real person. There are many small indications of this throughout this Gospel that I have tried to point out in the exposition that follows. Luke did this because he was evidently writing to Greeks. Greeks had a background in polytheism and mythology. Because of their cultural background, they tended to think of gods as superhumans. These gods were not real people, but they had the characteristics of people expanded into superhuman proportions, faults and all. Luke wanted his readers to realize that Jesus was not that type of god. He was fully human, but He was also sinless. He had superhuman powers, but He was not the type of superman that the Greeks envisioned.

Jesus was a *fellow human being*, albeit sinless. This is very hard for us to imagine. Therefore, Luke put much in his Gospel that helps us understand Jesus, from His birth announcements, to His ascension into heaven. For example, Luke emphasized Jesus praying more than the other Gospel evangelists. As a man, Jesus was dependent on, and drew His strength from, the Father. We must not be too quick to ascribe Jesus' superior powers to His being God. He laid aside the use of these powers in the Incarnation, and usually operated as a Spirit-empowered man. Luke helps us appreciate this about Jesus. He stressed the Holy Spirit's enablement of Jesus. Luke alone recorded, "The Child continued to grow and to become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him" (2:40), and "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (2:52).

Third, Luke presented Jesus as the redeemer of a lost humanity, as well as the head of a new race, and the elder brother of believers. Since he was writing to Greeks, Luke did not identify many allusions to the Old Testament, or to Jewish life and history. These allusions are in the text, but Luke did not draw attention to them. One of the outstanding concepts in Israelite life that Luke did not identify as such, but which overshadows his portrait of Jesus, is the kinsman-redeemer. His presentation of Jesus fits the image of the Jewish kinsman-redeemer remarkably.

The kinsman-redeemer had to be the next of kin to the person he redeemed. Luke presented Jesus as qualifying as our redeemer in this respect. He was a man, as we are. Therefore He could provide redemption for His needy brothers.

The kinsman-redeemer also had to accept personal responsibility for those he purposed to save from their miserable estate. Luke presented Jesus as taking personal responsibility for lost sinners. He recorded Jesus saying that He *had* to go to the Cross. He viewed the salvation of mankind as something that He needed to accomplish, because He had made a personal commitment to do so. That commitment began in heaven, before the Incarnation, but continued on earth throughout Jesus' life.

The kinsman-redeemer had to overcome those who opposed his brethren. Luke presented Jesus as in conflict with Satan and his hosts. He showed Him interceding for the Father's help for His tempted brethren—Peter, for example. Jesus won the victory over mankind's great enemy for His brethren.

The kinsman-redeemer had to create an opportunity for his brother's redemption. Luke presented Jesus as doing this. Luke's distinctive presentation of Jerusalem as Jesus' city of destiny contributes to this theme. Jesus deliberately advanced toward Jerusalem and the Cross, because He was creating an opportunity for mankind's redemption. (Similarly, Luke presented the Apostle Paul deliberately advancing toward Rome, his city of destiny, in the Book of Acts.)

The kinsman-redeemer turned his back on his personal rights and privileges in order to provide redemption for his brother. Luke presented Jesus doing this as well. Jesus modeled this strongly for His disciples, we see in this Gospel. He also taught the importance of disciples doing this so we can bring salvation to our brothers (and sisters).

These major themes are very strong in Luke's Gospel. Jesus is the head of an entirely new race of people: the redeemed. He is the elder brother who provides an example for His brethren to follow, including depending on the Father and relying on the Spirit. He is the Savior who has come "to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

We have observed how Luke presents Jesus as the Savior. Now let us turn to what he revealed about salvation. The key verse in the Gospel is, I believe, 19:10: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost." We have been looking at "the Son of Man." Now let us look at "seeking and saving the lost." I would say that the key verse in Matthew is 27:37: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," and the key verse in Mark is 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." I would say the key verse in John is 20:31: "These [things] have been written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Luke reveals that the Son of Man has redeemed mankind. This Gospel is a record of God's redeeming work through Jesus Christ. Jesus' work on the Cross is the climax of this Gospel, as it is the climax of all the Gospels and history itself. Jesus was born to die. By His death, Jesus purchased mankind's freedom from sin at the cost of His own life. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper so His disciples would always keep the memory of the

significance of His death freshly before them. The Christian mission is to tell the world about this redemption (24:46-47).

Through redemption, God regenerates those who are dead in sin. This is the second step in God's plan of seeking and saving the lost, after providing redemption. Believers receive new life when they believe on Jesus. Comprehending what this new life involves—learning how to live in view of its reality, and appreciating its great potential—are all things that Luke stressed in this Gospel. Jesus' disciples struggled with learning this, as all Christians do. Luke recorded many of Jesus' teachings that are helpful in understanding and appreciating regeneration.

Through regeneration, God brings believers into *relationship with Himself*. This is the third step in this great salvation process. Luke helps the reader understand the difference between "trusting for salvation" and "working for rewards." What is our relationship to Jesus as His followers? What are our privileges and our responsibilities? How does prayer enter into our relationship? Luke has more to say to disciples about our relationship to the Father and the Son than any other Gospel evangelist.

Then, through *relationship with Himself*, God prepares believers for life after death as members of a new race. Luke recorded much that is of great help for us as readers on this subject as well. What is the next phase of our life with God going to be like? How should we prepare for it? What is ahead in the future? Luke teaches us what it means to be a member of the new redeemed race of humanity.

In addition to the central teaching of this Gospel, let me also point out what I believe are the reasons for its abiding appeal. These are two: the personality of Jesus, and the presentation of discipleship.

The personality of Jesus, as Luke presents Him in this Gospel, is very appealing. Three things make Him so.

First, we feel that we can identify with the Jesus of Luke's Gospel. This is probably because Luke presented Him as a real man. It may be harder to identify with a King or with a Suffering Servant, to say nothing about God: John's emphasis. Even though He is perfect, He is someone with whom we feel a natural kinship, because we share humanity together. Jesus faced what we face, yet He was pleasing to God. This is very encouraging.

Second, the Jesus of Luke's Gospel is attractive because He is different from us. Even though we are of the same kind, He holds a fascination for us, because He was the personification of ideal humanity. He was everything that God intended man to be. It is thrilling to view someone like that, since we all fall so far short of what we should be.

Third, this Jesus is attractive because He was so compassionate. One of the characteristic features of Luke's Gospel is the many references it contains featuring Jesus' concern for the needy—including women, the poor, the sick, and outcasts of society. We read of the social outcasts of Jesus' day flocking to Him and feeling at home in His presence. We see Him welcoming children, and we feel drawn to Him. We see Jesus' compassion in Matthew and in Mark, but Luke stresses Jesus' compassion more than they do.

Another reason for the appeal of this book is its presentation of discipleship. It contains some of the straightest talk and most challenging demands for followers of Jesus that the New Testament holds. We read Jesus telling us that unless we hate our family members, we cannot be His disciples (14:26). He taught that we have to deny ourselves (14:27). We have to renounce all that we have (14:33). Interestingly, these three conditions correspond to the three things that I mentioned earlier that Luke pointed out about Jesus. He did not call His disciples to do anything He had not done. Let me explain further.

Jesus calls Christians to view our connections with our old race differently, because we have become members of a new race. Jesus taught that our spiritual relations are really closer than our physical relations. Therefore, we should let these old relations go if they interfere with our participation in the calling of our new race. We should not break contact with unbelievers, of course, any more than Jesus did. But we should put our allegiance to Jesus and our spiritual brethren before our ties to our unbelieving brethren.

Jesus calls us to accept the same responsibility that He accepted, since we are now brothers. He denied Himself and took up His cross for us. Now we are brothers, so we need to do the same for Him. Brothers sacrifice for each other.

Jesus also calls us to give up everything for Him. Having received the benefits of redemption, because of the work of our Kinsman-Redeemer, who paid a great price for us, we need to pay a great price too. The price He calls us to pay is not to earn redemption. He has given that to us as a gift. It is to express our gratitude to Him for His grace, and to advance the mission that He has given us to fulfill. He had a mission from God, and He gave up everything to fulfill it. We, too, have a mission from God, and we need to give up everything to fulfill it.

Finally, this Gospel has a two-fold application: to the church and to the world.

To the church, Luke says: "Be witnesses!" "You are witnesses of these things" (24:48). We are to be so in view of the relationship that we now enjoy with the Son of Man. We should be witnesses for three reasons: we have experienced redemption, we enjoy His fellowship, and we have a future as members of a new race. We are also to be His witnesses in view of the lost condition of mankind. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Our fellowship with Jesus requires participation in His mission to seek and to save the lost. We can do this for three reasons: He has transformed our lives, He will open people's eyes with His Word, and He has empowered us with His Spirit (cf. ch. 24).

To the world Luke says: "You are lost, but the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." A Redeemer has come. A Brother is available. A new life is possible. Behold *the Man!* He understands you. Yet He is different from you. And He will receive you.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Message of the Books of the Bible*, 2:1:41-54.

## Exposition

### I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-4

Luke introduced his Gospel in a classical literary fashion.

"It was customary among the great Greek and Hellenistic historians, including the first-century Jewish writer Josephus, to explain and justify their work in a preface. Their object was to assure the reader of their capability, thorough research, and reliability."<sup>30</sup>

Luke's introduction contrasts with Matthew's genealogy, Mark's title statement, and John's theological prologue. It would have been what a cultured Greek would have expected to find at the beginning of a reputable historical work. It is all one sentence in Greek.

1:1           The first Greek word, *epeideper* (lit. because), occurs only here in the New Testament, though other major Greek writers such as Thucydides, Philo, and Josephus used it.<sup>31</sup> Luke tells us that when he wrote his Gospel there were already several written accounts of Jesus' ministry, perhaps including the Gospels of Matthew (A.D. 40-70) and Mark (A.D. 63-70). I think it is most probable that Matthew wrote in the late 40s, Mark in the late 60s, and Luke in the late 50s. There were probably some uninspired accounts as well, of Jesus' life and ministry, circulating when Luke wrote his Gospel. Luke's statement here does not imply that the existing accounts were necessarily deficient. He simply wanted to write one that was orderly and based on reliable research (v. 3). "The things accomplished" or fulfilled refer to God's purposes for Jesus' life and ministry.

1:2           The writer wanted to assure Theophilus (v. 3) that the information that he and other writers had included in their accounts was valid. It had come from eyewitness testimony of people who accompanied Jesus from the beginning of His public ministry, and who were "servants of the word," namely, of the gospel message. These people were the apostles and other "eyewitnesses," such as Jesus' mother (cf. Acts 10:39-42). The Greek word *autoptes* ("eyewitness") occurs only here in the Greek New Testament.

". . . we typically associate the word 'eyewitness' with a person who has personally observed an event, but this is not always the case in antiquity. . . . Rather the historian

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<sup>30</sup>Liefeld, p. 821.

<sup>31</sup>Henry J. Cadbury, "Commentary on the Preface of Luke," in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: Macmillan and Co, 1920-33), 2:489-510.

examined relevant *sites* of historical incidents, gaining firsthand experience of them.

"'Eyewitnesses' and 'ministers of the word' are parallel descriptions of the same group of people.'"<sup>32</sup>

William Arndt argued that Luke's sources did not include the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.<sup>33</sup> However, no one knows for sure what sources Luke used. Luke used the Greek word *logos*, "word," often in his Gospel, especially in the sections that are unique to it.<sup>34</sup> Paul also claimed to communicate faithfully what others had "handed down" to him (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3).<sup>35</sup> This verse is a claim to careful research using reliable sources of information.

1:3 Until now Luke had described the work of previous writers. Now he referred to his own Gospel. He, too, had done careful research and proceeded to write an orderly account. Significantly, Luke did not describe himself as an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, but as a researcher of it. This is the only Synoptic Gospel in which the writer spoke in the first person.<sup>36</sup>

"In consecutive order" (NASB, Gr. *kathexes*, "orderly" NIV) does not necessarily imply chronological order. It probably means that Luke wrote according to a plan that God led him to adopt.<sup>37</sup> All the Gospel writers seem to have departed from a strictly chronological arrangement of events occasionally for thematic purposes.

This is one of the clearest proofs in the Bible that God did not always dictate the words of Scripture to the writers who simply copied them down. That view is the dictation theory of inspiration. He did this with some passages (e.g., Exod. 20:1-17; et al.) but not most.

Theophilus' name means "lover of God." This fact has led to some speculation about whether "Theophilus" was really a substitute for the real name of Luke's addressee, or perhaps Luke wrote generally to all lovers of God. The use of "most excellent" (Gr. *kratiste*) suggests that Theophilus was a real person of some distinction (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). The name was common in the Greek world. He may have been Luke's patron or publisher.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Green, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup>William F. Arndt, *St. Luke*, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup>See Lloyd Gaston, *Horae Synopticae Electonicae; Word Statistics of the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 64, 76; and John C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae; Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem*, pp. 20, 43.

<sup>35</sup>See Oscar Cullmann, *The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology*, pp. 59-75.

<sup>36</sup>Barclay, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>See Green, pp.42-44.

<sup>38</sup>See E. J. Goodspeed, "Some Greek Notes: I. Was Theophilus Luke's Publisher?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 73 (1954):84. See also Bock, *Luke*, pp. 23, 42-43, for further speculation about Theophilus' identity.

Flavius Josephus, another first-century writer, similarly prefaced his *Antiquities of the Jews* (circa A.D. 93), and his *Against Apion* (c. A.D. 100), with a similar statement of purpose addressed to a certain "Epaphroditus," whom he described as: "a lover of all kind[s] of learning."<sup>39</sup>

1:4 Luke did not address Theophilus in a way that enables us to know if he was a believer in Jesus when Luke penned these words. He had received some information about Christianity, specifically reports of the words and works of Jesus Christ. We do not know, either, if Theophilus was in danger of abandoning the faith, or if he just needed a strong foundation for immature faith. Luke's introduction promised a factual foundation.<sup>40</sup>

The Christian faith does not require believing things that are contrary to the facts, but believing things that are true. Luke wrote his introduction to assure his readers that there was a factual basis for their faith. The gospel tradition was, and is, reliable. Luke was the only Gospel writer who stated his purpose at the beginning of his book (cf. John 20:31).

## **II. THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS 1:5—2:52**

This section contains material unique in Luke.<sup>41</sup> The only repeated statement occurs in Luke 2:39 and Matthew 2:23. Other unique features are the way Luke alternated the reader's attention between John and Jesus, and the joy that several individuals expressed (1:46-55, 68-79; 2:14, 29-32).<sup>42</sup> This section of Luke's narrative contains three intertwining stories of promise leading to fulfillment leading to praise.<sup>43</sup>

<b>Character</b>	<b>Promise</b>	<b>Evidence of Fulfillment</b>	<b>Praise Response</b>
Zechariah	His wife would bear a son.	John is born.	Song of Zechariah
Mary	She would conceive a son.	Unborn John bears witness to unborn Jesus, and Elizabeth blesses Mary.	Song of Mary
Simeon	He would see the Messiah.	He sees Jesus.	Song of Simeon

<sup>39</sup>Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, preface, pars. 2 and 3; idem, *Against Apion*, 1:1; 2:1; 2:42. Cf. idem, *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, par. 76.

<sup>40</sup>See Earle E. Cairns, "Luke As a Historian," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122:487 (July-September 1965):220-26; F. Duane Lindsey, "Lucan Theology in Contemporary Perspective," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125:500 (October-December 1968):346-51; Merrill C. Tenney, "Historical Verities in the Gospel of Luke," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135:538 (April-June 1978):126-38; and Nicholas M. van Ommeren, "Was Luke an Accurate Historian?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:589 (January-March 1991):57-71.

<sup>41</sup>See Appendix 1 "A Harmony of the Gospels" at the end of my notes on Matthew.

<sup>42</sup>For studies of the structure of this passage, see Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:15-20; R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke*, pp. 248-53, 292-98, 408-10; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I—IX*, pp. 313-15; and David E. Malick, "A Literary Approach to the Birth Narratives in Luke 1—2," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, pp. 93-107.

<sup>43</sup>Green, p. 48.

This section has a decidedly Semitic style that suits the connections that it has with the Old Testament. Matthew used fulfillment formulas to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but Luke was less direct. He showed that Old Testament predictions lay behind these events by describing them in the style and vocabulary of the Old Testament.

"Luke regards his opening chapters as though they were the continuation of the story rooted in the Abrahamic covenant."<sup>44</sup>

He also featured Jerusalem and the temple, which provide added connections to the Old Testament. References to the temple form an *inclusio* (i.e., brackets) around this section of text (1:5-23 and 2:41-51).

The alternation between John and Jesus compares and contrasts them (cf. 1 Sam. 1—3).<sup>45</sup> Luke presented them both as prophets in the Old Testament mold, but Jesus was infinitely superior to John. Note the uses of the title "Most High" (1:32, 35, 76).<sup>46</sup> First, Luke recorded the announcements of John's, and then Jesus' birth (1:5-38). This is a section of comparison primarily. Then he told of Elizabeth blessing Mary and Mary blessing God, a section of predominant contrast (1:39-56). Finally we have the births of John and Jesus, a section of both comparison and contrast (1:57—2:52).

Luke recorded the appearance of angels in this section. Apparently he did so to strengthen the point that Jesus was God's provision for humankind's need. Angels bridge the gap between God and man, and here they rejoiced in God's provision of a Savior for humankind. Frequent references to the Holy Spirit validating and empowering Jesus' ministry increase this emphasis (1:15, 35, 41, 67, 80; 2:25-27).

The theme of joy is present explicitly—in the songs, and words of praise, and thanksgiving—as well as implicitly in the mood of the whole section. Yet there is a warning of coming pain as well as deliverance (2:35).

Note the similarity of structure that facilitates comparison of John and Jesus.

	<b>JOHN</b>	<b>JESUS</b>
The introduction of the parents	1:5-7	1:26-27
The annunciation by an angel	1:8-23	1:28-30
The giving of a sign	1:18-20	1:34-38
The mother's reponse	1:24-25	1:39-56
The pregnancy of a childless woman	1:24	1:42
The birth	1:57-58	2:1-20
The circumcision and naming	1:59-66	2:21-24
The prophetic response	1:67-79	2:25-39
The growth of the child	1:80	2:40-52

<sup>44</sup>Idem., p. 57. See pp. 53-55, for many parallels between this section of Luke and Genesis 11—21.

<sup>45</sup>See G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>46</sup>See H. H. Oliver, "The Lucan Birth Stories and the Purpose of Luke-Acts," *New Testaments Studies* 10 (1963-64):215-26.

This first part of this section (1:5-56) deals with promise, while the rest of the birth and childhood narrative concerns fulfillment (1:57—2:52).

### **A. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH 1:5-25**

The entire announcement of John the Baptist's birth is unique to Luke's Gospel. There is a strong emphasis in this section on the fact that angels visited John's parents and announced the birth of John. This would have impressed Greek readers with the supernatural character of John as Jesus' forerunner (cf. Mercury and Zeus at Lystra in Acts 14). The announcement by angels impresses the modern reader with God's intervention in the lives of these two godly people, and causes us to anticipate something great coming from this supernatural birth. There are striking parallels to this account in the Old Testament. Zechariah and Elizabeth were similar to Abraham and Sarah, to Jacob and Rachel, to Elkanah and Hannah, and to Samson's parents. In each case, there was a divine announcement of the birth of an unusual child.

#### **1. The introduction of John's parents 1:5-7**

1:5 Herod the Great ruled over Judea, the large Roman province that included all of Israel, from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.<sup>47</sup> Luke sometimes used "Judea" to refer to the land of the Jews (cf. 23:5).

"From the opening verse it is apparent that Luke is concerned with the *balance of power*."<sup>48</sup>

Luke pointed out that both of John's parents had a priestly heritage. The priests in Israel had the great privilege of intimate association with God through their worship and service in the sanctuary. Zechariah's name means "Yahweh remembers," and is significant here, because the birth of John, whose name means "Yahweh is [or has been] gracious," was the fulfillment of a prophecy that God would send a forerunner before Israel's Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6). The etymological derivation of Elizabeth's name is unclear, but possibly it means "God's covenant."<sup>49</sup> The combined names of this couple, therefore, highlight the fact that "Yahweh remembers His covenant." Normally John would have become a priest and served in the temple as his father did.

David had divided the priesthood into 24 divisions and had placed the leader of one priestly family at the head of each group (1 Chron. 24:10; 2 Chron. 8:14).

"Actually only four divisions returned from the Exile (Ezr. 2:36-39), but the four were subdivided to make up twenty-four again with the old names."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup>Green, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup>Bailey, p. 107.

<sup>50</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. 68.

"Abijah" was the leader of the division to which Zechariah belonged (1 Chron. 24:10). The Exile had interrupted these divisions, but Israel's leaders established them again, after the restoration, as best they could. In Zechariah's day, each division served for one week, twice a year, plus during the major festivals (cf. 1 Chron. 23:6; 28:13).<sup>51</sup> Jeremias estimated the number of priests in Palestine at about 8,000.<sup>52</sup> Josephus gave the number as closer to 20,000.<sup>53</sup>

"On Sabbaths the whole 'course' [division] was on duty; on feast-days any priest might come up and join in the ministrations of the sanctuary; and at the Feast of Tabernacles all the twenty-four courses were bound to be present and officiate."<sup>54</sup>

- 1:6 This verse shows that Elizabeth's childless condition was not the result of her sin. In the Old Testament, God normally blessed the godly with children (cf. Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127; 128). She and her husband were right with God and followed Him faithfully. "Blameless" (Gr. *amemptos*) means that they dealt with sin in their lives quickly and as God required, not that they were sinless (cf. Phil. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 8:7). This Greek word is the equivalent of the Hebrew *tam* that describes Noah (Gen. 6:9) and Job (Job 1:8). The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was typically superficial and hypocritical, but Zechariah and Elizabeth were truly godly.

"Sometimes we are deprived of something because God has better things awaiting us down the road. When we wait patiently on the Lord, he often gives us more than we imagined possible. Zechariah and Elizabeth wanted a child; what they got was a prophet."<sup>55</sup>

- 1:7 Elizabeth's condition was identical to Sarah's (Gen. 17:16-17; cf. Gen. 16:4, 11; 29:32; 30:1, 23; 1 Sam. 1:5-11; 2:5-8). Her childless state embarrassed her (cf. v. 25), and her advanced age removed the hope of bearing children from her. Whenever the Old Testament said a woman had no child it also recorded that God gave her one later.<sup>56</sup> Therefore this statement prepares the reader for a miracle.

Priests were not disqualified from serving in the temple by age, but only by infirmity.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>51</sup>J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 198-207.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>53</sup>Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2:8.

<sup>54</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 90.

<sup>55</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 55.

<sup>56</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 53.

<sup>57</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1:135.

## 2. The angel's announcement to Zechariah 1:8-23

"It seems indeed most fitting that the Evangelic story should have taken its beginning within the Sanctuary, and at the time of sacrifice."<sup>58</sup>

Note the chiasmic structure of this section, which highlights the good news:

- A Service, sanctuary, and people (vv. 8-10)
- B Gabriel's appearance and Zechariah's response (vv. 11-12)
- C The announcement of good news (vv. 13-17; cf. v. 19)
- B' Zechariah's objection and Gabriel's response (vv. 18-20)
- A' People, sanctuary, and service (vv. 21-23)<sup>59</sup>

1:8-9 Zechariah was serving God faithfully by discharging some temple function as a member of his priestly division. According to Josephus, there were four courses (divisions) of the priests, and each one had more than 5,000 priests in it.<sup>60</sup> Evidently these courses were broken down into 24 smaller sections, each of which would serve in the temple on rotation during two separate weeks each year.<sup>61</sup> When a section was on duty, all its members were responsible to appear in the temple.<sup>62</sup> There were so many priests then that the great privilege of offering incense on the golden incense altar in the temple fell to a priest only once in his lifetime.<sup>63</sup>

It was a great privilege to stand before the incense altar in the holy place, because this was as close to the holy of holies as any non-high priest could get. The priests decided who would offer incense at the daily sacrifice, morning and evening, by casting lots. Zechariah's selection was undoubtedly a high point in his life and the greatest honor of his priestly career. Obviously God providentially arranged for his selection (cf. Esth. 3:7; Prov. 16:33).

". . . in the Temple of Herod there was neither *Shechinah*  
nor ark—all was empty . . ." <sup>64</sup>

1:10 Many godly people (Gr. *laos*, an important word in this Gospel) assembled in the temple courtyards for this daily offering, as was customary. *Laos* occurs 36 times in Luke, but only 14 times in Matthew and two times in Mark. Luke used this word as a virtual synonym for *ochlos*, "crowd" or "multitude." This was probably the evening "incense

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 1:144.

<sup>59</sup>Adapted from Green, p. 67.

<sup>60</sup>Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2:8.

<sup>61</sup>See Green, p. 68.

<sup>62</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 83.

<sup>63</sup>Mishnah, *Tamid* 5:2; Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, 2:284-97.

<sup>64</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 314. Cf. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 5:5:5.

offering" (3:00 p.m., cf. Dan. 9:21; Acts 3:1). This verse heightens the suspense and prepares the reader for verses 21-22. Incense symbolized the ascending prayers of God's people that rise like a sweet fragrance to Him (cf. Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). Luke stressed prayer more than any of the Gospel writers, and this is his first reference to it.<sup>65</sup>

"Here, as elsewhere in Luke-Acts, prayer is a prelude to divine revelation; hearing, God speaks and acts (cf. 3:21-22; 9:28-36; 22:39-46; Acts 4:23-31; 10:3-5, 9-16, 30-32; 13:2; 22:17-21)."<sup>66</sup>

1:11-12 This is also Luke's first reference to "an angel" appearing. He evidently "materialized" beside the altar as Zechariah performed his duties of burning incense on the altar and prostrating himself in prayer.<sup>67</sup> Obviously God took the initiative, at the time He chose, to reveal what He was about to do. This was an angel *from* the Lord, rather than "The Angel *of* the Lord" (cf. v. 19). The "right" side of the altar may indicate the side of favor and honor, implying that the angel was bringing good news. Angelic appearances always indicated important events in the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 16:10-11; Judg. 13:3-21). As far as Scripture records, this was the only time that an angel appeared in the temple.

Zechariah's reaction was one of shock, because for the first time, presumably, he met a supernatural person face to face. This was the typical reaction of people in such situations (cf. v. 29; 5:8-10; et al.).

1:13 The angel appeared in order to announce God's answer to Zechariah's prayer. He told Zechariah not to fear, a fairly common statement in Luke's Gospel (cf. v. 30; 2:10; 5:10; 8:50; 12:7, 32). Zechariah's prayer may have been a "petition" (Gr. *deesis*) for "a son," which the priest and his barren wife probably offered many times in previous years. However, it was probably the petition that Zechariah had just offered as he presented the incense, presumably as he prayed for Israel's salvation (cf. Dan. 9:20). In either case, God's provision of a son—*John*—was the answer. God named "John" (Jehochanan, or Jochanan), indicating His sovereign authority (cf. v. 31). John's name means, "Yahweh is [or has been] gracious."

"Heaven-given names always have etymological significance."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup>See Kyu Sam Han, "Theology of Prayer in the Gospel of Luke," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:4 (December 2000):675-93.

<sup>66</sup>Green, p. 71.

<sup>67</sup>Mishnah *Tamid* 6:3.

<sup>68</sup>Nolland, p. 29.

1:14-15 "Joy" would replace fear in Zechariah's heart, and spread to his wife, and then to all Israel. The coming of Israel's predicted Messiah would be a joyous event according to the Old Testament. The theme of joy is prominent in Luke's Gospel.

The cause of joy would be John's spiritual greatness ("great in the sight of the Lord"). The same angel also announced that Jesus would be "great"—without qualification (v. 32). Thus there was a connection between the roles of John and Jesus. The phrase "in the sight of" the Lord indicates God's choice and approval. It translates a Greek word, *enopion*, which only Luke among the synoptic writers used. It appears 35 times in Luke and Acts.<sup>69</sup> John used this word once, in John 20:30.

"Filling [with the Holy Spirit] is a general Lucan term for presence and enablement."<sup>70</sup>

The contrast between "control by drink" and "control by the Holy Spirit" occurs elsewhere in Scripture (Eph. 5:18). It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if John was to be a Nazirite (Num. 6:1-12)—or simply devoted to God. The priests were to refrain from strong drink before serving in the sanctuary (Lev. 10:1-4, 9-11). There are no other specific indications that John was a Nazirite, though he may have been.<sup>71</sup> His ascetic lifestyle was similar to that of many prophets, particularly Elijah (v. 17; 2 Kings 1:8; Matt. 3:4).

"John's greatness is not found in his choice of lifestyle, but in the fact that in understanding his calling, he pursues it fully and carries out God's will faithfully. John's style will be different from that of Jesus. God does not make all people to minister in the same way. That diversity allows different types of ministry to impact different kinds of people."<sup>72</sup>

The Holy Spirit's influence in his life was unusual for someone living in Old Testament times. Normally the Holy Spirit empowered people selectively and temporarily then. Luke had a special interest in the Holy Spirit's enabling ministry that surfaces frequently in his writings (cf. vv. 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27; 3:16, 22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12; and many times in Acts).

1:16-17 John would "turn the hearts" of many Israelites "back to God," as the prophets had done in Old Testament times. None of them was more successful or important than "Elijah" had been. He led the people back to

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<sup>69</sup>Martin, p. 204.

<sup>70</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 98.

<sup>71</sup>See Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 375.

<sup>72</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 53-54.

Yahweh—after Ahab and Jezebel had pushed Israel's apostasy further than it had ever gone, by instituting Baal worship as Israel's official religion. John would possess the same "spirit and power" that Elijah had. Moreover, John would be the predicted predecessor of Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6; cf. Mal. 3:1). Jesus later explained that John fulfilled the prophecy of Messiah's forerunner (Mal. 3:1). He would have completely fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah's return if the Jews had accepted Jesus (Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 11:10, 14).

". . . according to Jewish notions, he [Elijah] was to appear *personally*, and not merely 'in spirit and power.'"<sup>73</sup>

The term "turn back" (Gr. *epistrepho*) became a technical term for Christian conversion (cf. Acts 9:35; 2 Cor. 3:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:25). Essentially it means turning from idols to the true God. Turning people to God was the responsibility of every true priest (Mal. 2:6). The Malachi quotation probably means that when restoration comes, there will be *human* reconciliation and love, rather than estrangement and selfishness.<sup>74</sup> People would clean up their interpersonal relationships in preparation for Messiah's appearing.

Luke spoke often of the "people (Gr. *laos*) that God was preparing for Himself." These "people prepared for the Lord" included Jewish hearers, but also those who formerly were not "a people" (1 Pet. 2:10), namely: the Gentiles. They are the elect who would compose the church. With this term (people prepared for the Lord), Luke constantly reminded his original Greek readers that God's plan included Gentiles—who responded to the gospel—as well as Jews.

1:18-20      When Abraham received the angelic announcement that God would give him the Promised Land, he, too, requested a confirming sign (Gen. 15:8), which God provided. However, Zechariah should have simply believed the angel's announcement and given God thanks for it, as Abraham later did (Gen. 17:17-18), and as Manoah and his wife did (Judg. 13:2-21). Instead he asked for some verification of the promise, probably a sign (cf. 11:29). The angel gave Zechariah a "sign," but it cost Zechariah inconvenience and embarrassment for nine months (cf. vv. 34, 45). Perhaps Zechariah's request for a sign received a rebuke, and Abraham's did not, because Zechariah had the advantage of the Old Testament record, whereas Abraham did not. The angel helped Zechariah understand the seriousness of his mistake by explaining who he was ("Gabriel who stands beside God").

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<sup>73</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:142.

<sup>74</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 60.

". . . Gabriel was regarded in tradition as inferior to Michael; and, though both were connected with Israel, Gabriel was represented as chiefly the minister of justice, and Michael of mercy; while, thirdly, Gabriel was supposed to stand on the left, and not (as in the Evangelic narrative) on the right, side of the throne of glory."<sup>75</sup>

Gabriel (lit. "Man of God" or "Mighty One of God") had appeared twice to Daniel to give him information and understanding (Dan. 8:16; 9:21). He did the same for Zechariah here (cf. vv. 67-79). Gabriel could have been harder on Zechariah than he was, but he was not—probably because Zechariah believed for the most part, and only wanted confirmation (cf. Judg. 6:36-40; 13:2-21). He was not asking for a sign to help him believe.

The sign that God gave—Zechariah's muteness—served to heighten the wonder of what God would reveal, and to conceal Gabriel's revelation from the people until the proper time.

"In Luke, God may of his own initiative give a sign (1:36; 2:12), but requests for signs are consistently interpreted negatively (11:16, 29-30; 23:8)."<sup>76</sup>

1:21-22 Zechariah's "delay in the temple," and then his inability to speak, impressed the worshippers that something supernatural had occurred (cf. Dan. 10:15-17). Normally he would have pronounced the Aaronic blessing over them (Num. 6:24-26).<sup>77</sup> The people assumed incorrectly "that he had seen a vision." Zechariah was unable to communicate to them what had really happened. Luke recorded their reaction to impress his readers with the importance of this event.

1:23 Zechariah and Elizabeth lived in a town in the hill country of Judah, where Zechariah probably pursued another occupation when not involved in "priestly" duties (v. 39).

### **3. The pregnancy of Elizabeth 1:24-25**

The angel's announcement of John's birth occurred even before Elizabeth conceived him (cf. Matt. 1:18-25). This is further evidence of his being a special provision from the Lord. Elizabeth's self-imposed, five-month period of "seclusion," may have been to safeguard the arrival of her child and her own health as an older woman. Elizabeth gratefully acknowledged God's grace in removing the "disgrace" of her childless condition (cf. Gen. 21:6; 30:23; 1 Sam. 1:19-20; 2:1-10; Ps. 113:9).

<sup>75</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:142.

<sup>76</sup>Green, p. 79.

<sup>77</sup>Mishnah *Yoma* 5:1; *ibid. Tamid* 7:2.

". . . Zechariah and Elizabeth represent two different kinds of righteous people. Zechariah raises doubts about the angel's message, for the prospective parents are now beyond normal childbearing age (v. 18). Sometimes even good people have doubts about God's promise. . . .

"Elizabeth pictures the righteous saint who takes her burden to God and rejoices when that burden is lifted."<sup>78</sup>

"Hardly for the last time in Luke-Acts, a woman is put forward as a recipient of God's favor and as a model of faithfulness to God's purpose."<sup>79</sup>

### **B. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF JESUS' BIRTH 1:26-56**

This section parallels the one immediately preceding (vv. 5-25). Their forms are so similar that Luke must have arranged them to bring out the similarities between them. Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus as he had John's birth. Again, the fact of a divinely initiated birth announcement shows the unique significance of the individual to be born. In the preceding section the father was the main figure, but in this one the mother is.

"Luke presents the theology of the Incarnation in a way so holy and congruent with OT sacred history that any comparisons with pagan mythology [that the original readers may have made] seem utterly incongruous. Instead of the carnal union of a pagan god with a woman, producing some kind of semidivine offspring, Luke speaks of a spiritual overshadowing by God himself that will produce the 'holy one' within Mary."<sup>80</sup>

Luke may have obtained some of the intimate information in this section directly from Mary. In this section, Luke stressed Jesus' divine sonship (vv. 32, 35), and His messianic role as Ruler over God's kingdom on earth (vv. 32-33). He also stressed God as the "Most High" (vv. 32, 35; cf. v. 76), the Holy Spirit's power (v. 35), and God's grace (vv. 29-30, 34-35, 38).

#### **1. The introduction of Mary and Joseph 1:26-27**

The time reference and the same "angel" ("Gabriel") connect this incident directly with what precedes (v. 24). "The sixth month" refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Luke presented God as taking direct action, not only here, but throughout his Gospel and Acts. He may have generously called "Nazareth" a "city" (Gr. *polis*), to give it status in the eyes of his readers. The Greek language had no word for "town," and the alternative would have been to call it a "village." It would have been unknown to almost everyone outside Palestine, so Luke described it as being "in Galilee."<sup>81</sup> Gabriel now

<sup>78</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 50.

<sup>79</sup>Green, p. 81.

<sup>80</sup>Liefeld, p. 829.

<sup>81</sup>See the map "Places Mentioned in Luke's Gospel" at the end of these notes; and J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, pp. 516-24, for more information about Galilee and Nazareth.

visited a small town in Galilee, on the northern border of Zebulun, contrasted with the big city of Jerusalem in Judea, where he had met Zechariah.<sup>82</sup> Because of Gentile influence, the Galilean Jews were not as strict in their observance of the Law and Pharisaic tradition as their southern brethren.<sup>83</sup>

"Where the story of John's origins starts in the temple and moves out, the story of Jesus' origins starts in Galilee and moves to climax in the temple."<sup>84</sup>

Young "Mary" also contrasts with old Zechariah and Elizabeth. Her name, the equivalent of Miriam in the Old Testament, apparently meant "exalted one."<sup>85</sup> The Greek word *parthenos* ("virgin") refers to a young, unmarried girl and implies virginity.<sup>86</sup> It clearly means virgin here (cf. v. 34).<sup>87</sup> Betrothal often took place shortly after puberty.<sup>88</sup> Consequently Mary may have been a young teenager at this time., even as young as 12.<sup>89</sup>

"In Jewish tradition a girl was normally betrothed in the thirteenth year and for legal but not domestic purposes was from that point on considered to be married. Around a year later the girl was taken to the bridegroom's home for normal married life to begin."<sup>90</sup>

During betrothal, a man and a woman were considered as husband and wife, even though they lived apart and did not have sexual relations.<sup>91</sup> If the wife proved unfaithful to her husband during this period, she could be stoned (Deut. 23:24-25). Only divorce or death could terminate the betrothal, and from then on society considered them widow and or widower.

Luke identified "Joseph" as a descendant "of David." He evidently considered Jesus a legitimate heir to David's throne, since Joseph was Jesus' legal father or guardian (cf. 3:23). In Semitic society, it was not necessary to be a blood descendant to possess family inheritance privileges (Gen. 15:3; 17:12-13; cf. Gen. 48:5; Exod. 2:10; 1 Kings 11:20; Esth. 2:7). Since Joseph was Jesus' legal guardian, Jesus thereby qualified to inherit as a legitimate son of Joseph. This fact has important bearing on the promise in verse 32b.

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<sup>82</sup>See P. Winter, "'Nazareth' and 'Jerusalem' in Luke chs. 1 and 2," *New Testament Studies* 3 (1956-57):136-42.

<sup>83</sup>For information on religious conditions in Galilee, see Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.*, pp. 259-97.

<sup>84</sup>Nolland, p. 57.

<sup>85</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 65.

<sup>86</sup>J. Massingbyrde Ford, "The Meaning of 'Virgin,'" *New Testament Studies* 12:3 (1966):293-99.

<sup>87</sup>See J. Greshem Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*; James Orr, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*; Thomas Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth*; R. E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*; and Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: Doctrine of Deity*.

<sup>88</sup>Liefeld, p. 830.

<sup>89</sup>Green, p. 86.

<sup>90</sup>Nolland, p. 49.

<sup>91</sup>Jeremias, pp. 364-67.

## **2. The angel's announcement to Mary 1:28-38**

- 1:28 The fact that Gabriel greeted Mary as he did, and did not greet Zechariah the same way, shows Mary's favored position. Gabriel's greeting was customary: "Hail!" or "Greetings!" (Gr. *chaire*). Mary was highly "favored" (Gr. *kecharitomene*) because God chose to bestow *special grace* ("favor," Gr. *charis*) on her (cf. Eph. 1:6, the only other New Testament occurrence of *kecharitomene*). She would be the mother of the Messiah, which was an honor most Jewish mothers prayed would be hers. God did this without any special merit of her own (cf. v. 47). Roman Catholic commentators dispute this point, but competent scholars have refuted their arguments.<sup>92</sup> The Lord's presence with Mary guaranteed His help in the assignment she would have to fulfill (cf. Judg. 6:12; Ruth 2:14-16).
- 1:29-30 The angel's unexpected appearance in the temple sanctuary had unnerved Zechariah (v. 12), but it was his unusual greeting that upset and puzzled Mary. Perhaps he appeared at her door and she mistook him for an ordinary visitor. Gabriel calmed the fears he had aroused with an announcement of a special divine blessing (cf. v. 13), by assuring Mary that God was happy with (favored) her (cf. Gen. 6:8; 1 John 4:17-18). Gabriel had come to announce a blessing, not punishment.
- "It is necessary here to recall our general impression of Rabbinism: its conception of God, and of the highest good and ultimate object of all things, as concentrated in learned study, pursued in Academies; and then to think of the unmitigated contempt with which they were wont to speak of Galilee, and of the Galileans, whose very *patois* [dialect] was an offence; of the utter abhorrence with which they regarded the unlettered country-people, in order to realize, how such an household as that of Joseph and Mary would be regarded by the leaders of Israel."<sup>93</sup>
- 1:31 These words would have come as good news indeed to Mary. Not only would she "bear a son," but her son would obviously be someone *special*—in view of the angelic announcement of His birth. Only five other children had been named before their births in Old Testament times: Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, and Josiah. John the Baptist was the sixth (v. 13). The words Gabriel used are very similar to the wording of Isaiah 7:14 in the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 16:11-12). "Jesus" was a common name<sup>94</sup> that came from "Joshua" (lit. "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation"; cf. Matt. 1:21). As with John the Baptist, God exercised His sovereign prerogative by naming Jesus. Both names were significant in the light of salvation history.

<sup>92</sup>See Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 65, for further discussion.

<sup>93</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:144-45.

<sup>94</sup>See Josephus' works, that refer to many different people named "Jesus."

1:32-33 Like John, Jesus would "be great" (v. 15). Even more, He would be "the Son of *God*,"—a clear statement of His deity (Ps. 2:7-9; 89:26-29; cf. v. 35). The "Most High" is a common designation of God in the Old Testament (Heb. *El Elyon*, Gen. 14:18; et al.). It carried over into the New Testament (vv. 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17; Heb. 7:1-3). The Greeks also used the title "Most High" to describe their gods.<sup>95</sup>

"In Semitic thought a son was a 'carbon copy' of his father, and the phrase 'son of' was often used to refer to one who possessed his 'father's' qualities (e.g., the Heb. trans. 'son of wickedness' in Ps. 89:22 [AV] means a wicked person)."<sup>96</sup>

Jesus would also be the long-expected Messiah, since God would "give Him the throne of His father David" (2 Sam. 7:12-14; Ps. 89:3-4, 28-29); His divine sonship qualified Him for His messianic role. The messianic rule of the Son would continue forever after it began (Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:14; Mic. 4:7; et al.).<sup>97</sup>

"Today, Jesus is enthroned in heaven (Acts 2:29-36), but it is not on *David's* throne."<sup>98</sup>

1:34 Mary, unlike Zechariah, did not ask for a sign *that* what the angel had predicted would happen. The idea that the Messiah would appear soon did not surprise her, either. Instead, she asked *how* it would happen. This was not an expression of weak faith but of confusion. Consequently Gabriel did not rebuke her as he had Zechariah. She was unmarried and a virgin. She had not had sexual relations with any man.<sup>99</sup> Evidently Mary assumed that Gabriel meant she would conceive before she and Joseph consummated their marriage.<sup>100</sup> The euphemism of "knowing" someone sexually comes from the Old Testament (Gen. 4:1; 19:8; et al.).

1:35 Gabriel explained that "the Holy Spirit" would be God's enabling agent who would make Jesus' supernatural birth possible (cf. vv. 41, 67, 80; 2:25-27). He would "overshadow" Mary with His personal presence (cf. Exod. 40:38). Beyond this Gabriel was not specific.

"This delicate expression rules out crude ideas of a 'mating' of the Holy Spirit with Mary."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 67.

<sup>96</sup>Martin, p. 205.

<sup>97</sup>See J. Dwight Pentecost, "The Biblical Covenants and the Birth Narratives," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, pp. 263-67.

<sup>98</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:172.

<sup>99</sup>Brown, *The Birth . . .*, p. 289.

<sup>100</sup>Ellis, p. 71; G. H. P. Thompson, *St. Luke*, pp. 53-54; et al. Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 69-70, listed several other explanations all of which I regard as inferior.

<sup>101</sup>Morris, p. 73. For information about ideas of divine beings fertilizing human women that existed in the ancient world, see Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 72-77.

God settled upon the tabernacle in the wilderness similarly, filling it with His presence (Exod. 40:35; cf. Ps. 91:4). It is interesting that the same Greek word, *episkiazo*, translated "overshadow" here, occurs in all three accounts of the Transfiguration where the cloud overshadowed those present (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34). Then the voice came out of heaven identifying God's Son, but here an angel identified Him as such. The Holy Spirit would produce a "holy" offspring ("Child") through Mary. The deity and preexistence of "the Son of God" required a miraculous conception. His virgin birth resulted in His assuming a human nature, without giving up His divine nature.

1:36-37 Even though Mary had not requested a sign, God gave her one, namely, the pregnancy of Elizabeth. The exact relationship between Mary and Elizabeth is unknown, but they obviously knew they were relatives.

Gabriel also reassured Mary with one of the greatest statements of God's power that God recorded in the Bible (v. 37). This verse undoubtedly comforted Mary in the following months, as it has comforted countless believers faced with difficult ministries ever since. God can do the "impossible" (cf. Jer. 32:17, 27). Gabriel was alluding to the angel's words to *Sarah*, when he announced that she would bear a son in spite of apparently impossible obstacles (cf. Gen. 18:14). Verse 37 should also encourage readers of this story, who doubt the possibility of a virgin birth, to believe that God can do even this.

1:38 Mary responded submissively to God's will, as Hannah had (1 Sam. 1:11, where the same Greek word, *doule*, "servant," or "slave-girl," occurs in the Septuagint).

"Mary had learned to forget the world's commonest prayer—"Thy will be *changed*"—and to pray the world's greatest prayer—"Thy will be *done*."<sup>102</sup>

Even though Gabriel's announcement was good news, it was also bad news. Mary would bear the Messiah, but her premarital pregnancy would bring misunderstanding and undeserved shame on her for the rest of her life (cf. Deut. 22:23-24). Therefore her humble attitude is especially admirable (cf. Gen. 21:1, 7, 12; 30:34). Unfortunately, she did not always maintain it (cf. John 2:3-5). In this she was only human.

"There were three miracles of the Nativity [according to Martin Luther]: that God became man, that a virgin conceived, and that Mary believed. And the greatest of these was the last."<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Barclay, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup>Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 288.

"This passage suggests four other important lessons: (1) the certainty that God will perform his promise, since nothing is impossible with him, (2) Mary's example as one chosen to serve God, an example that extends even beyond the willingness to be used to trust God to take us beyond our limitations, (3) the significance of the Virgin Birth of our Savior, and (4) the importance of sexual faithfulness throughout our lives."<sup>104</sup>

### **3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth 1:39-56**

This section brings the parallel stories of John's birth and Jesus' birth together. The two sons had their own identities and individual greatness, but Jesus was superior. John began his ministry of exalting Jesus in his mother's womb. The conception of Jesus took place between verses 38 and 39.

1:39-40      Apparently Mary left Nazareth shortly after Gabriel's announcement to her. Her trip south to Elizabeth's home, somewhere in "the hill country . . . of Judah," would probably have covered 50 to 70 miles, and taken three or four days.

1:41-42      Elizabeth was then at least six months pregnant (v. 36). She regarded the fact that John "leaped" in her womb as an indication of his "joy" that Mary, who would bear the Messiah, had come for a visit (v. 44). The "Holy Spirit" also came upon Elizabeth, then prompting her to greet Mary as the mother of Messiah. The Spirit evidently gave her intuitive or revelatory understanding of Mary's role. She proclaimed her benedictions loudly, in joyful praise to God, and because of the Spirit's impelling. "Blessed" means specially privileged because of God's favor. Elizabeth evidently meant that Mary was the *most blessed* "among women." Mary was most blessed because *her Son* would be most blessed among all people. "Fruit of the womb" is an old figure of speech for a child (cf. Gen. 30:2; Deut. 28:4).

1:43          By "Lord" Elizabeth meant Jesus, not the entire Godhead. Consequently the Bible never ascribes the title "Mother of God" to Mary. She was the mother of Jesus, who was Elizabeth's Lord, since He was God.

Luke used the title "Lord" 95 times out of its 166 occurrences in the Synoptics.<sup>105</sup>

"The use of *kurios* in narrative to refer to Jesus is distinctive of Luke."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 60.

<sup>105</sup>Gaston, p. 76.

<sup>106</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 81.

This title has a double meaning. It is the word the Septuagint used to translate the Hebrew "Yahweh," and the New Testament writers used it the same way. As such, it implies deity. It also means "master" in the sense of a superior person, specifically the Messiah. This usage does not necessarily imply that the person using it believed that Jesus was God. Elizabeth apparently meant that Jesus was the Messiah at least. Luke evidently used the term "Lord" frequently because for Greek readers "Christ" or "Messiah" had little meaning. The pagan Gentiles referred to Caesar as "Lord" Caesar, meaning that he was their divine sovereign. "Lord" had the same connotation for Luke's original readers. Jesus is the divine sovereign for Christians.

Elizabeth considered herself unworthy that the mother of Messiah should visit her (2 Sam. 24:21; cf. 2 Sam. 6:2-11). John the Baptist did not understand that Jesus was the Messiah until Jesus' baptism (John 1:32-33). She had done nothing to deserve this honor. Her inspired words reflect the superiority of Mary's child over her own son.

1:44-45 Elizabeth related to Mary what Luke had already told the reader about John leaping in her womb (v. 41). She then announced Mary's privileged condition. It was not just that she would bear the Messiah, but that she "believed" that she would bear Him when God announced that to her through Gabriel (cf. Acts 27:25).

The structure of verses 41-45 focuses attention on the fact that Mary would be the mother of the Messiah.

- A John's leaping in Elizabeth's womb v. 41
- B Elizabeth's blessing of Mary v. 42
- C Elizabeth's acknowledgment that Mary's child was Messiah v. 43
- A' John's leaping in Elizabeth's womb v. 44
- B' Elizabeth's blessing of Mary v. 45

1:46-47 Mary's reply to Elizabeth was also an inspired utterance. This "Magnificat" has strong similarities with Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. However, it also alludes to at least 12 other Old Testament passages.<sup>107</sup> Mary's familiarity with the Old Testament shows her love for God and His Word. A striking feature of this poem is the fact that Mary viewed God as overthrowing established authorities (v. 52). This would have been of special interest to Luke's original readers. She viewed herself as occupying an important role in the history of salvation (v. 48).

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<sup>107</sup>Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, pp. 30-31.

Structurally the song divides into four strophes: verses 46-48, 49-50, 51-53, and 54-55. Mary did not necessarily compose this song on the spot. She was a reflective person (2:51) who may have given it much thought before the Holy Spirit enabled her to share it with Elizabeth. Some students of this passage have concluded that Luke really composed it, but this is unlikely since he gave Mary the credit for it (v. 46).

In the first strophe (vv. 46-48), Mary praised God for what He had done for her.

Verses 46 and 47 are synonymous parallelism in which the second line restates the idea of the first line. The term "Magnificat" comes from the first word in the Latin translation of this song that in English is "exalts" or "glorifies." Mary focused on "God," in whom she "rejoiced" because He had saved her (Hab. 3:18; cf. 1 Sam. 2:1; Ps. 35:9). The phrase "God my Savior" is the equivalent of "God of my salvation" (Deut. 32:15; Ps. 24:5; 25:5; 95:1; Mic. 7:7; Hab. 3:18).

"Note that in beginning the Magnificat by praising 'God my Savior,' Mary answered the Roman Catholic dogma of the immaculate conception, which holds that from the moment of her conception Mary was by God's grace 'kept free from all taint of Original Sin.' Only sinners need a Savior."<sup>108</sup>

As an Old Testament believer, Mary's hope of salvation rested in God and His promises. Her hope was not in her own ability to make herself acceptable to God.

1:48 Mary probably referred to her lowly social and personal position by her "humble state." She was only the young bride of a humble carpenter in a small village. Again she referred to herself as the Lord's servant (v. 38). "All generations" of people would regard her as specially favored by God—because He chose her to give birth to His Son. This verse gives the reasons Mary exalted and rejoiced in God (vv. 46-47). With Mary, God had begun to exalt the lowly (cf. Gen. 30:13; 1 Sam. 1:11). This exaltation would find full expression in Jesus' messianic reign.

1:49 The second strophe (vv. 49-50) glorifies God for His power, holiness, and mercy. Here are more reasons future generations would call Mary blessed. "The Mighty One" had "done great things for" her (cf. Ps. 24:8; Zeph. 3:17). Furthermore, "His name" (i.e., His person) is "holy." God is holy or different from humans in that He is high above all others, especially in His moral and ethical perfection (cf. Ps. 99:3; 103:1; 111:9; Isa. 57:15).

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<sup>108</sup>Liefeld, p. 836.

1:50 God's "mercy" (Gr. *eleos*) balances His power and holiness (Ps. 103:17; cf. Matt. 23:23). The Greek word *eleos* translates the Hebrew *hesed*, meaning "loyal love," in the Septuagint. His mercy refers to His compassion, specifically on those with whom He has entered into covenant relationship. Those who "fear" God reverence and trust Him.

1:51-53 The third strophe (vv. 51-53) reflects on God's power in reversing certain social conditions. His favor to Israel is especially in view. God had dealt with Mary as He had dealt with His people (Ps. 89:13; 118:16). God had reversed their conditions politically (v. 52) and socially (v. 53). Jesus' appearance and messianic reign would continue these divine works on a universal scale.

"Luke wrote more on the topic of wealth than any other New Testament writer."<sup>109</sup>

"In the ancient world it was accepted that the rich would be well cared for. Poor people must expect to be hungry. But Mary sings of a God who is not bound by what men do. He turns human attitudes and orders of society upside down."<sup>110</sup>

1:54-55 The last strophe (vv. 54-55) recalls God's mercy to Israel and to Mary (cf. Isa. 41:8-9; 42:1; 44:21). He had been consistently faithful to His covenant promises with His people, having tempered judgment with mercy (cf. Mic. 7:20). God's past faithfulness gives hope for the future.

"One of the important functions of the Magnificat is to provide an initial characterization of the God whose purpose shapes the following story."<sup>111</sup>

1:56 This verse resumes the narrative interrupted in verse 46. Mary remained with Elizabeth for the duration of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Then she "returned to her home"—not Joseph's. They were not yet married as we regard a married couple living together.

### **C. THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST 1:57-80**

As in the first part of this major section of the Gospel (1:5-56), Luke arranged his material in this one to compare and contrast John the Baptist and Jesus (1:57—2:52). In that section there was prediction, but in this one there is fulfillment. Luke's emphasis in his record of John's birth was his naming and his father's prediction of his future ministry.

<sup>109</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 159. See his summary on pp. 159-60.

<sup>110</sup>Morris, p. 77.

<sup>111</sup>Tannehill, 1:29.

### **1. The naming of John 1:57-66**

1:57-58 Luke passed over the birth of John quickly (cf. Gen. 25:24). It occasioned great joy for his parents and for all who knew them. Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives shared in the joy of John's birth, as the shepherds did later when they announced Jesus' birth.

1:59-61 As godly Israelites, Zechariah and Elizabeth were careful to circumcise John eight days after his birth (Gen. 17:9-14; cf. Luke 2:21). Normally the head of the household performed this operation.<sup>112</sup> Both parents also faithfully followed Gabriel's instructions, and named their son as God had directed, despite opposition from well-meaning friends who attended the special occasion (cf. Ruth 4:17). The Jews usually named their children at birth, but the Hellenists did so a few days later.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps this custom influenced Zechariah and Elizabeth to name John at his circumcision.

"Only a name outside the range of all expectation can do justice to the decisive discontinuity in human affairs marked by John's coming."<sup>114</sup>

1:62-63 Apparently Zechariah could not hear or speak. The visitors had to communicate with him in sign language. The Greek word used to describe his condition, *kophos*, can mean deaf as well as dumb (cf. 7:22). Zechariah authoritatively settled the argument about his son's name by writing on "a tablet": "John is his name." God had named John before his conception. Apparently the neighbors expressed astonishment because no other family member had that name.

"One of the major lessons is that even if all his neighbors do not understand why Zechariah does not do things the way they have been done, he will walk where God tells him to walk. . . .

". . . How do we define life? Is it in power and in the ability to 'take control,' or is it in following the one who is in control?"<sup>115</sup>

1:64-66 God rewarded Zechariah's obedience by removing his temporary disability. His first words were in "praise of God" (cf. Acts 2:4, 11).

"The first evidence of his dumbness had been, that his tongue refused to speak the benediction to the people; and

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<sup>112</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 88.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Nolland, p. 79.

<sup>115</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 78, 81.

the first evidence of his restored power was, that he spoke the benediction of God in a rapturous burst of praise and thanksgiving."<sup>116</sup>

Luke stressed the widespread effect this incident had in the whole area. Everyone concluded that John would be an unusual child because God's "hand" was "with him." It was also Luke's purpose in emphasizing the naming of John to elicit the same reaction in his readers. When John began his public ministry, there must have been some Jews who submitted to his baptism because they had noted God's hand on him from this event onward (cf. 2:19, 51).

## **2. Zechariah's song of praise 1:67-79**

This is the second major song of praise in Luke: the "Benedictus." This title also comes from the first word in the Latin version, translated "blessed" (Gr. *eulogetos*). The first part of the song praises God for messianic deliverance (vv. 68-75), and the second part rejoices in John's significant role in this deliverance and contains prophecy (vv. 76-79). The chiasmic structure of the song emphasizes the words "covenant" and "oath" (vv. 72-73). God's faithfulness to His covenant is a dominant theme in the Benedictus. There are at least 16 Old Testament allusions or quotations in this song.<sup>117</sup> Its style and content are similar to Mary's Magnificat.

"Where the angel Gabriel's words (vv 15-17) have attributed a preliminary eschatological role as preparer to John, and the Magnificat (vv 46-55) has hymned the coming of Jesus as the fulfillment of all eschatological hopes, it is left to the Benedictus to speak of both together and to establish the nature of their partnership in the bringing of salvation."<sup>118</sup>

1:67           The "Holy Spirit" now "filled" (i.e., controlled) "Zechariah," as He had Elizabeth (v. 41) and John (v. 15). He enabled the priest to prophesy. Zechariah proceeded to utter a psalm of praise, in which he gave God's explanation of the significance of the events that had begun to happen in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

"Observe that Zechariah's previous doubt and his discipline through loss of speech did not mean the end of his spiritual ministry. So when a believer today has submitted to God's discipline, he may go on in Christ's service."<sup>119</sup>

Zechariah's failure had been relatively minor, so major discipline was unnecessary.

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<sup>116</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:159.

<sup>117</sup>Plummer, p. 39.

<sup>118</sup>Nolland, p. 91.

<sup>119</sup>Liefeld, p. 839.

- 1:68 Earlier Mary rejoiced that she was blessed (v. 48). Now Zechariah "blessed" Yahweh, the "God of Israel." When God is the person blessed (Gr. *eulogetos*), this word has the virtual meaning of "praise." Zechariah first praised God for visiting His people Israel (Gen. 21:1; Exod. 4:31; Zech. 10:3; cf. Acts 15:14). He had done this most recently by sending Messiah's forerunner. Second, Zechariah praised God for redeeming His people. The great historical demonstration of this had been the Exodus, but now God was moving again to provide ultimate "redemption"—nationally and personally—through Messiah.
- 1:69-70 Zechariah alluded to God's promise to raise up "a horn (symbolic of strength) of salvation" from David's descendants (i.e., a mighty Savior, Ps. 132:17; cf. Ps. 18:2). He was not speaking of John but Jesus. Zechariah knew of Jesus' coming birth because of Mary's three-month visit (v. 56). The other prophets in view, "the holy prophets from of old," are all those who spoke of the coming Messiah.
- 1:71-73 Zechariah alluded to "salvation," "mercy," and "covenant" fulfillment. Messiah's salvation would be both political and spiritual (cf. Ps. 106:10). God would be merciful to the fathers by fulfilling His promises to them (cf. Mal. 4:6). The "oath" God swore to Abraham refers to Genesis 22:16-18; it included promises of victory over enemies and universal blessing (cf. Gen. 26:3; Ps. 106:45). The words "covenant" and "oath" are central in the chiasm, as mentioned earlier. Note the repetition of the other key words or phrases in the chiasm in the surrounding verses. These are "come" or "visit," "His people," "salvation," "hand of our enemies," and "fathers."
- 1:74-75 God's deliverance through Messiah did not mean that Israel could become passive, but active, albeit in another form of His service. They could do so "without fear" of enemy persecution, negatively, and in "holiness" toward God and "righteousness" toward man, positively—forever.
- 1:76-77 These verses focus on John and his ministry. This description of John clearly links him with Elijah (cf. Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5). Even though Luke omitted the conversation about Elijah that followed the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13), he undoubtedly recognized John's role as the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecies.<sup>120</sup> It is difficult to say if Zechariah used "Lord," here, only in the sense of *Messiah*, or also in the sense of *God*, but probably he meant *Messiah*.

". . . although 'Lord' in its transcendent sense appears in the Gospel as a title for Jesus, it occurs thus only in the words of the narrator, who thus gives us his own assessment of Jesus' identity and reveals his own status as a believer (see

<sup>120</sup>See Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 42-45.

7:19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 17:5, 6; 19:8a; 22:61; 24:3  
[some mss.]."<sup>121</sup>

John would "prepare" the way (path) for the Lord by giving "His people" the "knowledge (experience) of salvation" (cf. 3:3; Acts 4:10-12; 5:31-32; 13:38).

"We might have expected that Zechariah's song would be all about his little boy. He surprised us by beginning with the Messiah whom God was about to send. But he was very pleased about John, and in this part of his song he prophesies the child's future."<sup>122</sup>

1:78-79 God's loving compassion ("tender mercy," v. 78) motivated Him "to give salvation" (v. 77). The reference to God's "tender mercy" occurs in the exact middle of this part of Zechariah's song (vv. 76-79), highlighting what moved God to provide salvation.<sup>123</sup> The Greek word *anatole*, translated "visit" (NASB) and "come" (NIV), can describe the rising of a heavenly body or the growing of a plant shoot. "Dayspring" (v. 78, AV) means "sunrise." This is perhaps a double reference to messianic prophecies about the Star arising out of Jacob (Num. 24:17), and the Shoot growing out of Jesse (Isa. 11:1-2).<sup>124</sup> Verse 79 continues the first allusion (cf. Isa. 9:1-2; 59:9).

"Within the Third Gospel, 'peace' is metonymic for 'salvation,' . . ."<sup>125</sup>

"The story is shaped to attract our sympathy to devoted men and women who have waited long for the fulfillment of Israel's hopes and who now are told that the time of fulfillment has come."<sup>126</sup>

### **3. The preparation of John 1:80**

Luke's comment on John's personal development shows his interest in human beings, which characterizes this Gospel (cf. 2:40, 52). John's "spirit" here corresponds roughly to his character and personality (cf. 1 Sam. 2:21).

There has been considerable speculation about whether John became a member of the ascetic Essene community at Qumran—because "he lived in the deserts."<sup>127</sup> There is no way to prove or to disprove this theory presently. The factors in its favor are their

<sup>121</sup>Green, p. 118.

<sup>122</sup>Morris, p. 80.

<sup>123</sup>Green, pp. 118-19.

<sup>124</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>125</sup>Green, p. 854. Cf. 2:14, 29; 7:50; 8:48; 10:5-7; 19:38.

<sup>126</sup>Tannehill, 1:19.

<sup>127</sup>See A. S. Geyser, "The Youth of John the Baptist," *Novum Testamentum* 1 (1956):70-75; and J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, pp. 11-27.

common eschatological expectations, their use of Isaiah 40:3, and their use of ritual washings. Against it is John's connection with the Jerusalem temple through his father, which the Essenes repudiated.<sup>128</sup> Probably John was not an Essene, but simply a prophet who went into the deserts, in order to commune with God so he could be free of the distractions of ordinary life.<sup>129</sup>

"If in any of the towns of Judaea one had met the strange apparition of a man dressed wholly in white, whose sandals and garments perhaps bore signs of age—for they might not be put away till quite worn out—but who was scrupulously clean, this man was an Essene."<sup>130</sup>

At this point, John gives way to Jesus in the text.

## **D. THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS CH. 2**

Luke followed the same pattern of events with Jesus' birth and early life as he did for those of John. His purpose was to compare and contrast these two important individuals. All of chapter 2 is unique material that appears only in Luke's Gospel.

### **1. The setting of Jesus' birth 2:1-7**

In narrating John's birth, Luke stressed his naming, but in his account of Jesus' birth, he concentrated on its setting.

Luke's brief account of Jesus' birth emphasizes three things. He described the political situation to explain why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This set Jesus' birth in a context of world history and anticipated His cosmic significance. Second, Luke connected Bethlehem with David to show that Jesus qualified as the Messiah. Finally, he presented Jesus' humble beginnings, and so introduced the themes of Jesus' identification with the poor and His rejection.

Luke paralleled John and Jesus' births as he did the announcements of their births, and he stressed Jesus' superiority again. Zechariah announced John's birth, but angels proclaimed the birth of Jesus.

2:1-3            "Those days" refer to the time of John's birth (1:57-79). Augustus was Caesar from 44 B.C. to A.D. 14.<sup>131</sup> His other name was Gaius Octavius, and he was called in antiquity "the divine savior who has brought peace to the world."<sup>132</sup> Luke presented a superior Savior.

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<sup>128</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 96.

<sup>129</sup>John C. Hutchinson, "Was John the Baptist an Essene from Qumran?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159:634 (April-June 2002):187-200.

<sup>130</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*, p. 246.

<sup>131</sup>Hoehner, p. 12. For a list of the 16 Roman emperors from 30 B.C. to A.D. 180, with their dates, see Scroggie, p. 37.

<sup>132</sup>Green, p. 58.

The purpose of a Roman "census" was to provide statistical data so the government could levy taxes.<sup>133</sup> "All the inhabited earth" (NASB) means throughout "the entire Roman world" (NIV) or empire. This may have been the first census taken of the whole Roman provincial system, though it was not the first census that the Romans took within the empire.<sup>134</sup> Alternatively, it has been claimed that:

"No single census embraced the whole Roman world, but each particular census was an expression of a consistent policy of the emperor for the whole of his empire."<sup>135</sup>

"Quirinius" served as governor of the Roman province of Syria twice (3-2 B.C. and A.D. 6-7).<sup>136</sup> However, Herod the Great was still alive when Augustus issued his decree (Matt. 2), and Herod died in 4 B.C.<sup>137</sup> This incongruity has cast doubt on Luke's reliability as a historian.<sup>138</sup> There is evidence that Augustus issued the type of decree that Luke described in A.D. 6 (cf. Acts 5:37).<sup>139</sup> However, there is presently no evidence that he did so earlier.

One solution to this problem is that the decree went out in 3 or 2 B.C., but we have no other record of it.<sup>140</sup> This solves the problem of a census occurring during the governorship of Quirinius, but it does not solve the problem of Herod being alive then. Another possibility is that the word "first" (v. 2, Gr. *prote*) means "prior" or "former" here (cf. John 15:18).<sup>141</sup> Luke's meaning would then be that the census that took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem was the one Augustus made prior to the one he took when Quirinius was governor of Syria (in A.D. 6).<sup>142</sup> This seems to be the best solution. All the evidence points to the birth of Jesus in late 5 or early 4 B.C.<sup>143</sup>

Customarily people returned to their own hometowns to register for these censuses.<sup>144</sup> Bethlehem is where the family registers of Joseph and Mary were kept.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>134</sup>A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 168.

<sup>135</sup>Nolland, p. 103.

<sup>136</sup>Hoehner, p. 22. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 18:1:1; 18:2:1; and Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, pp. 258-61..

<sup>137</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 18:1:1; 18:2:1.

<sup>138</sup>For defense of Luke's accuracy as a historian, see F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*, pp. 192-94; and I. H. Marshall, *Luke . . .*, pp. 98-104.

<sup>139</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 18:2:1.

<sup>140</sup>*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Quirinius," by E. M. Blaiklock, 5:5-6; *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962 ed., s.v. "Quirinius," by F. F. Bruce.

<sup>141</sup>Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>142</sup>See Nolland, pp. 103-4.

<sup>143</sup>Hoehner, pp. 11-25.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>145</sup>Robertson, 2:22.

By citing Caesar's "decree," Luke helped his readers see that human decrees, however powerful, fall under and within the divine decree, which ordered the birth of Jesus (1:37).

2:4-5 It may seem unusual that Joseph took Mary with him to his ancestral home in Bethlehem, which lay some 85 miles from Nazareth, since she was pregnant. Apparently the Romans required that every adult appear to make a proper assessment of his property.<sup>146</sup> In Syria, which included Palestine, a poll (head) tax was levied on women as well as on men.<sup>147</sup> Perhaps Joseph also did this to remove Mary from local gossip and emotional stress in Nazareth.<sup>148</sup> In addition, the couple probably knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

One writer suggested that Joseph and Mary lived together as husband and wife, though they did not have sexual relations before Jesus' birth (cf. 1:25). He believed that it is unlikely that Mary would have traveled with Joseph as she did if they were only betrothed.<sup>149</sup> However, they could have traveled together without having lived together previously, since their culture regarded engaged couples as virtually married.

Most readers assume that the couple arrived in Bethlehem just before Jesus' birth. However, the text neither requires nor rules out this reading. They may have been there for some time before Mary went into labor.

2:6-7 "Firstborn son" implies that Mary had other children (cf. Matt. 1:25; 13:55; Mark 3:31-35). Normally mothers "wrapped" their newborn babies in wide strips of cloth to keep them warm and to keep their legs straight (cf. 23:53; Ezek. 16:4).<sup>150</sup> Traditionally, Christians have believed that the "manger," or feeding trough, in which Mary "laid" the baby Jesus, was in a cave.<sup>151</sup> However, most homes in Israel had two parts: one for the family and another for the household animals. It is possible that this other section was the location of the manger.<sup>152</sup> An "inn" (Gr. *katalyma*) could have been a guest room in a house (cf. 22:11-12), or any place of lodging. This Greek word has a wider range of meanings than *pandocheion*, which refers specifically to an inn for travelers (cf. 10:34).

"Mary and Joseph, then, would have been the guests of family or friends, but their home would have been so overcrowded that the baby was placed in a feeding trough."<sup>153</sup>

<sup>146</sup>Hoehner, p. 15.

<sup>147</sup>Nolland, p. 111.

<sup>148</sup>Liefeld, p. 844.

<sup>149</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 105.

<sup>150</sup>Liefeld, p. 846; *The Nelson Study Bible*, p. 1689.

<sup>151</sup>Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, 78:4; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1:15.

<sup>152</sup>Nolland, pp. 105-6, 111.

<sup>153</sup>Green, p. 129.

The so-called innkeeper has become a villain figure in the Christmas story, but Luke did not present him as such. The writer's contrast was between the royal birthplace that this "Son of David" deserved, and the humble one He received. His exclusion from human society anticipated the rejection that He would continue to experience throughout His ministry.

We may never know the exact day of Jesus' birth until we get to heaven. However, a day in late December or early January is likely. The traditional date of December 25 goes back at least as far as Hippolytus (ca. A.D. 165-235).<sup>154</sup> Probably Jesus was born in the winter of 5-4 B.C.<sup>155</sup>

". . . the date of the Feast of the Dedication [of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 B.C.]—the 25<sup>th</sup> of Chislev—seems to have been adopted by the ancient Church as that of the birth of our blessed Lord—Christmas—the Dedication of the true Temple, which was the body of Jesus (John 2:19)."<sup>156</sup>

Jesus' birthplace was evidently very close to the location of the present Church of the Nativity, which Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, built in the early fourth century A.D.<sup>157</sup>

## **2. The announcement to the shepherds 2:8-20**

There is great theological significance in this familiar passage. It comes through mainly in the angel's words and in the symbolism of what happened.

"In 2:8-14 we have a third annunciation scene, which follows the same pattern as the previous two: the appearance of an angel, a response of fear, the command not to fear, the announcement of a birth that brings joy. In this case, however, the announcement is not to a parent of the child to be born, for this birth is not just a family affair. Indeed, the angel stresses that he brings a message of 'great joy which shall be for all the people' (2:10)."<sup>158</sup>

2:8 "Shepherds" were socially looked down upon in Jesus' day. Their work made them ceremonially unclean, and they had a reputation for being untrustworthy.<sup>159</sup> Thus God first sent the gospel to the lowly. Luke had a

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<sup>154</sup>Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4:23:3. See also Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 248; and Kurt M. Simmons, "The Origins of Christmas and the Date of Christ's Birth," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58:2 (June 2015):299-324..

<sup>155</sup>Hoehner, pp. 11-27.

<sup>156</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 334. See also pp. 333-36.

<sup>157</sup>Finegan, *Light from . . .*, p. 532.

<sup>158</sup>Tannehill, 1:38.

<sup>159</sup>Liefeld, p. 845.

special interest in the lower elements of society. David, of course, had been a shepherd, but God had elevated him to be the ruler of His people (2 Sam. 7:8). Jesus' career would follow the pattern of his ancestor generally. Throughout the Old Testament God used shepherds as symbols of those who cared for His people (Ps. 23:1; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 23:1-4; et al.). Consequently, these shepherds represent all people of lowly origin and reputation, who receive the gospel by God's grace and proclaim it joyfully to others. The idea that *these* shepherds were raising sheep, that the people would offer as Passover sacrifices in a few months, is possible but not verifiable.<sup>160</sup> They would have been "out in the fields" with their sheep at "night" if the winter weather was mild, as it apparently was. There is evidence in the Mishnah, however, that sheep pastured there were destined for temple sacrifice.<sup>161</sup>

2:9 A single "angel" appeared to the shepherds first—"suddenly." Luke did not identify him by name, perhaps to focus attention on his message. Later a multitude of other angels joined him (v. 13). The sudden appearance of the angel, plus the accompanying manifestation of God's "glory," terrified the shepherds (cf. 1:12; 9:34; Ezek. 1; Acts 12:7).

2:10-11 The angel reassured the frightened shepherds (cf. 1:13, 30). His appearing signaled an occasion for rejoicing, not fearing.

Significant terms characteristic of Luke's Gospel occur in the angel's announcement, indicating its importance. These include: "bring good news" (Gr. *euangelizomai*), "joy" (Gr. *chara*), "people" (Gr. *laos*), "today" (Gr. *semeron*), "Savior" (Gr. *soter*), "Lord" (Gr. *kyrios*), and "glory" (Gr. *doxa*). This angelic announcement, then, is a seedbed for important ideas that Luke traced throughout the rest of this book. The time had come for the fulfillment of Messiah's predicted coming. A similarly worded birth announcement of Caesar Augustus that archaeologists have discovered shows that such terminology was not uncommon.<sup>162</sup> However in Jesus' case, it was a cause for true joy. The unusual phrase "Christ the Lord," which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, probably means "Messiah God." "Savior" occurs only here in Luke's Gospel in reference to Jesus.

2:12 The "sign" that Messiah God had indeed come to save the people would be the "baby" that the shepherds would find "wrapped in cloths lying in a manger." This was an unusual place for *any* baby to lie—but especially the divine Messiah! In this case, the sign was not an unusual demonstration of divine power, as was the case with Zechariah's muteness and Elizabeth's conception, but a confirmation of the truth of the angel's message.<sup>163</sup> The

<sup>160</sup>See Morris, p. 84.

<sup>161</sup>Mishnah *Shekalim* 7:4. See also Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:186-87; and idem, *Sketches of . . .*, p. 80.

<sup>162</sup>See Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 109.

<sup>163</sup>Green, p. 135.

term "swaddling clothes" (AV) translates the Greek word *spargano*, meaning "to swathe" or "wrap." The Jews also wrapped their dead in strips of cloth, just as they did their infants. Thus a birth was a reminder of the death that would inevitably follow one day.

- 2:13 Frequently God waits a long time to act, but then acts "suddenly," as here (cf. Mark 13:36; Acts 2:2; 9:3; 1 Thess. 5:3). The sudden appearance of the other angels represents God's sudden action in providing a Savior. The term "heavenly host" derives from the Old Testament, and here refers to a band (choir) of angels (cf. 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron. 33:3, 5; Ps. 148:2; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5). This *army* of angels, ironically, announced "peace" (v. 14).

". . . when a child was born the local musicians congregated at the house to greet him with simple music."<sup>164</sup>

- 2:14 Only once before had a human heard angelic praise (Isa. 6:3). Now the angels' praise explained the benefits of Jesus' birth. These angels first ascribed "glory to God" in heaven, where He dwells. God revealed His glory by sending His Son. Consequently it is appropriate to ascribe glory or praise to God. The effect of Jesus' coming on humankind is "peace." The biblical concept of peace, rooted in the Hebrew *shalom*, includes the sum of God's blessings, not just the cessation of hostility.

The AV translation "good will toward men" is not a good one, and it is misleading. The reader could infer that God will be gracious to people who show good will to others, which would suggest that human merit is the basis of God's favor. The NIV translation "peace to men on whom His favor rests" is better. Those on whom God bestows His favor are those who experience His peace.<sup>165</sup>

- 2:15-16 The angels went away "into heaven," their dwelling place and God's; they did not disappear instantaneously. Luke showed interest in spatial relationships in his Gospel (cf. 24:51) and in Acts (cf. Acts 1:11). The shepherds, on the other hand, hurried off "to Bethlehem" (cf. 1:39). This has been called "the first Christmas rush." They realized that the angels' message came from the Lord. Contrast the attitude of the religious leaders who, though they heard of Messiah's birth in Bethlehem, did not bother to check it out (Matt. 2:5). Luke did not break the feeling of excitement and swift action in the narrative by describing how the shepherds located the manger. In Luke's account there is no mention of the star that appeared to the wise men.

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<sup>164</sup>Barclay, p. 17.

<sup>165</sup>See Green, p. 137.

"It is most likely that these shepherds were in charge of the flocks from which the Temple offerings were chosen. It is a lovely thought that the shepherds who looked after the Temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."<sup>166</sup>

- 2:17-18 After the shepherds saw Jesus, they spread the word as evangelists (i.e., reporters of good news)—the first evangelists in Luke-Acts. The response of those who heard their eyewitness testimony was amazement (Gr. *ethaumasian*), not unbelief or belief. They probably thought: I wonder if the Messiah really has arrived. The theme of amazement runs through this Gospel (cf. vv. 33, 47; 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14, 38; 20:26; 24:12, 41).
- 2:19-20 In contrast to the shepherds' public proclamation, Mary meditated on the significance of these events (cf. vv. 19, 51; Gen. 37:11). The shepherds returned to their flocks, "glorifying" God (cf. vv. 13-14; 10:17). Luke also stressed "praising God" as the appropriate response to God's mighty works (cf. 5:25-26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47).

### **3. Jesus' circumcision 2:21**

The record of this incident, similar as it is to the account of John's circumcision and naming (1:59-66), shows Jesus' identification with John specifically, and with humankind generally. Jesus' "name" is very significant, meaning "Yahweh is salvation [or Yahweh saves]." God specified it before His conception, as He had done for John, but on this day Jesus' parents officially gave Jesus His name. Prophecies about John's future followed his circumcision immediately, but they occurred later for Jesus, namely, at His presentation in the temple (vv. 22-24).

### **4. Jesus' presentation in the temple 2:22-38**

The emphasis in this section is Simeon's prediction of Jesus' ministry (cf. 1:67-79). He pointed out the universal extent of the salvation that Jesus would bring and the rejection that He would experience.

- 2:22-24 Under Mosaic Law, a woman became ritually unclean when she gave birth to a child (Lev. 12:2).

"In the worship of the Old Testament, where everything was *symbolical*, that is, where spiritual realities were conveyed through outward signs, every physical defilement would point to, and carry with it, as it were, a spiritual counterpart. But especially was this the case with reference to birth and death, which were so closely connected with sin and the second death, with redemption and the second

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<sup>166</sup>Barclay, p. 17.

birth. Hence, all connected with the origin of life and with death, implied defilement, and required Levitical purification [cf. Num. 19]."<sup>167</sup>

The parents of a male child were to circumcise him on the eighth day after his birth (Lev. 12:3; cf. Gen. 17:12). The mother of a male offspring was unclean for 33 days following her son's circumcision (Lev. 12:4; cf. Lev. 12:5). On the fortieth day after her son's birth, the mother was to present a sin offering to the priest at the sanctuary to atone for her uncleanness (Lev. 12:6-7). Normally this offering was to be a lamb, but if the woman was poor she could bring two doves or two pigeons (Lev. 12:8). In the case of a firstborn son, the parents were to present him to the Lord (Exod. 13:2, 12; Num. 18:16; cf. 1 Sam. 1:24-28). The parents would normally "redeem" the son, buy him back, by paying five shekels for him (Num. 18:16).

"It could be paid to a priest anywhere (M. Ex. 13:2 (22b)). The facts that the scene of the present incident is the temple, no ransom price is mentioned, and the child is present, show that Jesus is not here being redeemed but consecrated to the Lord."<sup>168</sup>

"In the Court of the Women there were thirteen trumpet-shaped chests for pecuniary contributions, called 'trumpets.' Into the third of these they who brought the poor's offering, like the Virgin-Mother, were to drop the price of the sacrifices which were needed for their purification."<sup>169</sup>

Mary and Joseph complied with these regulations as observant Israelites. Mary apparently offered two birds, suggesting that Mary and Joseph could not afford the more expensive lamb sacrifice.<sup>170</sup> Luke may have mentioned this to help his readers understand the Jewish regulations. He did not stress the economic condition of Mary and Joseph.

Ritual uncleanness was not the same as sinfulness. All sin resulted in uncleanness in Israel, but uncleanness was not always the result of sin. Mary's uncleanness was not due to sin, but to bearing a child. The fact that she became unclean when she bore Jesus testifies to the reality of the Incarnation.<sup>171</sup> Jesus was a real human being.

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<sup>167</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 343-44.

<sup>168</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 117. See also *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "paristemi, paristano," by Bo Reicke, 5:840-41.

<sup>169</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:196.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., 1:149, 195.

<sup>171</sup>F. W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, p. 30.

"Festive seasons were not the only occasions which brought worshippers to Jerusalem. Every trespass and sin, every special vow and offering, and every defilement called them to the Temple."<sup>172</sup>

2:25-26 "Simeon" was a godly individual who testified to Jesus' significance under divine inspiration. This was part of Luke's purpose of assuring his readers that Jesus was indeed the Lord. He used the testimony of credible people to do this. Simeon possessed the three essential characteristics of Old Testament piety: first, he was "righteous and devout"; second, he was one of the believing remnant in Israel who was looking for Messiah's appearing.<sup>173</sup> Third, the "Spirit" who is the Consoler "was upon" this one who was waiting for the consolation of Israel (i.e., the Messiah).<sup>174</sup> Many readers have assumed that Simeon was an old man, but the text does not say that, though he may have been.

"Hillel was the father of Simeon, and Simeon the father of Gamaliel. It has been imagined by some that Simeon was the same old man who took the infant Saviour in his arms, and pronounced the *Nunc Dimittis*."<sup>175</sup>

2:27-28 The Holy Spirit led Simeon to be present in the temple courtyard when Mary and Joseph arrived to consecrate Jesus to God (cf. 4:1). Again the presence of Jesus became an occasion for joy and praise of God (1:46-55; 2:14, 20). This was consistently the response of the godly to Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

2:29-32 As with the Magnificat and the Benedictus, this hymn also has a Latin name: the *Nunc Dimittis*. Simeon acknowledged that Messiah had come. He felt ready to die since God had fulfilled His promise to Simeon (v. 26). This statement may imply that he was an old man, but it may just be a way of saying that Simeon felt that this was the greatest experience in his life. Simeon properly regarded God as his sovereign, and himself as God's "(bond)-servant" (Gr. *doulos*). He equated the Messiah with God's "salvation." He also viewed the salvation that Jesus would provide as being worldwide, not just for Israel (cf. Ps. 98:3; Isa. 52:10). Luke mentioned the fact that Jesus would provide salvation for "Gentiles" as well as Jews, many times. The word "Gentile" is from the Latin *gens*, meaning "tribe" or "nation." For "Israel," Messiah's coming spells "glory" (Isa. 45:25; 46:13).

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<sup>172</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 343.

<sup>173</sup>Idem, *The Life . . .*, 1:198.

<sup>174</sup>Liefeld, p. 849.

<sup>175</sup>Howson, p. 47.

"Simeon's words echo the universalism of Isaiah (see esp. Isa 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:1-2) and the role of the Servant of the Lord in this universal salvation."<sup>176</sup>

If we only had Matthew and Mark's Gospels, we might wonder if there were any Jews besides Jesus who understood the Old Testament correctly. Luke presented two so far who did, namely: Zechariah and Simeon.

2:33 Mary and Joseph understood that Jesus was the Messiah. However, they had evidently not connected some of the Old Testament revelation about Messiah, to which Simeon referred, with Jesus' ministry. Perhaps they understood Messiah to be mainly a political leader, as was the view of most of their contemporaries. God used a stranger to inform them of their Son's significance for the Gentiles.

"If one wonders why they marveled at Simeon's words after what they had heard from Gabriel, Elisabeth, and the Shepherds, he should bear in mind that every parent is astonished and pleased at the fine things others see in the child."<sup>177</sup>

". . . we can . . . in some measure, understand why the mystery of His Divinity had to be kept while He was on earth. Had it been otherwise, the thought of His Divinity would have proved so all-absorbing, as to render impossible that of His Humanity, with all its lessons."<sup>178</sup>

2:34-35 Simeon now prayed for God's blessing on Mary and Joseph, or perhaps declared them "blessed" by God (cf. v. 28)—especially Mary, who would suffer more than Joseph (cf. 1 Sam. 2:20-21). He revealed to Mary that Jesus would be responsible for bringing many people in Israel to the point of making an important moral decision. Some of them would reject Him, and so "fall" spiritually, while others would accept Him, and therefore "rise" spiritually. He would be a "sign" in the sense that He would be a demonstration that God was at work.

"In himself, therefore, Jesus is the one through whom God points to his salvation and offers proof of its reality."<sup>179</sup>

As the predicted Stone, Jesus would be a source of stumbling to some, but a means of reaching heaven for others (cf. Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16). He would be the instrument of salvation for some but condemnation for others.

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<sup>176</sup>Nolland, p. 124.

<sup>177</sup>Robertson, 2:29.

<sup>178</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:192.

<sup>179</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 122.

However, He would pay a price, namely, suffering the antagonism of those who would reject Him. This rejection would hurt Mary. The word for the "sword" that would pierce Mary's soul is *rhomphaia*, which describes a long Thracian javelin.

"Jesus is the magnet of the ages. He draws some, he repels others. This is true of all epoch-making men to some extent."<sup>180</sup>

2:36-38

"Anna," whose name is equivalent to the Hebrew Hannah, was a female "prophetess" (cf. Exod. 15:20; Judg. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh. 6:14; Isa. 8:3; Acts 2:17; 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5). Her mention continues Luke's interest in the renewal of prophecy at this time (cf. 1:67; 2:34-35). Perhaps Luke referred to Anna's ancestors to validate her Jewishness.

"Curiously enough, the tribe of Asher alone is celebrated in tradition for the beauty of its women, and their fitness to be wedded to High-Priest or King."<sup>181</sup>

Anna's "husband" had died "seven years after" their "marriage," and she had remained "a widow" from that point to her present "age of 84." Luke contains about 43 references to women, four of whom were widows (vv. 36-40; 7:11-15; 18:1-8; 21:1-4). Anna was a widow who had devoted herself to the worship and service of God in the temple (cf. 1 Tim. 5:5). Luke again recorded God's providential timing in bringing this godly woman to Jesus then (cf. v. 27). As Simeon, she was anticipating God's deliverance of Israel through Messiah (cf. v. 25). The references to Simeon "looking for the consolation of Israel," in verse 25, and Anna "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem," in verse 38, act as a pair of bookends (*inclusio*) holding the Simeon and Anna episodes together. Luke used "Jerusalem" figuratively (i.e., metonymy) for Israel (cf. Isa. 52:9). God gave Anna insight into Jesus' identity. The godly in Jerusalem undoubtedly learned about Messiah's birth from reliable Simeon and Anna (cf. 1:68)—two more witnesses (cf. v. 17): a male and a female.

"They represent the long history of an expectant people, nourished by God's promise. Zechariah and Elizabeth also fit this character type. They, too, are righteous, careful observers of the law (1:6), old (1:7), and filled with the prophetic Spirit when they recognize the fulfillment of God's promise (1:41, 67). These people represent their faith at its best, according to the values of the implied author, even though Zechariah has temporary doubts. To them the coming of the long awaited salvation is revealed."<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>Robertson, 2:29.

<sup>181</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:200.

<sup>182</sup>Tannehill, 1:39.

### **5. Jesus' development in Nazareth 2:39-40**

2:39 Luke again noted Mary and Joseph's careful obedience to God's will as revealed in the Mosaic Law. He omitted their flight to Egypt that Matthew recorded. It illustrated another fulfillment of messianic prophecy. However, the fulfillment of prophecy was not as important to Luke as it was to Matthew.

"There was a general contempt in Rabbinic circles for all that was Galilean."<sup>183</sup>

"Making every allowance for exaggeration, we cannot wholly ignore the account of Josephus about the 240 towns and villages of Galilee, each with not less than 15,000 inhabitants."<sup>184</sup>

2:40 Luke also noted Jesus' normal development as a human being (v. 40; cf. 1:80; 2:52). He was the object of God's grace (help). Luke mentioned Jesus' "wisdom," perhaps in anticipation of the following pericope. Verse 40 describes what happened to Jesus between His presentation in the temple and His return there when He was 12 years old (vv. 41-51).

### **6. Jesus' visit to the temple as a boy 2:41-50**

This is the only inspired incident that God has given us of Jesus' experiences during His boyhood. Luke stressed Jesus' boyhood wisdom here, and His conscious awareness that He was the Son of God, so his readers would have confidence in Jesus' deity. There is a strong contrast between Jesus' earthly parents and His heavenly Father. Stories of the precocious condition of a great person in his or her youth were and are common. They demonstrate the uniqueness of the individual and his or her superiority over others. Yet Jesus was far more than precocious.

"An episode from the in-between years of Jesus' life is a fitting transition to the main Gospel account which will begin in chap. 3. Here Jesus as a preadolescent for the first time takes an active part. And here that unique relatedness to God which marks his adult life comes into clear focus."<sup>185</sup>

2:41-42 Again Luke pointed out the godly characters of Mary and Joseph. Jewish males were to go to Jerusalem three times a year: at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In Jesus' day, women usually attended with their husbands or fathers (cf. 1 Sam. 1:7).<sup>186</sup> Those who could not attend all three festivals tried to attend Passover at least. Customarily, Jewish

<sup>183</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:225.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 1:224.

<sup>185</sup>Nolland, p. 128.

<sup>186</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "pascha," by J. Jeremias, 5:896-904.

parents took their young sons with them for a year or two, before the boy became a "son of the covenant" usually at age 13.<sup>187</sup> Luke called Jesus a "boy" (Gr. *pais*, also used of servants) here rather than a "child" (Gr. *paidion*), the term he used of Jesus in verse 40.

"Jewish boys became responsible for their actions at thirteen (*m[ishnah]*. *Niddah* 5.6; *m[ishnah]*. *Megillah* 4.6). At the age of twelve the instruction of boys became more intensive in preparation of the recognition of adulthood (*m[ishnah]*. 'Abot 5.21). The Bar Mitzvah of modern times, however, postdates the time of Jesus by five hundred years. . ." <sup>188</sup>

2:43-45 Luke noted that Mary and Joseph stayed for the duration of the eight-day festival, another tribute to their piety. Mary and Joseph probably did not miss Jesus for a whole day, because each may have supposed He was with the other, since men often traveled with men and women with women.<sup>189</sup> Perhaps they assumed He was with the other children, or the other adults, in their "caravan" of pilgrims. One of my colleagues once left his children at the church where he was the guest preacher, and only became aware of their absence when he arrived back home. It seems unlikely that Mary and Joseph would have been this preoccupied, however.

2:46-47 On the second day, Mary and Joseph "returned to Jerusalem" (v. 45), which evidently took the whole day. Then on the third day, they began searching for Jesus, and "found Him in the temple"—"sitting" among the rabbis, "listening" to their teaching, and "asking them questions." The Jews encouraged their children to ask questions of the rabbis.<sup>190</sup> Luke's reference to His being in their "midst" suggests Jesus' centrality in this august group, though He was then a learner and not a teacher (cf. Ps. 119:99-100).

"Already early in life Jesus values the pursuit of comprehending God, as he increases 'in wisdom and stature' (2:52). His approach to knowing God and seeking understanding pictures how we should pursue the same, even at a young age."<sup>191</sup>

"It is possible that Gamaliel may have been one of those doctors with whom Jesus was found conversing in the Temple."<sup>192</sup>

<sup>187</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:235-36.

<sup>188</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 99, n. 1. Cf. Fitzmyer, p. 440.

<sup>189</sup>Liefeld, p. 852; Barclay, p. 24.

<sup>190</sup>Howson, p. 48.

<sup>191</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 100.

<sup>192</sup>Howson, p. 52.

Jesus' "understanding" and "His answers" . . . "amazed" (Gr. *existanto*) them "all" (cf. 4:32; 9:43). One suspects that some of these rabbis later remembered this incident when Jesus became a popular teacher Himself. Obviously Jesus already had unusual wisdom and insight into the Scriptures, which were the center of these discussions.<sup>193</sup>

". . . whether or not Jesus had attended such a [synagogue] school, His mind was so thoroughly imbued with the Sacred Scriptures—He was so familiar with them in their every detail—that we cannot fail to infer that the home of Nazareth possessed a precious copy of its own of the entire Sacred Volume, which from earliest childhood formed, so to speak, the meat and drink of the God-Man. More than that, there is clear evidence that He was familiar with the art of writing, which was by no means so common in those days as reading."<sup>194</sup>

2:48 Mary and Joseph were understandably anxious (Gr. *edynomenoi*) about their Son's safety (cf. v. 35; 16:24-25; Acts 20:38; Rom. 9:2). When they found Jesus, His participation in conversation with the rabbis astounded (Gr. *exeplogesan*) them.

"It is one of the characteristics of Luke to observe the various responses of awe at the words and deeds of Jesus, which is also consistent with ancient narratives touching on the observation of wonders."<sup>195</sup>

Mary's question had the force of scolding, revealing an unwarranted but understandable attitude.<sup>196</sup>

2:49-50 Mary and Joseph's anxiety contrasts with Jesus' calmness. Mary's reference to Jesus' earthly father also contrasts with Jesus' reference to His heavenly Father. Jesus' first question prepared His parents for His significant statement that followed in His second question. Jesus' response to Mary and Joseph showed that He regarded His duty to His heavenly "Father," and His "house" (temple), as taking precedence over His duty to His earthly father and his house.

"Jesus' point is that his career must be about instruction on the way of God, for the temple was not only a place of

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<sup>193</sup>See J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts*, p. 105.

<sup>194</sup>Edersheim, *Sketches of . . .*, p. 118. See chapter 8 of this volume for more information about education in Jesus' time.

<sup>195</sup>Liefeld, p. 852.

<sup>196</sup>For a chronological catalog of 103 questions that people asked Jesus in the Gospels and His responses, see Roy B. Zuck, "How Jesus Responded to Questions," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, pp. 108-33.

worship, but was also a place of teaching. Jesus has a call to instruct the nation. Though he is twelve now, a day is coming when this will be his priority."<sup>197</sup>

"Jesus' question should, then, be seen as reflecting genuine surprise and not reproach."<sup>198</sup>

Even as a boy, Jesus placed great importance on worshipping God and learning from and about God. However, Jesus' obedience to God did not involve disobedience to Joseph. Jesus implied that His parents should have understood His priorities, but they did not grasp the true significance of His words.

Did Jesus not owe it to His parents to tell them beforehand that He planned to linger in the temple so they would not worry about Him? He may have done so and they may have forgotten, but this was not something Luke chose to explain. Luke's purpose was to record Jesus' response to Mary and Joseph, which expressed Jesus' awareness of His unique relationship to God and His duty to God.<sup>199</sup>

"Jesus' reply, though gentle in manner, suggests the establishment of a break between himself and his parents, although this will be modified in v. 51. There is thus a tension between the necessity felt by Jesus to enter into closer relationship with his Father and the obedience which he continued to render to his parents."<sup>200</sup>

All committed young believers who live under their parents' authority have struggled with this tension.

These are the first words that Luke recorded Jesus saying in his Gospel, and they set the tone for what follows. All of Jesus' words and works testified to the priority He gave to the will of His heavenly Father. "Had to" (Gr. *dei*) reflects a key theme in Luke's Gospel that highlights divine design. The Greek word occurs 99 times in the New Testament and 40 times in Luke-Acts.<sup>201</sup>

### **7. Jesus' continuing growth 2:51-52**

Jesus' obedience to His heavenly Father included obedience to His earthly parents (Exod. 20:12; cf. Col. 3:20). Luke balanced the former revelation of Jesus' deity with this indication of His humanity. His second reference to Mary meditating on "these things"

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<sup>197</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>198</sup>Nolland, p. 131.

<sup>199</sup>See I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," *Interpretation* 21 (1967):87-103.

<sup>200</sup>Idem, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 128.

<sup>201</sup>See Bock, "A Theology . . .," pp. 94-95, for further discussion of it.

continues the implication that his record of these events came from her or from someone close to her (cf. Gen. 37:11).

Usually young people who give God His proper place in their lives develop into normal adults, people whom God and other people approve (cf. Prov. 3:1-12). This was true of Jesus (cf. 1 Sam. 2:26). Jesus' mental, social, and spiritual powers developed along with His physical powers. He was fully man, as well as fully God, who voluntarily set aside some of His divine prerogatives temporarily in the Incarnation (Phil. 2:7). The Greek word translated "increased" or "grew" (v. 52, *prokopto*) literally means to make one's way forward by chopping down obstacles, a vivid description of the maturation process (cf. v. 40).

Luke's original Greek readers were familiar with the concept of gods visiting humans. This was common in their mythology. However, those gods did not become humans; they remained different from mortals. Luke probably recorded so much information about Jesus' birth and early life to help his readers believe that Jesus became a real man at the Incarnation.

"The [Greco-Roman] biographical tradition used a combination of birth, family, and boyhood stories to give anticipations about the future life of the hero. . . . All of these components functioned also as prophecies of the character of the public career of the subject of the biography. If this was their purpose in the Greco-Roman biographies, then this is how a reader/hearer of Luke would most probably have taken the material of a similar nature in Luke 1:5—4:15.

"Virtually the totality of the material about Jesus in Luke 1:5—4:15 would have been regarded as an anticipation of his later public greatness. . . . [This material] would combine to foretell/foreshadow the type of person Jesus would be in his public ministry which began at Luke 4:16-30."<sup>202</sup>

The point of everything in chapter 2 is to present Jesus as the unique God-man.

"The levels of insight achieved by participants in the infancy events will not recur until after the resurrection, when the fact of the cross enables these vistas to take on quite new meaning. The infancy narratives have created a privileged insiders' status for the readers, but now Luke's actual story begins."<sup>203</sup>

### **III. THE PREPARATION FOR JESUS' MINISTRY 3:1—4:13**

Luke next narrated events that paved the way for Jesus' public ministry in Galilee and Judea.

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<sup>202</sup>Charles H. Talbert, "Prophecies of Future Greatness: The Contribution of Greco-Roman Biographies to an Understanding of Luke 1:5—4:15," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H. Silberman*, p. 137.

<sup>203</sup>Nolland, p. 139.

". . . whereas 1:5—2:52 establishes the *possibility* of Jesus' mission as Son of God, 3:1—4:13 establishes its *probability* before that ministry actually commences with Luke 4:14."<sup>204</sup>

### **A. THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST 3:1-20**

John's ministry, as Jesus', did not begin until he was a mature man. This section of the Gospel shows the vital role John played as Messiah's forerunner.

#### **1. The beginning of John's ministry 3:1-6 (cf. Matt. 3:1-6; Mark 1:1-6)**

3:1-2 Luke made detailed reference to the time when John commenced his ministry, in order to document the reliability of his Gospel.<sup>205</sup> Only the reference to "Tiberius" ("fifteenth year of" his "reign") is necessary to date the beginning of John's ministry, which shortly preceded the commencement of Jesus' ministry. The other references place these events in a broader historical context.

"Pontius Pilate was governor (prefect) of Judea," from A.D. 26 to late 36 or early 37. "Herod" Antipas ended his reign as "tetrarch [ruler of a fourth part] of Galilee," that began in 4 B.C., by deposition in A.D. 39. "His brother" Herod "Philip," who ruled territories to the northeast of Palestine from 4 B.C., died in A.D. 34.<sup>206</sup> "Trachonitis" was an area south of Damascus. Present historical evidence does not enable scholars to date "Lysanias," the "tetrarch of Abilene," an area west of Damascus. "Annas" was Israel's "high priest" from A.D. 6 to 15 until the Roman authorities deposed him. However, some of the Jews continued to regard him as the high priest, and he retained his title.<sup>207</sup> His son-in-law, "Caiaphas," served as the official high priest from A.D. 18 to the spring of 37.<sup>208</sup> Thus the general timeframe when John began his ministry was between A.D. 26 and 37. The specific date, "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar," is harder to pinpoint, but it was probably A.D. 29.<sup>209</sup> Then "the word of God came to John . . . in the wilderness" where he lived (cf. 1:80), and he began his ministry as a prophet (cf. Isa. 1:1; Jer. 1:1-3; et al.).

"The ancients did not have our modern system of chronology, the names of rulers as here being the common way."<sup>210</sup>

<sup>204</sup>Green, p. 49.

<sup>205</sup>Compare Thucydides 2:2 for a similarly elaborate chronological synchronism.

<sup>206</sup>See Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 255-57. See Scroggie, p. 122, for a diagram of the Herodian family tree.

<sup>207</sup>Jeremias, pp. 157-58.

<sup>208</sup>See Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 262-63.

<sup>209</sup>Hoehner, pp. 29-37.

<sup>210</sup>Robertson, 2:37.

"The sentence as a whole is reminiscent of numerous prophetic texts—including those that also situate the prophet in an historical context with reference to national leaders, those that declare the coming of the divine word to the messenger, and, as in Luke 3:1-2, those combining both of these elements."<sup>211</sup>

3:3 Luke mentioned John's itinerant ministry in the region "around the Jordan" River, whereas Matthew described it as in the wilderness of Judea (Matt. 3:1). The thing that characterized John's ministry in the minds of his contemporaries was his "baptism" (baptizing). What marked his baptism distinctively, was that it expressed "repentance" that resulted in divine "forgiveness of sins." When people came to John for baptism, they were saying by coming that they had repented of their sins. John's baptism prefigured Jesus' different kind of baptism (cf. v. 16). Luke said little about John's baptizing but stressed his preaching.

"The task of 'proclaiming . . . repentance for release of sins' (3:3) remains central throughout Luke-Acts [cf. 4:18; 5:17-32; 24:47]."<sup>212</sup>

3:4-6 All three synoptic writers quoted Isaiah 40:3 as the prophecy that John fulfilled, and John the evangelist recorded John the Baptist quoting it of himself (cf. John 1:23). However, Luke alone also quoted Isaiah 40:4-5. These verses contained the preparations made for a royal visitor that were common in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>213</sup> They also included the fact that "all" people would experience "the salvation" that God would provide. One of Luke's main themes was the universal scope of salvation (cf. 2:30; Acts 28:28; et al.).<sup>214</sup> Typically Luke quoted from the Septuagint. John's ministry consisted of preparing the Jews by getting them right with God, so that when Messiah appeared, they would believe on Him.

"This quotation from Isaiah not only interprets John's special mission but reveals the purpose of God which underlies the whole narrative of Luke-Acts."<sup>215</sup>

In Luke, John is a "prototype of the Christian evangelist."<sup>216</sup>

"The section on John's ministry begins with a rather lengthy scriptural quotation and ends with an arrest that

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<sup>211</sup>Green, p. 167.

<sup>212</sup>Tannehill, 1:48.

<sup>213</sup>Robertson, 2:38.

<sup>214</sup>Morris, p. 95.

<sup>215</sup>Tannehill, 1:47.

<sup>216</sup>Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, p. 27.

will lead to death. Jesus' ministry will begin and end in the same way."<sup>217</sup>

## **2. John's preaching 3:7-18 (cf. Matt. 3:7-12; Mark 1:7-8)**

Essentially, John called his hearers to change their minds about their relationship to God, and to demonstrate the genuineness of their repentance with righteous conduct (vv. 7-14). He also promoted Jesus (vv. 15-17). Only Luke included John's enumeration of specific changes the people needed to make to demonstrate true repentance (vv. 10-14).

3:7-9 Luke's introduction of John's message is more general than Matthew's, but his summary of John's preaching is almost identical to Matthew's. However, Luke never reported that John said, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Luke waited to introduce the kingdom theme until Jesus began His ministry (4:43).

As adders (poisonous desert snakes) try to escape before an approaching brush fire, so the Jews of John's day were trying to escape God's coming judgment by fleeing to John for baptism.<sup>218</sup> However, John sensed that their reason for coming to him was just their safety, not genuine repentance. Righteous behavior would prove true repentance.

"John is as skeptical of their readiness for repentance as Jeremiah had been before him (Jer 13:23)."<sup>219</sup>

Many of the Jews believed that Abraham's righteousness availed for his descendants.<sup>220</sup> As God had cut Israel out of Abraham, who was a rock spiritually, so He could produce "children" for Himself *from the* "stones" in the wilderness (cf. 19:40).<sup>221</sup> There is a play on words here in Aramaic involving "stones," *abnayya*, and "children," *benayya*. People commonly "cut down" and burn fruit "trees" that do not produce "good fruit." Likewise, God would judge Israel as a fruitless tree, unless the Jews repented and started bearing "the fruits of repentance" (cf. 6:43-45; 13:6-9; Isa. 5:1-7; 10:33-34; 66:24; Mal. 4:1).

"The Greek verb [*metanoeo*, translated "to repent"] means 'to change one's mind,' but in its Lucan usage it comes very close to the Hebrew verb for repent which literally means 'to turn or turn around' (*sub*). . . . A change of perspective, involving the total person's point of view, is called for by this term. In fact, John called for the Israelites to bring forth

<sup>217</sup>Tannehill, 1:53.

<sup>218</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 139.

<sup>219</sup>Nolland, p. 154.

<sup>220</sup>W. D. Davis, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 270-71.

<sup>221</sup>Plummer, p. 90.

fruit worthy of repentance (3:8). This passage is significant for it separates repentance from what it produces, and also expresses a link between repentance and fruit. One leads to the other.

"In summary, Luke saw repentance as a change of perspective that transforms a person's thinking and approach to life."<sup>222</sup>

3:10-11 Luke's unique inclusion of the specific fruits of repentance (vv. 10-14) demonstrates his concern for social justice. To the sincere in the crowd, John recommended generously sharing their possessions with the needy (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). The tunic (Gr. *chiton*) was the short undergarment worn under a robe. The Jews often wore two of them at once if they had two. These undergarments were not what we think of as underwear. They were simply an under layer of clothing. The important question: "Then what shall we do?" (v. 10), is repeated later by several others in Luke-Acts (3:12, 14; 10:25; 18:18; Acts 2:37; 16:30; 22:10).

3:12-13 John counseled sincere "tax collectors" to refrain from extorting more money than they had a right to receive (cf. 5:27-32). (Every mention of "tax collectors" in Luke is negative; cf. 5:30; 7:34; 15:1; 18:13.) John advocated honesty and freedom from greed. He did not suggest overthrowing a system that allowed for abuses, but prescribed personal morality that would eliminate the abuses.

". . . it is their reputation for involvement in a kind of institutionalized scheme of extortion or robbery that is in view in this context."<sup>223</sup>

3:14 Soldiers were capable, because of their position, of threatening people with reprisal in order to extort money "from them." Exactly who these soldiers were is unclear, but it is also unimportant. Greed appears to have been a special temptation for them, since the "wages" of soldiers were low. Therefore John called on them to demonstrate contentment.

Verses 12-14 help us see that certain temptations are more prominent in certain occupations than others. However, material possessions were a source of temptation to all these people, as they still are today.

3:15-17 Luke's account of John's preaching about Jesus is the longest in the three Synoptic Gospels (cf. John 1:19-25). John distinguished between his baptism and Messiah's to show that he was not the Messiah.

<sup>222</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," pp. 129-30, 132.

<sup>223</sup>Green, p. 179.

Matthew's account of these words stressed the importance of Jesus' Jewish hearers repenting personally and nationally. Luke tailored his account to Gentiles and stressed the judgment that Jesus would bring (cf. Isa. 4:4). The presence of only one article before "Holy Spirit" and "fire" in the Greek text suggests that John was referring to one baptism. It is probably the baptism that Jesus will initiate when He returns to earth as the messianic King, but which He previewed from heaven—as a foreview of that event—on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:3-4; cf. Isa. 44:3; Joel 2:28-32). Another view is that these are two separate baptisms that relate to His first and second comings.<sup>224</sup> John's *water* baptism prefigured Jesus' *Holy Spirit* baptism. John's reference to "unquenchable fire" implies eternal judgment. Jesus will be the stronger One ("mightier than" John) who judges, not just God (cf. John 5:22).

3:18 John's preaching was also positive. He "preached" good news (the gospel) to the people (Gr. *laos*, a potentially responsive group), as well as warning them of coming judgment.

"John illustrates how the proclaimer of the Word should perform his task. The preacher must bear good news as well as news that exposes sin. Some preachers in the past tended to emphasize sin so much that one wondered where grace might be found. Today our problem is the opposite: being able to confront people with their accountability and culpability before God."<sup>225</sup>

### **3. The end of John's ministry 3:19-20**

Luke concluded his account of John's ministry before he began to narrate Jesus' ministry. This arrangement of material allowed Luke to continue comparing and contrasting the ministries of the two men.<sup>226</sup> One writer argued that Luke took John out of the scene, before introducing Jesus, in order to minimize John's importance for the baptist sectarians of Luke's day (cf. Acts 19:1-7).<sup>227</sup>

"John's prophetic call, his ministry in fulfillment of Scripture, his preaching to all classes in society, his falling foul of Herod, and his ultimate fate all have their counterparts in the career of Jesus."<sup>228</sup>

John's stern words about sin led to his arrest and imprisonment by Herod Antipas. Matthew and Mark recorded a longer account of what happened (Matt. 14:4-12; Mark 6:17-29). Luke recorded references to John's death later (9:7-9, 19-20). Here he stressed

<sup>224</sup>The Nelson . . . , p. 1693.

<sup>225</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 117.

<sup>226</sup>C. Talbert, "The Lukan Presentation of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee," *Review and Expositor* 64 (1967):490.

<sup>227</sup>Richard J. Erickson, "The Jailing of John and the Baptism of Jesus: Luke 3:19-21," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36:4 (December 1993):455-66.

<sup>228</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , pp. 148-49. Cf. H. Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, p. 22.

John's boldness and the sickness of the society that he confronted.<sup>229</sup> John probably began his ministry in A.D. 29 and remained free for one year. The next two years he was in prison, and he died in A.D. 32.<sup>230</sup>

**B. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS 3:21-22 (CF. MATT. 3:13-17; MARK 1:9-11; JOHN 1:29-34)**

Luke's account of this significant event is shorter than the parallel passages. At His baptism, Jesus received the anointing of the Holy Spirit for His ministry. It was also the occasion for the Father to authenticate Jesus as His Son. Luke stressed these two features and did not describe Jesus' actual baptism fully, though he recorded some information that the other evangelists omitted.

"For Luke, Jesus' participation in baptism is his participation in the stage of preparation initiated by John and his identification with the imperatives and expectations of John's ministry."<sup>231</sup>

3:21 Evidently John baptized Jesus "after" he had baptized many ("all the") other "people." Luke may have wanted to imply by this that Jesus' baptism was the climax of John's ministry.<sup>232</sup> According to Luke, this is the first of many important events that happened "while" Jesus "was praying" (cf. 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1; 22:32, 40-44; 23:46). Only Luke recorded that the heavens opened while Jesus was praying, that is, the revelation from God that followed was a direct response to Jesus' prayer. Luke had a special interest in Jesus' prayer life. It showed His conscious dependence on His Father as a human being.

"Jesus' baptism, like that of the people, was a single event in time; but his praying continued for his lifetime."<sup>233</sup>

Perhaps this explanation accounts for the different tenses of the verb and the participle in this verse. Luke also may have mentioned Jesus' praying to encourage his readers to do the same. The opening of the heavens indicated divine intervention into human history with revelation. God Himself had not intervened this way for many centuries. Luke's original readers, with their background in Greek mythology, would have had a special interest in this intervention. The Greek gods supposedly intervened in human affairs occasionally. Moreover, Luke's frequent references to Jesus praying would have helped his original readers realize that Jesus was truly human, and not only a "god" who had visited humans.

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<sup>229</sup>See Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 18:5:4.

<sup>230</sup>Martin, p. 212.

<sup>231</sup>Nolland, p. 160.

<sup>232</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 150.

<sup>233</sup>Liefeld, p. 859.

"In Luke-Acts times of prayer and worship are frequently the occasions for divine revelations to characters in the story. This is true of Zechariah (Luke 1:9-11), Anna (2:37-38), Cornelius (Acts 10:2-6), Peter (10:9-16), Paul (9:11-12; 22:17-21), and the prophets and teachers of the church in Antioch (13:2). This is true also of Jesus. Jesus' choice of the twelve is preceded by prayer, indeed, prayer through the whole night (dif. Matthew, Mark), in which Jesus is evidently seeking divine guidance for the choice (6:12). The transfiguration also takes place while Jesus is praying (dif. Matthew, Mark). . . . In 22:40-46 also, if vv. 43-44 are an original part of the text, Jesus prays concerning his mission and receives a response through a vision of a strengthening angel."<sup>234</sup>

3:22 This was a *theophany*: God appearing in corporeal ("bodily") form. The "dove" is a biblical symbol of peace, and the herald or bearer of good news (Gen. 8:8-12; cf. Gen. 1:2). Primarily, it signified the coming of God's peaceful "Spirit" to empower Jesus for His ministry (Isa. 42:1; cf. Isa. 64:1). Secondarily, it represented the *peace* that Jesus would impart to those who believed on Him.<sup>235</sup> Only Luke wrote that the Spirit came down "in bodily form," thereby giving the theophany more substance. The "voice from (out of) heaven" identified Jesus as God's "beloved Son" (cf. 1:32; Exod. 20:1; Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1). God announced that His favor rested on Jesus, not that He as the Father felt delight in His Son.<sup>236</sup> With this guarantee of divine enablement, Jesus was ready to begin His ministry.

"The risen Jesus connects the beginning of the apostles' mission with the coming of the Spirit upon them (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8), and the Pentecost scene shows that the coming of the Spirit leads immediately to the first preaching and expansion of the community. Thus in both Luke and Acts the descent of the Spirit initiates the central sequences of events which dominate these writings."<sup>237</sup>

"The primary application of this text comes in its Christology. Many in our culture respect Jesus, regarding him as a religious teacher of great significance and even placing him among the top religious teachers of all time. Others even acknowledge him as a prophet, giving him a seat in a rather limited club of divine revealers. But as high as these notes of respect are, they pale in comparison to the biblical portrait. Luke shows that Jesus is not like anyone who came before him or anyone since. The

<sup>234</sup>Tannehill, 1:56-57.

<sup>235</sup>See L. E. Keck, "The Spirit and the Dove," *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-71):41-67.

<sup>236</sup>Morris, p. 100.

<sup>237</sup>Tannehill, 1:57.

Hall of Religious Fame into which he is placed has only one portrait in it—his. There have been other great teachers, prophets, and kings, but there is only one who has combined all of those roles as God's Son."<sup>238</sup>

### **C. THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS 3:23-38 (CF. MATT. 1:1-17)**

Why did Luke place his genealogy of Jesus at this point in his Gospel? Probably he did so because this was the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Specifically, it is where Jesus' role as Son of God empowered by the Holy Spirit begins.<sup>239</sup> Matthew recorded Jesus' genealogy to show that He had a legitimate right by birth to occupy the Davidic throne. Consequently he placed his genealogy at the very beginning of his Gospel. Luke wanted to show the ancestry of Jesus, who now began His ministry, as the authenticated Son of God.

"Genealogies serve as indicators of (inherited) status . . ." <sup>240</sup>

There are several other distinct differences between the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke. They proceed in different directions, Matthew's starting with Abraham and ending in Jesus, and Luke's beginning with Jesus and working back to Adam and God. Matthew's list stressed Jesus' place in the Jewish race, by recording Jesus' ancestry back to Abraham, the father of the Jews. Luke's perspective is broader, tracing Jesus all the way back to Adam, and showing Him to be a member of the human race.

Matthew grouped his names into three groups of 14 names each, whereas Luke simply listed 78 ancestors. It is possible to divide Luke's list into 11 groups of 7 names each, plus God's name.<sup>241</sup> But Luke did not draw attention to his divisions as Matthew did. Matthew recorded Jesus' descent from Joseph through Solomon, but Luke traced other ancestors from Joseph to David's other son Nathan. Matthew apparently gives Jesus' legal line of descent from David naming the heirs to his throne, but Luke gave another branch of David's family tree that seems to be Joseph's bloodline.<sup>242</sup> A similar possibility follows:

"The most credible harmonization is based on Jewish customs in the case of the marriage of heiresses: it may well be that Mary had no brothers and that, therefore, on her marriage to Joseph, her husband was adopted by Mary's father, whose genealogy is thus reflected in the Lukan text (cf. Ezra 2:61; Num 32:41 cf. 1 Chr 2:21-22, etc.)."<sup>243</sup>

Matthew mentioned several women in his genealogy, but Luke mentioned none. Finally Luke's list is considerably longer than Matthew's.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>238</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>239</sup>Nolland, p. 173.

<sup>240</sup>Green, p. 188.

<sup>241</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 160.

<sup>242</sup>Ibid., p. 158; Machen, pp. 202-9, 229-32.

<sup>243</sup>Nolland, pp. 173-74.

<sup>244</sup>See Scroggie, pp. 505-10, for further discussion of the two genealogies.

"That the genealogy is recorded at all shows Him to be a real man, not a demi-god like those in Greek and Roman mythology. That it goes back to David points to an essential element in His messianic qualifications. That it goes back to Adam brings out His kinship not only with Israel but with the whole human race. That it goes back to God relates Him to the Creator of all. He was the Son of God."<sup>245</sup>

"By extending the genealogy in this way, Luke makes his most important point in this section. Adam as son of God comes after the baptismal address of Jesus as Son of God (Luke 3:22) and before the tempter's beguiling suggestions to Jesus as Son of God (4:1-13, and esp. vv 3, 9)."<sup>246</sup>

"The concatenation, or chain of causes, represented by the repetition of 'son of,' is rare in biblical genealogies (though cf. 1 Chr 3:10-24; 6:16-30), but serves an important function. It not only links together these members of Jesus' family line, but especially provides for a kind of crescendo culminating in the acknowledgment of God as the originator of Jesus' ancestral line."<sup>247</sup>

3:23 Luke probably mentioned the rounded number "about 30" to describe Jesus' age when He launched His ministry, because many significant Old Testament characters began their service of God when they were 30 (cf. Gen. 41:46; Num. 4:3, 23; 2 Sam. 5:4; Ezek. 1:1). This included Israel's priests (Num. 4). Evidently Jesus was 32 years old when He began His ministry.<sup>248</sup> Luke also clarified that Jesus was not the physical "son of Joseph." People only "supposed" that He was.

3:24-38 Matthew traced Joseph's line back to David through Joseph's father Jacob and David's son Solomon. Luke traced Joseph's line back to David through Joseph's father Eli (or Heli, NIV) and David's son Nathan. Is there a mistake in the text, is one of these genealogies really the genealogy of Mary rather than Joseph, or did Joseph have two fathers?

The two lines of Joseph proceed back through two entirely different sets of names. Therefore there does not seem to be an error in the text regarding the name of Joseph's father. Luke did not even mention Mary in his genealogy, and Matthew seems clearly to have been describing Joseph's ancestors (Matt. 1:16). Consequently it appears unlikely that one of the genealogies is Mary's. As strange as it may seem, Joseph appears to have had two fathers.

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<sup>245</sup>Morris, p. 101.

<sup>246</sup>Nolland, p. 174.

<sup>247</sup>Green, p. 189.

<sup>248</sup>Hoehner, pp. 37-38.

One solution to this problem is that the custom of levirate marriage in the ancient Near East permitted the widow of a childless man to marry his (unmarried) brother. It was common to consider a child of the second marriage as the legal son of the deceased man—to perpetuate that man's name. In genealogies, the ancients sometimes listed such a child as the son of his real father, but at other times as the son of his legal father. This may be the solution to the problem of Joseph's fathers. It is a very old explanation that the third-century church father Africanus advocated.<sup>249</sup> Evidently, either Jacob or Eli (Heli) was Joseph's real father, and the other man was his legal father. This may also be the solution to the problem of Shealtiel's two fathers (Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27). This is only an adequate explanation, however, if Jacob and Eli were half-brothers, specifically the sons of the same mother but not the same father. Jacob's father was "Matthan" and his grandfather was "Eleazar," whereas Eli's father was "Matthat" and his grandfather was "Levi."

Another solution is that Matthew provided a list of incumbents (actual or potential) to the Davidic throne, and Luke listed Joseph's physical father and forefathers.<sup>250</sup> I prefer this view. According to this view, Matthew showed that Jesus had a legitimate right to rule as Messiah, since He was in the royal line through His legal guardian Joseph. Luke showed that Jesus was a real blood descendant of David. Yet Luke had already showed in chapters 1 and 2 that Jesus was not a biological son of Joseph. Advocates of this view point out that Luke was careful to state that Jesus was only "as was supposed" the "son of Joseph" (v. 23). However, if He was not the physical son of Joseph—what is the point of tracing Joseph's ancestors to prove Jesus' humanity? This criticism applies to the former view too. Probably in the eyes of the Greeks, Jesus' connection with Adam through Joseph would have been adequately convincing.

Another view is that the genealogy is Joseph's, but Luke did not mean that Joseph was Jesus' physical father.

"In the eye of the law Jesus was the heir of Joseph; and therefore it is Joseph's descent which is of importance."<sup>251</sup>

Yet the purpose of the genealogy seems to be to trace Jesus back to the first man to prove that He was a real son of Adam.

The obvious problem with the view that Luke recorded Mary's genealogy, a fourth view, is that he did not refer to Mary but wrote that his genealogy was Joseph's. Advocates of this view explained the lack of reference to Mary this way: It was not customary among the Romans or the Jews to

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<sup>249</sup>*The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, 1:7.

<sup>250</sup>Machen, p. 209; *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962 ed., s.v. "Genealogy of Jesus Christ," by F. F. Bruce.

<sup>251</sup>Plummer, p. 103.

include the name of a woman in such a list.<sup>252</sup> However, Matthew listed four women in his genealogy, and Luke showed more interest in women than any of the other evangelists.<sup>253</sup> It seems unlikely that he would have refrained from using Mary's name if he meant that this genealogy was hers.

Most of the scholars are not dogmatic about the solution to this problem.

"It is only right, therefore, to admit that the problem caused by the existence of the two genealogies is insoluble with the evidence presently at our disposal."<sup>254</sup>

From David to Abraham (vv. 32-34), Luke's list parallels Matthew's quite closely (Matt. 1:2-6). The list from Abraham to Adam (vv. 34-38) is very similar to the one in Genesis 11:10-26 (cf. Gen. 5:1-32; 1 Chron. 1:1-26).<sup>255</sup>

The presence of "Shealtiel" and "Zerubbabel" in the lists of both Solomon's and Nathan's descendants is another problem (Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27). King Jeconiah, a descendant of Solomon, may have adopted Shealtiel, a descendant of Nathan and Zerubbabel's father, into his line (cf. 1 Chron. 3:17; Jer. 22:30). Then Zerubbabel's descendants continued the two lines of Solomon and Nathan, one branch of the family perpetuating the legal line of Solomon and the other the bloodline of Nathan.<sup>256</sup> Another possibility is that there were two sets of fathers and sons named "Shealtiel and Zerubbabel": one set in Joseph's legal line, and the other in his bloodline.

"Jesus is only the apparent son of Joseph; in fact his identity as Son of God need not be traced back through Joseph to Adam at all, but rests on his miraculous conception. Thus, the genealogy provides Jesus with the legitimation needed in the world in which he will carry out his mission."<sup>257</sup>

#### **D. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS 4:1-13 (CF. MATT. 4:1-11; MARK 1:12-13)**

Luke stressed how the Spirit who had come upon Jesus at His baptism guided and empowered Him in His temptation, and how Jesus, God's approved Son, pleased His Father by His obedience. Jesus overcame the devil, who opposed God's plans. This story

<sup>252</sup>Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, p. 151; Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, pp. 218-21.

<sup>253</sup>See Tannehill, 1:132-39.

<sup>254</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 159. Cf. Morris, p. 101. See Pentecost, *The Words . . .*, pp. 33-39, for further discussion of the genealogies.

<sup>255</sup>For a study of the differences and several ways of reconciling them, see M. S. Mills, "A Comparison of the Genesis and Lukan Genealogies (The Case for Cainan)" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978).

<sup>256</sup>See Plummer, p. 104.

<sup>257</sup>Green, pp. 189-90.

is also edifying because it helps believers understand how to recognize and overcome Satan's attacks. We do so as Jesus did—by obeying God's will as revealed in Scripture. Jesus drew His responses to Satan from Old Testament passages that relate to Israel in the wilderness (Deut. 8:3; 6:13, 16).<sup>258</sup> Jesus succeeded, in the wilderness no less, where Israel had failed.<sup>259</sup>

"In the final analysis Jesus is tempted neither as second Adam, nor as true Israel, but as Son. There is a touch of Adamic typology and considerable exodus typology, but that is because the experiences of Adam and Israel are paradigmatic cases of the testing of God's Son."<sup>260</sup>

It is generally assumed that Jesus was alone during his 40 days in the wilderness, mainly because there are no references to anyone else being with Him. Martin Luther wrote the following:

"Eve got into trouble when she walked in the garden alone. I have my worst temptations when I am by myself."<sup>261</sup>

Luke recorded the same three temptations as Matthew did, but he reversed the order of the second and third incidents. Apparently Luke rearranged the order to stress Jesus' victory in Jerusalem. Luke viewed Jerusalem as the center toward which Jesus moved in this Gospel, and the center from which the gospel radiated to the uttermost part of the earth in Acts (Acts 1:8). Matthew, on the other hand, concluded his account of the temptation with a reference to the kingdom, his particular interest. This rearrangement of material illustrates the fact that the Gospel writers sometimes changed the order of events in their narratives to emphasize particular points in harmony with their purposes and messages.

Greek readers had an interest in the idea of the Son of God, explicitly present in two of the temptations. They also had an interest in miracles, which appear in one if not two of them, and Satan, who appears in all three.

4:1-2            Reference to Jesus' being "full of the Holy Spirit" links this incident with Jesus' baptism (3:22). There seems to be a deliberate comparison between Israel as God's Son (Exod. 4:22-23; Hos. 11:1) and Jesus as the Son of God in this story. Both sons experienced temptation in the wilderness for 40 periods of time, Israel for 40 years and Jesus for 40 days (cf. Gen. 7:4; Exod. 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8; Jon. 3:4). Perhaps God regarded a period of "days" as the appropriate counterpart for a man, compared to "years" for a

<sup>258</sup>See *ibid*, pp. 192-93, for development of the parallels between Israel as God's "Son" and Jesus as God's Son.

<sup>259</sup>See R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, pp. 50-53; G. H. P. Thompson, "Called — Proved — Obedient," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS11 (1960):1-12; and B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son*.

<sup>260</sup>Nolland, p. 182.

<sup>261</sup>Quoted in Bainton, pp. 284-85.

nation.<sup>262</sup> Moses also went without food for 40 days in the wilderness (Deut. 9:9). Israel failed, but Jesus succeeded. God's Spirit "led" both sons "about . . . in the wilderness" (cf. Deut. 8:2). God tested Israel there, and God allowed the devil to test Jesus there.

Satan tempts people to depart from God's will, but God never does this (James 1:13). People tempt God by making unreasonable demands on Him (Num. 14:22; Deut. 6:16; Ps. 106:14). God tests, but does not tempt, people (Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2; 13:1-3; Judg. 2:22; 3:4; 2 Chron. 32:31). All three types of testing occurred in Israel's temptation in the wilderness and in Jesus' temptation there.<sup>263</sup>

Jesus proved completely pleasing to God in His trials, but Satan was displeasing to Him. Jesus, filled with the Spirit, sided with God, whereas Satan, not filled with the Spirit, opposed Him.<sup>264</sup> Jesus was physically hungry, but He was full of the Spirit. Thus the importance of Spirit control is obvious in this passage, as is the importance of familiarity with and fidelity to the Scriptures. Jesus had been fasting (Matt. 4:2; cf. Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9). Evidently Jesus experienced temptation all 40 days, but the three instances Luke recorded happened at the end of that period (cf. Mark 1:13).

4:3-4

All three of the tests recorded enticed Jesus to abandon His dependence on God. The first one was a temptation to *gratify* self, but not by doing something wicked, since eating is necessary. The devil attacked Jesus where (and when) He was vulnerable, since He was then (after 40 days) "hungry." To continue to exist in the wilderness, Jesus, and the Israelites before Him, had to believe that God's word was trustworthy (Deut. 8:3). God had revealed a plan for both that assured them that they would not die in the wilderness. Satan assumed that Jesus was the "Son of God," as is clear from the first class condition in the Greek text (v. 3; cf. 3:22). This title, without the definite article preceding, as here, emphasizes Jesus' relationship to God, not His office of Messiah.<sup>265</sup>

"The Devil suggests that Sonship is a privilege to be exploited. Jesus is tempted to order his own affairs and provide for his own needs, rather than being nourished in filial dependence on God."<sup>266</sup>

Human welfare does not depend primarily on food or even physical provisions. It depends mainly on obedience to God's will, even though that may mean physical deprivation. By applying this passage to Himself,

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<sup>262</sup>Gerhardsson, pp. 41-42.

<sup>263</sup>Liefeld, p. 863.

<sup>264</sup>See Sydney H. T. Page, "Satan: God's Servant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:3 (September 2007):449-65.

<sup>265</sup>Robertson, 2:50.

<sup>266</sup>Nolland, p. 179.

Jesus put Himself in the category of a true "man" (Gr. *anthropos*). Luke had special interest in the testing of Jesus' humanity, and he presented Jesus as the example for the Christian to follow.

- 4:5-8 The devil also took Jesus up on a mountain (Matt. 4:8; cf. Deut. 32:49; 34:1-3). Evidently he showed Jesus the "kingdoms" in a *vision*, since He saw them *all* "in a moment of time (instant)." This was a temptation to *exalt* self. Satan was, in effect, asking Jesus to renounce His identity as God's Son, and to become "Satan's son."<sup>267</sup> Jesus could not enter into His glory without suffering first, according to God's will (24:26). Jesus' response was that of the perfect Man—the last Adam (Rom. 5:19). He worshipped and served God alone (Deut. 6:13).

"It is likely . . . that the worship of Satan to which Jesus is enticed is the temptation to pursue his task in the ways of the world . . ., to gain glory for himself in this world by compromise with the forces that control it . . ., and to become indebted to Satan in the manner that every successful man of the world is."<sup>268</sup>

- 4:9-12 Next Satan tempted Jesus to *glorify* Himself. Jesus refused to repeat Israel's sin in the wilderness, of putting God to the test by forcing His hand. The Israelites had wondered if God was still with them (Exod. 17:7). Jesus, on the other hand, committed Himself to simply following God's will in God's time. Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12, and Jesus responded with Deuteronomy 6:16. The Deuteronomy passage applied to Satan as well as to Jesus.

". . . the faithful man does not seek to dictate to God how he must express his covenant loyalty and fulfill his promises. That would be to put God to the test and a failure to believe that God will do well by his son."<sup>269</sup>

"The central motif of this temptation is the facing of death in Jerusalem. This temptation occupies the climactic third position because just such a facing of death in Jerusalem represents the climax of Jesus' ministry (Luke 9:51; 13:32-33)."<sup>270</sup>

"Satan questioned the Father's love when he tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread. He questioned His hope when he offered Jesus the world's kingdoms this side of the Cross

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<sup>267</sup>Green, p. 194.

<sup>268</sup>Nolland, p. 180.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid.

(see Heb. 12:1-3). Satan questioned the Father's faithfulness when he asked Jesus to jump from the temple and prove that the Father would keep His promise (Ps. 91:11-12). Thus, the enemy attacked the three basic virtues of the Christian life—faith, hope, and love."<sup>271</sup>

Notice also the parallels between Satan's temptation of the first Adam and his temptation of the Second Adam (Christ). The first Adam failed in a garden and brought sin and death on humanity. The Second Adam succeeded in a wilderness and brought forgiveness and life to humanity.

THE FIRST ADAM	THE SECOND ADAM	THE APPEAL
"The tree was good for food." (Gen. 3:6)	"Tell this stone to become bread." (Luke 4:3)	"The lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16)
"It was a delight to the eyes." (Gen. 3:6)	"He (Satan) . . . showed Him (Jesus) all the kingdoms of the world." (Luke 4:5)	"The lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16)
"The tree was desirable to make one wise." (Gen. 3:6)	"Cast yourself down from here." (Luke 4:9)	"The pride of life" (1 John 2:6)

4:13 The devil only "left" Jesus temporarily; he continued to tempt Him later. However, Luke viewed Jesus' victory here as significant. His lack of reference to the fact that angels then ministered to Jesus (Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13) reinforces Jesus' personal victory over Satan.

"Moses fasted in the middle, Elijah at the end, Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. Moses fasted in the Presence of God; Elijah alone; Jesus assaulted by the Devil. Moses had been called up by God; Elijah had gone forth in the bitterness of his own spirit; Jesus was driven by the Spirit. Moses failed after his forty day's fast, when in indignation he cast the Tables of the Law from him; Elijah failed before his forty day's fast; Jesus was assailed for forty days and endured the trial. Moses was angry against Israel; Elijah despaired of Israel; Jesus overcame for Israel."<sup>272</sup>

#### **IV. JESUS' MINISTRY IN AND AROUND GALILEE 4:14—9:50**

Luke commenced his account of Jesus' public ministry with His return to Galilee following His temptation. This section of his Gospel ends with Jesus' decision to leave Galilee for Jerusalem and the Cross (9:51). Luke did not give as much information about Jesus' Galilean ministry as the other synoptic writers did (cf. Matt. 4:12—16:12; Mark

<sup>271</sup>Wiersbe, 1:183.

<sup>272</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:294.

1:14—8:26). He chose, rather, to emphasize Jesus' ministry as He traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27), which the other synoptic evangelists did not highlight as much.

The name "Galilee" comes from the Hebrew *galil*, meaning "a circle." It was apparently so called because originally non-Jewish nations encircled the area.<sup>273</sup>

### **A. JESUS' TEACHING MINISTRY 4:14—5:11**

This section of the third Gospel records some of Jesus' initial preaching and various responses to it. Much of the material appears only in Luke. Interspersed are instances of Jesus performing mighty works. Luke, as the other evangelists, stressed the essential message that Jesus proclaimed. Green saw 4:14-15 and 4:42:44 as forming an *inclusio* around 4:16-41.<sup>274</sup>

#### **1. An introduction to Jesus' Galilean ministry 4:14-15 (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14-15)**

Luke again drew his readers' attention to the fact that Jesus was under the control of the Holy Spirit as He began His public ministry (cf. 1:35; 3:22; 4:1). "The Spirit" empowered and enabled Jesus in His words and deeds. Luke would stress His teaching ministry. Luke attributed Jesus' success to His orientation to the Spirit, not His essential deity. Consequently, Jesus was a model that all believers can and should copy. Luke continued to stress the Holy Spirit's ministry in Acts.

Everyone who had contact with Jesus "praised" Him, not just the Jews. This was the initial popular response to Him, and it is the normal initial response that Spirit-directed believers experience.

#### **2. Jesus' teaching in Nazareth 4:16-30**

In contrast to most people, the inhabitants of Jesus' hometown did not praise Him. When Jesus began to speak of God extending salvation to the Gentiles, a particular interest of Luke's, the Jews there opposed Him violently. Perhaps Luke meant this incident to represent a classic case of rejection, in which Nazareth symbolized all of Israel.<sup>275</sup> If so, this is another instance of metonymy. He may have also intended that it become a paradigm for the church's ministry—as well as for Jesus' ministry.<sup>276</sup>

Many students of the Synoptics take this pericope as parallel to Matthew 13:53-58 and Mark 6:1-6. However, the differences between Luke's account, and the account in Matthew and Mark, seem to indicate two separate incidents. Luke's incident probably occurred early in Jesus' Galilean ministry, whereas the one that Matthew and Mark recorded happened later.

<sup>273</sup>*The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962 ed., s.v. "Galilee," by J. H. Paterson.

<sup>274</sup>Green, p. 203.

<sup>275</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 178.

<sup>276</sup>Bo Reicke, "Jesus in Nazareth — Lk 4, 14-30," in *Das Wort und die Wörter*, pp. 51-53.

4:16-17 Luke reminded his readers that Jesus "had grown up" in "Nazareth," where this incident took place.

"It is quite wrong to think of Jesus as being brought up in a backwater; He was brought up in a town in the sight of history and with the traffic of the world almost at its doors."<sup>277</sup>

Luke also drew attention to Jesus' piety, by noting His regular habit of attending synagogue services, where He likely both worshipped *and taught*. Jesus probably attended the synagogue that the Roman centurion, whose beloved servant Jesus later healed, had built for the Jews of Capernaum (cf. 7:2-10).

"It was our Lord's custom to attend public worship, a custom His followers should imitate today (Heb. 10:24-25). He might have argued that the 'religious system' was corrupt, or that He didn't need the instruction; but instead, He made His way on the Sabbath to the place of prayer."<sup>278</sup>

"From the start of His public ministry, the Lord made a habit of attending the synagogue worship (Luke 4:16), and he continued that practice to the end of his earthly life. His example speaks to individuals who excuse themselves from attending corporate worship because they 'get nothing out of the service.' No defender of public worship should ever try to make his case on the basis of the ability of the preacher. We worship to meet God."<sup>279</sup>

One of the synagogue rulers (Jairus? cf. Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41) may have asked Jesus to read the Scriptures, since Jesus was a popular teacher. Customarily, Jewish teachers "stood up to read" the Scriptures, out of respect for them, and then "sat down" to expound them.<sup>280</sup> No one knows for sure if someone asked Him to read this particular passage or if He chose to do so, but the context favors the second alternative by stressing Jesus' initiative.

4:18-19 The passage Jesus read was Isaiah 61:1-2a (cf. Isa. 58:6). This passage prophesied the mission of Messiah. It is appropriate that Jesus should have read it at the beginning of His ministry, and that Luke should have recorded it here. As the Servant of the Lord, which the context of the Isaiah passage contributes, Messiah would possess "the Spirit." He would

<sup>277</sup>Barclay, p. 44. See Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 298-301, for more information about Nazareth.

<sup>278</sup>Wiersbe, 1:184.

<sup>279</sup>Ryrie, p. 149.

<sup>280</sup>Martin, p. 214. See Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:430-50, for explanation of synagogue worship and arrangements.

also be the bearer of good news (1:19; cf. Deut. 18:18; Isa. 40:9; 41:27; 52:7). Luke highlighted Jesus' prophetic ministry of proclamation (v. 24; 7:16, 39; 9:8, 19; 13:33; 24:19). Moreover, Messiah would bring "release" to the oppressed (cf. 7:22).

The "poor" to whom He was sent were not just the economically poor, or the spiritually impoverished, but people of low status in society: "for those excluded according to normal canons of status honor in [the] Mediterranean world."<sup>281</sup> Likewise, the "blind" refers to those who need to receive revelation and experience salvation.

The reference to "the favorable year of the Lord" is an allusion to *the year of jubilee*, when all the enslaved in Israel received their freedom (Lev. 25). It points to the messianic kingdom, but is more general, and includes God's favor on individual Gentiles, as well as on Israel nationally.

Jesus stopped reading before He read the words "and the day of vengeance of our God" in Isaiah 61:2b. This is a reference to the Tribulation, among other judgments. The omission highlights the *gracious* nature of Messiah's ministry then, compared with its *judgmental* character in the future.<sup>282</sup> One writer listed many passages, in addition to Isaiah 61:1-2, that contain prophecies with a nearer fulfillment of some statements, and a more distant fulfillment of others.<sup>283</sup>

- 4:20 Probably Luke narrated these events step by step because his Gentile readers would have been unfamiliar with synagogue worship. His description also heightens the sense of anticipation in the story. The people present were alert and expectant, waiting to hear Jesus' comments on the passage.
- 4:21 When He announced the fulfillment of this passage, Jesus revealed that *He Himself* was the predicted Messiah, and that the time for God's gracious deliverance had arrived.<sup>284</sup> This is one of only two instances in which Luke recorded the fulfillment of Scripture by Messiah, the other being in 24:44. These occurred at the beginning and at the end of Jesus' ministry. They constitute an *inclusio*, implying that the whole of Jesus' ministry was a fulfillment of messianic prophecy. Jesus began preaching the gospel that enriches the poor (marginalized), releases bound people, enlightens the spiritually blind, and gives the downtrodden freedom. He also announced that the kingdom was at hand (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15).

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<sup>281</sup>Green, p. 211.

<sup>282</sup>See Gary Yates, "The Use of Isaiah 61:1 (and 58:6) in Luke 4:18-19," *Exegesis and Exposition* 2:1 (Summer 1987):13-27.

<sup>283</sup>J. Randall Price, "Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, pp. 159 and 160.

<sup>284</sup>See Daniel Doriani, "The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:3 (September 1994):333-50.

- 4:22 These "words" about God's grace (cf. Acts 14:3; 20:24) evoked a positive response from Jesus' hearers and amazed them (Gr. *ethaumazon*). They were glad to hear *these* things. However, they balked at Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. They did not understand how *He* could be the Messiah, since He had grown up with them and seemed so similar to them.
- 4:23 Evidently Jesus had been ministering in Capernaum before this incident (cf. vv. 14-15). The accounts of Jesus in Nazareth, in Matthew 13:53-58 and Mark 6:1-6, also follow instances of His doing miracles in Capernaum (Matt. 4:13; Mark 1:21-28).<sup>285</sup> This has convinced some interpreters to regard this passage in Luke as parallel to the others in Matthew and Mark, but this is probably incorrect. Jesus' decision to refrain from doing miracles in Nazareth apparently led some of the Nazarenes to question His ability to do them at all. This cast further doubt on His messiahship in their minds. They thought that if He was the Messiah, then He should bring blessing to Nazareth, and do signs there too.
- 4:24 Luke recorded Jesus saying, "Truly I say to you," or, "I tell you the truth," six times (4:24; 12:37; 18:17, 29; 21:32; 23:43).<sup>286</sup> This phrase always introduces a significant and authoritative comment, as in the other Gospels. The Greek word *dektos*, translated "welcome" or "accepted," is the same one that occurs in verse 19. Perhaps Jesus used this word in verse 24, to indicate that even though God wanted to accept the people, they would not accept the Prophet whom He had sent to tell them of His grace.<sup>287</sup> Prophets were not "welcome" in their "hometown," because hometown folks hardly ever fully trust one of their own, who leaves town, becomes famous, and then returns home. In saying what, He did Jesus was again claiming to be a prophet.
- "People are always more ready to see greatness in strangers  
than in those they know well."<sup>288</sup>
- 4:25-27 Jesus did not say that Elijah and Elisha went to Gentiles because the Jews rejected them, but because God "sent" them there "to them." God sent them there, to Gentile territory, even though there were many needy people in Israel. This happened because Israel at that time was in an apostate condition. The three and one-half years was a period of divine judgment on Israel (cf. Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). The reason for these two illustrations was that God had sent Jesus to Gentiles as well as to Jews. The Nazarenes, therefore, should not expect

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<sup>285</sup>See Appendix 6 "The Miracles of Jesus" at the end of my notes on Matthew.

<sup>286</sup>See J. C. O'Neill, "The Six Amen Sayings in Luke," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS10 (1959):1-9; and J. Strugnell, "'Amen I say unto you' in the Sayings of Jesus and in Early Christian Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974):177-90.

<sup>287</sup>Liefeld, p. 869.

<sup>288</sup>Morris, p. 107.

preferential treatment. Jesus ministered to Jews first, but He also ministered to Gentiles. These examples would have encouraged Luke's original Gentile readers, since they had a similar mission.

"This remark [of Jesus'] is strong for two reasons: (a) It compares the current era to one of the least spiritual periods in Israel's history, and (b) it suggests that Gentiles, who were intensely disliked among the Jews, were more worthy of ministry than they were."<sup>289</sup>

"Elsewhere in the Third Gospel, Jesus conducts his ministry in the synagogues . . . , but nowhere else does Luke include a report of the content of his teaching. Hence, here we have an exemplar of the sort of message Jesus proclaimed in synagogues throughout his public ministry."<sup>290</sup>

4:28-30 Jesus allowed the crowd to drive Him out of town, and "to the brow of the hill" (cliff), near where Nazareth stood. Later, He allowed another crowd to drive Him out of Jerusalem, and nail Him to a cross. However, this was not the time for Him to die, and Nazareth was not the place. Luke did not give the details whereby He escaped His neighbors' wrath. We need not suppose that His deliverance came through some supernatural act or intervention. The description of His escape does picture Jesus in sovereign control of the situation, however.

There were two forms of punishment for religious offenses that were common in the Judaism of Jesus' day, in addition to punishments that came directly from God. People could be whipped with 39 stripes (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24), or they could experience what the rabbis referred to as a "rebel's beating." It was the latter of these two that Jesus almost experienced here (cf. John 8:59; 10:31; Acts 7:58; 21:31). If anyone were caught in supposed open defiance of some positive precept, either of the Mosaic Law or the traditions of the elders, the observers could punish him or her on the spot, without a trial.<sup>291</sup>

This pattern of violent Jewish rejection continued—and mounted—throughout Jesus' ministry. One writer referred to Jesus' rejection at Nazareth as a "dress-rehearsal" for His passion.<sup>292</sup> It is significant that rejection began at the start of Jesus' ministry because of a revelation of God's desire to bless His people. Ironically, when Jesus announced the arrival of the "year" of God's favor (v. 19), He received no "favor" from His townspeople.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>289</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 138.

<sup>290</sup>Green, p. 207.

<sup>291</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp 66-68.

<sup>292</sup>Nolland, p. 200.

<sup>293</sup>Green, p. 217.

"Thus in the first scene in the narrative of Jesus' mission, Jesus announces 'words of grace' but encounters the violent rejection which prophets can expect in their homeland. The good news which Jesus preaches is already shadowed by a conflict that will persist to the end of Acts."<sup>294</sup>

"The visit to Nazareth was in many respects decisive. It presented by anticipation an epitome of the history of the Christ. Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not. The first time He taught in the Synagogue, as the first time He taught in the Temple, they cast Him out. On the one and the other occasion, they questioned His authority, and they asked for a 'sign.' In both instances, the power which they challenged was, indeed, claimed by Christ, but its display, in the manner which they expected, refused. The analogy seems to extend even farther—and if a misrepresentation of what Jesus had said when purifying the Temple formed the ground of the final false charge against Him (Matt. 26:60-61), the taunt of the Nazarenes: 'Physician, heal thyself!' found an echo in the mocking cry, as He hung on the Cross: 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save.' (Matt. 27:40-42)"<sup>295</sup>

"In all this we have a commentary on the third temptation. The people tried to put Jesus into the position Satan had suggested. But He did not let them."<sup>296</sup>

"It is important to appreciate how central good teaching is to ministry. In an era when feelings and interpersonal relationships are high on the agenda, it is wise to reflect on why Jesus spent so much time instructing people."<sup>297</sup>

### **3. Jesus' ministry in and around Capernaum 4:31-44**

"As the Nazareth-account was a programmatic instance of Jesus' activity in Galilee, so the narration of his Capernaum ministry illustrates and develops the nature of his ministry."<sup>298</sup>

The people of Nazareth rejected Jesus because they did not believe that He was the Messiah or the Son of God. Luke next gave many proofs of Jesus' messiahship and deity. He chose incidents from Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee to demonstrate this. The first four incidents happened in Capernaum and its environs. Even though these incidents involved miracles, they occurred in a broader context of teaching.

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<sup>294</sup>Tannehill, 1:73.

<sup>295</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:451.

<sup>296</sup>Morris, p. 108.

<sup>297</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 139.

<sup>298</sup>Green, p. 222.

**The exorcism of a demoniac in the Capernaum synagogue 4:31-37 (cf. Mark 1:21-28)**

4:31-32 Jesus had to go "down" (topographically) from Nazareth, that stood approximately 1,200 feet above sea level, "to Capernaum," that lay almost 700 feet below sea level. This notation, and the mention that Capernaum was "a city of Galilee," were undoubtedly for Luke's original readers' benefit—many of whom were unfamiliar with Palestinian geography. Again, Luke recorded that Jesus "was teaching . . . in the synagogue" (cf. v. 16). There He demonstrated the liberating work that Isaiah wrote that Messiah would do (v. 18).

"Teaching [Gr. *didache*] in Luke-Acts is seen as a broad term encompassing much more than the offer of the gospel, whereas preaching [*kerygma*] in Luke-Acts [only in Luke 11:32] tends to be limited to the salvation message."<sup>299</sup>

Jesus' unusual "authority" amazed (Gr. *exeplessonto*) those present (cf. Deut. 18:18). Later Jesus' works elicited the same response (9:43). It was particularly Jesus' word or "message" (Gr. *logos*, cf. 1:1-4) that impressed them here. As a prophet, Jesus spoke directly from God and for God. The people of Capernaum recognized Jesus' authority, but the Nazarenes did not.

". . . the very thing that the devil promised to give Jesus, 'authority,' has come to Jesus as a consequence of his resisting the devil . . ."<sup>300</sup>

4:33 Messiah's appearance served notice on the demon world that He purposed to destroy their work. Consequently the demons began to oppose Jesus immediately. Jesus continued this holy war throughout His ministry, and His disciples extended it after His departure (9:1-2; 10:9-10, 17). The Gospel writers used the adjectives "evil" and "unclean" interchangeably, combined with "spirit," to describe these demons. They were evil in their intent, and they produced uncleanness—in contrast to the goodness and holiness that the Holy Spirit produces in those whom He inhabits.<sup>301</sup> Possibly Luke specified that this was an "unclean demon" because the Greeks thought there were good and evil demons.<sup>302</sup>

4:34-35 "Ha!" translates an expression of "indignant surprise."<sup>303</sup> "What do we have to do with You?" means something like: "Why this interference?"<sup>304</sup>

<sup>299</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 119.

<sup>300</sup>Green, p. 221.

<sup>301</sup>See *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Demon, Demoniac, Demonology," by R. K. Harrison, 2:92-101.

<sup>302</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "*daimon*," by W. Foerster, 2:9.

<sup>303</sup>J. M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke. A Commentary on the Third Gospel*, p. 30.

<sup>304</sup>Danker, p. 61.

The demon testified to Jesus' messianic and divine character. He was the "Holy One of God," in contrast to the unclean demon. The demon probably spoke for the forces of evil, when he said: "What do *we* have to do with You?" Jesus may have silenced the demon to prevent a premature movement to recognize Him as simply a political Messiah. Again Jesus' authority is obvious, in His command here to "Keep (Be) quiet!" Jesus also expelled the demon on His own authority, not by invoking the name of some other power. Luke, who consistently showed interest in people's physical conditions, noted that even though the demon exited violently, he did not hurt the man. Jesus effected the release of one whom Satan had held captive, and He did it completely (v. 18).

4:36-37 Again Luke noted the "amazement" of the observers (Gr. *thambos*, wonder mixed with fear). The people questioned, out of curiosity and wonder, the powerful word (Gr. *logos*, v. 32) of Jesus, marked as it was by "authority" (Gr. *exousia*) and "power" (Gr. *dynamei*) over unclean spirits (i.e., demons). Perhaps Luke stressed the "word" of Jesus, because the Greeks put much stock in the power of a great person's words—of people such as the great Greek orators, for example. The reports of this miracle spread Jesus' fame farther into the surrounding areas.

This incident established the authority that Jesus had claimed in Nazareth. Testimony to His deity from the spirit world should have convinced many of Jesus' hearers. Luke probably recorded the incident to strengthen Jesus' greatness in the minds of his readers.

#### **The healing of Peter's mother-in-law 4:38-39 (cf. Matt. 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31)**

Luke's account does not include some details that Matthew and Mark recorded, but it stresses the immediacy of Jesus' healing. Luke did not introduce Peter to his readers, probably because they knew about him before reading this Gospel.

"Undoubtedly, the key disciple in Luke's writings is Peter. He was the representative disciple, as well as the leading apostle."<sup>305</sup>

Doctor Luke (cf. Col. 4:14) alone wrote that this was "a high fever." He described Jesus as "standing over" Peter's mother-in-law as a doctor would, perhaps suggesting Jesus' role as the Great Physician. He also wrote that Jesus "rebuked the fever." We need not infer that a demon had produced it and that Jesus was rebuking the demon. Luke may have just been personifying the fever to show the power of Jesus' words. Peter's mother-in-law's ability to serve others testified to the complete recovery that Jesus effected (cf. v. 35). Luke showed special interest in women in his Gospel, and this is another indication of that (cf. Elizabeth, Mary, Anna). He apparently wanted his Greek readers, who held women in high esteem, to realize that Jesus also honored them.

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<sup>305</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 148.

Luke's emphasis in this healing was the miraculous element in Jesus' great power and authority over sickness.

**Jesus' healing of many Galileans after sundown 4:40-41 (cf. Matt. 8:16-17; Mark 1:32-34)**

Having recorded two individual healings, Luke now mentioned a group of people that Jesus healed. Again Luke omitted some details that the other synoptic writers included, but added others to stress other points for his particular readers.

4:40           The Jewish crowds waited to come to Jesus until the Sabbath ended at sundown. Luke did not draw attention to the Sabbath, but noted that the "sun was setting," as the background for what followed. Luke distinguished between the sick and the demon-possessed. He did not think demons were responsible for all disease, as some Greeks did. However, he would have acknowledged that sin is responsible for all sickness ultimately. Luke alone also mentioned Jesus "laying His hands on" those who came to Him for healing. This demonstrates Jesus' compassion for the afflicted and the fact that the healing came from Him. It was common in pagan Hellenistic accounts of supposedly miraculous healings for healers to lay their hands on the sick.<sup>306</sup> The "hand of God" is also an Old Testament metaphor for *God's power*.

4:41           Only Luke recorded that the demons called Jesus "the Son of God." This was another testimony to His true identity. Again Jesus told them to keep quiet (cf. v. 35). He wanted people, not just demons, to believe that He was the Son of God. Yet the testimony of demons could appear suspect to the people present, since evil spirits are known to serve the "father of lies." Note that Luke equated "Son of God" and "Christ (Messiah)," which many of Jesus' followers had difficulty comprehending and acknowledging.

The demons' witness to Jesus' identity seems to be the point of this story.

**Jesus' first preaching tour of Galilee 4:42-44 (cf. Mark 1:35-39)**

Again Luke stressed the wide ministry that Jesus purposely carried on. This pericope records what happened the morning following the previous incident (cf. v. 40). The people of Nazareth had wanted Jesus to leave, but then the people of Capernaum begged Him to stay. Jesus wanted to reach as many people as possible with His message. "Judea" (v. 44) evidently refers to the whole Roman province that included Galilee, not just to southern Palestine. The words "must," "kingdom of God," and "sent" are all unique to Luke's narrative here. Luke's concept of the "kingdom of God" is the same as that of the other Gospel writers, namely: the rule of God on earth through David's descendant—Messiah.

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<sup>306</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 196.

"Along with 'preach,' these words constitute a programmatic statement of Jesus' mission and also of Luke's understanding of it."<sup>307</sup>

"Christ is the great Apostle of God to men."<sup>308</sup>

This section (4:31-44) contains representative incidents from Jesus' Galilean ministry, that illustrate what He did, and the reactions of people to Him (cf. Acts 10:38). Note that Jesus' teaching ministry was primary and His healings were secondary. His miracles served to authenticate His message. This was true of the apostles' preaching and miracles in Acts, too.

#### **4. The call of Peter, James, and John 5:1-11 (cf. Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20)**

"The sharp Christological focus of 4:14-44 now broadens; in this section [5:1—6:16] the individual people who personally respond to Jesus become important. Sinners find a new life; apostles are called to join Jesus in his task; Pharisees prefer to stay with their old but false righteousness."<sup>309</sup>

Nolland noted a structural unity to 5:1—6:16, and I have retitled his seven sections as follows, though I have not adopted his categories in the notes below:

The call of Peter, James, and John 5:1-11

The cleansing of a leper 5:12-16

The healing of a paralytic 5:17-26

The call of Levi and his banquet 5:27-32

The Sabbath controversy over eating 6:1-5

The Sabbath controversy over healing 6:6-11

The call of the Twelve 6:12-16

Luke's account of this incident is the longest of the three. Luke stressed Peter and omitted any reference to Andrew, his brother (Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16). (In Luke's Gospel, the disciples have little role to play.<sup>310</sup>) He characteristically focused on single individuals that Jesus touched, wherever possible, to draw attention to Jesus. He also stressed the sovereignty and holiness of Jesus, as well as these disciples' total abandonment of their possessions to follow Jesus. Jesus repeated the lesson of this incident after His resurrection (John 21:1-14).

Luke placed this account in his Gospel after the Capernaum incidents rather than before them as Mark did (Mark 1:14-28). He probably arranged his material this way to stress Jesus' sovereignty over people, having already established the general program of Jesus'

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<sup>307</sup>Leifeld, p. 874.

<sup>308</sup>Robertson, 2:67.

<sup>309</sup>Nolland, p. 218.

<sup>310</sup>Green, p. 228.

ministry.<sup>311</sup> The emphasis on Jesus' sovereignty continues through chapter 5. This was not the first time Jesus had talked with Peter and the other disciples mentioned. Andrew had told his brother Peter that he had found the Messiah (cf. John 1:41). However, these disciples thought of the Messiah as their contemporaries did. They expected a political deliverer who was less than God. Jesus had to teach them that He was God as well as Messiah. This lesson and its implications took all of Jesus' ministry to communicate.

5:1-3            These verses give the setting for the incident. Again Luke pointed out that the crowd was "listening to the word of God" (v. 1; cf. 4:32, 36). The people were so interested that they pressed upon Jesus. Jesus put some distance between them and Himself by teaching from a boat not far off shore.

Luke described the Sea of Galilee as a "lake," as most of His readers would have thought of it. "Gennesaret" was the town and plain on the lake's northwest coast, from which it received its other name.

Luke's characteristic attention to detail is obvious, in that he referred to "two boats," setting the stage for verse 7. Evidently the fishermen had used large dragnets (Gr. *diktau*) when they had fished all night, which Zebedee, James, and John were now washing and mending (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:2). These nets were made of linen, and were therefore visible to fish during the day, so they were used at night only, and they needed washing each morning.<sup>312</sup> Peter and Andrew were using a smaller round casting net (Gr. *amphibleston*), throwing it into the water from close to shore (Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16).

"It was a busy scene; for, among the many industries by the Lake of Galilee, that of fishing was not only the most generally pursued, but perhaps the most lucrative."<sup>313</sup>

". . . Jesus is fishing from the boat to catch men . . ."<sup>314</sup>

5:4-5            Luke alone specified that Simon and his companions were "fishermen" (Gr. *halieus*, v. 2). Consequently, Jesus' command to launch out into the "deep water" for another try at fishing, contrasts Jesus' authority with the natural ability of these men. Peter's compliance shows his great respect for Jesus, that led to his obedience, and ultimately to a large catch of fish. "Master" (Gr. *epistata*) is Luke's equivalent for "teacher" or "rabbi." Luke never used the term "rabbi," probably because it would have had little significance for most Greek readers. "Master" is a term that disciples or

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<sup>311</sup>Leifeld, p. 876.

<sup>312</sup>David Bivin, "The Miraculous Catch: Reflections on the Research of Mendel Nun," *Jerusalem Perspectives* 5:2 (1992):7-10.

<sup>313</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:473.

<sup>314</sup>Nolland, p. 221.

near disciples used of Jesus (8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13), and it indicates submission to authority. Luke is the only Gospel evangelist who used this term, and wherever it appears it refers to Jesus.

5:6-7 Luke first stressed the gathering of very many fish (cf. John 21:6). The details give the narrative the ring of truth. "Partners" (Gr. *metochois*) probably refers to partners in business (cf. Heb. 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8). A similar word (Gr. *koinonos*, v. 10b) also means "partners."

"Both terms are here employed of the two pairs of brothers [Peter and Andrew, and James and John] who have a business company under Simon's lead."<sup>315</sup>

5:8-10a Luke's other emphasis was Peter's response to this miracle. The catch so amazed (Gr. *thambos*) Peter that he prostrated himself before Jesus, evidently in the boat. Peter now addressed Jesus as "Lord" (Gr. *kyrios*) instead of "Master." "Lord" expressed more respect than "Master." In view of later developments in Peter's life, it is difficult to say that Peter viewed Jesus as God when he called Him "Lord" here. He may have done so and then relapsed into thinking of Him as only a mortal later. In either case, Peter expressed conviction of sin in Jesus' presence, indicating that he realized Jesus was a holy Man, very different from himself (cf. Isa. 6:5). "Depart from me," or, "Go away from me," expresses Peter's feeling of uncleanness in Jesus' presence. Jesus' superior ability caused Peter to sense that he was a sinner, one who fell short. "Sinner" (Gr. *hamartolos*) is one of Luke's characteristic words. Of the 22 occurrences of this word in the Synoptics, 15 are in Luke.

"Luke does not use the term pejoratively but compassionately, as a common term applied to those who were isolated from Jewish religious circles because of their open sin, their unacceptable occupation or lifestyle, or their paganism. Luke shows that these sinners are the objects of God's grace through the ministry of Jesus."<sup>316</sup>

"We observe in Peter at this time that mixture of good and evil, of grace and nature, which so frequently reappears in his character in the subsequent history."<sup>317</sup>

"What Peter does not realize is that admitting one's inability and sin is the best prerequisite for service, since then one can depend on God. Peter's confession becomes his résumé for service. Humility is the elevator to spiritual greatness."<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>Robertson, 2:70.

<sup>316</sup>Leifeld, p. 877.

<sup>317</sup>A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 15.

<sup>318</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 155.

5:10b-11 Jesus does not depart from nor reject sinners who feel conviction because of their sin. He draws them to Himself and sends them out to serve Him. Jesus used the fish to represent people that Peter would draw into the kingdom of God and before that into the church (cf. Acts 2; 10:9-48). This seems to be a reference to "catching" in the sense of saving, rather than judging and destroying.

"Fishermen caught live fish to kill them, but the disciples would be catching people who were dead to give them life."<sup>319</sup>

Peter and his three companions immediately abandoned their life as fishermen to become Jesus' disciples full-time (cf. 14:33; 18:22). Only Luke recorded that Jesus had contact with Peter before He called Peter to follow Him (cf. 4:38). These fishermen left the greatest catch of their career, undoubtedly, because of what it showed them of Jesus.<sup>320</sup>

"We observe in Peter at this time that mixture of good and evil, of grace and nature, which so frequently reappears in his character in the subsequent history."<sup>321</sup>

It is unlikely that they were able to finance their life as Jesus' disciples with this single catch of fish, as one commentator suggested.<sup>322</sup>

"Luke did not lay particular stress on the thought of giving up all to follow Jesus (Mk. 1:18, 20): the accent is on v. 10 with its call to mission."<sup>323</sup>

"The likelihood is that the married disciples, like married soldiers, took their wives with them or left them at home, as circumstances might require or admit. Women, even married women, did sometimes follow Jesus; and the wife of Simon, or of any other married disciple, may occasionally have been among the number. At an advanced period in the history we find the *mother* of James and John in Christ's company far from home; and where mothers were, wives, if they wished, might also be."<sup>324</sup>

The general emphasis in this incident is on the authority of Jesus. His words had powerful effects. The only proper response to them was submission. Blessing would follow in the

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<sup>319</sup>Bailey, p. 112.

<sup>320</sup>Morris, p. 114.

<sup>321</sup>A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 15.

<sup>322</sup>Geldenhuis, p. 182.

<sup>323</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 206.

<sup>324</sup>A. B. Bruce, p. 17.

form of participation in Jesus' mission. There are parallels between this section and that of Isaiah's commission (Isa. 6:1-10): both contain an epiphany, a reaction, reassurance, and a commission.<sup>325</sup>

"The major application in the miracle of the catch of fish centers around Jesus' instructions and Peter's responses. In the midst of teaching many, Jesus calls a few people to more focused service. Peter is one example of such a call. Everyone has a ministry, and all are equal before God, but some are called to serve him directly. Peter has the three necessary qualities Jesus is looking for. He is willing to go where Jesus leads, he is humble, and he is fully committed."<sup>326</sup>

This whole first section describing Jesus' teaching mission (4:14—5:11) focuses on Jesus' authority and the proper response to it.

### **B. THE BEGINNING OF CONTROVERSY WITH THE PHARISEES 5:12—6:11**

One of Luke's purposes in his Gospel, and in Acts, appears to have been to show why God stopped working *particularly* with Israel—and began working with Jews and Gentiles *equally* in the church.<sup>327</sup> The Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus was a major reason for this change. The conflict between them is an important feature of this Gospel.

This section of the Gospel includes six incidents. In the first one, Jesus served notice to the religious leaders in Jerusalem that the Messiah had arrived. In the remaining five pericopes, the Pharisees found fault with Jesus or His disciples. Mark stressed the conflict that was mounting, but Luke emphasized the positive aspects of Jesus' ministry that led to the opposition.<sup>328</sup>

#### **1. Jesus' cleansing of a leprous Jew 5:12-16 (cf. Matt. 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45)**

This miracle was to be a "testimony" to others about Jesus' person (v. 14). It authenticated His person and His teaching. It also shows the blessings that Jesus brought to people, specifically the spiritual cleansing of those whom sin has polluted (cf. 4:18). It alerted the religious leaders to Messiah's presence in Galilee.

"Like sin, leprosy ["a defiling skin disease" TNIV] is deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3) and cannot be helped by mere 'surface' measures (see Jer. 6:14). Like sin, leprosy spreads (Lev. 13:7-8); and as it spreads, it defiles (Lev. 13:44-45). Because of his defilement, a leprous person had to be isolated outside the camp (Lev. 13:46), and lost sinners one day will be isolated in hell. People with leprosy were looked on as 'dead' (Num.

<sup>325</sup>Green, p. 233.

<sup>326</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 163.

<sup>327</sup>Liefeld, p. 879.

<sup>328</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 206.

12:12), and garments infected with leprosy were fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:52)."<sup>329</sup>

- 5:12 "One of the cities" of *Galilee* is what Luke meant, in view of the context. He revealed his particular interest in medical matters again, by noting that leprosy "covered" this man *completely*. There could be no doubt that he was a leper. As Peter had done, this man "fell on his face" before Jesus (cf. v. 8). As Peter, he also appealed to Jesus as "Lord" (v. 8). This address was respectful and appropriate for addressing someone with special power from God.<sup>330</sup> The leper was very bold in coming to Jesus, since his leprosy separated him from normal social contacts. His conditional request cast doubt on Jesus' willingness to heal him, not His ability to do so. It may express his sense of unworthiness to receive such a blessing.
- 5:13 By stretching out His hand and touching the leper, Jesus was doing the unthinkable (Lev. 13). He probably did this to express His compassion for the man, as well as to identify Himself, beyond any possible doubt, as the Source of his healing (cf. Exod. 4:4; 6:6; 14:16; 15:12; Jer. 17:5; Acts 4:30). Jesus' words offered him reassurance (cf. v. 10). Jesus' authority extended to power over disease and ceremonial uncleanness. Doctor Luke again noted an immediate cure (cf. 4:35, 39).
- "Since the uncleanness of leprosy was communicable, it is especially significant that Jesus responds by touching the man: not that Jesus violates the rules of cultic cleanliness; rather, the uncleanness retreats before the touch and command of Jesus (cf. at 4:40, 41). The touch of Jesus represents a 'welcome back' to the isolated leper."<sup>331</sup>
- "The most significant lesson from the cleansing of the leper story is that even outsiders can experience God's healing grace."<sup>332</sup>
- 5:14 The healing of lepers was a messianic act (cf. 7:22). Therefore the man's "testimony" to his cleansing amounted to an announcement of Messiah's arrival. Jesus did not want this man to fail to go to Jerusalem and present the required offering for the healing of leprosy (Lev. 14:1-32). If the man had broadcast his healing, he may never have reached the priests there, and the crowds may have "mobbed" Jesus even worse than they were already doing. Furthermore, it was inappropriate for the man to announce his healing before a priest examined him and made an official announcement that he was clean (Lev. 14:57). Jesus was careful not to usurp this priestly authority.

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<sup>329</sup>Wiersbe, 1:186.

<sup>330</sup>G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>331</sup>Nolland, p. 229.

<sup>332</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 165.

5:15-16 Luke omitted the fact that the man disobeyed Jesus (cf. Mark 1:45), perhaps because this would have undermined his emphasis on Jesus' authority. Instead he stressed the spread of the story (lit. "word," Gr. *logos*) concerning Jesus. The spread of the gospel concerning Jesus is a major theme of both this Gospel and the Book of Acts. This healing increased Jesus' popularity. However, His response was not to rest on popular approval but to renew His dependence on His Father by praying in a solitary place.

". . . the mainspring of his life was his communion with God, and in such communion he found both strength and guidance to avoid submitting to temptation."<sup>333</sup>

Luke did not mention the fact that increased popularity hampered Jesus' activities (cf. Mark 1:45). He also wrote of the people's hearing Jesus before their experiencing healing, in verse 15, reflecting the priority of Jesus' preaching over His miracles.

## **2. Jesus' authority to forgive sins 5:17-26 (cf. Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12)**

Luke documented Jesus' authority, in yet another area of life, by showing His power to forgive sins. In this incident the miracle is secondary, and the issue of Jesus' authority is primary. Jesus claimed to be God by forgiving the man's sins. Forgiving sins is a divine prerogative.

5:17 Again Luke stressed the priority of Jesus' teaching ministry. The "Pharisees and teachers of the law (scribes)" had come to hear what He was teaching. These men, first appearing in Luke in this chapter, were the guardians of Israel's orthodoxy. The Pharisees were a political party in Israel—noted for their strict observance of the Mosaic Law as traditionally interpreted by the rabbis. Some of these "doctors (teachers) of the law" (i.e., scribes, lawyers) were probably Pharisees, but probably not all of them were. The figure is a *hendiadys*, indicating that they were religious watchdogs (representatives), and does not mean that other religious leaders were absent. (A hendiadys is a figure of speech in which someone expresses a complex idea by naming two entities and linking them with a conjunction.) Thus "scribes and Pharisees" or "Pharisees and teachers of the law" means religious leaders, but does not imply that other religious leaders such as the Sadducees were absent.<sup>334</sup>

"In the past an unduly negative portrait of the Pharisees of the NT period has been produced by an almost exclusive concentration on the criticisms found in the synoptic

<sup>333</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 210.

<sup>334</sup>For a discussion of the religious leaders, see Steve Mason, "Chief Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees and Sanhedrin in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting; Vol. 4: The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, pp. 134-47.

record. At best this produces a caricature, at worst it produces anti-Semitism and serious misunderstanding of the NT criticisms themselves, which in many cases gain their proper force only when it is recognized that they are directed at what was probably the most highly respected group in Jewish society."<sup>335</sup>

"Only one intimately acquainted with the state of matters at the time would, with the Rabbis, have distinguished Jerusalem as a district separate from all the rest of Judaea, as St. Luke markedly does on several occasions (Luke v. 17; Acts i. 8; x. 39)."<sup>336</sup>

Luke viewed the power of God as extrinsic to Jesus (cf. John 5:1-19). Jesus did not perform miracles out of His divine nature. He laid those powers aside at the Incarnation. Rather, He did His miracles in the power of God's Spirit—who was on Him and in Him—as a prophet.

"Why would Luke say that 'the power of the Lord was present for him to heal' if Jesus could heal at any time, under any condition, and solely at his own discretion? This statement only makes sense if we view healing as the sovereign prerogative of God the Father, who sometimes dispenses his power to heal and at other times withholds it."<sup>337</sup>

In Acts, Luke would stress that the same Spirit is on and in every believer today, and He is the source of our power as He was the source of Jesus' power.

- 5:18-19 This incident happened in Capernaum (Mark 2:1), though that fact was irrelevant for Luke. Other details in his account again add the touch of reality to it.
- 5:20 The zeal with which the four friends of the paralytic sought to bring him into Jesus' presence demonstrated their faith, namely: their belief that Jesus *could* heal him. However, the sick man also appears to have had faith in Jesus, or he would not have permitted his friends to do what they did. Perhaps Luke did not mention the paralytic's faith explicitly, because to do so might have detracted from his emphasis on Jesus' power. God responds to the faith of others, when they bring their needy friends to Him, in prayer as well as in person.

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<sup>335</sup>Nolland, p. 233.

<sup>336</sup>Edersheim, *Sketches of . . .*, p. 73.

<sup>337</sup>Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, p. 59. Cf. J. I. Packer, "The Comfort of Conservatism," in *Power Religion*, p. 289.

". . . it is impossible to think that the man's sins were forgiven if he had no faith of his own."<sup>338</sup>

We should not regard physical healing and spiritual forgiveness as an "either or" proposition. Rather, true forgiveness includes full restoration in every area of life. Jesus graciously did "both and" for this man, though often God does not restore people to complete physical health, some not until after death.

"In many traditional, non-Western societies, the domain of biological medicine is not differentiated from that of religion, politics, and broader social life, with the result that healing may include or require the resolution of spiritual and social disorder. Hence, we should not be surprised that Jesus refers to the man's new psychosocial state and spiritual condition rather than to his physiological presentation, nor should we imagine that forgiveness was in some way (only) preparatory to the cure that would come."<sup>339</sup>

"Miracle becomes a metaphor for salvation. All Jesus' miracles should be seen in this light."<sup>340</sup>

5:21 The religious leaders were correct. *Only God* "can forgive sins." However, they were unwilling to draw the conclusion that Jesus was God.

"Whenever Luke reports what someone is thinking, instruction from Jesus usually follows."<sup>341</sup>

"Luke, incidentally, is rather fond of questions which begin with 'Who?' and refer to Jesus (7:49; 8:25; 9:9, 18, 20; 19:3)."<sup>342</sup>

"Blasphemy against another human being means to speak evil of him (see 1 Corinthians 4:13; Titus 3:2; 2 Peter 2:2; Jude 8). But blasphemy against God involves not merely cursing his name, but also attempting to usurp the rights that belong only to the creator."<sup>343</sup>

"What is expressed here is an objection in the strongest terms to Jesus' act of making that declaration of the

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<sup>338</sup>Morris, p. 117.

<sup>339</sup>Green, p. 241.

<sup>340</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 126.

<sup>341</sup>Idem, *Luke*, p. 158.

<sup>342</sup>Morris, p. 117.

<sup>343</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *The Miracles of our Lord*, p. 50.

forgiveness of God which in their understanding God had reserved as his own prerogative for the final day."<sup>344</sup>

- 5:22-23 As a prophet, Jesus may have had special insight into what His critics were thinking (cf. Matt. 9:3; Mark 2:6). It was easier to say, "Your sins have been forgiven you," because no one could disprove that claim. In another sense, of course, both claims were equally difficult, because healing and forgiving *both* required supernatural power.
- 5:24 Jesus did the apparently more difficult thing, in order to prove that He could also do the apparently easier thing. This is the first time Luke recorded Jesus calling Himself the "Son of Man." Luke used this title 26 times, and in every case Jesus used it to describe Himself (except in Acts 7:56 where Stephen used it of Him). This was a messianic title with clear implications of deity (Dan. 7:13-14). Since the Son of Man is the divine Judge and Ruler, it is only natural that He would have the power to forgive. It was only consistent for Jesus to claim deity, since He had just demonstrated His deity by forgiving the man's sins. He would prove it by healing him.
- 5:25-26 The paralyzed man responded in faith "immediately" (Gr. *parachrema*) to Jesus' command. The stretcher had carried the man, and now the man carried the stretcher.

"The ability of the paralyzed man to resume his walk of life is a picture of what Jesus does when he saves. His message is a liberating one."<sup>345</sup>

Everyone present glorified God because of what Jesus had done. One of Luke's objectives was to glorify God, and to encourage his readers to do the same, in this Gospel and in Acts (cf. 2:20). The amazed reaction of the crowd recalls the same response of the people on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11-12; cf. Luke 7:16; 13:17; 18:43; Acts 3:9; 8:8). Perhaps Luke meant to draw the reader's attention to "today," the last word that is also the first word Jesus spoke when He announced the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2a (4:21). The "day" of the Messiah's appearing had arrived, and the witnesses of this miracle testified to it, albeit unknowingly.

Luke's emphasis in his account of this incident was on Jesus' authority and the people's acknowledgment of it. He also stressed Jesus' ongoing mission (cf. Acts).

"Three quest stories appear early in the narrative of Jesus' ministry, in Luke 5 and 7. Three reappear toward the end of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, in Luke 17, 18, and 19. Thus they appear early and late in the

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<sup>344</sup>Nolland, pp. 235-36.

<sup>345</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 158.

narrative of Jesus' ministry prior to his arrival in Jerusalem. The tendency to bracket Jesus' ministry with this type of story suggests the importance of these encounters in Jesus' total activity."<sup>346</sup>

A "quest story" is one in which someone approaches Jesus in quest of something very important to human well-being. Of the nine quest stories in the Synoptics, seven are in Luke, and four of these are unique to Luke.

### **3. Jesus' attitude toward sinners 5:27-32 (cf. Matt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17)**

Luke painted Jesus bestowing messianic grace on a variety of people: a demoniac, a leper, a paralytic, and now a tax collector. He liberated these captives from a malign spirit, lifelong uncleanness, a physical handicap, and now social ostracism and materialism. Again the Pharisees were present. In Levi's case, Jesus not only provided forgiveness, but fellowship with Himself. The incident shows the type of people Jesus called to Himself, and justifies His calling of them. Jesus' attitude toward sinners was positive and contrasts with the religious leaders' negative attitude toward them.

5:27-28 "Levi" (Matthew) was "a tax collector" ("publican," AV). However, he was not a *chief* tax collector, as Zaccheus was (19:2), nor does the text say that he was rich, though he appears to have been. Nevertheless the Pharisees, and most of the ordinary Jews, despised him because of his profession. He collected taxes from the Jews for the unpopular Roman government, and many of his fellow tax collectors were corrupt. Tax collectors were the social equivalent of "pimps and informants."<sup>347</sup>

"It is of importance to notice, that the Talmud distinguishes two classes of 'publicans': the tax-gatherer in general (*Gabbai*), and the *Mokhes*, or *Mokhsa*, who was specially the *douanier* or custom-house official. Although both classes fall under the Rabbinic ban, the *douanier*—such as Matthew was—is the object of chief execration."<sup>348</sup>

Jesus' authority is apparent in Levi's immediate and unconditional abandonment of his profession to follow Jesus. Levi obeyed Jesus, as he should have, and in so doing gave Luke's readers a positive example to follow (cf. 5:11). Luke's terminology stresses Levi's decisive break with his former vocation ("left everything behind"), and his new life of continuous discipleship. This decision undoubtedly involved making financial and career sacrifices.

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<sup>346</sup>Tannehill, 1:118.

<sup>347</sup>Green, p. 246.

<sup>348</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:515.

"He had grown weary of collecting revenue from a reluctant population, and was glad to follow One who had come to take burdens off instead of laying them on, to remit debts instead of exacting them with rigor."<sup>349</sup>

5:29-30 The joy of Levi and his outcast guests contrasts with the "grumbling" of the Pharisees and scribes. Shared meals, in the Mediterranean world, symbolized shared lives.<sup>350</sup> The religious leaders objected to Jesus and His disciples' eating and drinking with these "tax collectors and sinners," because of the supposed risk of ceremonial defilement they ran by doing so. They focused their criticism on Jesus' "disciples" rather than on Jesus, perhaps because Jesus was so popular. "Sinners," to the Pharisees, were those who lived outside of faithfulness to God—in this case, *Jesus' team* associating with tax collectors.

"In effect, Jesus is being cited for a breach of convention, when it is the Pharisees and their scribes whose behavior—raising an unseemly point of discussion—is out of bounds."<sup>351</sup>

5:31-32 Jesus used a proverb to summarize His mission (cf. ch. 15). He used the word "righteous" in a relative sense, and perhaps a bit sarcastically, since no one is truly righteous, though the Pharisees considered themselves *especially* righteous. A person must acknowledge his or her need for Jesus, and His righteousness, before that one will benefit from the Great Physician's powers. This acknowledgment of need is what Jesus meant by "repentance." Repentance leads to joy in Luke, as well as to life (cf. 15:7, 10, 22-27, 32). Luke stressed the positive "call" of "sinners to repentance," both in this Gospel and in Acts. Luke referred to repentance more than Matthew or Mark did (cf. 3:3, 8; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 16:30; 17:3-4; 24:47).

"The connection between 5:32 and 19:10 suggests that they form an inclusion. That is, we have similar general statements about Jesus' mission early and late in his ministry, statements which serve to interpret the whole ministry which lies between them."<sup>352</sup>

#### **4. Jesus' attitude toward fasting 5:33-39 (cf. Matt. 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22)**

The setting of this controversy is the same as the previous one: Levi's banquet. Jesus' attitude toward fasting stressed that His presence anticipated the day of kingdom rejoicing.

<sup>349</sup>A. B. Bruce, p. 24.

<sup>350</sup>See Green, pp. 244-50, for explanation of banquets (Greco-Roman symposia) in Luke.

<sup>351</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>352</sup>Tannehill, 1:107.

5:33 The religious leaders (v. 30; Mark 2:18) and John's disciples (Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18) raised the question of fasting. They did so because it was another practice, besides eating with sinners, that marked Jesus and His disciples as unusual (cf. 7:34). Since Jesus preached repentance (v. 32), why did He not expect His followers to demonstrate the accepted signs that indicated it? These questioners made Jesus and His disciples appear to be out of step, by negatively contrasting their behavior with that of John the Baptist's and the Pharisees' disciples. All of those people appeared to be sympathetic to Jesus and righteous.

The Old Testament required only one day of fasting, namely, the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29), but over the years additional fasts had become traditional. Evidently John and his disciples fasted periodically. The Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday (cf. 18:12), as well as on four other days in memory of Jerusalem's destruction (Zech. 7:3, 5; 8:19).<sup>353</sup> Jesus did not oppose fasting, but He criticized its abuse (4:2; 22:16, 18; Matt. 6:16-18).

Luke alone mentioned the reference of Jesus' questioners to prayer. He probably did this to clarify the circumstances in which fasting happened for his readers. The questioners implied that Jesus' disciples neglected prayer as well as fasting.

5:34-35 Jesus compared the situation to a wedding, which calls for joy. He meant that *He* was the "bridegroom," who had come to claim His bride, Israel (cf. Isa. 54:5-8; 62:5; Jer. 2:2; Hos. 2:19-20, 23; Ezek. 16). His disciples were His friends ("attendants"), who rejoiced at this prospect with Him. Therefore to compel them to "fast" was inappropriate. Thus Jesus rebuked His questioners. However, Jesus implied that the bridegroom would die (be "taken away from them"). This was one of Jesus' early intimations of His death. Then His disciples would fast. They probably did this after His crucifixion but before His resurrection. They also do it after His ascension and before His return to the earth (cf. John 16:16-24).

5:36 Jesus next illustrated with parables the fact that His coming introduced a radical break with former religious customs. He did not come to patch Judaism up but to inaugurate a new order. Had Israel accepted Jesus, this new order would have been the messianic kingdom, but since the Jews rejected Him, it became the church. Eventually it will become the messianic kingdom. Simply adding His new order to Judaism would have two detrimental effects. It would have damaged the "new" order, and it would not preserve the "old" order. It would also appear incongruous. Only Luke's account includes the first effect, that it would damage the new order. Luke evidently included this to help his Christian readers see that Israel and the church are distinct.

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<sup>353</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "nestis," by J. Behm, 4:930.

"The real point is the incompatibility of the two pieces of cloth, and the contrast of new and old is implicit. . . . Whereas in Mk. the deficiencies of Judaism cannot be mended simply by a Christian 'patch', in Lk. the emphasis is on the impossibility of trying to graft something Christian onto Judaism."<sup>354</sup>

Another, less popular, interpretation understands the "old" to represent Jesus' conduct as the fulfillment of God's desire, and the "new" as the Pharisees' deviant position.

"In effect then, Jesus interprets his behaviors, which are questionable and innovative to some onlookers, as manifestations of God's ancient purpose coming to fruition, while the concerns of the Pharisees are rejected not only as innovative but also as quite inconsistent with God's program."<sup>355</sup>

- 5:37-38      The second illustration adds the fact that the new order, that Jesus had come to bring, has an inherently expanding and potentially explosive quality. The gospel and Christianity would expand to the whole world. Judaism simply could not contain what Jesus was bringing, since it had become too rigid due to centuries of accumulated tradition. Here Luke's account is very close to Mark's.
- 5:39          Only Luke included this statement. Jesus' point was that most people who have grown accustomed to the old order are content with it, and do not prefer the new. They tend to assume that the old is *better* because it is old. This was particularly true of the Jewish religious leaders, who regarded Jesus' teaching as "new," and inferior to what was old.

"There is in religious people a kind of passion for the old. Nothing moves more slowly than a Church. . . .

"We should never be afraid of new methods. That a thing has *always* been done may very well be the best reason for stopping doing it. That a thing has *never* been done may very well be the best reason for trying it. . . . Let us have a care that in thought and in action we are not hidebound reactionaries when we ought, as Christians, to be gallant adventurers."<sup>356</sup>

Jesus contrasted four pairs of things that do not mix in this pericope. They are: feasting and fasting, a new patch and an old garment, new wine and old wineskins, and new wine and old wine. His point was that His *new* way, and the *old* way that the Jewish leaders

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<sup>354</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 227.

<sup>355</sup>Green, p. 250.

<sup>356</sup>Barclay, pp. 64, 65, 66.

followed and promoted, were unmixable. The religious leaders refused to even *try* Jesus' way, believing that their old way was better.

**5. Jesus' authority over the Sabbath 6:1-5 (cf. Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28)**

The final two instances of confrontation with the Pharisees that Luke recorded involved Sabbath observance. The Sabbath was one of Judaism's main institutions, and Jesus' violation of traditional views on Sabbath observance brought the religious leaders' antagonism toward Him to a climax. Here was a case in point that Jesus' new way could not exist with Israel's old way. Sabbath observance had its roots not only in the Mosaic Law but in creation. Furthermore its recurrence every seventh day made it a subject of constant attention. Jesus' authority over the Sabbath showed that He was "Lord of the Sabbath," and therefore, God.

"The interesting thing about Jesus' approach is that He was not simply arguing that repressive regulations should be relaxed and a more liberal attitude adopted: He was saying that His opponents had missed the whole point of this holy day. Had they understood it they would have seen that deeds of mercy such as His were not merely permitted—they were obligatory (cf. Jn. 7:23f.)."<sup>357</sup>

6:1-2        Mark recorded that the Pharisees voiced their question to Jesus, but Luke wrote that they asked Jesus' disciples. Probably they did both. Luke chose to relate their question to the disciples, apparently because Jesus then stepped in and answered for them (v. 3). Thus Luke showed his readers Jesus' position as the Master who comes to the defense of His disciples. Luke alone also mentioned the disciples "rubbing" the ears of grain "in their hands," probably to give his readers a more vivid picture of what really happened.

The law permitted people to glean from the fields as they passed through them (Deut. 23:25). However, the Pharisees chose to view the disciples' gleaning as harvesting, and their rubbing the grain in their hands as threshing and winnowing, as well as preparing a meal. The Pharisees considered all these practices inappropriate for the Sabbath.

6:3-4        Jesus drew an analogy from Scripture (cf. 1 Sam. 21:1-9). The Pharisees had obviously read the story of David, but they had not seen what it meant.

"It is possible to read scripture meticulously, to know the Bible inside out from cover to cover, to be able to quote it verbatim and to pass any examination on it—and yet completely to miss its real meaning. Why did the Pharisees miss the meaning—and why do we so often miss it? . . .

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<sup>357</sup>Morris, pp. 121-22.

"When we read God's book we must bring to it the open mind and the needy heart—and then to us also it will be the greatest book in the world."<sup>358</sup>

Jesus' point was twofold, first: that ceremonial traditions are secondary to divine service. What David did was contrary to the Pharisees' understanding of what the Mosaic Law required (Lev. 24:9), yet Scripture did not condemn him for what he did (cf. 2 Chron. 30:18-20). What Jesus' disciples did was not contrary to the divine intent of the Mosaic Law, so the Pharisees should not have condemned them for what they did. Why did the Scriptures not condemn David for what he did? They did not because David was meeting a human need. God permitted him to violate what, to the Pharisees, appeared to be the letter of the law, but not the true intent of the law, without condemnation. Therefore the Son of Man (v. 5), who is superior to David, had the right to set aside a Pharisaic tradition, not a divine law, in the service of God.

"Just as, when David acted in this way, it is to be understood that he interpreted the true intention of the enscripturated will of God, so also it should be understood that when the Son of Man makes provision for his disciples on the Sabbath, he is not violating the Sabbath but as Lord of the Sabbath revealing its true significance."<sup>359</sup>

Suppose you are sitting in your vehicle at a stoplight waiting for it to change from red to green. As you glance in your rearview mirror, you notice a large truck bearing down on you from behind. It seems inevitable that the driver cannot stop in time to avoid plowing into you and pushing you into the unoccupied intersection. You have to make a decision: will you simply sit there and wait for the inevitable collision, or will you drive ahead, through the red light, and make a right turn to avoid an accident. The Pharisees would say you should stay where you are, because you must not drive through a red light—it's the law. Jesus would say you should drive through and get out of the way of the oncoming truck, because human welfare is more important than obeying a stoplight—if you have to choose one or the other.

6:5 Jesus' second point was that the "Son of Man" (cf. 5:24), because of who He is ("Lord of the Sabbath"), has the right to violate the Sabbath. Jesus was not violating the Sabbath by doing what He did, but He had the right to do so. This was another claim to divine authority, an emphasis that we have seen running through this part of Luke's Gospel. God is greater than the laws He has imposed, and He can change them when He chooses to do so.

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<sup>358</sup>Barclay, p. 68.

<sup>359</sup>Nolland, p. 258.

"David did not allow cultic regulations to stand in the way of fulfilling his divine calling of becoming king of Israel. Jesus has a similar mission which makes him 'Lord of the Sabbath,' one who is authorized to decide when Sabbath regulations must be set aside to fulfill a greater divine purpose."<sup>360</sup>

This incident elevates the readers' appreciation of Jesus' authority to new heights in Luke.

This is the first of seven incidents that the Gospel evangelists recorded in which Jesus came into conflict with the Jewish religious leaders over Sabbath observance. The chart below lists them in probable chronological order.

<b>SABBATH CONTROVERSIES</b>				
<b>Event</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
The disciples plucked ears of grain in Galilee.	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
Jesus healed a paralytic at the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem.				5:1-18
Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in Capernaum.	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Jesus referred to the Jews circumcising on the Sabbath.				7:22-23
Jesus healed a man born blind in Jerusalem.				9:1-34
Jesus healed a woman bent over in Judea.			13:10-17	
Jesus healed a man with dropsy in Perea.			14:1-6	

### **6. Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath 6:6-11 (cf. Matt. 12: 9-14; Mark 3:1-6)**

This incident happened on a different Sabbath from the one in the preceding pericope (v. 6). Note the similar terms Luke used to introduce both events. He evidently placed it here in his narrative, because it builds on the idea of Jesus' authority over the Sabbath, and advances it even further than the previous pericope does. As the authoritative Son of Man, Jesus declared that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Both incidents involved a controversy about the question: What is more important, ceremonial law or human need? The Pharisees believed that it was unlawful to do virtually anything on the Sabbath, though they hypocritically did good for themselves but not for others. They did,

<sup>360</sup>Tannehill, 1:174-75.

however, permit life-saving measures, midwifery, and circumcision on the Sabbath.<sup>361</sup> Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath showed that the attitude of the religious leaders was wrong. They really had little compassion for needy people. They did not love their neighbors as themselves.

6:6-8 Luke again noted the primacy of Jesus' "teaching" over His performing miracles (cf. 4:15-16, 31-33). He also mentioned that it was the "right hand" of the man that was useless, a detail of particular interest to a doctor. This detail shows the seriousness of the man's case. Most people are right-handed. By now the religious leaders (cf. v. 7) were looking for an occasion to criticize Jesus publicly, believing that they had a case against Him. Jesus probably "knew their thoughts" (HCSB) at least because their intentions were now clear (cf. 5:22). He could have known their thoughts because He was a prophet. Morris believed Luke was emphasizing Jesus' deity.<sup>362</sup> Jesus consciously provoked conflict by calling the man "forward" for healing. His initiative demonstrates His authority and His sovereignty.

6:9 Jesus' question had two parts. He first asked if it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or if it was lawful to do evil. The obvious answer was that doing good was lawful but doing evil was not lawful. God had instituted the Sabbath for the welfare of humankind. His attitude of love should have characterized the Israelites as they observed the day. They, too, should have made it a special day for the blessing of people. The second part of Jesus' question particularized it and pointed to its ultimate consequences. Obviously Jesus was speaking about saving a life (Gr. *psyche*) from physical destruction, not saving a soul from eternal damnation.

"Jesus' approach to Sabbath keeping is governed by the conviction that love of God is inseparably linked to love of neighbor (Luke 10:25-37). Therefore, that which dishonors my neighbor cannot honor God, and that which leaves my neighbor in his suffering can only be evil."<sup>363</sup>

6:10 There was only one answer that the religious leaders could give. It was lawful to do good and unlawful to do evil on the Sabbath. However, they refused to answer because their answer virtually would have given Jesus their approval to heal the man. They did not want to do that because they wanted to retain their traditional abstinence from Sabbath activities. Jesus proceeded to do good and healed the man's hand, but He did so without performing any physical work. There was nothing the critics could point

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<sup>361</sup>Mishnah *Yoma* 8:6, and Mishnah *Shabbath* 18:3 and 19:2.

<sup>362</sup>Morris, p. 123.

<sup>363</sup>Nolland, p. 262.

to, as an act that Jesus performed, for which they could condemn Him. This method of healing pointed to Jesus being a prophet sent from God, at least, and to His being God, at most.

6:11 Understandably, the response of Jesus' critics was violent. "Rage" or "furious" translates the Greek word *anoia*, which refers to senseless wrath (cf. 2 Tim. 3:9).

"He humiliated the religious leaders and healed the man all at the same time without even breaking the Pharisees' law. It is no wonder that the religious establishment was furious and sought a way to get rid of Him."<sup>364</sup>

Verse 11 is the climax of Luke's section that describes the beginning of Jesus' controversy with the religious leaders (5:12—6:11). This event occurred nearly two years before Jesus' crucifixion.<sup>365</sup> Luke did not say that this incident led them to plot Jesus' death, as Matthew and Mark did. The intensity of the conflict did not interest Luke as much as Jesus' sovereign authority over His enemies.

### **C. JESUS' TEACHING OF HIS DISCIPLES 6:12-49**

Luke gave his readers an overview of Jesus' ministry (4:14—5:11), and then presented Jesus' relationship to His opponents (5:12—6:11). Next Luke described Jesus' relationship with His disciples (6:12-49). He arranged his material to identify the disciples first, and then he summarized what Jesus taught them.

There is some similarity between Luke's narrative, and the account of Moses ascending Mt. Sinai when he received the law from God and then descending and teaching it to the people (Exod. 19; 32; 34).<sup>366</sup> Perhaps Luke intended the reader to recognize the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:18 in this similarity.

#### **1. The selection of 12 disciples 6:12-16 (cf. Mark 3:13-19)**

Luke prefaced Jesus' teaching of His followers with an introduction of His most important disciples.

"It is clear that for Luke an important stage in the founding of the church is to be seen here, the choice of those from among the company of Jesus' companions from the beginning of his ministry who were to be in a special sense the witnesses to his resurrection and the messengers of the gospel."<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>364</sup>Martin, p. 219.

<sup>365</sup>Robertson, 2:83.

<sup>366</sup>Ellis, p. 113.

<sup>367</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 237.

6:12 Jesus' choice of the Twelve followed His conflict with the Jewish leaders. Luke implied that that hostility played a part in Jesus' decision to spend "the night in prayer" before selecting the apostles. In view of mounting hostility, it was imperative that He receive direction from His Father in this choice. A "mountain" (or hill) was a traditional place to pray, since it provided seclusion, and its elevation gave the person praying a special sense of nearness to God. Luke alone mentioned Jesus' all-night prayer vigil. It shows Jesus' conscious dependence on God, a special emphasis in the third Gospel. The early church followed Jesus' example (Acts 13:2; 14:23; cf. Acts 1:2, 24-26).

"Nowhere else is such a sustained period of prayer attributed to Jesus. Acts 1:2 establishes an equivalence between prayer here and the guidance of the Spirit."<sup>368</sup>

6:13-16 Jesus selected the Twelve from the larger group of learners who followed Him around (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Acts 1:13).

"It is probable that the selection of a limited number to be His close and constant companions had become a necessity to Christ, in consequence of His very success in gaining disciples."<sup>369</sup>

Only Luke mentioned that Jesus called the Twelve "apostles" (lit. sent ones, i.e., authorized representatives). Luke used this term six times in this Gospel (6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10) and 28 times in Acts. Each of the other Evangelists used it only once. This fact reflects his continuing interest in the mission that Jesus began—and continued—through these apostles and the whole church (Acts 1:1-2). The fact that Jesus chose "12 apostles" at this time, probably suggests continuity in God's plan of salvation, because the 12 apostles in one sense replaced the 12 sons of Israel (Jacob). However, I believe the many points of discontinuity with Israel are just as important, and make the equating of Israel and the church impossible (cf. Eph. 2).

Luke's list contains the same individuals as those that Matthew and Mark have given us, with some variation in the order. Also, some men evidently had two names (Simon/Peter, Thaddaeus/Judas, the son or brother of James, and Simon the Cananaean/Simon the Zealot). Only Luke mentioned that Judas Iscariot became a traitor.

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<sup>368</sup>Nolland, p. 269.

<sup>369</sup>A. B. Bruce, p. 29.

	<b>Matt. 10:2-4</b>	<b>Mark 3:16-19</b>	<b>Luke 6:14-16</b>	<b>Acts 1:13</b>
1.	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
2.	Andrew	James	Andrew	John
3.	James	John	James	James
4.	John	Andrew	John	Andrew
5.	Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
6.	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
7.	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
8.	Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
9.	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus
10.	Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Judas, son or brother of James	Judas, son or brother of James
11.	Simon the Cananaean	Simon the Cananaean	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
12.	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

"It does not take a great man to make a good witness, and to be witnesses of Christian facts was the main business of the apostles. . . .

"Far from regretting that all were not Peters and Johns, it is rather a matter to be thankful for, that there were diversities of gifts among the first preachers of the gospel. As a general rule, it is not good when all are leaders. Little men are needed as well as great men; for human nature is one-sided, and little men have their peculiar virtues and gifts, and can do some things better than their more celebrated brethren."<sup>370</sup>

## **2. The assembling of the people 6:17-19 (cf. Matt. 5:1-2)**

The similarities between the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7, and what Luke recorded in 6:20-49, seem to suggest that Luke condensed that Sermon. However, the introductions to the two sections have led many students of these passages to conclude that Jesus gave two different addresses on separate occasions. Harmonization of the introductions is possible, and this would point to one sermon that Luke edited more severely than Matthew did.<sup>371</sup> Matthew wrote that Jesus was on a mountainside when He delivered this address (Matt. 5:1), but Luke said that He was "on a level place" (v. 17).

<sup>370</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>371</sup>Robertson, 2:85.

"Judea" here refers to the whole of Palestine (cf. 3:1; 4:44). The place where Jesus gave this sermon is the major problem in harmonizing the two accounts.<sup>372</sup>

Apparently Jesus went up on a mountain near Capernaum to pray all night (v. 12). There in the morning He selected the Twelve (v. 13; cf. Mark 3:13-14). Then He descended to "a level place" where He met "a large crowd" that "had come to hear Him" and to receive healing (vv. 17-19). Luke tells us that they came from as far away as "Judea and Jerusalem" to the south, and "the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon" to the north (v. 17). Such a site as Luke described exists near Capernaum.<sup>373</sup> Next Jesus apparently went back up the mountainside to get away from the huge crowd (Matt. 5:1a). There His disciples came to Him and He taught them (Matt. 5:1b-2). As the sermon progressed, more people made their way up the mountainside and began listening to what Jesus was teaching (Matt. 7:28; Luke 7:1; cf. Matt. 7:24; Luke 6:46-47).<sup>374</sup> Another possibility is that the place where Jesus preached may have been a level place in a mountainous region (cf. Isa. 13:2; Jer. 21:13).<sup>375</sup> I believe the two sermons were really one.

"Power was coming from Him" (v. 19) refers to the power of the Holy Spirit that was manifested in Jesus' ministry.

Luke's emphasis in this section was on Jesus' widespread appeal, together with His willingness to give of Himself freely to help those who came to Him in need.

### **3. The Sermon on the Mount 6:20-49**

Luke's version of this important address, primarily aimed at Jesus' disciples, is much shorter than Matthew's (Matt. 5:3—7:29). Luke presented Jesus' instruction of His disciples (6:20-49) as immediately following His selection of the Twelve (6:12-16), verses 17 through 19 being transitional. Matthew's account contains 137 verses, whereas Luke's has only 30. Both accounts begin with beatitudes, contain the same general content, and end with the same parables. However, Luke edited out the teachings that have distinctively Jewish appeal, specifically Jesus' interpretations of the Mosaic Law, the "legal matters." These parts had less significance for an audience of predominantly Gentile Christians.

"Luke's including the Sermon in a form that relates to Gentiles shows the message is timeless."<sup>376</sup>

Some commentators refer to this section of Luke's Gospel as the "Sermon on the Plain." Some of them believe that it was a different sermon from the Sermon on the Mount, given on a different occasion and in a different place, as mentioned above. Others believe

<sup>372</sup>See J. Manek, "On the Mount - on the Plain (Mt. V. 1 - Lk. VI. 17)," *Novum Testamentum* 9 (1967):124-31.

<sup>373</sup>J. A. Findlay, "Luke," in *Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 1037.

<sup>374</sup>Martin, p. 219.

<sup>375</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 187.

<sup>376</sup>Idem, "A Theology . . .," p. 114.

there was only one sermon, but they use this name to differentiate this version of the sermon from Matthew's version, that they call the "Sermon on the Mount." I believe it is the same sermon, and prefer to call it the Sermon on the Mount, to avoid the implication of two sermons.

### **The choices of disciples 6:20-26**

Matthew recorded nine beatitudes, but Luke included only four. Matthew gave no woes, but Luke recorded four. The four beatitudes precede the four woes, and the beatitudes parallel the woes in thought. The beatitudes are positive and the woes correspondingly negative (cf. Ps. 1; Isa. 5:8-23).

Two types of disciples are in view throughout this section of the sermon: the "poor and oppressed," and the "rich and popular." The first type can anticipate God satisfying their needs, but the second type should expect divine judgment. The comparisons call on the disciples to consider which group they want to be in. Matthew's beatitudes are more ethical in principle, and describe what a disciple of Jesus ought to be. Luke's beatitudes describe the actual condition of the two types of disciples, and the consequences of those conditions. A beatitude is an acknowledgment of a fortunate state of being (cf. Ps. 1:1; Prov. 14:21; 16:20; 29:18). They depreciate the world's values, by exalting what the world despises and rejecting what the world admires.<sup>377</sup>

### **The Beatitudes 6:20-23 (cf. Matt. 5:3-10)**

6:20 Clearly Jesus' disciples were the primary objects of His instruction in this sermon (cf. vv. 13-19).

"Blessed" (Gr. *makarios*) in this context describes the happy (or contented) condition of someone whom God has granted His special favor.<sup>378</sup> Luke's original Greek readers would have been familiar with the word.

"Originally in Greek usage the word described the happy estate of the gods above earthly sufferings and labors."<sup>379</sup>

"Poor" disciples are those who have given up what the world offers, in order to follow Jesus faithfully (cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 2:12; 32:1-2; 34:8; 40:4; 84:12; 112:1). Some of Jesus' disciples had already done this (cf. 5:11, 28). Such disciples characteristically look to God for their needs, rather than to themselves or the world. The parallel passage in Matthew clarifies that *spiritual poverty*, namely, a recognition of one's spiritual need, is at the root of this physically poor disciple's thinking ("poor in spirit"; Matt. 5:3).

<sup>377</sup>Morris, p. 126.

<sup>378</sup>See *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "*makarios*," by F. Hauck and G. Bertram, 4:362-70.

<sup>379</sup>Martin, p. 220.

"They rely on God and they must rely on Him, for they have nothing of their own on which to rely. . . . The rich of this world often are self-reliant"<sup>380</sup>

The second part of each beatitude explains why the person in view is blessed or happy. Disciples who forego the wealth of the present world order, in order to follow Jesus faithfully, have Jesus' promise that they will enjoy the benefits of the coming world order, namely, the messianic kingdom. Jesus' disciples are better off poor now, yet having a part in the coming messianic kingdom, than being rich now and having no part in that future kingdom.

"Human society perpetuates structures of injustice and exclusion, but God intervenes on the side of the oppressed. The disruptive effect of this intervention is often presented in Luke as a reversal of the structures of society: those with power, status, and riches are put down and those without them are exalted. This reversal was proclaimed in the Magnificat (1:51-53). A similar overturn of the established order was anticipated in Simeon's prophecy that Jesus 'is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel' (2:34)."<sup>381</sup>

"At face value, it appears that Jesus was making a blanket promise of salvation and blessing to anyone and everyone below the poverty line (6:20). Some have adopted just such an interpretation and have felt a special call to aim their ministries at the downtrodden. In this view, the poor are seen as God's chosen people. Though they suffer in this world, and perhaps because they suffer now, they can expect glorious blessing in the world to come. And the adherents of this view believe that while in this world the people of God should do everything possible to alleviate the suffering of the poor. In this way the kingdom of God is extended."<sup>382</sup>

6:21 Following Jesus as His disciple also involved feeling hungry occasionally. However, Jesus promised ultimate satisfaction to those who chose discipleship. To those less fortunate, discipleship then and now sometimes involved and involves giving away some money that one might use for food. Sometimes students preparing for ministry have to live on meager rations to pay other bills associated with their commitment to study God's Word and serve Him.

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<sup>380</sup>Morris, pp. 126, 127.

<sup>381</sup>Tannehill, 1:109.

<sup>382</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1701.

Likewise discipleship involves weeping and sorrow, but laughter will come eventually. Kingdom conditions are again in view. In one sense, a disciple is to rejoice always (1 Thess. 5:16). However, in another sense: the sin that surrounds us, and the hardness of the hearts of people with whom we share the gospel, are constant sources of sorrow. Hunger and weeping often accompany poverty (v. 20).

6:22-23 Various forms of persecution will give way to ultimate "reward" and consequent "joy." Note the logical progression in verse 22: from hatred, to ostracism (i.e., excommunication and social exclusion<sup>383</sup>), to insults, and finally to character assassination. Luke recorded in Acts that all these forms of persecution overtook the early Christians. The New Testament epistles also warn Christians about them (e.g., 1 John 3:13; 1 Pet. 4:14; James 2:7). Not just the prophets of old, but also Jesus Himself experienced these persecutions. Disciples can expect the same. God will vindicate them eventually and reward them for their faithfulness (cf. 12:37, 42-44; 18:1-8).

The use of "Son of Man" here is significant, since it combines the ideas of Jesus as God and as man. Discipleship involves commitment to Jesus as the God-man. The disciples who first heard this beatitude had not yet experienced much persecution for Jesus' sake, but they would shortly. "In heaven" focuses on the ultimate destiny of the disciple. "Heaven" is an alternative expression for "God," that Luke and Jesus used frequently.

### The Woes 6:24-26

6:24 The woes contrast with the beatitudes, both in content and in the structure of the passage (cf. 1:53). They address those disciples who refuse to give up all to follow Jesus, or who face the temptation to draw back from following Him faithfully (cf. vv. 46-49). This section of the sermon begins with a word of strong contrast: but (Gr. *plen*). "Woe" means "alas," (NEB) or "How terrible," (TEV) and it introduces an expression of pity for those who are under divine judgment.<sup>384</sup>

Disciples who choose present riches over identification with the Son of Man are pitiable, because they can expect no greater riches, from His hand, in the future. The context clarifies that Jesus was not condemning the rich simply for being rich. He was warning those who were choosing present riches at the expense of total commitment to Him as His disciples. Wealth tempts people to think that they need nothing beyond money (cf. 12:19).

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<sup>383</sup>Robertson, 2:88.

<sup>384</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 255.

"Riches almost inescapably (18:25) ensnare those who possess them in a false set of values and loyalties which involve a foreshortened perspective in which love for the things of this world proves to be greater than desire for the kingdom of God (18:23)."<sup>385</sup>

- 6:25 Similarly, eating well and laughing are not wrong in themselves. However, if a person decides not to follow Jesus because he prefers a fuller stomach, and greater happiness, than he believes he would have if he followed Jesus, he makes a bad choice. He is a fool for giving up what he cannot lose, to get what he cannot keep (cf. Isa. 65:13-14; James 4:9).
- 6:26 The opposite of experiencing persecution (vv. 22-23) is having everyone "speak well of you." Disciples who discover that everyone thinks that all they are doing is just fine, need to examine their commitment to Jesus Christ. Unbelievers naturally disagree with and oppose, to some extent, those who follow God's will faithfully—because they hold different values. Jesus' experience (rejection, opposition, persecution, deprivation) is what all of His disciples can expect to reproduce to some extent. False prophets often win wide acclaim (cf. Jer. 5:31).

### **The conduct of disciples 6:27-38 (cf. Matt. 5:43-48; 7:1-2)**

Jesus' explanation of the importance of true righteousness was the heart of the Sermon on the Mount—as Matthew narrated it (Matt. 5:17—7:12). The need of love is the heart of this sermon according to Luke. Matthew reported that Jesus spoke of true righteousness in relation to three things: the Scriptures (Matt. 5:17-48), the Father (Matt. 6:1-18), and the world (Matt. 6:19—7:12). Luke omitted Jesus' teaching on the relationship of true righteousness to the Father, which included instruction about ostentation (Matt. 6:1), alms-giving (Matt. 6:2-4), praying (Matt. 6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18). The first of these sections laid down a basic principle, and the last three dealt with the so-called "three pillars of Jewish piety." Luke recorded some of Jesus' teachings on these subjects elsewhere in his Gospel.

In the section dealing with the relationship of true righteousness to the Scriptures, Luke recorded only one of Jesus' revelations. He combined Jesus' teaching about God's will concerning love (Matt. 5:43-47), and the importance of loving the brethren (Matt. 7:1-5). At this point, Luke passed over Jesus' explanation of His view of the Old Testament, and His revelations about God's will concerning: murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and His summary of the disciple's duty.

As we have noted previously, one of Luke's main concerns, as is clear from his selection of material, was his concern for people. He did not present Jesus' teaching about love contrasted with rabbinic distortions of the Old Testament, as Matthew did (Matt. 5:43-44). Rather he stressed Jesus' positive command, the Golden Rule, which Matthew

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<sup>385</sup>Nolland, p. 287.

included later in his version of the sermon (Matt. 7:12). Luke recorded Jesus identifying seven actions that reveal true love in a disciple. These are all impossible to produce naturally; they require supernatural enablement. Demonstration of this kind of love reveals true righteousness in a disciple: righteousness imparted by God and enlivened by His Spirit.

"Verses 27-31 identify behaviors becoming those who have fully embraced Jesus' message, while vv 31-38 summarize those behaviors and develop their motivational bases."<sup>386</sup>

6:27-28 "Love" (Gr. *agape*) involves demonstrating genuine concern for the welfare of another person, regardless of that one's attractiveness or ability to return love (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). The "enemies" in view would be people who oppose disciples because of their commitment to Jesus. To "bless" (Gr. *eulogete*) here means to wish someone well, contrasted with cursing or wishing someone evil. "Pray" (Gr. *proseuchesthe*, the general word for prayer) in this context means asking God to do them good when they do you evil.

"The call for love of enemy is in itself not as uniquely Christian as is sometimes maintained."<sup>387</sup>

Nolland and Barclay cited numerous examples of this call to love one's enemies in the Old Testament and in secular sources before the time of Jesus.<sup>388</sup>

6:29-30 Disciples should not resist the violent attacks of their opponents. The attack may be an insult (cf. Matt. 5:39) or a violent punch on the jaw (Gr. *siagon*).<sup>389</sup> In either case, this is an attack on the disciple's person. An attack against his family members might require their defense, though not with more than defensive action against the attacker. Disciples need to guard themselves against pride, that sometimes masquerades as chivalry, while at the same time defending those in their care and trying not to overreact against the attacker.

Taking the outer cloak (Gr. *himation*) implies that the setting is a street robbery. In legal disputes, the undergarment (Gr. *chiton*, cf. Matt. 5:40) more often went to the victor. Luke pictured a robber taking an outer garment. The person being attacked should offer the robber his undergarment (undershirt) also. Matthew conversely pictured a lawsuit, in which an enemy sues the disciple for his undergarment, and the disciple offers his outer garment. In this whole section, Luke described what was

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<sup>386</sup>Green, p. 270.

<sup>387</sup>Nolland, p. 294.

<sup>388</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 294-96.

<sup>389</sup>Morris, p. 129; Barclay, p. 77.

more typical in the Gentile world, and Matthew what was more common among Jews.

"The Christian should never refrain from giving out of a love for his possessions."<sup>390</sup>

"The teaching of the passage as a whole relates not so much to passivity in the face of evil as to concern for the other person."<sup>391</sup>

In refraining from doing evil, the disciple may suffer evil. This is how Jesus behaved and what He experienced (23:34; cf. 1 Pet. 2:20-24). It is what He taught His disciples to do, and to expect, too.

6:31 This hyperbolic command summarizes the duty of a disciple regarding love of enemies, and all people for that matter. We should be willing and ready to sacrifice ourselves, and what we have, for the welfare of others. This "Golden Rule" was not original with Jesus, though He made it positive and strengthened it (cf. Tobit 4:15; Lev. 19:18).<sup>392</sup>

"In Hellenistic discussion of ethics, it [the Golden Rule] was ordinarily contextualized within an ethic of consistency and reciprocity: act in such-and-such a way so that you will be treated analogously."<sup>393</sup>

6:32-34 Jesus next compared the courtesies that non-disciples extend to others, with those that His disciples should extend. He proceeded from the general concept of loving (v. 32), to the more concrete expression of it as doing good (v. 33), to the specific example of lending (v. 34). His point was that disciples should not only love their enemies, but also love and express their love to their friends—more than other people do.

The seven actions that Jesus commanded in verses 27-31 are the following: (1) Love your enemies; (2) do good to those who hate you; (3) bless those who curse you; and (4) pray for those who mistreat you. Furthermore, (5) do not retaliate when others attack you; (6) give freely to those who ask of you; and (7) treat others the way you would want them to treat you. This type of love makes a disciple stand out as distinctive (vv. 32-34), and is the type of love that God shows, and enables the disciple to demonstrate (v. 35).

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<sup>390</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>391</sup>Liefeld, p. 893.

<sup>392</sup>Cf. Mishnah *Shabbath* 31a; and *Epistle of Aristeas* 207.

<sup>393</sup>Green, p. 273.

6:35-36

"But" (Gr. *plen*) introduces another strong contrast (cf. v. 23). Rather than loving, doing good, and lending, as other people do with a desire to receive in return, the disciple should do these things with no thought of receiving back. That is how God gives, and it is therefore how His children should give. Jesus promised a "great reward" for disciples who do this.

"Within Luke's world, the question of making a bargain with God would hardly have been in the foreground in discourse about the ethic outlined here. Of much greater significance would be the way Jesus has just subverted a key organizing factor of the Roman Empire—namely, patronal ethics. The Empire was an intrusive, suffocating web of obligation, with resources deployed so as to maintain social equilibrium, with the elite in every village, town, city, and region, and of the Empire as a whole given esteem due them in light of their role as benefactors. If God, and not the emperor, is identified as the Great Benefactor, the Patron, and if people are to act without regard to cycles of obligation, then the politics (legitimation, distribution, and exercise of power) of the Empire is sabotaged."<sup>394</sup>

The children of God can demonstrate their relationship to "the Most High" by behaving as He behaves. The use of this name for God highlights the disciple's exalted position. Mercy toward all people should typify disciples' attitudes and actions—despite the ingratitude, wickedness, and enmity of the recipients—as it typifies God's, who continually gives rain to the unjust, not only to the just. This emphasis accords with Luke's concern for people in need (cf. 10:25-37). Matthew's interest, on the other hand, was in God's perfect righteousness (cf. Matt. 5:48; 19:21).

6:37-38

These verses explain what it means to "be merciful as God is merciful" (v. 36). The first two examples are negative and the second two are positive. A judgmental attitude is not merciful. However, some judging is necessary, so Jesus clarified that He specifically meant "condemning other people." Judgment and condemnation are essentially God's functions, not man's. Rather, a merciful person pardons others. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was addressing interpersonal behavior, not the judicial system. Giving to others is also merciful behavior. What a person sows, he or she will normally reap, for evil or for good (cf. Gal. 6:7). Disciples will discover that they will receive back the same treatment that they have dispensed abundantly, from God if not from man.

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<sup>394</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

"The saying here may appear to speak in terms of strict retribution, but the thought is rather that human generosity is rewarded with divine generosity, not with a precisely equivalent gift from God."<sup>395</sup>

"Jesus' followers give freely, without dragging others and especially those in need into the quagmire of never-ending cycles of repayment and liability."<sup>396</sup>

### **The character of disciples 6:39-49**

In the previous sections of the sermon, Jesus addressed the choices that disciples make and their conduct. He also spoke of the character from which those things spring. He used five parables (comparisons) to teach these lessons.

#### **The parable of the blind guide 6:39-42 (cf. Matt. 7:3-5)**

6:39 In this parable, the leader evidently represents a disciple, and the person led is someone the disciple is seeking to guide into the way of life. If the disciple is "blind," he will not be able to help other "blind" non-disciples find their way. Both disciple and non-disciple will stumble tragically. On another occasion, Jesus called the Pharisees blind guides (Matt. 15:14). However, here He compared His disciples to blind guides. The disciples could become blind guides if they did not follow Jesus' instructions about loving (vv. 27-38).

"This is the only use of the term parable concerning the metaphors in the Sermon on the Mount. But in both Matthew and Luke's report of the discourse there are some sixteen possible applications of the word."<sup>397</sup>

6:40 Changing the figure momentarily, Jesus compared a disciple of His to a teacher. It is proverbial that a pupil cannot rise above his teacher in knowledge. The fact that some pupils do excel their teachers is an exception to the rule. The people whom the disciples would instruct in the truth that Jesus taught them would normally advance no further than the disciples. This was especially true before the widespread availability of books.<sup>398</sup> Therefore it was imperative that the disciples pay careful attention to Jesus' teachings about love and apply them. The progress of the disciples' learners depended on it.

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<sup>395</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 267.

<sup>396</sup>Green, p. 275.

<sup>397</sup>Robertson, 2:93.

<sup>398</sup>Morris, p. 133.

6:41-42 Jesus returned to the figure of limited perception (v. 39). It would be easy for a disciple to criticize those he was instructing, and fail to realize his own faults, since he was in the position of a teacher (v. 40). It would be not only dangerous, but hypocritical, to try to help a learner overcome his deficiencies, without first dealing with one's own failings. If a disciple tried to teach his learner the importance of loving as Jesus taught, but did not practice that kind of love himself, he could not remove his learner's knowledge deficiency. His sin would be greater than his learner's ignorance.

"That simply means that we have no right to criticize at all, because 'there is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it ill becomes any of us to find fault with the rest of us.'"<sup>399</sup>

Thus Jesus stressed the importance of His disciples applying the truths He had taught them *before* they tried to teach them to other people. Their failure to do so would make them the spiritual equivalent of blind eye surgeons. They would be judging others but not themselves (v. 37; cf. Rom. 2:1-3).

#### **The parable of the two trees 6:43-44 (cf. Matt. 7:15-20)**

Jesus' point in this parable was that a person of bad character cannot normally produce good conduct (cf. Matt. 12:33-35). Therefore His disciples needed to clean up their lives before they could minister for Him effectively. As a pupil follows the example of his teacher (v. 40), so "fruit" from a tree follows the nature of that tree. In the Matthew parallel, Jesus applied the parable to false teachers, but here it stands by itself and applies in this context to disciples of His. Conduct follows character as surely as fruit follows root, for "good" and for "bad" (cf. James 3:12). The conduct of Christians is sometimes "bad," rather than "good," because their character is still sinful. Disciples are not totally good or totally bad.

"The text indicates that although fruit may not be a certain indicator, it can be a suggestive one."<sup>400</sup>

"In Luke's (pre-Freudian) world, a person's 'inside' is accessible not through his or her psychology but through his or her social interactions."<sup>401</sup>

#### **The parable of the two men 6:45 (cf. Matt. 12:35)**

This short parable makes more explicit the same point about human conduct that Jesus had just made about trees (cf. Matt. 12:35). The conduct of people follows from their character, for "good" or for "bad" (cf. 3:7-9). The man's treasury is his heart. What makes

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<sup>399</sup>Barclay, p. 79.

<sup>400</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 200.

<sup>401</sup>Green, p. 277.

the heart good is proper orientation to Jesus as a disciple. The "good man" has chosen to follow Jesus faithfully as His disciple, but the "evil man" has decided to pursue worldly wealth and happiness. A person's speech normally expresses what "fills his heart."

**The parable of the two claims 6:46 (cf. Matt. 7:21-23)**

This is a very brief condensation of a parable that Matthew recorded more fully. Matthew's interest in it connects with the mention of false teachers that occurs in the context of his account of the sermon. Luke simply lifted the main point of the teaching out and inserted it in his account. His interest was primarily Jesus' warning to disciples to apply His teaching to their lives. Profession of discipleship is one thing, but what identifies a true disciple of Jesus is actually doing God's will (cf. James 1:22-25).

A disciple cannot legitimately refer to Jesus as his or her "Lord," and ignore what He teaches. The double title ("Lord, Lord") was common in Judaism to strengthen the form of the address (cf. Gen. 22:11; 46:2; Exod. 3:4; 1 Sam. 3:10). Here it implies great honor. "Lord" was a respectful address, as we have noted, but in view of who Jesus was it came to imply the highest respect. Used intelligently it implied deity, messiahship, and sovereignty. However, everyone who used this title, even Jesus' disciples, did not always imply *all of this* when they used it—especially before Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

**The parable of the two builders 6:47-49 (cf. Matt. 7:24-27)**

This final parable is an appeal to the hearers, primarily Jesus' disciples (v. 20), to obey the teaching that they had heard (cf. James 1:21-25; Ezek. 13:10-16). As such, it is a conclusion to the whole sermon. Luke omitted the response of the people, which Matthew mentioned.

Jesus compared a disciple who heard His teachings, and then put them into practice, to "a house" built on a solid "foundation" ("rock"). Luke stressed the digging of a proper foundation. Perhaps he had Hellenistic houses with basements in mind.<sup>402</sup> The floodwaters represent the forces of enemies and temptations that threaten to move the disciple from these moorings, perhaps even divine testing. The disciple who does not both hear and apply Jesus' teachings, specifically what He had just taught about commitment choices and loving conduct, could anticipate ruin. It is as foolish to hear Jesus' teachings without obeying Him, as it is to build a house without first laying a solid foundation.

". . . in Matthew the difference between the two men is that they chose different sites on which to build; here they differ in what they do on the sites."<sup>403</sup>

"In every decision in life there is a short view and a long view. Happy is the man who never barter's future good for present pleasure. Happy is the

<sup>402</sup>J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 27, n. 9.

<sup>403</sup>Morris, p. 134.

man who sees things, not in the light of the moment, but in the light of eternity."<sup>404</sup>

Throughout this sermon, Jesus was not contrasting believers and unbelievers, but disciples who followed Him and those who did not. The Gospel writers were not too concerned about identifying the moment when a person placed saving faith in Jesus and passed from death to life. This became a greater concern to the writers of the New Testament epistles. However, even they were not as interested in nailing down the moment of regeneration as some of us sometimes are. Jesus and the Gospel writers put more emphasis on the importance of people making decisions to follow Jesus, to learn from Him, and to become wholehearted participants with Him in His mission. That was particularly Luke's interest in relating what Jesus taught His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. I am not depreciating the vital importance of trusting in Jesus in a moment of saving faith. Normally learning from Jesus precedes that moment.

#### **D. JESUS' COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE CH. 7**

This section of Luke's Gospel records Jesus revealing Himself further to the people. Luke presented Him as the fulfillment of prophecies about God's gracious intervention into earthly life (e.g., Isa. 61:1-2a; cf. Luke 4:18). Jesus met many needs of people, both physical and spiritual. Luke pictured Jesus showing compassion on a Gentile, a widow, and a sinful woman. The multitudes generally regarded these gracious acts as evidences of a divine visitation. However, the Pharisees viewed them with suspicion. The unifying theme of this chapter is Jesus' compassion for people.

"In his ministry Jesus intervenes on the side of the oppressed and excluded, assuring them that they share in God's salvation and defending them against others who want to maintain their own superiority at the expense of such people. The groups for whom Jesus intervenes are not sharply defined and delimited. They include a number of partly overlapping groups. In his ministry Jesus helps the poor, sinners, tax collectors, women, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Each of these groups was excluded or subordinated in the society to which Jesus spoke, and the Lukan narrator seems to be especially interested in Jesus' ministry to these people."<sup>405</sup>

#### **1. The healing of a centurion's servant 7:1-10 (cf. Matt. 8:5-13)**

This incident shows Jesus extending grace to a Gentile through Jewish intermediaries. It would have helped Luke's original Gentile readers appreciate that Jesus' mission included them as well as the Jews. It is another case in which Jesus commended the faith of someone (cf. 1:45; 5:20). Luke continued to stress Jesus' authority and the power of His word (cf. 4:32, 36). The similarities between this incident and the conversion of Cornelius are striking (cf. Acts 10).

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<sup>404</sup>Barclay, p. 81.

<sup>405</sup>Tannehill, 1:103.

"His story is thus an example of the fact that God is willing to accept all men alike and that everyone who fears him [*sic* Him] and performs righteousness is acceptable to him [*sic* Him] (Acts 10:34f.)."<sup>406</sup>

The good relations between the Jews and this Gentile also show their compatibility, an important lesson for early Christians, since there were Jewish-Gentile tensions within the early church. Jesus also noted the unbelief that characterized the Jews generally, another important factor that the early church had to deal with. In his account of this healing, Matthew, writing to Jews, stressed the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan, but Luke, writing to Gentiles, emphasized the importance of Gentiles loving Jews.<sup>407</sup>

7:1 This verse is transitional. It helps us appreciate the fact that "people" generally (Gr. *laos*), not just disciples, were listening to the Sermon on the Mount, at least the last part of it (cf. Matt. 7:28). The Greek word that Luke used to describe the completion of Jesus' teaching on that occasion is *eplerosen*, which means "fulfilled." He thus implied that this teaching was a fulfillment of prophecy about the Messiah, perhaps that He would preach good news to the poor (4:18; 6:20; Isa. 61:1). The centurion illustrates the proper response to Jesus' authoritative words.

7:2-3 These verses are unique to Luke's account. They give detail about the character of the centurion, who would have commanded from 50 to 100 soldiers.<sup>408</sup> He had a personal concern for his slave whom he honored and respected (Gr. *entimos*), which was unusual and commendable. This affectionate regard is also clear in his use of the Greek word *pais* to describe the servant (v. 7). This word elsewhere sometimes describes a son (John 4:51). The centurion also enjoyed the respect of the Jews in Capernaum, so much that he felt free to ask some of the local "Jewish elders" to approach Jesus for him (cf. 1 Tim. 3:7). Normally the Jews did not like the Roman soldiers who occupied their towns.<sup>409</sup> The slave was evidently too sick to bring to Jesus. Luke described him as about to die. Matthew described him as paralyzed and in great pain (Matt. 8:6).

"Likely the centurion was a proselyte of the gate, which meant that he had not yet been baptized and circumcised, nor could he yet offer a sacrifice. Had he been a full proselyte to Judaism he would not have sent the Jewish elders to plead his case."<sup>410</sup>

7:4-5 The village leaders explained to Jesus why they were interceding for the centurion. Their affection for him is obvious and quite untypical, as was a Roman soldier's affection for the Jews. Any person in this centurion's

<sup>406</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 277.

<sup>407</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:544.

<sup>408</sup>Robertson, 2:97.

<sup>409</sup>See Nolland, pp. 316-18, for the view that this centurion was not a Roman, but part of Herod Antipas' Gentile army.

<sup>410</sup>Ryrie, p. 60.

position could have enriched himself honestly.<sup>411</sup> Consequently the fact that he was so generous with the Jewish residents of Capernaum shows his selfless concern for their welfare. Of course, by building their synagogue, the centurion had placed the Jewish residents in his debt, which in that society was expected to require repayment in some form.<sup>412</sup> Early Jewish Christian readers should have concluded that, since Jews thought this Gentile worthy of Jesus' help, they should see no problem with accepting similar people into the church.

The New Testament writers referred to nine centurions all together, and they all appear in a favorable light. They are: (1) this one, (2) the centurion at Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 27:54), (3) Cornelius (Acts 10), (4) the centurion to whom Paul revealed his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25-26), (5) the centurion to whom Paul spoke about his nephew (Acts 23:17-18), (6 and 7) the two centurions who prepared for Paul's transfer from Jerusalem to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-24), (8) the centurion whom Felix charged to keep Paul in custody in Caesarea (Acts 24:23), and (9) Julius, who treated Paul kindly on his way to Rome (Acts 27:1, 3, 43).

7:6-8 It seems unusual that the centurion would send for Jesus, and then tell Him not to come. Apparently his humility moved him to do so (cf. 3:16). He felt unworthy that Jesus should enter his house. He understood that Jews customarily avoided entering the homes of Gentiles because they considered them ritually unclean. He may also have wished to spare Jesus the embarrassment of entering a Gentile's house, since many Jews would have criticized Jesus for doing so.<sup>413</sup> He even felt unfit (spiritually, morally, religiously) to meet Jesus outside his house.

However, the main point of the centurion's words was his recognition of Jesus' "authority." He viewed Jesus' relationship to sickness as similar to his own relationship to his subordinates. He saw both men as operating in a chain of command: "under" the authority of others, but also in "authority" *over* others. Jesus could therefore bid sickness to "come," to "go," and to behave ("Do this")—as this soldier ordered his slaves. Jesus therefore only needed to issue an authoritative command, as the centurion gave orders, and the sickness would depart. All *they* had to do was say the word—and things happened. This man not only viewed Jesus as having authority over sickness, but he even believed that Jesus' spoken word would be sufficient to heal.

7:9-10 Jesus' comment did not slander the faith of the Jews. One would expect *them* to have faith, since they had the prophecies about Messiah in Scripture, but *the Gentiles* did not have that light. The centurion believed that Jesus *could* heal his servant, not that He *would* heal him. The only two

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<sup>411</sup>B. S. Easton, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, p. 95.

<sup>412</sup>Green, p. 285.

<sup>413</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 284.

instances of Jesus "marveling" at people are here, on account of faith, and at Nazareth, because of unbelief (Mark 6:6). The centurion's belief in Jesus' authority was unusual, apparently because it rested on reports, and perhaps personal observation, of Jesus' previous ministry. Jesus rewarded his faith by healing his servant.

"Here was one, who was in the state described in the first clauses of the 'Beatitudes,' and to whom came the promise of the second clauses; because Christ is the connecting link between the two, and because He consciously was such to the Centurion, and, indeed, the only possible connecting link between them."<sup>414</sup>

Jesus did not limit His healing ministry to people who believed that He was the divine Son of God. He evidently healed some people who expressed no understanding of His true identity, simply because He felt compassion for them and chose to bless them (cf. John 9:11; Acts 10:38). Even the Twelve did not understand that Jesus was both God and man, until God revealed that to Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:16). It may therefore be incorrect to conclude that this centurion became a believer in Jesus' deity here, though he may have. He did believe that Jesus was at least a prophet of God, and probably he believed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah (cf. 2 Kings 5:1-14). Jesus rewarded his faith, because he responded—as he should have—to the information about Jesus that he had. That is essentially what Jesus had been teaching His disciples to do in the Sermon on the Mount. That is what Luke wanted his readers to do too.<sup>415</sup>

"Faith is always cultivated by looking at its object; faith is always weakened by looking at itself. When we come to Christ for salvation, we are told to believe him. We are exhorted to live the Christian life by walking by faith in him. If we look at our faith, we will be discouraged; if we look at him, our faith will be strengthened."<sup>416</sup>

## **2. The raising of a widow's son 7:11-17**

This miracle lifted the popular appreciation of Jesus' authority to new heights. Luke also continued to stress Jesus' compassion for people, in this case a widow whose son had died, by including this incident in his Gospel. She is the epitome of the "poor" to whom Jesus came to bring good news (cf. 4:18). The importance of faith in Jesus is not strong in this pericope. However, the motif of the joy that Jesus brings recurs. The incident also sets the stage for Jesus' interview by John the Baptist's disciples that follows (vv. 18-23).

7:11 Jesus may have gone directly from Capernaum (7:1-11) to Nain ("the pleasant"). Nain was only about 20 miles southwest of that town. It lay on the northern slope of the Hill of Moreh, that stood at the eastern end of the

<sup>414</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:549.

<sup>415</sup>See Zane C. Hodges, "The Centurion's Faith in Matthew and Luke," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121:484 (October-December 1964):321-32.

<sup>416</sup>Ryrie, p. 62.

Jezeel Valley. It was six miles south and a little east of Nazareth, and was easily visible across the valley from Nazareth. The Hill of Moreh was a significant site, because on its south side stood Shunem, where Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:18-37). Luke distinguished two groups of people who accompanied Jesus, namely: His disciples, and a large multitude of presumably non-disciples.

7:12 Friends were carrying the corpse out through the city "gate" to bury it outside the town, as was customary.

"As the funeral procession passed, every one was expected, if possible, to join the convoy."<sup>417</sup>

"Cremation was denounced as a purely heathen practice, contrary to the whole spirit of Old Testament teaching."<sup>418</sup>

The fact that the "widow" now had no surviving husband or son meant that she was in desperate circumstances, economically as well as emotionally (cf. 1 Kings 17:10). She would probably become destitute without someone to provide for her needs. The large retinue of mourners was common, though it suggests that she had friends.<sup>419</sup>

7:13 This is Luke's first narrative use of the term "the Lord" for Jesus (cf. v. 19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5, 6; 18:6; 19:8; 22:61; 24:3, 34). It anticipates the title the early Christians gave Him (e.g., Acts 2:36), and in this story it anticipates the remarkable demonstration of His sovereignty that followed.

Luke noted Jesus' "compassion" for the woman, one of his characteristic emphases. The Lord's words expressed His compassion, but they proved to be far from merely hollow words of encouragement. He would shortly give her a reason not to "weep," but to rejoice.

7:14 The "coffin" (Gr. *sorou*) was a litter that carried the shrouded corpse. By touching it, Jesus expressed His compassion, but His act also rendered Him ritually unclean (Num. 19:11, 16). Probably His action told the bearers that He wanted to do something. So they stopped. Undoubtedly the residents of Nain knew Jesus, and His reputation was probably another reason they stopped. This was the first time Jesus restored to life someone who had died, according to the Gospel records. Again the simple but powerful word of "the Lord" proved sufficient to effect the miracle.

<sup>417</sup>Edersheim, *Sketches of . . .*, p. 168.

<sup>418</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>419</sup>See Josephus, *The Wars . . .*, 3:9:5.

- 7:15 Luke probably wrote that the young ("dead") "man sat up" and spoke, in order to authenticate the resuscitation. Luke drew additional attention to the parallel incident of Elijah raising a widow's son, by noting that Jesus "gave" the young man back "to his mother" (cf. 1 Kings 17:23). He had given him to her once at birth indirectly, but now He gave him to her again. This act further illustrates Jesus' compassion for the widow, and His grace.
- 7:16 Again Luke noted that the result of Jesus' ministry was that "fear (Gr. *phobos*) gripped" the people (cf. 1:12; 5:26). This is a natural human reaction to a demonstration of supernatural power. They also praised God that this act of power had such a beneficial effect (cf. 2:20; 5:25-26; 18:43; 23:47).
- The people remembered the life-restoring miracles of Elijah and Elisha, in that very neighborhood, centuries earlier. They quickly concluded that God had sent them another prophet similar to them (cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37). However, calling Jesus "a great prophet" was not the same as acknowledging Him as Messiah, much less God. Their second exclamation did not necessarily mean that they acknowledged Jesus as God. It is an Old Testament expression meaning that God had sent help to His people (Ruth 1:6; cf. Luke 1:68). Some of the people may have concluded that Jesus was Immanuel, "God with us" (Isa. 7:14), but their words allow a broader meaning.
- 7:17 Luke concluded this pericope with a notation that the news (Gr. *logos*, word) about this incident radiated over that entire region (cf. 4:14, 37). The "surrounding district" probably refers to the area beyond "Judea," that included Perea, where John heard of Jesus' mighty works (v. 18).

"Jesus' amazing healings and exorcisms contribute to the very rapid spread of his fame. Comparison of the following statements shows how the narrator conveys an impression of rapidly growing fame: After the exorcism in the synagogue of Capernaum, 'a report about him was going out to every place of the neighboring area' (4:37). After the healing of the leper, 'the word about him was spreading more' (5:15). In the next scene Pharisees and teachers of the law are present 'from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem' (5:17). This is surpassed in 6:17-18, where we hear of 'a great multitude of the people from all the Jewish land and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and be healed.' We reach the climax of this development in 7:17: 'And this statement about him went out in the whole Jewish country and all the neighboring region.'"<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>420</sup>Tannehill, 1:85-86.

In Acts, the spread of the news about Jesus would go from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

What were some of Luke's purposes in including the raising of the widow of Nain's son? They appear to include the power of Jesus' word (as in the previous pericope), the life and joy that Jesus provides, and Jesus' ability to do what only the greatest prophets and God can do.

This incident doubtless became the basis for many people concluding that Jesus was: either the fulfillment of the prophecy about Elijah's return (Mal. 4:5-6), or Elijah himself (9:8). Hopefully it brought others into saving faith in Him.

Jesus raised two other dead people back to life: Jairus' daughter (8:54), and Lazarus (John 11:43). God the Father is said to have raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 4:10; 13:37).

### **3. The confusion about Jesus' identity 7:18-35**

It was only natural that these people had questions about who Jesus really was. Was He a prophet? Was He Elijah? Was He another former prophet? Was He "the Prophet" that Moses had predicted (Deut. 18:18)? Was He the Messiah? Was He Immanuel, "God with us" (Isa. 7:14)? Even John the Baptist began to have questions. On the one hand, Jesus was fulfilling prophecy that indicated He was the Messiah. He was preaching righteousness, healing the sick, casting out demons, even raising the dead. However, He was not fulfilling other Messianic prophecies, such as: freeing the captives (John was one), judging Israel's enemies, and restoring the Davidic dynasty to power.

Luke included much about the controversy over Jesus' identity, because it authenticates Jesus' identity, and strengthens the confidence of disciples in their Savior. As witnesses of Jesus Christ, Luke's readers faced many hostile challengers of Jesus' identity. This section enables disciples to counter these challenges more effectively.

#### **Jesus' response to John the Baptist's inquiry 7:18-23 (cf. Matt. 11:2-6)**

7:18-20 "These things" probably means the activities of Jesus that Luke had recorded, including the healing of the centurion's servant and the raising of the widow's son. John evidently had second thoughts about Jesus, because Messiah was supposed to release prisoners (Isa. 61:1), and Jesus claimed to fulfill that prophecy. However, He had not released John who was in prison (Matt. 11:2; cf. Luke 3:20). Moreover, the fact that Jesus was apparently fulfilling the prophecies about Elijah's coming, may have made John wonder if Jesus was the Messiah or Elijah. Luke apparently reported John's question twice, in these verses, in order to emphasize that this was the issue at stake.

"Disappointment often calls us to a deeper, less self-focused walk with God."<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>421</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 215. See also Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*.

7:21-23 Luke recorded, and Jesus listed, several messianic works that He just finished doing (cf. Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:7; 61:1). Isaiah did not predict that Messiah would cleanse lepers. Perhaps Jesus mentioned that because His ministry fulfilled Elisha's ministry, and he cleansed a leper (cf. 2 Kings 5).

Acts of judgment are conspicuously absent from this list, since that was not the time for judgment. Apparently in Jesus' day, the Jews believed that Messiah would not claim to be the Messiah *before* He performed many messianic works.<sup>422</sup> Jesus pronounced "blessed" those who accepted the evidence that He presented—and concluded that He was the Messiah—rather than stumbling over it. John was in danger of stumbling, namely, drawing the wrong conclusion and thereby falling into a trap (Gr. *skandalisthe*, cf. Isa. 8:13-14). Stumbling (taking "offense") is the opposite of believing here.

"There is a difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is a matter of the mind: we cannot understand what God is doing or why He is doing it. Unbelief is a matter of the will: we refuse to believe God's Word and obey what He tells us to do."<sup>423</sup>

Luke probably made much of the question of Jesus' identity, which John the Baptist's question raised, to highlight the seriousness of rejecting Jesus.

### **Jesus' testimony to John's identity 7:24-28 (cf. Matt. 11:7-11)**

Evidently Jesus spoke these words—praising John—because John's question about Jesus' identity made John look like a vacillator, a reed blowing in the wind. Jesus assured His hearers that that was not what John was. John's testimony to Jesus' messiahship was reliable.

7:24-26 John was not "reed"-like, nor was he "soft" or effeminate. John did not serve an earthly king but the heavenly King, and his clothing identified him as a "prophet" *of God*. Jesus said that John was not only "a prophet," but even "more than a prophet."

7:27-28 These verses are almost identical to Matthew 11:10-11. Jesus identified John as the forerunner of Messiah predicted in Malachi 3:1. As Messiah's forerunner, John enjoyed a role greater than any other prophet, even those who gave messianic prophecies. However, even the most insignificant participant ("least") in the messianic "kingdom" is superior to ("greater than") John, because John only anticipated it.

<sup>422</sup>R. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, pp. 71-74.

<sup>423</sup>Wiersbe, 1:196-97.

"Being least in the kingdom is better than being the best anywhere else."<sup>424</sup>

**Jesus' condemnation of His unbelieving generation 7:29-35 (cf. Matt. 11:16-19)**

John had questioned Jesus' identity, and Jesus had defended John's identity. Jesus now warned His hearers who rejected John's identity and Jesus' identity.

7:29           Verses 29 and 30 do not appear in the Matthew parallel. They reveal a deep division among the people, and they set the scene for Jesus' comments that follow (vv. 31-35).

Many of the "common people," even tax collectors, had responded to John's message and had undergone his baptism (3:12, 21). When they heard Jesus' preaching, these people responded positively. They "acknowledged God's justice" (justified God) when they heard Jesus speaking highly of John. That is, they accepted God's ways as they were, and did not try to force Him to behave as they might have preferred. Jesus' words about John vindicated their earlier decision to submit to John's baptism.

7:30           However, the "Pharisees and lawyers (scribes)" did not submit to John's "baptism," showing that they had rejected "God's purpose," namely: His plan of salvation for them.

7:31-32       This second group, the present "generation" of unbelievers, was similar to faithless Israel in the past (cf. Deut. 32:5, 20; Judg. 2:10; Ps. 78:8; 95:10; Jer. 7:29). They, too, were subject to God's wrath. They were behaving no better than fickle "children" who become upset when their peers refuse to cooperate with them. Jesus pictured the religious leaders as children sitting down "in the market place," and calling out to others to *march to their tune*. However, their peers would not cooperate, so the religious leaders criticized them.

7:33-34       These unbelieving religious leaders did not like John because he was too much of an ascetic. He would not "dance" for them. However, they did not like Jesus, either. They believed He was too much of a *libertine* as they defined that term: too joyful. Jesus would not "weep" for them. Because John ate locusts and wild honey, instead of "bread" and "wine," the unbelieving Pharisees and lawyers accused him of having "a demon." His fanatical behavior also suggested this to them. Jesus, on the other hand, took part in feasts, "eating and drinking" freely. They accused Him of gluttony and drunkenness. The Old Testament described an Israelite who was "a gluttonous man and a drunkard" as deserving of stoning (cf. Deut. 21:20). Furthermore, Jesus associated with people whom the Jewish leaders regarded as apostates.

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<sup>424</sup>Bailey, p. 117.

"People who want to avoid the truth about themselves can always find something in the preacher to criticize."<sup>425</sup>

John and Jesus were both living parables. John taught the importance of repentance, and Jesus offered joy and blessing. However, the Jewish religious leaders missed the points of both their messages, because John and Jesus did not "dance to their tunes." Jesus probably referred to Himself as the "Son of Man" here, because this title always stresses His deity (Dan. 7:13-14). This would heighten the seriousness of the religious leaders' rejection.

7:35 Despite the rejection of the Jewish leaders, those who accepted God's plan (v. 30), as John and Jesus announced it, demonstrated its rightness. Their lives were testimonies to the truthfulness of what they had believed, which John and Jesus had proclaimed. Jesus stated this truth as a principle. The behavior of *good* "children" (i.e., disciples) normally points to their having wise parents (i.e., John and Jesus). John and Jesus had also behaved as *good* "children of God," and had "vindicated" *His* "wisdom" by their behavior.

Luke's account of these condemnatory words is fuller than Matthew's. Luke focused on the religious leaders' rejection, whereas Matthew applied Jesus' words to all the unbelieving Israelites that He faced, more generally.

#### **4. The anointing by a sinful woman 7:36-50**

This incident, appearing only in Luke's Gospel, illustrates the truth just expressed in verse 35. It may have taken place in Nain (cf. vv. 11, 37). Here is a case in point of what Jesus had just described happening (v. 34). Jesus reached out to a sinful woman, only to receive criticism from a fastidious Pharisee. The love that the woman lavished on Jesus contrasts with Simon the Pharisee's lack of love for Him. How ironic and paradoxical that a sinner lavished love on Jesus, but a religious leader treated Him with no special consideration! The motif of Jesus' identity is also significant in this story, since Jesus had forgiven the woman's sins, and this raised a question about His authority. Again Luke featured a woman in his narrative, showing Jesus' concern for women. There are some similarities between this story and the one about Mary anointing Jesus' feet in Simon the leper's house, but that was a different incident (cf. Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8).

". . . the story of the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house reminds us of the previous conflict over Jesus' authority to release sins, suggesting that this is a continuing conflict. This reminder may also help readers to recall Jesus' basic claim of authority to release sins in 5:24."<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>425</sup>Wiersbe, 1:197.

<sup>426</sup>Tannehill, 1:106.

"The touching display of affectionate gratitude shown to Jesus by this woman off the street well illustrates the claim of v 35 that Wisdom is justified by her children."<sup>427</sup>

- 7:36 We should not overlook the fact that Jesus accepted an invitation to dinner from a Pharisee. He did not cut all the religious leaders off simply because most of them rejected Him. He dealt with people as individuals. Simon, perhaps, had not yet formed an opinion about Jesus, like Nicodemus had (John 3). The story presents him as inhospitable and insulting, but not hostile or antagonistic. Jesus accepted his invitation.
- 7:37 Social custom allowed needy people to visit such meals and to partake of some of the leftovers.<sup>428</sup> Moreover it was not unusual for people to drop in when a rabbi was visiting.<sup>429</sup> Luke gallantly omitted describing why the woman "was a sinner," though the commentators love to guess. One writer called her "a prostitute by vocation, a whore by social status."<sup>430</sup> Some have assumed that the woman was Mary Magdalene, but this is pure speculation. The point was that she was a member of the social class called sinners, whom the Pharisees regarded as treating the law loosely. The liquid perfume was in an expensive "alabaster vial." Jewish women frequently wore such vials suspended from a cord around their necks.<sup>431</sup>
- 7:38 Jesus was probably "reclining" on a divan to eat, with His head and arms close to the table, and His feet stretched out away from it, as was customary at important meals. The woman's sacrificial gift, and her tears, raise questions the text does not answer. Was she grateful to Jesus for some act of kindness that He had showed her, or was she seeking His help? By constantly "kissing" (Gr. *katephilei*, the imperfect tense) Jesus' "feet," the woman was expressing her affection, respect, and submission (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1). Normally people anointed a person's head, not the feet.
- "Letting her hair down in this setting would have been on a par with appearing topless in public, for example. She would have appeared to be fondling Jesus' feet, like a prostitute or a slave girl accustomed to providing sexual favors."<sup>432</sup>
- 7:39 Simon deduced that Jesus could not be a prophet, since if He were, He would not permit a sinful woman to do what this woman was doing. The touch of a "sinner" brought ceremonial defilement.

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<sup>427</sup>Nolland, p. 353.

<sup>428</sup>Liefeld, p. 903.

<sup>429</sup>Martin, p. 224.

<sup>430</sup>Green, p. 309.

<sup>431</sup>Morris, pp. 146-47.

<sup>432</sup>Green, p. 310.

- 7:40 Simon had no reason to expect Jesus' words to him to have anything to do with what he had been thinking. He had concluded that Jesus could not tell sinners from non-sinners. Simon would now learn that Jesus knew exactly what was in his heart (cf. 5:22). He politely addressed Jesus as "Teacher" (Gr. *didaskale*, Luke's equivalent of "Rabbi," cf. 9:38; 20:21, 38; 21:7; 22:11), less than a prophet.
- 7:41-42 Jesus proceeded to tell His host a parable about "two debtors." A denarius was worth one day's wage for an agricultural laborer. Regardless of the buying power of the money in view, obviously both men owed considerable debts, but one's debt was 10 times greater than the other's. Jesus regarded "love" as being evidenced by the debtor's expression of gratitude implied in Jesus' question.
- 7:43 The answer to Jesus' question may have been obvious to Simon, though he seems to have known very little about forgiveness and love. However, he apparently knew that Jesus sometimes used questions to lure His critics into a trap. So he replied with uneasy reluctance, allowing the possibility that the answer might not be as obvious as it appeared to be.
- 7:44-46 Jesus probably surprised Simon by making the woman the focus of His parable, and by contrasting her with Simon. Even worse, Jesus made her the heroine and Simon the villain, the opposite of how Simon thought. The woman was guilty of sins of commission, but Simon was guilty of sins of omission. All the things that Simon had failed to do for Jesus, were common courtesies that hosts frequently extended their guests. However, Simon had probably not acted discourteously. He had just not performed any special acts of hospitality on Jesus.<sup>433</sup> The scented "oil" in view would have been olive oil, which was both plentiful and inexpensive. The woman, however, had gone far beyond courtesy, and had made unusual sacrifices for Jesus out of love. Simon appears in the incident as the greater "sinner" of the two.
- 7:47 Jesus next drew a conclusion from what He had just said. The woman's great love showed that she had appreciated great forgiveness. Jesus did not mean that she had earned great forgiveness with her great love. Her love was the result of, not the reason for, her forgiveness.<sup>434</sup> This is clear from the parable (vv. 42-43), as well as from Jesus' later statement that it was her faith, not her love, that had saved her (v. 50). As a maxim, the intensity of one's love tends to be proportionate to his perception of the greatness of his forgiveness.

"Because he [Simon] trivialized his sin, he misunderstood what God's forgiveness meant."<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup>A. E. Harvey, *The New English Bible: Companion to the New Testament*, p. 244.

<sup>434</sup>Robertson, 2:109.

<sup>435</sup>Gary Inrig, *The Parables*, p. 56.

- 7:48 Jesus now confirmed to the woman what had already taken place. This was a word of assurance. Jesus used the perfect tense in Greek (*sosoken*). We could translate it, "Your sins have been forgiven and stand forgiven." This was true in spite of the Pharisee's slur (v. 39). She had evidently obtained God's forgiveness sometime before she entered Simon's house. Jesus was not now imparting forgiveness to her for the first time, but was commenting on her "forgiven" condition. This is clear because throughout the story, Jesus consistently regarded the woman as a forgiven person. Her acts of love sprang from her sense of gratitude for having received forgiveness. Jesus had earlier forgiven the sins of the paralytic man in Capernaum (5:20). In this story, He was not actively *forgiving* the sins of the sinful woman, but announced authoritatively that they had in fact been, and were still, forgiven.
- 7:49 Some of the people present mistakenly assumed that Jesus was forgiving the woman's sins. This again raised the question of who He was (cf. v. 39; 5:21). Jesus did not answer it, nor did Luke. Those present, and the readers, could and can draw their own conclusion, which should have been and should be obvious by now.
- 7:50 Jesus concluded the incident by giving the woman a further word of encouragement and clarification. It was her "faith," not her love, that had resulted in her salvation, of which her forgiveness was a part. Consequently she could depart "in peace" about her condition, even though others might continue to regard her as a "sinner" (cf. 8:48; 17:19; 18:42). Here salvation has the larger meaning of spiritual deliverance. This is clear because of Jesus' previous comments about forgiveness, and the lack of reference to physical deliverance (i.e., healing). Likewise the common Jewish farewell, "May God's peace be yours" (Judg. 18:6; 1 Sam. 1:17; 2 Sam. 15:9; 1 Kings 22:17; Acts 16:36; James 2:16), assumes a larger meaning when connected with spiritual salvation. This woman was able to "go" into a lasting condition of "peace" because of her "faith" (cf. Rom. 5:1).

". . . 7:36-50 is the first of three reported occasions (see 11:37-54; 14:1-24) on which Jesus is invited to dine at a Pharisee's house, and each of the three is a comparatively lengthy scene. This type-scene repetition suggests that this is a characteristic situation during Jesus' ministry and one of special interest to the narrator. Each of these scenes is an occasion of conflict."<sup>436</sup>

"Jesus' parable of the two debtors and His comments to Simon and the woman teach a number of lessons: (a) Salvation is the result of God's gracious work received by faith. (b) God graciously forgives the debt of sin that no one can repay. (c) Peace with God is possible because of the

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<sup>436</sup>Tannehill, 1:178.

forgiveness of sins. (d) The more one understands forgiveness, the more love he will have for Christ. (e) Humble service stems from a heart of gratitude for God's grace."<sup>437</sup>

### **E. JESUS' TEACHING IN PARABLES 8:1-21**

The present section of Luke follows the same basic pattern as the former one. There is a block of teaching (8:1-21; cf. 6:12-49) followed by another account of Jesus' mighty works (8:22-56; cf. ch. 7). This sequence is common in Luke and in Matthew.

#### **1. The companions and supporters of Jesus 8:1-3**

Luke's account emphasizes that concern for the multitudes motivated Jesus' mission. Mark, on the other hand, presented opposition from the Jewish religious leaders as a reason for His activities. Matthew stressed Jesus' desire to present Himself as the Messiah to the Jews. All of these were factors that directed Jesus in His ministry.

- 8:1            This verse is Luke's summary of Jesus' next preaching tour (cf. 4:43-44). Like the first summary statement, this one also states Jesus' ministry as consisting of itinerant preaching primarily. Luke noted the presence of the Twelve with Jesus in order to qualify them as reliable witnesses of His teaching, death, and resurrection. This is the first occurrence in Luke of the term "the Twelve."
- 8:2-3        Luke's mention of the "women" in this section anticipates his citing them as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection later (cf. 23:49, 55; 24:6, 10; Acts 1:14). This is Luke's third recent reference to women who benefited from Jesus' ministry to them, several of whom responded by ministering to Him (cf. 7:12-15, 36-50). Their example provides a positive example for female readers of Luke's Gospel.

"This is the first woman's missionary society for the support of missionaries of the Gospel."<sup>438</sup>

". . . traveling around with a religious teacher conflicts strongly with traditional female roles in Jewish society.<sup>439</sup> Such behavior neglects a husband's rights and a wife's responsibilities to her family. It would probably arouse suspicion of illicit sexual relationships. In his later teaching Jesus will repeatedly tell his disciples that his call requires a break with the family (Luke 9:57-62; 12:51-53; 14:26; 18:28-30). The last two of these passages speak of leaving 'house' and 'children,' which could apply to either a man or

<sup>437</sup>Bailey, p. 117.

<sup>438</sup>Robertson, 2:111.

<sup>439</sup>Footnote 55: B. Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, p. 117.

a woman, but these statements are male-oriented in that they also speak of leaving 'wife' but not husband. [Footnote 56:] However, 12:53 indicates that the division in the family caused by someone becoming a disciple will involve women as well as men. [End of footnote.] Nevertheless, 8:2-3 refers to women who have evidently taken a drastic step of leaving home and family in order to share in the wandering ministry of Jesus. The discipleship of women is conceived as radically as for men—perhaps even more radically, since women of that time were very closely bound to the family—involving a sharp break with social expectations and normal responsibilities."<sup>440</sup>

Many people have concluded that Mary Magdalene had been a prostitute. However, the text gives no warrant for this idea. It simply says that seven demons had indwelt her. In other cases of demon possession in the Gospels, the results were typically mental disorders rather than immoral conduct. "Magdalene" evidently refers to her hometown of Magdala (lit. the tower). It stood on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, south of Gennesaret and north of Tiberius. (Though Tiberius was one of the greatest cities of Galilee,<sup>441</sup> the Gospel writers never mentioned it. Herod Antipas I built this city, and named it in honor of Tiberius Caesar.<sup>442</sup>) "Joanna" was present at Jesus' crucifixion and empty tomb (23:55-56; 24:1, 10). She is the first of Jesus' disciples identified as connected with Herod Antipas' household. "Chuza" ("Little Pitcher") was evidently Herod's manager or foreman, some high-ranking official in Herod's employ (cf. Matt. 20:8; Gal. 4:2). He may or may not have been the royal official who came to Jesus in Cana, and requested that Jesus come to Capernaum to heal his son (John 4:46-53).

"It may be that the special knowledge of Herod and his court reflected in Lk. came through him; he and his wife are no doubt named as well-known personalities in the church and are evidence for the existence of Christian disciples among the aristocracy."<sup>443</sup>

"It is an amazing thing to find Mary Magdalene, with the dark past, and Joanna, the lady of the court, in one company. It is one of the supreme achievements of Jesus that He can enable the most diverse people to live together without in the least losing their own personalities or qualities."<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>440</sup>Tannehill, 1:138.

<sup>441</sup>Josephus, *The Life* . . . , par. 25.

<sup>442</sup>Idem, *Antiquities of* . . . , 18:2:3.

<sup>443</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 317.

<sup>444</sup>Barclay, p. 96.

"Susanna" ("Lily"), otherwise unknown to us, may also have been of special interest to Luke's original readers. The support of these and other similar unnamed disciples explains how Jesus was able to continue His ministry financially. These women, and probably some men, provided money by giving sacrificially out of love for Jesus and what He had done for them (cf. 7:36-50). It was apparently unusual for Jesus to have female followers (cf. John 4:27), though this was more common in the Hellenistic world than in Palestine.<sup>445</sup>

"Luke establishes a deliberate parallel between the apostles and the women (his gospel is marked by such paralleling of men and women: Zechariah and Mary in Luke 1—2; the woman of Zarephath and Naaman in 4:25-27; perhaps the demoniac and Simon's mother-in-law in 4:31-39; the centurion and the widow of Nain in 7:1-17; the man with sheep and the woman with coins in 15:3-10; perhaps the vindicated widow and the justified tax-collector in 18:1-14)."<sup>446</sup>

## **2. The parable of the soils 8:4-15**

Luke's account of Jesus' parables by the sea is the shortest of the three, and Matthew's is the longest. Luke limited himself to recording only two parables, namely, the parable of the soils and the parable of the lamp. He thereby stressed the importance of hearing, obeying, and proclaiming the Word of God.

"Unlike Mark 4 and Matthew 13, where entire chapters are devoted to kingdom teaching via parables, Luke concentrates on the one theme of faith both here and in the two short passages that follow (8:16-21)."<sup>447</sup>

### **The giving of the parable 8:4-8 (cf. Matt. 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9)**

As in the other Synoptics, Jesus gave the first parable to the crowds and then interpreted it for His disciples.

8:4 Luke omitted reference to the setting for this teaching. It was the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Instead, he mentioned the "large" and diverse "crowd" that Jesus addressed. Perhaps he wanted to picture the crowd as the various types of soil Jesus referred to in this parable.

8:5-8 The main focus of this parable, in all the Synoptics, is not on the sower (Jesus and His disciples) or the seed (the Word of God), as important as these are. The focus is on the soils on which the seed falls. Evidently in

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<sup>445</sup>Liefeld, p. 905.

<sup>446</sup>Nolland, pp. 365-66.

<sup>447</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 228.

Jesus' day, at least in some situations, sowing preceded plowing.<sup>448</sup> Consequently it is not unusual that the sower scattered his seed where he did. The presence of thorn seeds would not discourage the sower from sowing seed among them if he knew they were there. Rocks under the surface would only become visible when the farmer plowed the seed under.

Luke probably omitted the smaller harvests, and mentioned the largest yield, to encourage Jesus' disciples with the ultimate predicted result of His and their work. Only Luke mentioned that people "trampled" the seed "under foot" (v. 5), perhaps to signify people's contempt for God's Word (cf. Heb. 10:29). His unique reference to lack of moisture (v. 6, cf. Jer. 17:8) explains why those plants had "no root" (Matt. 13:6; Mark 4:6). Jesus' final appeal urged careful listening.

### **The reason for using parables 8:9-10 (cf. Matt. 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12)**

Luke focused the disciples' question on the one parable he recorded so far. Matthew and Mark had them asking Jesus why He was speaking to the people in parables (plural). "Mysteries" were secrets previously unknown about the kingdom (cf. Dan. 2:20-23, 28-30). The Greeks had their mystery religions, the secrets of which only the initiated knew. Consequently Luke's original readers would have had no trouble understanding Jesus' meaning. The parables intentionally revealed some truth to everyone who heard them, but only Jesus' disciples, who took a serious interest in their meaning, could understand the deeper significance of what they taught. One of the principles of spiritual growth is that when a person studies revelation, God gives him or her the ability to understand more truth. However, when one does not seek to understand it, God hides further truth from him or her (v. 18; Isa. 6:9; cf. Exod. 8:32; 9:12; Rom. 9:17-18). "In order that" (v. 10) indicates divine purpose more than result (v. 10).

### **The meaning of the parable 8:11-15 (Matt. 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20)**

Jesus now gave His disciples information that enabled them to understand the deeper teaching of the parable. The proclaimed Word of God does not in itself yield a uniform response of faith. Human response to it is all-important.

8:11-12 Luke alone wrote, "So that they may not believe and be saved." This inclusion reflects his intense interest in salvation. Luke viewed the preaching mission of Jesus and His disciples as essentially calling people to salvation. Satan's purpose is the exact opposite of God's purpose (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). In Jesus' ministry, the "word of God" that "saved" people was the message that Jesus was the God-man. When people trusted in Him as such, they experienced salvation.

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<sup>448</sup>Liefeld, p. 906; Fitzmyer, p. 703; Morris, p. 151.

8:13-14

In both of these cases ("rocky" and "among thorns"), there was some initial faith in Jesus, and later a turning away from Him in unbelief. Notice that Jesus did not mention if they were saved or lost. That was not His point. The point here is how they responded to the word of God. Some of them may have been saved and others unsaved. Jesus did not say they lost their salvation. That is impossible (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). He said they turned away in unbelief, i.e., they believed "for a while" and then stopped believing.

In Jesus' day, some of His hearers believed on Him (John 8:31), yet were still unsaved (John 8:44). Similarly today, some people respond to the gospel superficially by accepting it, but then turn from it in unbelief. In Jesus' day, others *genuinely* believed on Him and then stopped believing (e.g., John the Baptist). Jesus used the phrase "fall away" (Gr. *skandalizomai*) of John the Baptist in 7:23. Luke used a different Greek word here (8:13, *aphisteme*), but only because he preferred it, not because it has a different meaning.<sup>449</sup> Today, true believers sometimes stop believing because of information they receive that convinces them their former faith was wrong (e.g., youths who abandon their faith in college). Luke's treatment of this passage shows his concern about apostasy (i.e., departure from the truth) under persecution.

Those of us who have grown up in "Christian" countries sometimes fail to appreciate the fact that genuine Christians have renounced their faith in Jesus under severe persecution (e.g., Peter). We may tend to think that people who do this were never genuine believers. That may be true in some cases. However, we need to remember that for every Christian martyr who died refusing to renounce his faith, there were other believers who escaped death by renouncing it. To say that their behavior showed that they never truly believed is naive and unbiblical (cf. 19:11-27; 2 Tim. 2:12-13; 4:10a).

The people in view in verse 13 stop believing because of adversity, but those in verse 14 do so because of distractions (cf. Matt. 6:19-34; Luke 11:34-36; 12:22-32; 16:13). Notice that Jesus said that these "believers" (v. 13) produce no mature fruit (cf. John 15:2). In the light of this statement, we need to examine the idea that every true believer produces fruit, and that if there is no fruit the person must be lost. "Fruit" here is what appears on the outside that other people see. It is what normally, but not always, manifests life on the inside. It is possible for a fruit tree to produce no fruit and still be a fruit tree. Most fruit trees bear no fruit for the first few years after their planting, some stop bearing fruit after a while, and others never bear fruit. Today, the testimony of many Christians would lead onlookers to conclude that they are not believers, because they do not produce much external evidence of the divine life

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<sup>449</sup>See Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, p. 30-31.

within them. However, Jesus allowed for the possibility of true believers bearing no mature fruit because they allow the distractions of the world to divert them from God's Word (cf. John 15:2). Luke alone mentioned the "pleasures of this life," which were a special problem for his Greek readers.

8:15 Luke described this believer ("good soil") as having an "honest (or noble) and good heart," thereby stressing the character of the individual. He adapted an ancient Greek phrase denoting singleness of purpose.<sup>450</sup> Matthew described him as understanding, in keeping with his emphasis on comprehending the mysteries of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 13:11, 14-15, 19, 23, 25). The kind of person Luke describes will follow Jesus faithfully, and "bear fruit with perseverance."

"Jesus' emphasis here is not so much on whether a person perseveres but on the kind of person who does persevere."<sup>451</sup>

In summary, verse 12 seems to view the lost, verses 13 and 14 both the lost and the saved, and verse 15 the saved. However, in each case the emphasis is on their present response to the Word of God, be it belief or unbelief—not the ultimate outcome of their response, namely, their eternal salvation. Jesus encountered all four types of responses during His ministry, and so do modern disciples. Some people refuse to believe at all (cf. most of the Pharisees). Others follow Jesus temporarily, but because of persecution or love for other things, stop following Him (cf. John 6:66; Luke 18:18-30). The salvation of these people is the most difficult to evaluate. Still others believe and continue following faithfully (cf. vv. 1-3).

### **3. The parable of the lamp 8:16-18 (cf. Mark 4:21-25)**

Jesus continued speaking to His disciples.

8:16 This was evidently a favorite saying of Jesus' (cf. Matt. 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 11:33). In view of the context here, the "lamp" refers to a person who has the light of God's Word within him or her. Such a person has a responsibility to let the light illuminate those around him, rather than concealing it from them.

8:17 Jesus next commented on the parable of the lamp, explaining its significance. Disciples should not assume that because God had previously kept the truth secret, that Jesus was now revealing to them, He therefore wanted it to remain hidden. He wanted it declared publicly now.

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<sup>450</sup>Liefeld, pp. 907-8.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid., p. 908.

8:18 Jesus concluded by urging His disciples to listen carefully to what He taught them. If they believed what He told them, God would give them more truth. However if they disbelieved, God would remove from them what truth they thought they had.

#### **4. The true family of Jesus 8:19-21 (cf. Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35)**

Apparently Luke moved this teaching here, from Jesus' earlier controversy with the Pharisees over His authority, to provide a conclusion for this section of teaching (cf. Matt. 12:22-50; Mark 3:19-35). It continues the theme of the importance of obedience that has been dominant in the preceding context.

Jesus was not dishonoring His human family members, but honoring those who obey God. Some people feel close to God when they read the Bible, pray, hear a certain type of music, contemplate nature, or sit in a great cathedral. However, Jesus taught that the way to get close to God is to listen to and obey God's Word (cf. 6:46-49; James 1:22-23). Obedience brings the believer into an intimate relationship with Jesus. This saying would have helped Luke's original readers understand that Jewish blood did not bring believers into a closer relationship to Jesus than Gentile blood did. Probably Luke omitted "and sister" (v. 21), which Matthew and Mark included, simply for brevity. His account of the incident is the most concise of the Synoptics.

### **F. JESUS' MIGHTY WORKS 8:22-56**

This section is quite similar to Mark's account. Luke chose miracles that demonstrated Jesus' power over nature, demons, and illness and death, to show Jesus' authority as the divine Savior. Again he stressed the powerful word of Jesus. These miracles also revealed Jesus' compassion and willingness to save people in need.

#### **1. The stilling of a storm 8:22-25 (cf. Matt. 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41)**

"The remainder of the section 8:1—9:20 is strongly oriented to the question: Who is Jesus? (esp. 8:25; 9:9, 18-20; but also 8:28, 37, 39, 56)."<sup>452</sup>

This story pictures Jesus in complete control of Himself and His environment. Its climax is not the stilling of the storm, but the disciples' question about Jesus' identity (v. 25). This is the first miracle that Luke recorded that did not involve a person. It showed that Jesus had the same power of God over nature that God demonstrated in the Exodus (Exod. 14; cf. Ps. 89:8-9; 93:3-4; 106:8-9; 107:23-30; Isa. 51:9-10). The disciples turned to Jesus for deliverance at sea, just as many people have called on God for salvation in similar situations.

"This is the first of a series of four mighty works (8:22—9:17), the first and fourth of which are especially focused on the question of Jesus'

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<sup>452</sup>Nolland, p. 399.

identity, while the middle two also provide a pattern for the activity of the Twelve (9:1-2)."<sup>453</sup>

- 8:22-23 Evidently Jesus mentioned crossing the lake to His disciples both before and after He entered the boat (cf. Matt. 8:18; Mark 4:35). Jesus' command to cross constituted a guarantee that they would arrive safely. The other side was the east side (cf. v. 26). Luke introduced the fact that Jesus "fell asleep" before he referred to the storm breaking, perhaps to heighten the contrast between Jesus' peaceful condition and the storm. He stressed the severity of the storm by mentioning the "wind(s)" three times (vv. 23, 24, 25), as well as by describing it.
- 8:24-25 This time of testing was a challenge to the disciples' faith in Jesus' word (cf. v. 13). They stopped believing momentarily. Their double address, "Master, Master," showed their urgency. Jesus reminded them of their unbelief with His question. Luke recorded a milder rebuke than Mark did (Mark 4:40), perhaps showing that "faith" is a dynamic quality that grows and shrinks (cf. vv. 13-15). The disciples' question showed their lack of perception of Jesus' true identity (cf. 9:20). They had believed that He was the Messiah, but they had thought of Him as their contemporaries did. Now they saw that He could perform works that only God could do (cf. Ps. 107:28-30; cf. Acts 27:13-14, 25, 34). The disciples should have trusted in Jesus' word and remembered Psalm 107.

"Assuredly, no narrative could be more consistent with the fundamental assumption that He is the God-Man."<sup>454</sup>

Christians have often seen this storm as typical of the storms of life we encounter that threaten our faith (cf. James 1:6).

"The point of connection is not in the precise situation the disciples face in the boat, but in the feelings of helplessness they have about where Jesus has led them. Events in our lives sometimes leave us feeling at risk, whether it be in a job situation that calls us to take a stand, in the severe illness of a loved one, in an unexpected tragedy, or in the breakdown of a relationship. Any of these can be a storm in which we doubt God's goodness. We may feel God has left us to fend for ourselves."<sup>455</sup>

Experiencing deliverance in such situations should expand our appreciation for Jesus.

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<sup>453</sup>Ibid., p. 401.

<sup>454</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:600.

<sup>455</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 237-38.

**2. The deliverance of a demoniac in Gadara 8:26-39 (cf. Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20)**

The raging of this demoniac was even worse than the raging of the waters of Galilee (cf. Ps. 65:7). Demonic power was evident in the Hellenistic world of Luke's original readers. The fact that this incident happened in predominantly Gentile territory suggests that Luke may have seen in it a preview of the church's ministry to Gentiles (cf. Acts 26:18). In his account of this incident, Luke stressed: the saving of the man (v. 36), the fear of the spectators (v. 37), and the Abyss as the temporary destiny of the demons (v. 31). As Jesus had calmed the sea, He now calmed this demon-afflicted man.

8:26-29 Mark and Luke called this area "the country of the *Gerasenes*," but Matthew called it the country of the *Gadarenes*. Gergesa (also referred to as Gersa, Kersa, and Kursi) was a small village about midway on the eastern shore of the lake. Gadara, one of the Decapolis cities, was a larger town six miles southeast of the lake's southern end.<sup>456</sup> This incident apparently happened somewhere near both towns, on the southeast coast of the lake. A third town with a similar name, Geresia, was probably the same as Jarash, farther to the south and east.<sup>457</sup> As Luke described the situation, the demoniac met Jesus and His disciples as they arrived at the shore. He was one of two demoniacs, but Luke and Mark only mentioned one of them (cf. Matt. 8:28-34).

Doctor Luke mentioned several symptoms of this man's demon possession. These included disregard for his personal dignity (nakedness), social isolation, retreat to an unclean shelter, recognition of Jesus' identity, control of speech, shouting, and great strength (vv. 27, 29). This man was under the control of spiritual powers totally opposed to Jesus and God's will.

The demons in the man acknowledged that Jesus was the "Son of the Most High God" (cf. 1:32, 35; Gen. 14:18-22; Num. 24:16; Isa. 14:14; Dan. 3:26; 4:2; Acts 16:17). They were not worshipping Jesus as God, but were appealing to Him as their Judge for mercy. They wanted to escape premature torture in the abyss (v. 31; cf. Matt. 8:29; Rev. 20:1-3, 10).

"Note how the very presence of Jesus is already much more effective in restraining the man than all the efforts of his fellow countrymen."<sup>458</sup>

8:30-31 Jesus was probably asking for the "name" of the demon who indwelt the man for His disciples' benefit. "Legion" was not a proper name, but the designation of a Roman military unit that consisted of about 6,000

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<sup>456</sup>Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament*, p. 62.

<sup>457</sup>Bailey, p. 119.

<sup>458</sup>Nolland, p. 409.

soldiers. The improvised name "Legion" communicated that thousands of demons indwelt the man (cf. 8:2; Mark 5:13). The "abyss" refers to the final confinement place of the devil and his "angels" (demons) (cf. Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:1-3; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3). The Jews thought of it as a watery pit, deep below the earth (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Only God can send demons to the abyss. This is another indication that the demons recognized Jesus as God. The disciples should have learned from them.

8:32-33 Jesus granted the request of the demons, that involved a temporary stay of execution, thus demonstrating His mercy. But He nonetheless sent them to another watery place. There is no evidence that demons indwell water, so evidently Jesus killed them in this symbolic way, though their final judgment is still future (Rev. 20:1-3).

"Jesus' agreement to the request has troubled modern readers of the text, especially in light of the fate of the animals. In the (Jewish) perspective of the story, the pigs are of no value: to put the demons there is to put them safely out of the way, at least for the moment."<sup>459</sup>

8:34-37 The latter condition of the man contrasts with his former state. He now sat at Jesus' feet like a disciple, "clothed and in his right mind." The power that Jesus possessed to effect such a transformation terrified the people. Luke's use of the Greek word *sozo* (v. 36, "made well" or "cured," lit. "saved"), suggests that the man became a believer and a disciple of Jesus. Fear of Jesus led the residents to reject Him, unfortunately.

"Their fear may have been a superstitious reaction to the supernatural power that had so evidently been in operation. It may also have been associated with the material loss involved in the destruction of the pigs. If so, they saw Jesus as a disturbing person, more interested in saving men than in material prosperity. It was more comfortable to ask Him to go."<sup>460</sup>

"This scene is thus proleptic in its anticipation of both the power of the gospel and the opposition it will attract in the Gentile world."<sup>461</sup>

Thus Luke showed his reader-disciples that such were the results that they could expect.

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<sup>459</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>460</sup>Morris, p. 157. See also Ryrie, pp. 80, 81.

<sup>461</sup>Green, p. 336.

8:38-39 The man begged Jesus to allow him to follow Him. His desire was admirable, but Jesus ordered this disciple to remain where he was, as a witness to Jesus' person and power, at least temporarily. The man responded as an obedient disciple, and spread the gospel in this previously unreached Gentile area. Luke probably intended the reader to identify what "Jesus" had done with what "God" had done (v. 39)—i.e., Luke's words, "the great things *Jesus* had done for him" are a restating of Jesus' words, "what great things *God* has done for you," making Jesus and God one and the same. The man more than obeyed Jesus. He is, therefore, a good model for Gentile converts to emulate. Witness should start where we are, then God will cause it to expand (cf. Acts).

"The story is a paradigm of what conversion involves: the responsibility to evangelize."<sup>462</sup>

"A more transparent anticipation of the ministry of Jesus' followers in Acts could hardly be found at this early stage in the Lukan narrative."<sup>463</sup>

### **3. The healing of a woman with a hemorrhage and the raising of Jairus' daughter 8:40-56**

Luke, as the other synoptic evangelists, recorded this double miracle in its historical sequence. These are the only intertwined miracles in the Gospels. One miracle involved providing deliverance from disease, and the other, deliverance from death. Both of them demonstrated the power and compassion of Jesus, and the importance of putting one's faith in Him. The tension created in the Jairus story, by the interruption of the woman, challenged the faith of Jairus and the disciples on the one hand and their compassion on the other. Both incidents also deal with females for whom the number 12 was important. This number was important in each of the female's lives for reasons explained below, but it probably has no typological significance. Jesus' willingness to cleanse unclean people at the expense of His own ceremonial defilement also recurs (cf. 7:11-17). This showed His superiority over the Mosaic Law. These two miracles, as the preceding two, revealed the identity of Jesus primarily.

#### **Jairus' request 8:40-42a (cf. Matt. 9:18-19; Mark 5:21-23)**

Jesus returned from the southeast side of the lake to its northwest side, where this incident happened. Multitudes "welcomed" Jesus, because He had become popular in that area by working many other miracles. Jairus' position as a "synagogue ruler" proves that some influential Jewish leaders had believed on Him. His name, interestingly, means: "He [i.e., God] will awaken." Luke alone wrote that the girl was Jairus' "*only* (Gr. *monogenes*, cf. John 3:16) daughter." This detail adds to the pathos of the story. At "about 12" years of age, a Jewish girl was on the brink of becoming a young lady of

<sup>462</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 341.

<sup>463</sup>Green, p. 342.

marriageable age.<sup>464</sup> She was apparently going to die, just as she was about to begin to live as an adult—a further tragedy. Jairus invited Jesus to his "house."

"More and more, then, Jesus will be found in homes rather than in synagogues, a condition that will be recapitulated in the mission of the early church according to Acts."<sup>465</sup>

**The healing of the woman with a hemorrhage 8:42b-48 (cf. Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 5:24-34)**

8:42b-43 The crowd that Luke described, graphically, as "pressing against" Jesus and almost crushing Him, created the scene in which the woman approached Jesus. The exact reason for her continual bleeding ("hemorrhage") is unknown and irrelevant. This condition resulted in her discomfort, inconvenience, ritual uncleanness, and embarrassment. She was, therefore, one of the "poor" (marginalized) to whom Jesus had come with good news (cf. 4:18-19; 7:22; 8:1-2, 10). Some commentators believe that Luke's omission of the fact, that she had spent all her money on doctors who could not cure her, was his attempt to guard the reputation of his profession. However, it may have been a simple omission of a detail he felt was unimportant in view of his purpose. The point is, that no other doctor could heal the woman "for 12 years," but Jesus both could and did—in an instant!

8:44 The woman's superstition has also created problems for some readers. However, God honored even stranger expressions of faith than hers (cf. Acts 5:15; 19:11-12). Even though her knowledge was imperfect, she believed that Jesus could heal her, and Jesus honored that faith.

8:45-46 Jesus' question did not reveal lack of knowledge, but the desire to identify the woman so He could strengthen and encourage her faith. Occasionally Jesus chose to heal people who expressed no faith in Him. Here, though, someone with faith drew on His "power" without His conscious selection of her. Evidently God healed the woman through Jesus without Jesus' awareness. The Holy Spirit was the "power" at work (cf. 5:17-19; 6:19). Similarly, God sometimes brings blessing to individuals through His *other children* (believers), without those "conduit" believers even being aware of it, by His Spirit. Jesus meant that some of God's power had transferred from Him to another person, not that He consequently suffered a lack of power. Luke alone identified "Peter" as the spokesman of the disciples here, perhaps to make the narrative more concrete and vivid.

"It was good for her, indeed it was necessary for her that her cure be widely known. All her acquaintances must have been aware of her permanent state of ceremonial

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<sup>464</sup>Liefeld, p. 916.

<sup>465</sup>Green, p. 346.

uncleanness. If she was to be received back into normal religious and social intercourse, it was necessary that her cure become a matter of public knowledge. So Jesus took steps to see that people knew what had happened."<sup>466</sup>

- 8:47-48 The woman's mortified reaction was undoubtedly due to her illness, and to her impropriety in mingling with a crowd while being ritually unclean. Her falling at Jesus' feet recalls the sinful woman in Simon the Pharisee's house (7:36-50), who had a kindred spirit of thankfulness. Another reason Jesus insisted on identifying the woman was to secure her public confession of faith in Him. Perhaps Luke included this public confession that followed a private deliverance to provide a good example for his readers to follow (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). Jesus then prevented a possible misunderstanding—that her healing might have been the result of *magic*—by ascribing it to her "faith." Jesus' benediction also ties this story in with the earlier one involving the sinful woman (cf. 7:50). By calling her "daughter," Jesus affirmed her new position in the family of God.

**The raising of Jairus' daughter 8:49-56 (cf. Matt. 9:23-26; Mark 5:35-43)**

- 8:49-50 Jesus' words of encouragement, as well as His recent demonstration of power, prepared Jairus for what followed. He had just witnessed Jesus overcome ceremonial defilement and disease. He needed to believe that Jesus could overcome ceremonial defilement and death. Luke stressed the sad finality of the occasion, by using the perfect tense Greek verb translated "she has died," and by placing the verb in the emphatic first position in the sentence. The messenger's command also implied that there was no hope, but Jesus immediately fortified Jairus' faith.

"Whereas the woman's faith needed bolstering because it was shy, Jairus's faith needs to be calmed, persistent, and trusting. . . .

"We often struggle to understand God's timing. In fact, much of faith is related to accepting God's timing for events."<sup>467</sup>

- 8:51-53 Jairus' faith is evident in his continuing on with Jesus and allowing Him to enter his house. Perhaps Jesus allowed only Peter, John, and James (cf. 9:28; Acts 1:13) to accompany Him and the girl's parents, because the girl's room was probably small. Perhaps Luke used this order for these disciples because of Peter and John's prominence and partnership in the leadership of the early church. Another reason Jesus admitted only these few people may have been to make the little girl feel less conspicuous

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<sup>466</sup>Morris, pp. 159-60.

<sup>467</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 248, 249.

when she "awoke."<sup>468</sup> More significantly, His command to keep this incident quiet (v. 56) indicates that He did not want the unnecessary publicity that would inevitably accompany a second resuscitation (cf. 7:11-17). By saying, euphemistically, that the girl was asleep (Gr. *katheudei*), Jesus was implying that her death was only temporary (cf. John 11:11; 1 Thess. 4:13-14). Jesus was expressing God's view of death, not man's.

"Jesus' remark is directed toward the future and not the past. It is prognosis, not diagnosis. Her state is sleep and not death because of what Jesus intends to do for her."<sup>469</sup>

Obviously the girl had died because her spirit had departed from her body (v. 55). It is interesting that these mourners, who knew of Jesus' prophetic powers and gift of healing, refused to allow the possibility that He might be right. This attitude shows their lack of faith.

8:54-56 Jesus called the girl's "spirit" back to her body (cf. 1 Kings 17:21; Acts 9:41). Evidently He extended His hand ("took her by the hand") in order to assist her in sitting up, not to transfer divine power to her. Luke wrote that the girl rose up off her deathbed "immediately," and was able to eat—facts that preclude a gradual, or only spiritual, restoration (cf. 4:39). Her parents' amazement (Gr. *exestesan*) also witnessed to the reality of this miracle.

"The Gospels record three such resurrections, though Jesus probably performed more. In each instance, the person raised gave evidence of life. The widow's son began to speak (Luke 7:15), Jairus' daughter walked and ate food, and Lazarus was loosed from the graveclothes (John 11:44). When a lost sinner is raised from the dead, you can tell it by his speech, his walk, his appetite, and his 'change of clothes' (Col. 3:1ff). You cannot hide life!"<sup>470</sup>

This double miracle brings this section on Jesus' mighty works to a climax. The point Luke was emphasizing throughout was the identity of Jesus, whom he presented as exercising the prerogatives of deity (cf. Ps. 146:7-9).

"The most fundamental lesson in this passage is the combination of characteristics tied to faith. Faith should seize the initiative to act in dependence on God and speak about him, yet sometimes it must be patient. In one sense faith is full speed ahead, while in another it is waiting on the Lord. Our lives require a vibrant faith applied to the affairs of life,

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<sup>468</sup>Morris, p. 161.

<sup>469</sup>Nolland, p. 421.

<sup>470</sup>Wiersbe, 1:204.

but it also requires a patient waiting on the Lord, for the Father does know best."<sup>471</sup>

### **G. JESUS' PREPARATION OF THE TWELVE 9:1-50**

In this last major section describing Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee (4:14—9:50), Luke stressed Jesus' preparation of His disciples for the opposition that lay before them. This was the climax of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, and these events formed a bridge to Luke's unique major section on Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9:51—19:10).

Previously, Luke recorded Jesus teaching and authenticating His teaching with miracles, mainly among and to the people, generally. Jesus did so with power and compassion. During that time, the Twelve appeared in the text as Jesus' companions. Now, Jesus began to minister to the Twelve more specifically. The focus of this training was initially and predominantly the identity of His person. Two other themes dominate this section: the sufferings that Jesus would endure, and the necessity of His disciples' following the same path of service that would result in suffering for them too.

#### **1. The mission of the Twelve to Israel 9:1-6 (cf. Matt. 9:35—11:1; Mark 6:6b-13)**

This is another "sandwich" or chiasmic section in design (cf. 8:40-56). This structural device usually gives unity to the whole section and focuses attention on the central part of it. First, Jesus sent the Twelve on an evangelistic mission throughout Galilee. Second, Luke filled in the period of their mission proper with information about how Herod Antipas and the people perceived Jesus. Third, the writer recorded the return of the Twelve to their Master. The whole mission prefigured the later mission, of these and other disciples to the ends of the earth, that Acts records.

"As the rejection in Nazareth is a kind of dress rehearsal for the passion of Jesus, so this mission is something of a dress rehearsal for the post-Pentecost role of the Twelve."<sup>472</sup>

The lessons that Jesus taught about dependence on God and rejection by men apply to the church's mission in the present dispensation. Jesus' instructions to His missionaries, rather than the activities of the missionaries, are the core of this pericope. However, the reader must carefully distinguish the basic principles that Jesus taught, from the specific directions that He meant for this particular mission and no other.

9:1-2            Luke alone recorded that Jesus gave the Twelve both "power" (Gr. *dynamis*, spiritual ability) and "authority" (Gr. *exousia*, the right to exercise power). These are the same two qualities that Luke earlier wrote about, that the people of Nazareth attributed to Jesus (4:36). The parallel Gospel accounts refer only to authority. In both his Gospel and in Acts, Luke emphasized the validation of gospel preaching with signs and

<sup>471</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 250.

<sup>472</sup>Nolland, p. 426.

wonders. Other false teachers could do powerful miracles, presumably by Satan's power (cf. Acts 13:6-10; 19:13). Consequently it was necessary that Jesus' disciples could validate their preaching with powerful miracles as Jesus did. The Twelve received authority "over all demons." None would prove too powerful for them. The disciples' primary duty was to preach the kingdom of God, and their way of showing the Jews that God was behind their preaching was by performing miracles. Thus they followed Jesus' precedent (cf. 8:26-56; 9:11). They, as He, were to demonstrate concern for people's souls, but also their bodies.

- 9:3 The Twelve were to trust God to provide their food, protection, and shelter daily (cf. 8:14). They were not even to take a walking "staff" (Gr. *hrabdos*), commonly used on a long journey by foot (cf. Matt. 10:10). Mark, on the other hand, wrote that Jesus commanded the Twelve to take a staff (Gr. *hrabdos*, Mark 6:8). The solution to this apparent contradiction, may be that Jesus *originally* either permitted or prohibited the taking of a staff, and *later* did the opposite. The prohibition suggests a mission of short duration, and the permission a concession for comfort.

Jesus also forbade taking a bag (Gr. *pera*) for their necessities (i.e., a suitcase), food, money, or an extra undergarment (Gr. *chiton*). In view of these restrictions, it appears that Jesus anticipated a brief mission for the Twelve (v. 10). They could live like this temporarily but not permanently. Furthermore their simple lifestyle suggested the imminency of the messianic kingdom that they announced.

- 9:4 The disciples were to accept the hospitality that others would offer them, but they were not to move from house to house unnecessarily. Moving from house to house would probably imply that they were seeking better accommodations, and this would insult their hosts. People who entertained the Twelve would be demonstrating support for Jesus, since His disciples were representing Him (cf. 3 John 5-7).

- 9:5 Jewish travelers often shook the "dust off" their feet when they returned from a journey in Gentile territory, to reject symbolically the Gentiles' uncleanness.<sup>473</sup> When the Twelve did this, it represented rejection of the unbelievers who had not received their message and them (cf. Acts 13:51; 18:6). It symbolically stated that Israelites who rejected the disciples' preaching were no better than unbelieving Gentiles. Evidently Jesus meant this not only as a sign of individual, but primarily citywide, rejection (cf. Matt. 10:14-15).

- 9:6 Luke summarized the mission of the Twelve briefly. "Everywhere" means everywhere in that region of Galilee (cf. Matt. 10:5-6). Luke probably left the word undefined so his Christian readers would see the parallel with the Great Commission.

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<sup>473</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 354.

Thus Jesus' disciples made a tour of Galilee two by two (Mark 6:7), as Jesus had made a tour of Galilee with them. They did the same work as He had done: "preaching" and "healing" (cf. Acts).

## **2. Herod's question about Jesus' identity 9:7-9 (cf. Matt. 14:1-3; Mark 6:14-16)**

The crucial issue in the preaching of Jesus and the Twelve, during their mission in Galilee, was the identity of Jesus. Luke showed the centrality of this issue by placing the present pericope in the center of his account of the Twelve's mission. It highlights the controversy over Jesus' identity. Herod Antipas voiced the crucial question in verse 9: "Who is this man . . .?" This section also prepares the way for Peter's confession (vv. 18-20), and Jesus' instruction of His disciples on this subject that followed. Moreover it introduces Jesus' contacts with Herod that Luke developed later (13:31-32; 23:6-12).

Evidently everyone in Galilee was talking about Jesus, including the highest government official. However, people were concluding different things about Jesus' identity, which Luke recorded. Mark wrote that Herod believed that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead (Mark 6:16). However, Luke said that Herod questioned who Jesus might be (v. 9). The solution may be that Herod deliberated first and then decided that Jesus was John. By including Herod's question in his narrative, Luke implied that the answers people were giving to Herod's question were inadequate. Herod appeared unable to make up his mind, as were many others.

Only Luke included that Herod kept trying to get to know Jesus (v. 9). As later incidents revealed, curiosity and animosity motivated him rather than faith.

## **3. The feeding of the 5,000 9:10-17 (cf. Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; John 6:1-13)**

This is the only miracle that all four Gospel evangelists recorded. It is important because it is the climax of Jesus' miracles that authenticated His person as divine (cf. Ps. 146:7).<sup>474</sup> It was perhaps the most forceful demonstration of Jesus' deity to the disciples.

"Framed as it is by Herod's puzzlement and Peter's confident assertion, the feeding account is intended by Luke to make a special contribution to the disciple's insight into the identity of Jesus."<sup>475</sup>

Jesus performed this miracle primarily for their benefit, though also out of compassion for the people. Luke recorded no crowd reaction to it. His account contrasts the inadequacy of the disciples with Jesus' ability to help the crowd.<sup>476</sup> Jesus' compassion for the people also contrasts with the disciples' unconcern.

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<sup>474</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:677.

<sup>475</sup>Nolland, p. 445.

<sup>476</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 439-40.

9:10 This transitional verse marks the end of the special mission of the Twelve (vv. 1-6). Luke now called them "apostles" (missionaries) again (cf. 6:13), probably in anticipation of their ministry in Acts as Jesus' authorized representatives. They reported to Jesus as their authority (cf. Acts 14:26-28). Jesus then took them privately to the region of "Bethsaida" Julius, for rest (Mark 6:31) and for further instruction. This town stood near the northeast shore of Lake Galilee, just east of the Jordan River.

"As the popular speaker Vance Havner used to say, 'If we don't come apart and rest, we'll just come apart.'"<sup>477</sup>

9:11 Luke is the only evangelist who wrote that Jesus welcomed the crowds that came to Him. By doing so, he pictured Jesus as the ever-available Savior, who was ready and willing to help those who come to Him (cf. Heb. 13:8).

9:12-13 Jesus undoubtedly used this suggestion as a teaching device to confront the Twelve with the inadequacy of their resources, so they would turn to Him for help (cf. 2 Kings 4:42-44). They failed this test and thought instead of buying food. The non-local people would need lodging for the night, a detail that only Luke recorded.

9:14-17 Luke's account here does not differ from the others significantly. The miracle shows that when believers become partners with Jesus in the execution of His mission, He can enable them to provide greater blessing for others than they can by themselves. And He takes good care of His servants; each disciple received a basket of "left over" broken pieces. The absence of reference to the crowd's reaction in the synoptic accounts focuses attention on the results of the miracle. It must have elicited another question: Who is Jesus?

#### **4. Peter's confession of faith 9:18-27**

Luke alone recorded Peter's confession of faith right after Jesus' feeding of the 5,000. This arrangement of the material emphasizes Jesus' identity. Herod explicitly (9:9) and the 5,000 implicitly (9:10-17) had questioned Jesus' identity. This identity motif is very prominent in Luke because Jesus is the whole thing.

The story is told of a very old woman who used to sit in the front row of her church. She believed that every preacher should exalt Jesus when he preached. So she would talk to whoever was preaching during his sermon. At the very beginning of his message, she would shout out, "Get Him up!" meaning, "Lift up Jesus!" If he failed to do so, she would call out again, "Get Him up!" If the preacher did not have too much to say about Jesus, he was in for a long, hard time from this sister, because she would continue to call out, "Get Him up!" That is pretty good advice for any preacher. We need to make sure that we make Him the main thing.

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<sup>477</sup>Wiersbe, 1:205.

"The section 8:1—9:20 now reaches its final goal: now at last for the first time there is a human response that corresponds to the presentation God had made of his envoy ahead of time in the infancy gospel (1:4—2:52). This is to be the platform on which Luke will erect the remainder of his narrative, with its new focus from this point on the coming suffering in Jerusalem."<sup>478</sup>

Luke's account contains three parts: Jesus' question and Peter's reply; Jesus' prediction of His passion; and Jesus' explanation of the implications for the disciples.

### **Jesus' question and Peter's reply 9:18-20 (cf. Matt. 16:13-16; Mark 8:27-29)**

Luke omitted several incidents here that the other evangelists included (Matt. 14:22—16:12; Mark 6:45—8:26; John 6:16-66). By doing so, he connected the questions by Herod and the multitude about Jesus' identity with Peter's answer to that question. This selection of material helps the reader see that the question of Jesus' identity was very important to Luke. It should be to every evangelist.

9:18-19        The fact that this incident happened near Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27) was insignificant to Luke. He may have viewed it as a distracting detail, even though the event transpired in Gentile territory.

However, Luke alone mentioned that Jesus "was praying." Luke may have done so to tie this incident to the feeding of the 5,000, when Jesus also prayed (v. 16). Thus he presented the feeding and the revelation to Peter as coming in answer to prayer. Jesus' exemplary dependence on His Father is one of Luke's unique emphases (cf. 3:21; 6:12; 11:1; et al.). He showed Jesus praying before many important events in His ministry. He was evidently praying privately, though the disciples were with Him (cf. 11:1).

Jesus focused attention on the crucial issue of His identity with His question. He wanted the disciples to tell Him who "the crowds" (Gr. *ochloi*, the uncommitted masses) believed Him to be. He meant what role did the people believe He fulfilled. The disciples responded with the views that Luke had already revealed (cf. vv. 7-8).

9:20            Speaking for the other disciples, Peter answered that Jesus was the Messiah ("Christ"), whom "God" had sent (Ps. 2:2; Dan. 9:26; cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-16). In saying this, Peter rejected the notion that Jesus was just a prophet, even one of the greatest prophets. The latter is how the Moslems view Jesus today. Peter, however, believed that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

It is not difficult to know just what Peter's concept of the Messiah was when he made this confession of faith. When Peter's brother first invited him to come and see Jesus, Andrew referred to Jesus as the Messiah (John

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<sup>478</sup>Nolland, p. 453.

1:41). However, most of the Jews of Peter's day believed that the Messiah would be a descendant of David who would overthrow the Romans and establish the kingdom of God on earth. They did not view Him as deity. Matthew recorded Peter's full confession including, "the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). This is a clear statement of Jesus' deity. Why did Luke not include that phrase, since it would have clarified what Peter meant? Probably he did not see that as necessary, since the title "Christ" had become synonymous with a divine Messiah among Gentiles, to whom Luke (and Mark) wrote (cf. 1 John 5:1). Thus Luke appears to have assumed that his readers would understand Peter's confession of Jesus—as the Messiah—as a confession of His deity.

### **Jesus' prediction of His passion 9:21-22 (cf. Matt. 16:17-23; Mark 8:30-33)**

Luke omitted Jesus' prediction of the church (Matt. 16:17-19), Peter's rebuke of Jesus (Matt. 16:22; Mark 8:32), and Jesus' counter-rebuke of Peter (Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33). These omissions enabled him to focus on Jesus' prediction of His sufferings, and His call to the disciples to take up their cross and follow Him. The fate of Jesus is primary in this pericope.

Evidently Jesus urged the disciples not to publicize His true identity, because this would have resulted in unnecessary pressure from the Jewish multitudes. He would publicly proclaim His messiahship at the proper time, namely, in the Triumphal Entry. Next, Jesus gave His first clear prediction of His passion (cf. 2:35; 5:35). In view of what Jesus needed to teach the disciples, they needed to hear that rejection, death, and resurrection lay ahead for Him.

Jesus' use of the divine title "Son of Man" (v. 22) supports the fact that Peter recognized Jesus' deity. It was appropriate to use this title when speaking of His rejection, since the Old Testament predicted the Son of Man's glorious reign (Dan. 7:13-14). The disciples had seen Jesus raise two people from the dead: the widow of Nain's son and Jairus' daughter. Their failure to understand that Jesus would die and rise from the dead was, therefore, not due to its actual impossibility, but to its improbability—from their standpoint—since Jesus was the "Son of Man."

### **The implications for the disciples 9:23-27 (cf. Matt. 16:24-28; Mark 8:34—9:1)**

Jesus proceeded to explain the consequences for disciples who choose to follow Him faithfully in view of His rejection.

9:23           The "all" must be the disciples in view of the context (v. 18). "Coming after" Jesus means becoming a disciple of His. Denying self is more fundamental than denying things. It involves forsaking one's personal ambitions and desires in order to fulfill the will of God. It means living for His sake rather than our own. Criminals going to crucifixion normally carried the crosspiece (Gr. *patibulum*) of their own cross.<sup>479</sup> Carrying one's

<sup>479</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 373.

own "cross," therefore, implied bearing the reproach and burden associated with one's chosen way of life. To do this "daily" (Gr. *arato*, aorist tense) meant enduring these things as a disciple of Jesus, day after day, having no prospect of release in this life. Jesus meant that His disciples had to bear a particular burden that non-disciples did not have to bear. It is particularly the consequences, associated with choosing to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, that are in view. Jesus' disciples must keep following Him daily (Gr. *akoloutheito*, present tense), and bear the consequences of their choice, which will involve loss (vv. 24-25) and shame (v. 26) for them. The implication is that we need to do this with the real possibility of laying down our lives clearly in view (cf. Gen. 22:6).

"Now 'to follow him' is not just a Jewish way of talking about being a disciple of a master, but a challenge to have one's whole existence determined by and patterned after a crucified messiah."<sup>480</sup>

9:24-26 These verses expand the ideas of loss and shame implied in the illustration of bearing one's cross (v. 23). The contrast is first giving up what the world can provide to gain what God can provide. It involves going without—now—with the faith that God will abundantly reward any sacrifice that a disciple makes to faithfully follow Him. In addition, it involves giving up oneself (one's earthly ambitions, glory, honor) now, in order to gain something for oneself—either now or later. The second contrast is between glory (i.e., a good reputation) now, in the eyes of the world, versus glory in the future, in God's eyes. Jesus "glorified" the glory available in the future, by associating it with the "glory of the Father and the holy angels."

"Not long before this the disciples had been actively engaged in telling the nation about the Messiah and His kingdom program. No doubt many thought the disciples were throwing their lives away. They had given up their sources of income and were in danger because they associated with Jesus. Jesus assured His disciples that they were doing the right thing. They had chosen the proper values . . ."<sup>481</sup>

"What is gained in Christ far outweighs all that is lost for Christ."<sup>482</sup>

9:27 In view of the following incident, the Transfiguration, the "some" in this verse appears to refer to some of the disciples, namely: Peter, John, and James (cf. v. 28). The Transfiguration was a preview of the "kingdom of

<sup>480</sup>John Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 482.

<sup>481</sup>Martin, pp. 229-230.

<sup>482</sup>Bailey, p. 121.

God," in which three disciples saw Jesus in the glorified state that will be His in the kingdom (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-18). Jesus' reference to "tasting death" here, connects with what He had just implied about the disciples possibly having to die for their testimonies (vv. 23-25). The introductory "but" implied that many disciples would die before they saw the kingdom. Jesus was anticipating His rejection (v. 22) and the consequent postponement of the messianic kingdom.

Other views of what Jesus meant include His resurrection. However, most of the disciples present probably saw Jesus after His resurrection, and that event did not initiate the messianic kingdom. Others believe that Jesus referred to Pentecost. Yet most of the disciples present saw Pentecost, and Pentecost did not begin the kingdom. Another view is that Jesus meant the destruction of Jerusalem, but that event did not initiate the kingdom either. A fourth view is that Jesus meant the disciples would simply live to see the inauguration of the kingdom. Yet the messianic kingdom did not begin within the lifetime of any of those disciples. Another view is that the "some" are the people present who believe in Jesus and the others are unbelievers. The problem with this view is that unbelievers are not in view in the context, and the messianic kingdom did not begin during the lifetime of any of those disciples. People who hold these views have to redefine the messianic kingdom to include God's present rule over His own. This view of the kingdom (as present now) differs from Old Testament prophecies of it as an earthly reign of Messiah.

### **5. The Transfiguration 9:28-36 (cf. Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8)**

This event is a climax of the "identity of Jesus" motif in all the Synoptics. John's Gospel does not include it. Here three disciples saw and heard who Jesus really was. Luke's particular emphasis was the sufferings of Jesus that were coming. This comes through in his description of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah (vv. 30-31), and his interpretation of what the heavenly voice said (v. 35). The whole scene recalls God's appearance to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exod. 24), and it anticipates the second coming of Christ. There is a recurrence of the three themes of Jesus' identity (v. 20), His passion (v. 22), and glory (v. 26), from the previous pericope—but in reverse order (vv. 29, 30, 35). These are the main points the reader should identify as significant in Luke's narrative. The Transfiguration previewed, for the inner circle of disciples, the future glorified state of the Messiah whom they had now confessed as God.

"The transfiguration narrative confirms the importance of listening to Jesus, as he sets for himself and his followers a suffering fate; but it also confirms his anticipation of the glorious outcome of traveling this difficult road."<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>483</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 497.

9:28 Matthew and Mark said that the Transfiguration happened "after six days" (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2), but Luke wrote "some (about) eight days." Luke's reference is less precise and may reflect a Hellenistic way of referring to a week. Again Luke reversed the normal order of the three primary apostles, perhaps to link "Peter" with "John," the leaders of the apostolic church in Palestine (cf. 8:51).

His use of the definite article with "mountain" suggests a specific mountain, but Luke did not identify it. Perhaps the Mount of Transfiguration was so well known when he wrote, that he did not need to identify it, but only mentioned it as the mountain on which this event happened. Another idea is that he referred to the mountain this way, in order to identify it in some special symbolic way, as similar to Mt. Sinai and or Mt. Olivet (cf. Mt. Olympus).<sup>484</sup> Playing down the identity of the mountain has the effect of magnifying Jesus. In view of Jesus' geographical movements with His disciples, it seems to me that the mountain was probably Mt. Hermon, just north of Caesarea Philippi. Other possibilities are Mt. Tabor, Mt. Arbel, and Mt. Meron.<sup>485</sup> Mt. Tabor is the traditional site, but it is too far from Caesarea Philippi and appears to have been occupied at this time.<sup>486</sup>

Again Luke referred to Jesus "praying." The implication is that the Transfiguration was an answer to His prayer. Frequently in Old Testament times, revelations followed prayer (e.g., Dan. 9; et al.; cf. Acts 22:6; 26:13), though this one came to the disciples, not to Jesus.

9:29 The fact that Jesus experienced a change, "while praying," also implies the subjective effect that prayer can have on people. It transforms them as surely as it did Him. Luke avoided the term "transfigured," that Matthew and Mark used, probably to avoid giving his Greek readers, who were familiar with stories about gods appearing to men, this idea. Jesus was much more than a Greek god. Instead, Luke simply described the change in Jesus that suggests a *metamorphosis* into a holy condition (cf. Exod. 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3:7, 13). The vision is of a Righteous One who has come through suffering (Dan. 3:12-25; cf. Rev. 3:5).<sup>487</sup> The three disciples evidently saw Jesus as He will appear in His glorified state at His Second Coming.

"In OT and Jewish tradition, one's countenance is a mirror of one's heart and a manifestation of one's relationship to God (cf. Exod. 34:29-30; 1 Sam. 1:9-18; Ps. 34:5-6; Dan.

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<sup>484</sup>Liefeld, p. 926.

<sup>485</sup>See idem, "Theological Motifs in the Transfiguration Narrative," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, p. 167, footnote 27.

<sup>486</sup>Morris, p. 172.

<sup>487</sup>Danker, p. 116.

10:6; Acts 6:15; . . .). Throughout Luke-Acts, clothes are a signifier of status, dazzling clothes denoting heavenly glory ( cf. 24:4; Acts 1:10). Luke's point, then, is not that Jesus experienced an internal adjustment of some sort that led to his transformed appearance, but that his inner being was made transparent to those who accompanied him."<sup>488</sup>

9:30 Jesus' association with "Moses" and "Elijah" probably should have suggested, to the disciples, Jesus' continuation of the redemptive work of the Exodus, to its eschatological consummation. "Moses" was the original redeemer of God's people. "Elijah" was the prophet whom God predicted would turn the hearts of the people back to Himself—in the future—as he had in the past (Mal. 4:4-6; cf. Deut. 18:18). These men were the only two individuals in Scripture who met with God on Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb; Exod. 24; 1 Kings 19). The facts that no one could find Moses' corpse (Deut. 34:5-6), and that Elijah ascended into heaven while still alive (2 Kings 2:11-12, 15-18), intimated Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

However, Moses and Elijah had not undergone transfiguration as Jesus had. Luke described them as "men" (Gr. *andres*). This fact suggests Jesus' superiority to the two greatest men in Israel's spiritual history. I base this evaluation on the fact that Moses established Yahweh worship in Israel by giving the Law, and Elijah preserved Yahweh worship in Israel when the nation was closest to abandoning it. Moses was also the predecessor of Jesus, and Elijah was His precursor as well.<sup>489</sup> Even though John the Baptist was in one sense the greatest prophet, he did not have the lasting effect on Israel that Moses and Elijah did.

9:31 Luke described Moses and Elijah as appearing "in glory" (NASB) or "glorious splendor" (NIV). They evidently basked in the reflected glory of Jesus.

The disciples observed them speaking with Jesus about His upcoming "departure" (Gr. *exodos*). Luke alone mentioned the subject of their conversation. The use of *exodos* points to a larger significance of Jesus' death. It was more than just His departure from the earth. It would involve a journey through rejection and death to exaltation. It would be unusual, as Moses and Elijah's departures had been. However, it would "accomplish" *redemption*, as the Exodus from Egypt had done, but on a cosmic scale.<sup>490</sup> Jesus' "exodus" would open up a whole new wilderness experience, for the church to trek across, as Moses' Exodus did for the Israelites (cf. Acts 13:24).

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<sup>488</sup>Green, p. 380.

<sup>489</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 499.

<sup>490</sup>See J. Manek, "The New Exodus in the Books of Luke," *Novum Testamentum* 2 (1955):8-23.

Luke also recorded that this "exodus" would happen "at Jerusalem." This is the first of his several references to that city. It was the place to which Jesus now began to look as His city of destiny (cf. v. 51, 53; 13:33; 17:11; 18:31). "Accomplish" (NASB) is "fulfillment" (NIV, Gr. *pleroo*), suggesting the fulfillment of Jesus' destiny as the Suffering Servant that Scripture predicted.

"Much of Luke's Gospel from here through chapter 19 concerns preparation of the disciples for ministry in light of his [Jesus'] departure."<sup>491</sup>

"The purpose of the Transfiguration was to strengthen the heart of Jesus as he was praying long about his approaching death and to give these chosen three disciples a glimpse of his glory for the hour of darkness coming. No one on earth understood the heart of Jesus and so Moses and Elijah came. The poor disciples utterly failed to grasp the significance of it all."<sup>492</sup>

9:32 This information is also unique to the third Gospel. Evidently the three disciples, "overcome with sleep," had either been sleeping or had almost fallen asleep while Jesus was praying (v. 29; cf. 22:45). Thus they were not spiritually ready for what they experienced. If Jesus found it necessary to pray then, they should have followed His example. Their improper response comes out in the next verse. They apparently did not understand the significance of the discussion about Jesus' exodus. The vision before them, however, awakened them "fully."

9:33 Peter appears to have wanted to prolong this great experience, but his suggestion was inappropriate. By offering to build "three" shelters, Peter put Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Even worse, by suggesting their construction, Peter was perhaps subconsciously—though nonetheless effectively—promoting a delay of Jesus' departure to Jerusalem. He naturally viewed Jerusalem as a place to avoid, knowing the possibility of danger there. Peter may have thought that the kingdom had arrived, and there was no reason for Jesus and His disciples to go to Jerusalem. The "booths" he suggested building were probably the same kind that the Jews erected at the yearly Feast of Tabernacles, to commemorate the wilderness wanderings and to anticipate the messianic kingdom (Lev. 23:42-43; Neh. 8:14-17; Zech. 14:16-21).

"Peter suggested that they build three booths probably because of the prophecy in Zechariah 14:16 that the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) would be celebrated when Christ

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<sup>491</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 271.

<sup>492</sup>Robertson, 2:131.

reigns on the earth. Apparently Peter thought that with Moses, Elijah, the three disciples, and Christ all present, this must be the beginning of the earthly kingdom."<sup>493</sup>

- 9:34 The "cloud" was undoubtedly the *shekinah*, the visible vehicle for God's localized presence during the wilderness wanderings (Exod. 13:21-22; 16:10; 24:16; 40:34-38). It would also accompany the Son of Man's coming (Isa. 4:5; Dan. 7:13). Its presence is another indication that the Second Coming is in view. The Greek word *episkiazo* ("overshadow," also in v. 34 but translated "enveloped" in the NIV) translates the Hebrew word *shakan* in the Septuagint, from which the term "shekinah" comes. Thus the reader has two hints that God was drawing near: the bright (Gr. *photeine*) cloud and its overshadowing (Gr. *episkiazo*). Evidently the cloud enshrouded Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, and the disciples became very fearful (cf. Matt. 17:5-7).
- 9:35 For a second time, God spoke from heaven identifying Jesus as His "Son" (cf. 3:22). Previously, God had identified Jesus *to Jesus* as His "beloved" Son; this time He identified Him *to the disciples* as His "chosen" Son. God's words of official approval here also show that Jesus was God's *obedient* Son, and that He possessed *divine authority*. Therefore the disciples were to listen to what Jesus was telling them about His and their fate. The words recall Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 42:1, and Deuteronomy 18:15. Thus this divine vindication identified Jesus as the Son of God, God's chosen Servant, and the eschatological Prophet.

"Our culture desires to assemble a religious hall of honor from as many religious traditions as possible, all in honor of our commitment to religious toleration. But Jesus does not ask for a booth alongside the others."<sup>494</sup>

Many students of this verse have seen in it a divine warning against giving human wisdom precedence over divine revelation.

"The heavenly voice which declares that Jesus is God's Son recalls the scene of Jesus praying after his baptism in 3:22. In that scene Jesus was preparing for his ministry. In the transfiguration scene he is preparing for the crisis in Jerusalem. To prepare him, Jesus is given an anticipatory experience of the goal of his life and death, the heavenly glory which he will enter when exalted to the right hand of God (see Luke 24:26; Acts 7:55-56)."<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>493</sup>Bailey, p. 121.

<sup>494</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 273.

<sup>495</sup>Tannehill, 1:225.

9:36 The scene ends with Jesus "alone"—the center of the disciples' attention. The disciples told "no one" what "they had seen" because Jesus told them to keep it quiet (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9). Luke simply recorded the fact, and omitted the discussion about Elijah that followed (Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:10-13), thus highlighting Jesus' authority.

The major emphasis in Luke's account of the Transfiguration is that the glorious Son of God must suffer.

### **6. The exorcism of an epileptic boy 9:37-43a (cf. Matt. 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29)**

The effect of Luke's omission of the conversation Jesus had with the disciples about Elijah is clear. This healing (by exorcism) appears as the work of the "Son of God," whom the Transfiguration presented.

"It is the Jesus who has been transfigured who now appears to help men at the foot of the mountain; what the disciples cannot do, he can do. He appears like a visitor from another world who has to put up with the unbelief of men."<sup>496</sup>

Luke also omitted Jesus' teaching on the importance of faith that He gave His disciples at the end of this story (cf. Matt. 17:19-20; Mark 9:28-29). All of Luke's emphasis falls on Jesus' authority. This is the first of four incidents that show, respectively: the disciples' lack of faith, slowness to learn, pride, and intolerance.

9:37 Luke is the only Gospel writer who mentioned that the descent happened the day following the Transfiguration. This notation has the effect of contrasting the glorious manifestation on the mountain with the mundane world of sin and unbelief below. Some commentators thought that Luke's comment implies that the Transfiguration happened at night, but that is an unnecessary supposition.

9:38-40 Luke did not refer to the boy's condition as "epilepsy," as Matthew did (Matt. 17:15). He probably wanted his readers to understand clearly that it resulted from demonic influence (v. 42). A demon produced the symptoms of epilepsy in this boy, though not every case of epilepsy is the result of demon affliction. Unfortunately, throughout history, some people have equated epilepsy with demon possession because of the similar symptoms. Doctor Luke described this boy's symptoms more fully than the other Gospel writers, and he alone mentioned that the boy was the only (Gr. *monogenes*, cf. 8:42; John 3:16) son of his father (v. 38). The failure of the disciples (v. 40, cf. Gehazi's failure in 2 Kings 4:31) set the stage for a great demonstration of Jesus' unique power and authority (v. 42). In this

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<sup>496</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 389.

instance they were no better than the physicians who failed to help the hemorrhaging woman (8:43).<sup>497</sup>

- 9:41-42 Jesus' statement to the father and the crowd (v. 41) recalls Deuteronomy 32:20, where God rebuked the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus went on to express disappointment with these people's lack of faith. By omitting the further conversation between Jesus and the father, in which Jesus stressed the importance of faith in Him (cf. Mark 9:21-24), Luke focused attention on Jesus' power. Luke also stressed Jesus' compassion by noting that He "gave" the boy "back to his father" (v. 42, cf. 7:15).
- 9:43a In conclusion, Luke centered attention on the reaction of the crowd. Jesus' miracle "amazed" (Gr. *exeplesonto*, cf. 4:32) the people, who recognized it as a demonstration of God's great power (cf. 5:25; 7:16, 18; Acts 2:11; 19:17; 2 Pet. 1:16).

This sign should have convinced the crowd that Jesus was God.

**7. Jesus' announcement of His betrayal 9:43b-45 (cf. Matt. 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32)**

Luke's narrative joins this event with the preceding one thematically. However, the other Synoptics indicate that this conversation took place sometime later (Matt. 17:22; Mark 9:31). Luke's construction has the effect of contrasting the *wonder* of the people, with their *rejection*, that resulted in Jesus' sufferings and death. Luke also stressed the fulfillment of divine purpose in Jesus' passion.

"Luke establishes a sharp contrast between the all-powerful exorcist of the previous episode and the Son of Man who is soon to find himself subject to the hostile wills of men. The contrast is much the same as that which we have seen between the glorified Christ of the transfiguration and the one who must be heard when he talks of going to suffering and death, and when he defines a discipleship path which leads to the same. The Man of Destiny goes to his destiny in a way that defies human comprehension. Here Jesus underlines the importance of this path of destiny and seeks in vain to make his disciples accept his teaching."<sup>498</sup>

- 9:43b-44 The reaction of the crowd to Jesus' exorcism (v. 43a) was typical of the reaction of the multitudes as He continued to minister (v. 43b). In the context of this popular approval, Jesus revealed again to His disciples that it would not continue. He prefaced His announcement with a demand for attention, that highlights their incomprehension more strikingly. This announcement contained new information about His passion, namely, that

<sup>497</sup>Green, p. 388.

<sup>498</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 515.

someone—a human being, but ultimately God—would hand Jesus over to His enemies (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:31-32). Jesus' use of the title "Son of Man" (v. 44) intensified the horror of such a prospect.

9:45 However, this announcement did not make sense to the disciples. This was probably because of the popular view of the Messiah that still influenced them, the glorious prophecies about the Son of Man in the Old Testament, and Jesus' great popularity. "They did not understand" because their conventional thinking "concealed" this understanding "from them" (cf. 18:34; 24:16; Mark 9:32). That is, they understood the words but could not understand how this would happen, partly because of their limited faith. They remembered Jesus' words, but they only understood the prediction after Jesus' resurrection. Perhaps "they were afraid to ask" Jesus to clarify what He said, because they feared to hear what they suspected, that Jesus would indeed die soon.

"Some interpreters understand the statement, 'It was hid from them that they might not understand it,' as indication that God prevented the disciples from understanding.<sup>499</sup> While the passive formulation may hint at divine involvement, I would caution against the assumption that human resistance is not an important factor at this point in the narrative. If a divine purpose is involved, it is a purpose which works in and through human resistance, for which humans remain responsible."<sup>500</sup>

Thus there was a "suffering secret" as well as a "messianic secret" in Jesus ministry.<sup>501</sup> The "messianic secret" was the fact that Jesus was the divine Messiah, which He revealed only gradually before the Triumphal Entry. He withheld this information to preclude superficial and premature acceptance of Himself by the multitudes. The "suffering secret" was the information about Jesus' passion that God revealed to the disciples only gradually before the Resurrection.

### **8. The pride of the disciples 9:46-50**

In contrast to the humble attitude of Jesus, demonstrated in His willingness to submit to betrayal and death in God's will, the disciples manifested pride. They had their own ideas about the coming kingdom, and they wanted to secure their own futures in it. This spirit of self-seeking was also obvious after Jesus made His first revelation of His death (Mark 8:32-33). Now the disciples showed a greedy desire, first for position, and then for prestige, in the kingdom. Their inappropriate attitudes are instructive for all Christian disciples.

<sup>499</sup>Footnote 39: See, e.g., R. J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981):216.

<sup>500</sup>Tannehill, 1:227.

<sup>501</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 393.

"The disciples who were intoxicated with the anticipation of the glory that was to be theirs through their link to the Christ of glory were as little ready to find glory in the service of the humble as they had been to see the point in Jesus' talk of the Son of Man's betrayal."<sup>502</sup>

**The glorification of self 9:46-48 (cf. Matt. 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37)**

Again Luke omitted several historical details and thereby focused the reader's attention on the essential issues and the contrast with the previous pericope. Since the disciples did not understand Jesus' role as the Suffering Servant, they could not see its implications for them as His disciples.

9:46           The Twelve were thinking about rank in the kingdom. They wondered which of them would have the highest position and the most prestige.

9:47-48       Jesus used little children on different occasions as object lessons to teach different lessons. Once He used a child to teach that no act of kindness for one of His suffering disciples, whom the child represented, will pass without God's reward (Matt. 10:40-42). On the present occasion, Jesus used "a child" to illustrate two lessons. By standing the child—possibly the child He had just restored to health—beside Him, Jesus gave the child honor. Mark wrote that Jesus took the child in His arms (Mark 9:36). Evidently Jesus did both things.

The first lesson Jesus used this child to illustrate was that His disciples should be as humble as little children (Matt. 18:4, 6). Luke did not mention that lesson. The second lesson was that acceptable service involves caring about people, even insignificant people such as children (Matt. 18:5; Mark 9:37). That is the lesson Luke included in his account of this teaching (v. 48). It reflects his interest in neglected people. A child was the least significant person in Jewish and in Greco-Roman culture.<sup>503</sup> A woman or one of the servants dealt with the children.<sup>504</sup>

"To welcome' people would be to extend to them the honor of hospitality, to regard them as guests (cf. 7:44-46), but one would only welcome a social equal or one whose honor was above one's own. Children, whose place of social residence was defined at the bottom of the ladder of esteem, might be called upon to perform acts of hospitality (e.g., washing the feet of a guest), but normally they would not themselves be the recipients of honorable behavior. Jesus thus turns the social pyramid upside down, undermining the very conventions that led the disciples to

<sup>502</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 518.

<sup>503</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "pais," by Albrecht Oepke, 5:639-52.

<sup>504</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 519.

deliberate over relative greatness within the company of disciples and, indeed, that had led the disciples away from any proper understanding of Jesus' status."<sup>505</sup>

Jesus meant that instead of seeking status for themselves, His disciples should give their attention to the needs of people who have no status—people like children. The disciple who ministers to a person with no status, as though he or she was ministering to Jesus, does in fact minister to Jesus and to God the Father. The principle here is that the disciple who is willing to sacrifice personal advancement, in order to serve insignificant people, as the world evaluates people, is truly "great" in God's estimation (cf. Matt. 25:35-40; Mark 9:41).<sup>506</sup>

### **The exclusion of others 9:49-50 (cf. Mark 9:38-40)**

Disciples need to be aware of their attitude toward believers who are outside their circle of fellowship, as well as their attitude toward those within that circle. As in previous cases, Luke's account of this incident omits details in order to cut through to the heart of the matter.

This incident exposed an attitude of rivalry among the Twelve that existed toward other disciples of Jesus. This was not a problem of orthodoxy; the exorcist believed in Jesus. It was rather a problem of fellowship or association; he was not one of the Twelve. He appears to have been on the fringe of Jesus' followers. The Twelve wanted to exclude him, but Jesus wanted to include him. The disciples had set up a boundary on the basis of conventional notions of perceived honor.<sup>507</sup> Jesus' reply was proverbial. He had stated the reverse truth earlier (Matt. 12:30). Disciples should regard people who do not oppose them as associates rather than as enemies.

This incident concludes the section of Luke's Gospel that records Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee (4:14—9:50). Its major emphasis has been the identity of Jesus.

## **V. JESUS' MINISTRY ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM 9:51—19:27**

This large section of the Book of Luke has no counterpart in the other Gospels, but some of the material in it occurs in other parts of the Gospels (cf. Matt. 19—20; Mark 10). As a good teacher, Jesus repeated some of His lessons on different occasions. This section consists largely of instruction that Jesus gave His disciples, with only brief references to geographic movements. Luke de-emphasized the topographical data in this section, except those relating to Jerusalem.<sup>508</sup> We have already noticed that Luke had more interest in lessons than in details of geography and chronology. The skeletal references to Jesus' movements show a general shift from Galilee toward Jerusalem (e.g., 9:52; 10:38; 13:22, 32-33; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 28-29). However, His journey was not direct (cf.

<sup>505</sup>Green, pp. 391-92.

<sup>506</sup>For an outstanding example of such a person, see Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Borden of Yale*.

<sup>507</sup>Green, p. 392.

<sup>508</sup>Carson and Moo, p. 200, n. 1.

10:38; 17:11). Jesus visited Jerusalem more than once, but this section records Jesus leaving Galilee and arriving in Jerusalem for the last time before His passion. Luke presented what were really three trips to Jerusalem as one.<sup>509</sup> John told us more about those three trips.

The ministry of Jesus during this journey was not just different because of where it took place. It took on new characteristics. His ministry to the disciples seems to have occupied His primary attention, though Luke featured this less than Mark. We have noted a strong emphasis on Jesus' identity (Christology) in the previous chapters. Now the disciples' mission becomes the dominant theme. There are many words of warning to the rich and the complacent, as well as to the Pharisees, in this section. Many students of Luke and Acts have noticed the common emphasis on travel that characterizes both books, and have pointed out some significant comparisons. Jerusalem was for Jesus the destination toward which He pressed, as Rome was for Paul.

The literary structure of this section is a chiasm (inverted parallelism). The central, focal sections, where the emphasis falls, are the growth of the kingdom to include Gentiles as well as Jews (13:18-21), and the judgment coming on Israel for the Jews' rejection of Jesus (13:22-35).<sup>510</sup>

Luke gave us a total of 37 parables of Jesus (cf. Matthew's 34; Mark's 12; and John's 0).<sup>511</sup> There are 23 parables in 9:51—19:27. This is over half of all the parables in Luke's Gospel. Jesus gave most of the parables in this section to His disciples, but other non-disciples, who were following Him to Jerusalem to get help of various kinds from Him, were also present. That is why He used parables to teach His disciples: to reveal and to conceal truth.

<b>Parables in Luke 9:51—19:27</b>	
The good Samaritan	10:30-37
The shameless friend	11:5-8
The strong man's house	11:21-22 (cf. Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27)
The rich fool	12:16-21
The faithful servants	12:36-38
The two servants	12:42-42 (cf. Matt. 24:45-51)
The barren fig tree	13:6-9
The mustard seed	13:18-19 (cf. Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32)
The yeast hidden in meal	13:20-21 (cf. Matt. 13:33)
The seats at the wedding feast	14:7-11
The great banquet	14:15-24

<sup>509</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:128.

<sup>510</sup>See Bailey, p. 123, for a diagram of the chiasm.

<sup>511</sup>See Appendix 4 "The Parables of Jesus," at the end of my notes on Matthew, for a chart of them.

<b>Parables in Luke 9:51—19:27 (cont.)</b>	
The tower builder	14:28-30
The king going to battle	14:31-33
The lost sheep	15:4-7 (cf. Matt. 18:12-14)
The lost coin	15:8-10
The prodigal son	15:11-32
The shrewd manager	16:1-9
The rich man and Lazarus	16:19-31
The unworthy servant	17:7-10
The one taken and the one left	17:34-35 (cf. Matt. 24:40-42)
The persistent widow	18:1-8
The Pharisee and the tax collector	18:9-14
The minas	19:11-27

### **A. THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND REWARDS OF DISCIPLESHIP 9:51—10:24**

This part of the new section continues to focus attention on Jesus' disciples (cf. vv. 1-50). The problem of their attitude toward other people also continues (cf. vv. 46-50). There is further instruction on the cost of discipleship, too (vv. 57-62; cf. 6:20-49). The heart of this part of the Gospel is Jesus' preparation of the disciples for their second mission. The contrast between disciples and non-disciples becomes stronger, and the duties and privileges of discipleship emerge more clearly.

Whereas the Gospel writers used the term "disciple" (lit. learner) to describe a wide variety of people who sought to learn from Jesus—believers and unbelievers alike—as Jesus moved toward the Cross, His discipleship training focused increasingly on His believing disciples.

#### **1. The importance of toleration 9:51-56**

The first verse (9:51) sets the agenda for all that follows until Jesus' Triumphal Entry. It was now time for Jesus to begin moving toward Jerusalem and the Cross. As He did so, He immediately encountered opposition (cf. Acts 20:3; 21:4, 11-14), but He accepted it and refused to retaliate against His opponents. Jesus' attitude here recalls His reaction to the opposition He encountered in Nazareth at the beginning of His Galilean ministry (4:16-30), and it previews His attitude in His passion. It also contrasts with the disciples' attitude toward others, and provides a positive example for reader disciples who sometimes encounter antagonists similar to the Samaritans.

"Jesus' resolution is writ large in this episode, and there is a prefiguring of the fate that awaits him in Jerusalem, but also of the spirit in which he will receive that final rejection."<sup>512</sup>

It is difficult to make this incident fit into its Lukan context chronologically. Probably our writer was not following a strict sequence of events here, but inserted this incident where he did for thematic purposes.

9:51 The time had come for Jesus to begin moving toward Jerusalem for His final visit before the Cross (cf. Gen. 31:21; Jer. 21:10; 44:12). Luke looked beyond His passion there to His ascension. In this Gospel, Luke presented the ministry of Jesus before His ascension, and in Acts He reported what Jesus did after His ascension through His disciples (cf. Acts 1:2). By focusing on the ascension, Luke reminded his readers of the glorious outcome of the passion and the continuing ministry of Jesus' disciples. Jesus' resoluteness in spite of the suffering that lay ahead of Him, also gives a positive example to readers.

9:52 The "messengers" that "Jesus sent" ahead were apparently to arrange overnight accommodations for Jesus and the rest of His disciples. They were not on a preaching mission. These "messengers" were to prepare people for Jesus' arrival, which had been John the Baptist's mission earlier (7:24, 27). Normally Jewish pilgrims on their way from Galilee to Jerusalem passed through Samaria.<sup>513</sup> They were unwelcome visitors. A trip directly from Galilee to Jerusalem would have taken about three days.

The Jews had regarded the Samaritans as apostates and half-pagans since the Exile. The Samaritans descended from the poor Israelites who remained in the land when the Assyrians captured the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. The Jews believed that the Samaritans were the descendants of Israelites who intermarried with the non-Jews that the Assyrian kings imported into the land (2 Kings 17:6, 24-26). However, they may have been the pure-blooded descendants of the Israelites who remained in the land.<sup>514</sup> Eventually the Samaritans rejected the Jewish Scriptures—except for the Pentateuch. The two groups of people were still mutually hostile in Jesus' day (cf. John 4:9).<sup>515</sup>

9:53-54 The Samaritans whom the messengers contacted refused to accept Jesus and His followers, because they were on their way to "Jerusalem," evidently to worship there. The Samaritans rejected Jerusalem as a legitimate site of worship (cf. John 4:20). Evidently they did not reject Jesus because He claimed to be the Messiah, but simply because He was a Jew.

<sup>512</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 537.

<sup>513</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 406.

<sup>514</sup>*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Samaritans," by J. L. Kelso, pp. 244-47.

<sup>515</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, pp. 352-58.

"The Samaritans did not object to people going north away from Jerusalem, but did not like to see them going south towards the city . . ." <sup>516</sup>

The attitude of "James and John" was typically hostile. They may have been thinking that Jesus would react to the Samaritans as Elijah had to his opponents (2 Kings 1:9-12). Their question suggests that Jesus' disciples saw strong similarities between Jesus' ministry and Elijah's (cf. v. 19). However, they were willing to play Elijah's part by calling down judgment; they were not asking Jesus to do so.

"How startling, again, to think of this same John, a year or two after the date of this savage suggestion, going down from Jerusalem and preaching the gospel of Jesus the crucified in 'many of the villages of the Samaritans,' [Acts 8:25] possibly in this very village which he desired to see destroyed!" <sup>517</sup>

It seems unlikely that Jesus gave James and John their nickname Boanerges, "sons of thunder," because of this incident (Mark 3:17). All the other disciples' nicknames were positive rather than derogatory, and this one probably was too.

9:55-56 Jesus strongly disapproved of James and John's attitude, and He "rebuked them" (Gr. *epetimesen*, cf. 4:35, 41; 8:24). Jesus' mission did not call for Him to bring judgment yet. The group, therefore, proceeded "to another" presumably Samaritan "village" where they found lodging.

The point of the story is Jesus' toleration of rejection without retaliation (cf. 6:36). His attitude contrasts with the disciples' attitude, which did not grow out of righteous indignation—because the Samaritans were rejecting the Messiah—but out of racial prejudice.

## **2. The importance of self-denial 9:57-62 (cf. Matt. 8:19-22)**

Luke turned from a presentation of people who rejected Jesus, to one in which three individuals wanted to become His disciples. Each of them underestimated the degree of commitment that Jesus required. Jesus' words clarify the cost of discipleship (cf. vv. 23-26). Note the recurrence of the key word "follow" in verses 57, 59, and 61. The first two incidents evidently happened during Jesus' ministry in Galilee (cf. Matt. 8:18), and perhaps the third one did too. Luke probably grouped them here because they all deal with the same issue that Luke developed in this context, namely: discipleship.

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<sup>516</sup>Robertson, 2:228.

<sup>517</sup>A. B. Bruce, p. 242.

9:57-58 Matthew wrote that the man was a scribe (Matt. 8:19), but Luke generalized the reference, probably so every reader could identify with the man. The man professed willingness to follow Jesus anywhere as His intimate disciple. Jesus did not rebuke him, but clarified for him what that would involve, so he could count the cost intelligently. He would need to be willing to accept homelessness, physical discomfort, other privation, and rejection. Jesus' disciples had experienced these things traveling through Samaria (vv. 51-56). By using the title "Son of Man," Jesus heightened the irony of His sufferings. If the Son of Man experienced these things, how much more would His disciples.

9:59-60 The first man came to Jesus requesting permission to follow Him. The second one received a command from Jesus to follow Him, in exactly the same words as Jesus used to call the Twelve (e.g., 5:27).

"The expression 'to follow' a Teacher would, in those days, be universally understood as implying discipleship."<sup>518</sup>

Matthew's account has him approaching Jesus, but this was evidently after Jesus called him. Was the man's father dead already, or was he in danger of dying? The text is not clear, and an answer to this question is not necessary. Clearly the man wanted Jesus to approve his postponing obedience in either case. Perhaps the man's father was still living, since in Israel people were usually buried the day they died.<sup>519</sup>

"But the words have an even greater urgency if the father was dead. The Jews counted proper burial as most important. The duty of burial took precedence over the study of the Law, the Temple service, the killing of the Passover sacrifice, the observance of circumcision and the reading of the Megillah (*Megillah* 3b)."<sup>520</sup>

Elijah allowed Elisha to return to his home to say farewell to his parents (1 Kings 19:19-21). By not allowing this man to honor his father in a traditional way, Jesus was probably emphasizing the comparatively more important mission that He was on, compared to that of Elisha. God did not allow Ezekiel to mourn the death of his wife (Ezek. 24:15-24).

"The dead" whom Jesus said should "bury the dead" probably were the *spiritually dead* who did not believe in Jesus.

"Contemporary Jewish funerary customs make possible another reading. The practice of primary burial (in which the corpse is placed in a sealed tomb) followed by

<sup>518</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:133.

<sup>519</sup>Robertson, 2:141; Barclay, p. 133; Bailey, p. 124.

<sup>520</sup>Morris, p. 180.

secondary burial (following a twelve-month period of decomposition the bones were collected and reburied in an ossuary or 'bone box') is well attested, with the additional twelve months between burial and reburial providing for the completion of the work of mourning. According to this reckoning, Jesus' proverbial saying would refer to the physically dead in both instances: 'Let those already dead in the family tomb rebury their own dead.' In either case, Jesus' disrespect for such a venerable practice rooted in OT law is matched only by the authority he manifests by asserting the priority of the claims of discipleship in the kingdom of God."<sup>521</sup>

The mission of believers was even more important than discharging customary family obligations, when these conflicted with discipleship responsibilities. It is hard to imagine how Jesus could have set forth more forcefully the importance of immediate and wholehearted participation in God's program.

9:61-62 Luke alone recorded this third conversation. It appears anticlimactic at first, but it is not because the man was asking Jesus for a lesser concession than his predecessor (vv. 59-60). A "good-bye" would only take a few minutes, whereas burying a father would take an indefinite time. Perhaps he thought that if Elijah permitted Elisha to say farewell to his parents before he followed Elijah, Jesus would surely permit him to do the same (1 Kings 19:19-21). Yet even this concession was not one Jesus would grant. Jesus' mission was more important than Elijah's. Jesus' answer was again proverbial (cf. v. 50). Discipleship involves hard work and sacrifice similar to plowing. A farmer who does not concentrate on his plowing is not a fit farmer. Likewise, a disciple who allows life to distract him from his duties as a disciple is unfit "for the kingdom" (cf. Phil. 3:13; Heb. 6:7; 12:1-2). The disciple of Jesus must continue to follow Him faithfully, single-mindedly.

These "hard sayings" clarify the demands of discipleship. Jesus' followers must be willing to share His homelessness, to place participation in God's program above the claims that family and duty impose, and to persevere in their calling. Luke probably recorded the responses of these three individuals, so the reader would see himself or herself in the story, and realize the importance of making the proper response personally.

### **3. The importance of participation 10:1-16**

The theme of discipleship training continues in this section of verses. The 70 disciples that Jesus sent out contrast with the three men Luke just finished presenting (9:57-62). This was a second mission on which Jesus sent a group of His disciples, the first being

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<sup>521</sup>Green, pp. 408-9.

the mission of the Twelve (9:1-6, 10). Only Luke referred to it, though there are similarities with other Gospel passages (cf. Matt. 9:37-38; 10:7-16; 11:21-23). It is not surprising to find this incident in this Gospel. Luke had an interest in showing the development of God's mission from a small beginning in Luke. He presented it as growing to a worldwide enterprise in Acts. His emphasis was again the instruction Jesus gave these disciples in preparation for their ministry (cf. 9:1-6).

10:1 "After this" shows Luke's basic chronological progression, but he deviated from it often, as did the other Gospel writers. Luke's use of "Lord" here stresses His authority, an important emphasis in a section dealing with Jesus' directions to His followers.

The number of the messengers is a problem. Both 70 (NASB, AV, RSV) and 72 (NIV, NEB, JB) have good textual support. Commentators usually favor one or the other based on the reason they believe Jesus selected "70" or "72," since the textual evidence is so equal. Those who favor 70 usually do so because they believe Jesus was following an Old Testament precedent. There were 70 descendants of Jacob who went to Egypt with him (Exod. 1:1-5). There were also 70 elders in Israel (Exod. 24:1; Num. 11:16-17, 24-25) and in the Sanhedrin, and people in Jesus' day viewed the world as having 70 nations in it (Gen. 10).<sup>522</sup> Some scholars believe that one or more of these factors influenced Jesus. Others who favor 72 think that the table of nations in the Septuagint version of Genesis 10 that lists 72 nations influenced Jesus.<sup>523</sup> Another view is that the 72 translators of the Septuagint influenced Him.<sup>524</sup> I prefer 70 mainly because I think it likely that Jesus was prefiguring a mission to the whole world here. However, this problem has no significant bearing on the meaning of the rest of the story.

The scope of this mission was broader than the mission of the Twelve. The Seventy were to go to all the towns Jesus planned to visit, apparently not just Jewish towns but also those in the Samaritan and Gentile areas of Palestine. Evidently these disciples were to do what John the Baptist had done through his verbal witness, namely: prepare the people for the coming and preaching of Messiah (cf. 7:27). Their task was not just to arrange accommodations for Jesus, as had been the task of the messengers in the preceding pericope (cf. 9:52). Sending messengers two by two was a common practice (cf. 7:18-19; Mark 6:7; Acts 13:2; 15:27, 39-40; 17:14; 19:22). It assured companionship, protection, and the double witness that the Jews required (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "hepta," by K. H. Rengstorff, 2:634-35.

<sup>523</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 415; and Morris, p. 181.

<sup>524</sup>S. Jellicoe, "St Luke and the Seventy-two," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1960):319-21; Tannehill, 1:233.

<sup>525</sup>J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, p. 235.

- 10:2 Jesus' first instruction to the Seventy was that they "pray" (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-8). Jesus gave His disciples the same instructions on another occasion (cf. Matt. 9:37-38). The "harvest" figure is common in Scripture, and it pictures God gathering His elect (cf. Matt. 13:37-43; et al.). In this context, it referred to gathering believers in Jesus out from the mass of unbelievers to whom the Seventy would go. When He said that the harvest was "plentiful," Jesus meant that there was much work to do to bring the gospel of the kingdom to everyone. His disciple messengers were "few" in proportion to the large task. Therefore the disciples needed to pray ("beseech") God to "send" every qualified messenger out into the "field," and that none would fail to participate in this mission. Thus this verse expressed Jesus' desire for more workers, and for full participation by the workers who were available.
- 10:3 The importance of participation continues in Jesus' imperative command to the Seventy to "go" (Gr. *hypagete*, cf. Matt. 28:19). The "sheep (lambs) among wolves" figure was evidently a favorite one for Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:16). It pictures the dependent and vulnerable position of His disciples among hostile adversaries. They needed to trust in and pray to God, therefore, as they ministered. Jesus "sent" them "out" (Gr. *apostello*) as *apostles*, in the general sense of that word: missionaries. Jesus was speaking as the Shepherd of His sheep.
- 10:4 The mission of the Seventy would be relatively brief, so they needed to travel lightly (cf. 9:3; Mark 6:8). The implication of their not carrying a purse was that they should depend on the hospitality and gifts of believers to sustain them, but most importantly on God. In view of the hostility of the world (v. 3), the disciples might have expected Jesus to prepare them to be self-sufficient, but He did the opposite. He instructed them, instead, to mirror His own vulnerable dependence upon the Father. In ancient Near Eastern culture, people often gave very long greetings that tied them up sometimes for days (cf. Judg. 19:4-9; 2 Kings 4:29). Jesus did not mean that His disciples should be unfriendly or unsociable, but that they should not allow these greetings to divert them from their mission. They were to pursue their work and not waste their time on lesser things.
- 10:5-6 The Seventy were to pronounce a benediction (a spoken blessing; good words of divine favor, as from God) on any household that offered them hospitality. "Peace" (Heb. *shalom*) was a common Jewish blessing that wished the fullness of Yahweh's blessing on the recipient (cf. John 14:27). One could almost consider it a metonym for "salvation" (cf. 1:79; 2:14, 29; 7:50; 8:48; 19:38, 42; 24:36).<sup>526</sup> As the disciples ministered, it would become clear whether the host really believed their message. If he turned out to be a man of peace (cf. 5:34; 16:8; 20:34, 36; Acts 4:36), namely, a man marked by the fullness of God's blessing on his life, the disciple's

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<sup>526</sup>Green, p. 413.

benediction would result in God's further blessing. If the host proved unbelieving, God would not bring the fullness of His blessing on him, but the host would forfeit it (cf. Matt. 10:11-13; Mark 6:10-11).

- 10:7 The Seventy, like the Twelve (cf. 9:4), were normally to remain with their hosts and not move around in one neighborhood trying to improve their situation (cf. Matt. 10:11; Mark 6:10). This would result in their wasting time and possibly insulting their hosts. Going "from house to house" also implied engaging in a social round of activity, and being entertained long after they had done their work.<sup>527</sup> As servants of the Lord, they were to eat and drink what their hosts provided. They could expect sustenance, and needed to be content with what they were offered, even though it might not necessarily be what they would prefer. The principle of the worker being "worthy of his wages" goes back to creation (Gen. 1:28-30). Jesus and the apostles reaffirmed it for the present inter-advent age (cf. Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:3-18; 1 Tim. 5:18; 3 John 5-8).
- 10:8 Taken broadly, the food set before the disciples, in whatever town they might visit, could possibly include ceremonially unclean food. Jesus was already dispensing with the clean unclean distinction in foods (cf. 11:41; Mark 7:19; Rom. 10:4). Peter's scrupulous observance of the Jewish dietary laws may not have characterized all the disciples (cf. Acts 10:14). The practice of eating "unclean" food continued to disturb the early church (cf. 1 Cor. 8). Undoubtedly Luke included this reference with his original readers in mind.
- 10:9 The Seventy were to continue the ministry of Jesus (7:21-22; 9:11; Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; 6:12) and the Twelve (9:1-2). This verse gives the positive content of these messengers' ministry. Healing the sick here amounts to restoring any who needed restoration.<sup>528</sup> The order of healing *before* preaching suggests that the miracles provided an opportunity for the preaching, as well as validating it. Their message was that the Messiah had appeared and, therefore, the messianic "kingdom" was imminent ("come near"; cf. Matt. 3:2). If the people had believed in Jesus, the kingdom would have begun shortly. The kingdom was near then, spatially and temporally. It had not yet begun.

"In truth, the long-awaited Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy had come so near to the men of that generation that they had actually seen the face of the King and also had witnessed the supernatural works, which were the predicted harbingers of His Kingdom."<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>527</sup>Morris, p. 182.

<sup>528</sup>Green, pp. 414-15.

<sup>529</sup>Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 273.

- 10:10-11 The Seventy were to declare publicly two things to the towns (i.e., the people of the towns) that rejected them and their message. They were to pronounce a symbolic rejection for unbelief (cf. 9:5; Matt. 10:14; Mark 6:11), and they were to remind the rejecters of the reality of the kingdom offer that they had spurned. This second action was a virtual sentence of judgment.
- 10:12 The common characteristic of "Sodom" and these Palestinian cities was failure to repent when given a warning by God (cf. Gen. 19:24-29; Matt. 10:15; 11:20-24; Rom. 9:29; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). The fate of the people of Sodom had become proverbial (cf. Isa. 1:9-10). The Sodomites had the witness of Lot, but these cities had the witness of forerunners and eyewitnesses of the Messiah. The Sodomites could have saved their city by repenting, but these cities could have entered the messianic kingdom. Therefore their guilt was greater than that of the people of Sodom.
- "The association of the Sodomites with inhospitality is also in view in the current co-text [i.e., "the string of linguistic data within which a text is set"]: They are symbolic of any town that refuses welcome to Jesus' agents, and are thus guilty of refusing hospitality to God's emissaries."<sup>530</sup>
- 10:13-14 The traditional site of "Chorazin" (the name of a fish<sup>531</sup>) is at the north end of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>532</sup> "Bethsaida" ("fish town") Julius was its near neighbor (cf. 9:10). Thus the contrast Jesus presented was between two villages at the north end of the Sea of Galilee and two towns at the south end of the Dead Sea: Sodom and Gomorrah. This forms something of an *inclusio* for Israel as well as a geographical merism. Both Chorazin and Bethsaida, used as representatives for many other similar towns, had received much of Jesus' ministry. "Tyre and Sidon," two Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean coast, had suffered severe judgment for rejecting God and His people (cf. Isa. 23:1-18; Jer. 25:22; 47:4; Ezek. 26:1—28:23; Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10). The responsiveness of these rebellious Gentile towns, in comparison to the unresponsive Jewish towns named, would have encouraged readers of Luke's Gospel who were witnessing to Gentiles. However, Jesus' point was the dire fate that would come on people who spurned His offer of salvation (cf. Matt. 11:21-22). "Sitting in ashes" while wearing sackcloth made of goat hair, or sitting on "sackcloth," expressed great sorrow connected with sin in the ancient Near East (cf. 1 Kings 21:27; Job 2:8; 42:6; Esth. 4:2-3; Isa. 58:5; Jon. 3:6-8).
- 10:15 "Capernaum" had been the center of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. While it was more responsive than Nazareth (4:23), it was still less responsive than it should have been in view of the witness it had received. Jesus' words of

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<sup>530</sup>Green, p. 416. His definition of "co-text" is on p. 13.

<sup>531</sup>Josephus, *The Wars* . . . , 3:10:8.

<sup>532</sup>Finegan, *The Archaeology* . . . , pp. 57-58.

judgment undoubtedly stemmed from God's condemnation of the king of Babylon's pride (Isa. 14:13-15; cf. Matt. 11:23). Evidently the people of Capernaum expected God to treat them with special favor because Jesus had done many miracles there (cf. 13:26). Jesus was picturing "Hades" (i.e., "Sheol," the place of departed spirits) as opposite to heaven, spatially. Hades was a place associated with humiliation and punishment, whereas heaven was the place of joy and blessing. Jesus was contrasting the height of glory and the depth of degradation.

Verses 13-15 constitute a condemnation of the rejection of the ministry of the Seventy. These strong statements helped the disciples appreciate the importance of their mission as they went out.

10:16 Jesus added further importance to their mission, by explaining that acceptance or rejection of the Seventy amounted to acceptance or rejection of Himself and God the Father—"the One" who had "sent" Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37). Jesus was authorizing these disciples to act for Him (cf. John 20:21).

Prayer walks have become popular in some parts of Christianity in recent years. This is the practice of praying as one walks around a town, usually, asking God to bring salvation to its people. Undoubtedly the Seventy prayed as they conducted their mission trip, but they also preached. Jesus did not only tell them to pray for God to make the people responsive, but also to preach the gospel to them. Neither did He tell them simply to go out and do good works. Praying for the lost and preaching to the lost should go hand in hand whenever possible.

This ends Jesus' briefing of the Seventy for their unique mission. Luke recorded nothing about the mission itself. His concern was Jesus' instructions and their applicability to his readers in view of their mission (Acts 1:8).

#### **4. The joy of participation 10:17-20**

Luke stressed the joy that the Seventy experienced from participating in God's program (cf. Phil. 1:3-5). As we have noted before, Luke often referred to the joy that Jesus brought to people (cf. 1:14, 46; 24:52; et al.). In view of Jesus' preparatory instructions (vv. 1-16), we might have expected the Seventy to feel miserable and glad the experience was over. However, that is not normally the result of serving Jesus, regardless of the hardships involved. As in the preceding pericope, Luke focused on Jesus' words to the messengers.

10:17 These disciples undoubtedly experienced the same opposition and rejection that Jesus did, but their overwhelming sentiment was "joy" (Gr. *charas*). They had experienced supernatural enablement and power because they trusted and obeyed the Lord (cf. 9:1; Matt. 10:8). They quite naturally rejoiced, especially in the spectacular display of God's power evident in their control of "demons." Jesus exorcized demons with a command, but His disciples had to command demons in Jesus' name, namely, on the basis of His authority.

10:18 Jesus described the humiliation of Satan's demons as though it was a repetition of Satan's actual "fall from heaven" that happened before Creation. Isaiah's description of the king of Babylon's fall was similar (Isa. 14:12). Many Bible students believe that Isaiah was describing the fall of Satan, but the context argues for a human king. Jesus may have been alluding to this passage. However, He appears to have been describing a current "fall" or humiliation, resulting from the subjection of the demons to His authority. This is more probable than that He described a vision that He had. Satan will experience similar humiliations in the future during the Tribulation (Rev. 12:7-10, 13), at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 20:2), and at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:10). Jesus' victory over Satan gave Him, as well as His disciples, cause for rejoicing.

"To the casual observer all that had happened was that a few mendicant preachers had spoken in a few small towns and healed a few sick folk. But in the gospel triumph Satan had suffered a notable defeat."<sup>533</sup>

"To the extent that Christ's Kingdom is upbuilt, Satan with his power falls . . ."<sup>534</sup>

10:19 The power that Jesus had given the Seventy, to escape injury physically, paralleled their ability to overcome Satan and his demons spiritually (cf. Rev. 12:13-17). Thus the connection with the previous verse is clear. Jesus probably referred to "snakes ("serpents") and scorpions" here because they represented these spiritual foes (cf. Gen. 3:15). In other words, today *we* should probably take His words figuratively, rather than literally. This was evidently a special protection that Jesus gave His disciples during this mission. Jesus may have given it again to His disciples following His resurrection (cf. Mark 16:18). This verse is in the debated "long ending" of Mark's Gospel (16:9-20). However, that protection apparently lasted only a short time (cf. Acts 28:1-6). Jesus' disciples since then have experienced injury, so it was evidently a limited provision in view of the unique ministry of Jesus' original disciples and apostles. Even during the apostolic age, many disciples did not escape injury or death (Acts 7:60; 12:2; 2 Tim. 4:20).

10:20 As great as victory over injury, and especially over demons was, a greater cause for rejoicing was the Seventy's assurance that God would reward them—with heaven itself, plus additional heavenly rewards. God makes note of those who commit themselves to participating in His mission. Jesus' comparison helps all disciples keep His blessings in their proper perspective.

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<sup>533</sup>Morris, p. 185.

<sup>534</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:14:18.

There appear to be several records that God keeps in heaven. There is the book of the living, namely, those who are presently alive on the earth (Exod. 32:32-33; Deut. 29:20; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3). There is also a book containing the names of the lost and their deeds (Rev. 20:12). There is a book with the "names" of the elect ("book of life") in it (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). A fourth book evidently contains the "names" of faithful followers of the Lord (Mal. 3:16; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5). In view of the context, it was apparently to this last record that Jesus referred here. Obviously God needs no literal ledgers to write records in, since He knows everything. "Recorded in the book" is a figurative way of saying that He remembers.

This whole pericope deals with the joy that disciples who participate in God's mission for them experience. The greatest and most fundamental reason for rejoicing, for any disciple, is his or her *personal salvation*. Yet there is additional joy for disciples who take part in God's program and advance His will in the world. It involves seeing a preview of the final victory over the forces of evil (cf. Matt. 16:18). This joy more than compensates for the deprivations and rejection that discipleship entails. Non-participating disciples know nothing of this joy.

### **5. The joy of comprehension 10:21-24**

This incident followed the preceding one immediately (v. 21). The subject of joy continues, and the section on the responsibilities and rewards of discipleship reaches its climax here. Jesus expressed His joy to the "Father," in prayer, for revealing to the disciples ("infants") what they had learned, particularly Jesus' victory over Satan. This understanding constituted a unique privilege that Jesus pointed out to them.

The two parts of this section occur elsewhere in Jesus' ministry (vv. 21-22 in Matt. 11:25-27, and vv. 23-24 in Matt. 13:16-17). This suggests that Jesus said these things on more than one occasion.

10:21        The Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' ministry was another special interest of Luke's. The record of Jesus' similar prayer in Matthew 11:25-26 lacks the references to joy and the Holy Spirit. The phrase "rejoiced . . . in the Holy Spirit" (NASB) probably means that the Holy Spirit was the source of Jesus' joy (cf. Acts 13:52). *He* gave it to Jesus. This notation strengthens the force of what Jesus proceeded to say. All three members of the Trinity appear in this verse. The Son empowered by the Spirit addressed His Father. This, too, points to a very significant statement to follow.

Jesus praised God for something the Father had done. He addressed God intimately as "My Father" (Gr. *pater*, the equivalent of the Aramaic *abba*, cf. 11:2). The title "Lord of heaven and earth" was a common one for Jews to use. It came from Genesis 14:19 and 22, and it draws attention to God's sovereignty. This allusion was appropriate in view of what Jesus thanked God for. Jesus probably meant that He praised God that, although He had "hidden" the gospel of the kingdom from the humanly "wise," He had, nevertheless, "revealed" it "to infants," i.e., the poor, uneducated, and or

humble (cf. 1:48-55; 8:10; 1 Cor. 1:18-31). The last sentence of verse 21 evidently means: "Yes, O Father, I praise You because this was Your will (and I agree with it)." The wise and understanding people that Jesus had in mind were probably the Jewish religious leaders, and the babes were His disciples. Jesus rejoiced in the privilege these disciples had received, of understanding God's ways as they participated in His mission.

10:22 This verse at first glance appears to be a statement to the disciples, rather than a continuation of Jesus' prayer, but verse 23 specifically identifies the beginning of His words "to the disciples." Therefore we should probably understand verse 22 as part of His prayer. Apparently Jesus spoke these words for the disciples' benefit as much as for His Father's.

The "all things" in view probably include divine revelation and divine power, considering the context. The second and third clauses indicate that "the Father" and "the Son" know each other *completely*. Consequently only "the Son" can "reveal" the Father. There are only two incidents that the synoptic evangelists recorded in which Jesus referred to Himself as "the Son" (Matt. 11:27, the parallel passage to this one, and Mark 13:32), but John recorded many such incidents. Jesus concluded by saying that the Son bestows knowledge of the Father according to the Son's will. By saying these things, Jesus was claiming to have an exclusive relationship with God and to be the sole mediator of the knowledge of God to humankind (cf. 4:32; 1 Tim. 2:5).

10:23 Now Jesus addressed the Seventy directly, and congratulated them on participating in this revelation. The blessings that humble disciples experience contrast with the judgment that proud people who disregard the knowledge and power that Jesus revealed will experience (cf. 13-15; 1:52-55; 6:20-26; 1 Cor. 2:9-10). Those who saw the things these disciples saw were "blessed" or fortunate. What they saw were the signs that the Messiah had arrived and His kingdom was at hand (v. 17).

10:24 The "prophets" typically looked forward to the fulfillment of the things that they predicted (1 Pet. 1:10-12). "Kings" probably represent the most important people of their day. Even they, with all their advantages, could not "see" and "hear" what Jesus' humble disciples could. What they saw were the signs of the advent of Messiah, and what they heard was the good news that the kingdom was at hand.

Jesus' teaching in this pericope glorified the privilege of being a disciple of His. Too often the responsibilities of discipleship make following Jesus appear very threatening and unattractive, but the rewards of discipleship far outweigh its costs (cf. Rom. 8:18). In view of this revelation, disciples of Jesus should feel encouraged to participate wholeheartedly and fully in God's mission for them. For us that means participation in the execution of the Great Commission (24:44-49).

## **B. THE RELATIONSHIPS OF DISCIPLES 10:25—11:13**

The three incidents that compose this section all concern various aspects of the life of disciples. Luke continued to focus Jesus' teaching on discipleship by his selection of material. All three incidents are unique to Luke's Gospel, though again there is evidence that Jesus taught similar lessons, and made similar statements, at other times, that the other evangelists recorded in other contexts.

### **1. The relation of disciples to their neighbors 10:25-37**

The question that a lawyer put to Jesus provided the opportunity for this lesson. Jesus answered it, but then followed up His answer with a parable that was the climax of His teaching on the subject. The parable amplified the second great commandment (v. 27). The teaching that followed the parable (10:38—11:13), while not addressed to the lawyer, expounded the first great commandment (v. 27). But it is not just enough to *know* the right thing to do; one must then *do* it. The present section also reminds the reader of Jesus' allegiance to the Old Testament Scriptures, which He viewed as authoritative. Thus it balances Jesus' former words about Him revealing the Father (v. 22), with the importance of Scripture in that process.

#### **The lawyer's question and Jesus' answer 10:25-29**

The incident that Mark recorded in Mark 12:28-34 is quite similar to this one, but the differences in the accounts point to two separate situations. In view of the question at stake, it is easy to see how people might have asked it of Jesus many different times. Furthermore this particular question was of great concern to the scribes, who studied the law professionally. The fact that the Holy Spirit recorded the same lesson *twice* in Scripture, is a testimony to His greatness as a Teacher, since great teachers deliberately repeat themselves.

" . . . in the first century A.D. in Palestine the only way of publishing great thoughts was to go on repeating them in talk or sermons."<sup>535</sup>

10:25            Lawyers (scribes) were experts in the Mosaic Law. The Greek word translated "test" (*ekpeirazon*) does not necessarily imply hostility (cf. 4:12). The man simply could have been wanting Jesus' opinion. He addressed Jesus as a teacher or rabbi. This title tells us nothing about his motivation, only that he viewed Jesus as less than a prophet, the Messiah, or God. He assumed that people had to do something to obtain eternal life (cf. 18:18). The term "inherit" had a particular significance for Jewish readers, distinguishing a special way of receiving eternal life (cf. Matt. 5:5; 19:29; 25:34). However, Gentiles readers for whom Luke wrote would have regarded it as synonymous with *obtaining* eternal life (cf. Mark 10:17). "Eternal life" is the equivalent of spiritual salvation, and included entrance into the messianic kingdom.

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<sup>535</sup>T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 260.

- 10:26 Rather than answering the lawyer's question outright, Jesus directed him to the authority they both accepted: the Old Testament. Moreover by asking this counter-question, Jesus put Himself in the position of evaluating the lawyer's answer, rather than having the lawyer evaluate His answer.
- 10:27-28 This lawyer gave virtually the same answer that Jesus Himself gave to the same question on another occasion (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31).

"To love the neighbor as oneself does not mean to love the other as much as you love yourself, but it does mean to love the neighbor *in the way you would* love yourself. The call is to behave toward the other with the same consideration and concern that one naturally (and properly under most circumstances) shows about one's own welfare (as Eph 5:29)."<sup>536</sup>

Jesus affirmed that the lawyer had answered correctly (Gr. *orthos*, from which we get the word "orthodox"). However, He proceeded to caution the lawyer that he needed wholehearted compliance with the Law to gain eternal life—which is impossible. Jesus quoted the Law to drive this point home (Lev. 18:5).

- 10:29 The lawyer realized that the only way he could possibly fulfill the Law's demand was to limit its demand. He should have acknowledged his inability to keep these commands, and asked Jesus what he should do. Instead, he tried to "justify" himself (i.e., to declare himself righteous) by limiting (redefining) the demand of the Law, and then showing that he had fulfilled that limited demand.

His question set up a distinction between neighbors and non-neighbors. The word "neighbor" (Gr. *plesion*) means one who is near (cf. Acts 7:27). The Hebrew word that it translates, *rea*, means a person with whom one has something to do. The Jews interpreted the word in a limited sense, to mean a fellow Jew or someone in the same religious community. They specifically excluded Samaritans and Gentiles from this category.<sup>537</sup>

"If there is a neighbor I must love, is there also a non-neighbor I do not need to love? Do I have to love everyone? Where do I draw the line? . . . These are hardly irrelevant questions in a world where 'compassion fatigue' has reached epidemic proportions."<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>536</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 585.

<sup>537</sup>See John Bowman, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Expository Times* 59 (1947-48):151-53, 248-49.

<sup>538</sup>Inrig, pp. 34-35.

### The parable of the good Samaritan 10:30-37

Jesus told this parable to correct the lawyer's false understanding of who his neighbor was, and to clarify his duty to his neighbor.<sup>539</sup>

"This parable episode takes up the neighbor half of the command to love of God and neighbor of vv 25-28. Vv 38-42 will take up, more indirectly, the God half."<sup>540</sup>

10:30 The "man" in view may have been a real person, and the incident Jesus described could have really happened. Yet the fact that Jesus told this story as He did, similar to other parables, has led most students of the passage to conclude that He invented it to teach a lesson.

Jesus left the man's race and occupation unspecified, though His hearers would have assumed that he was a Jew. The 17-mile desert road, that descended about 3,300 feet "from Jerusalem to Jericho," was treacherous, winding, and a favorite haunt of robbers.<sup>541</sup> Clothing was a valuable commodity in Jesus' society, and this fact probably explains why the bandits took the man's clothes. Perhaps the man resisted his attackers, which would have been a common reaction, and suffered a near fatal beating.

10:31 Jesus described the "priest" as happening "by chance" to take the journey that brought him into contact with the unfortunate victim. This fact in no way excused the priest's failure to show love, but it may suggest that from the priest's viewpoint his discovery was accidental. Jesus simply recounted the priest's unloving act ("passed by on the other side") without complicating the story with his motivation. For whatever reason, and the reason is unimportant, the priest failed to act in love, even though common courtesy demanded that he stop and render aid. However a priest, of all people, should have shown compassion. He served in a "helping occupation," and he had frequent contact with the Scriptures and their demands. Moreover, this priest had recently been in Jerusalem, the center of worship and spiritual influence.

"According to Jewish tradition, half of each of the twenty-four 'courses,' into which the priesthood were divided, were permanently resident in Jerusalem; the rest scattered over the land. It is added, that about one half of the latter had settled in Jericho, and were in the habit of supplying the needful support to their brethren while officiating in Jerusalem."<sup>542</sup>

<sup>539</sup>For some inappropriate lessons to be drawn from this parable, see Amy-Jill Levine, "The Many Faces of the Good Samaritan—Most Wrong," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38:1 (January/February 2012):24, 68.

<sup>540</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 597.

<sup>541</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 943; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 447. See also Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 314-15.

<sup>542</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 83.

Since "lawyers" were often "priests," this lawyer may have seen himself in this character in Jesus' parable.<sup>543</sup>

10:32 The "Levite" repeated the priest's act. He was a less likely person to offer help since his duty, assuming he fulfilled it, involved just assisting the priests in the mundane affairs involved in worship. By omitting his motives, Jesus again focused attention on the man's unloving act.

". . . the Levites . . . had no clerical dress at all [when they assisted the priests in temple service], but only wore the white linen (2 Chron. 5:12) . . ."<sup>544</sup>

"Involvement with 'problem people' often entangles us in embarrassing, difficult, and even dangerous situations. . . .

"Was it fear for his own safety (the robbers may still be in the vicinity), a fear of defilement, a fear of entanglement? For whatever reason, he too 'passed by on the other side.'"<sup>545</sup>

10:33-35 The "Samaritan" was the least likely of the three travelers to offer help, yet he did so (cf. 9:52). By placing "Samaritan" in the emphatic first position in the Greek sentence, Jesus stressed the contrast between him and the other two travelers. The "compassion" that he felt overcame his racial prejudice against Jews. Jesus explained his attitude, but not his other motives, that again were irrelevant. The Samaritan's compassion contrasts with the callousness of the priest and the Levite toward one of their own "neighbors." His compassion led the Samaritan to take action to help the sufferer. "Oil" soothed the victim's wounds, and "wine" disinfected them.<sup>546</sup> These were household remedies for wounds.<sup>547</sup> The Samaritan's love was obvious in his willingness to inconvenience himself, and in his making generous and costly sacrifices for the other man's good (cf. 2 Chron. 28:8-15). The genuineness of his love is clear from his provision of further care "the next day" (v. 35). It cost about one twelfth of a denarius to live for a day, so the Samaritan's gift exceeded the man's need many times.<sup>548</sup>

10:36 Jesus then applied the teaching of the parable to the lawyer, by asking him "which of the three" passersby behaved as a neighbor. He reversed the lawyer's original question (v. 29), and focused attention where it should

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<sup>543</sup>Green, p. 427.

<sup>544</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 145.

<sup>545</sup>Inrig, p. 37.

<sup>546</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 204.

<sup>547</sup>Robertson, 2:153.

<sup>548</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, p. 122.

have been: on the subject showing love rather than the object receiving it. The priest and the Levite had avoided contamination and ritual uncleanness, while the Samaritan had contracted it. Yet the two Jews had not shown compassion, whereas the true neighbor had.

10:37 The answer to Jesus' question was simple and obvious. The lawyer seems to have understood the point of the parable, because he did not describe the true "neighbor" as "the Samaritan," but as "the one who showed mercy." On the other hand, he may have avoided the use of the word "Samaritan" out of disdain. Showing mercy was the key issue, not the nationality of the neighbor. Racial and religious considerations were irrelevant.

Jesus ended the encounter by commanding the lawyer to begin to follow the Samaritan's example. This is what he needed to do if he wanted to *earn* eternal life (cf. v. 25). If he treated everyone with whom he had any dealings with compassion and mercy, he would be loving his neighbor in the sense that God commanded (v. 27; Lev. 19:18). Thus Jesus showed that the real test of love is action, not just profession (cf. James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17-18). He also faced the lawyer with a humanly impossible obligation. Hopefully the man finally realized that, and turned to Jesus for his justification (v. 29).

This parable obviously teaches that people should help other people who are in need when they encounter them, even though they may not have anything in common but their humanity. It is also a powerful polemic (argument) against prejudice and for compassion. Jesus Himself was the great example of the attitudes and actions that He advocated in this parable. The parallels between Jesus and the Samaritan are striking. However, it seems clear that Jesus did not give this parable to draw attention to Himself, but to teach His disciples and the lawyer what it means to "love your neighbor as yourself."

"Love is not a sentimental feeling. Rather it is sacrificial action. It means interrupting my schedule, expending my money, risking my reputation, ruining my property, even for a stranger, so that I can do what is best for him."<sup>549</sup>

The disciples also learned that, properly understood, God's demands are impossible to keep perfectly, so one must cast himself on God's mercy if he hopes to obtain eternal life.

"The Parable implies not a mere enlargement of the Jewish ideas, but a complete change of them. It is truly a Gospel-Parable, for the whole old relationship of mere duty is changed into one of love. Thus, matters are placed on an entirely different basis from that of Judaism. The question now is not 'Who is my neighbour?' but 'Whose neighbour am I?'"<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>549</sup>Inrig, p. 42.

<sup>550</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:239.

"This parable of the Good Samaritan has built the world's hospitals and, if understood and practiced, will remove race prejudice, national hatred and war, class jealousy."<sup>551</sup>

"With the Samaritan, we were given a model of compassionate behavior to imitate. With the priest and the Levite, we were warned against allowing religious duty to make us unloving. From the man in the ditch, we learn the lesson of our need to be willing to receive help."<sup>552</sup>

A popular definition of a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." This is a good descriptive definition, but the Greek word *parabole*, translated "parable," means something placed alongside something else for the sake of comparison. Consequently, the word "parable" has both a general and a technical meaning. Generally, it means any comparison, including illustrations, likenesses, similes, and metaphors. Technically, "parable" usually refers to a *story* that makes a comparison. These two uses of the word account for the fact that some students of the Gospels view some of Jesus' comparisons as parables while others do not. Some define parables differently than others, and so come up with different lists. Usually these differences involve the length of the comparison.

## **2. The relation of disciples to Jesus 10:38-42**

This is another incident involving women who became disciples of Jesus (cf. 8:1-3; et al.). Like the parable of the Good Samaritan, it shows Jesus overcoming prejudice. As the former parable illustrated the meaning of the second commandment, this one elucidates the first commandment. Jesus had claimed to be the revealer of God to humankind (v. 22). Now the disciples learned again the importance of listening to Him (cf. 8:1-21; et al.).

"He [Luke] may have placed it immediately after the preceding parable as a safeguard against any of his readers coming under the misapprehension that salvation is by works. He makes the point that waiting quietly on the Lord is more important than bustling busy-ness."<sup>553</sup>

10:38 Luke's reference to travel keeps the travel theme in view. We continue to see Jesus moving toward Jerusalem and the fulfillment of His mission. It also explains the reason for Martha and Mary's hospitality. Luke did not mention that this incident happened in Bethany (cf. John 11:1; 12:1). He probably omitted this detail to keep his readers from becoming too preoccupied with Jesus' exact movements, which Luke viewed as relatively unimportant.

Luke presented "Martha" as the primary hostess. Her name derives from the Aramaic *mar* meaning "mistress," which is appropriate since she was the mistress of her house. Her eagerness to receive Jesus contrasts with the Samaritans, who had not "welcomed" Him (9:53).

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<sup>551</sup>Robertson, 2:155.

<sup>552</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables*, p. 64.

<sup>553</sup>Morris, p. 191.

- 10:39 "Mary" (or Miriam, cf. 1:27; et al.) took the traditional place of a disciple, seating herself at Jesus' "feet" to listen and learn (cf. Acts 22:3). Normally rabbis did not permit women to do this in Jesus' day.<sup>554</sup> The title "Lord" further stresses the authority of Jesus, to which Mary symbolically submitted by sitting at His feet.
- 10:40 Martha's duties as a hostess drew her attention away from Jesus, whom she evidently wanted to sit near and listen to also (cf. 1 Cor. 7:35).<sup>555</sup> She expressed concern that Jesus did not discourage Mary from sitting at His feet. She wanted Him to "tell" Mary "to help" her with her hostess duties. Martha reproached Jesus for monopolizing Mary to her own (Martha's) hurt.<sup>556</sup> Though she addressed Jesus as "Lord," Martha wanted Him to assist her in her plans, rather to learn of His plans from Him, as Mary was doing
- 10:41-42 Jesus showed concern for Martha's anxiety (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35), but He did not do what she asked. The "many things" that "bothered" Martha were her excessive "preparations" for the meal (cf. 12:29). She had allowed her duties as hostess to become too burdensome (cf. 8:14; 12:22, 26). Apparently she wished to honor Jesus with an elaborate meal, but a simpler one that would have allowed her some time to listen to her Guest would have been better. The few things in view were the things involved in simple entertaining. The one indispensable thing was listening to Jesus' teachings, which reflects an attitude of dependence.

"For the Third Gospel, to listen to the word is to have joined the road of discipleship (e.g., 6:47; 8:11, 21; 11:28) . . ."<sup>557</sup>

Jesus was telling Martha that the "one thing" that Mary had "chosen" was more important than the "many things" Martha had chosen to do. The implication was that Martha should listen to Jesus more and labor less. The "good part" that Mary would not lose, was the blessing that comes to those who pay attention to the teachings of Jesus with an attitude of dependence on Him (i.e., disciples).

"Few things are as damaging to the Christian life as trying to work for Christ without taking time to commune with Christ. . . ."

"So often we want to be kind to people—but we want to be kind to them *in our way*; and should it happen that our way is not the necessary way, we sometimes take offence and

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<sup>554</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 944.

<sup>555</sup>H. K. Luce, *The Gospel according to S. Luke*, p. 208.

<sup>556</sup>Robertson, 2:156.

<sup>557</sup>Green, p. 435.

think that we are not appreciated. If we are trying to be kind the first necessity is to try to see into the heart of the person we desire to help—and then to forget all our own plans and to think only of what he or she needs."<sup>558</sup>

"If serving Christ makes us difficult to live with, then something is terribly wrong with our service!"<sup>559</sup>

"The episode is concerned to show that even when domestic service has been harnessed to the purposes of the kingdom of God, the danger remains that its concerns will take possession of us."<sup>560</sup>

This then was a lesson in priorities for Martha and all Jesus' disciples. Jesus' point was not that a contemplative life is better than an active life, or that scholarship is preferable to domesticity. Giving humble attention to Jesus' words is of primary importance. This is the better way to serve Him. This passage should be a warning to disciples who tend to be too active in Christian service and neglect the Word of God. It should also remind us that busyness, even with legitimate pursuits, can hinder our relationship with Christ. Disciples must make time to listen to and learn from Jesus. Everything that He says is important.

"This passage is also a key discipleship text—not in the comparison between Martha and Mary's tasks, but in how Martha has wrongly judged Mary's inaction and worries too much about what others are doing [cf. John 21:21]. The text has two distinct emphases: Martha's consumption with assessing others as she performs what she is called to do, and Mary's wisdom in seeking some time at the feet of Jesus. Both qualities, one negative and the other positive, are at the heart of discipleship."<sup>561</sup>

Some time ago I received a letter from a former student who wrote the following: "Although I had lived overseas before, when I was in the Army—I was stationed in Korea for two years—the culture shock here [in India] was great. I found myself at first very discouraged and defeated, and spent almost two months very spiritually low. I was really even questioning God's guidance in my life. I felt useless here, not knowing the language and just tagging along with other Christian workers. I began to equate happiness with the comfortable life in the U.S., and I'd catch myself daydreaming about my return there this June. However, one needs to find joy, no matter what the circumstances, where God has him. I remember how, in the Gospels class, you told us that our hearts have to be set, not on doing God's work or sharing God's Word, but on loving God. Otherwise it would be easy to leave this physically and spiritually harsh environment quickly. Loving God deeply is hard here, for me, but it's what I'm aiming to do. I must love God more than the easy American life. That was a good point that you made, and I just thought you'd like to hear some feedback on it." I did indeed.

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<sup>558</sup>Barclay, p. 145.

<sup>559</sup>Wiersbe, 1:213.

<sup>560</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 605.

<sup>561</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 305.

### **3. The relation of disciples to God the Father 11:1-13**

Jesus continued to point out the disciples' proper relationships. Having explained their relation to their neighbors (10:25-37) and to Himself (10:38-42), He now instructed them on their relation to their heavenly Father. This pericope, as the former one, clarifies the meaning of the first commandment (10:27).

This whole section consists of teaching on prayer. Luke presented prayer as a major subject on which Jesus instructed His disciples, whereas in Matthew, prayer instruction is incidental to other themes. The teaching in the present section of this Gospel gives help to disciples who need to learn how to pray, and encouragement that God will hear and answer their prayers. The disciples' request for instruction on how to pray (v. 1) resulted in Jesus giving them a pattern prayer (vv. 2-4). He then gave them a parable that illustrates God's willingness to answer (vv. 5-8), a promise that God would answer (v. 9), and further assurance showing God's readiness to answer their prayers (vv. 10-13). Prayer is a discipline of dependence on God, and as such, is the life breath of every disciple of Jesus.

#### **The Lord's Prayer 11:1-4 (cf. Matt. 6:9-13)**

Luke's record of Jesus' teaching of the Lord's Prayer differs significantly enough from Matthew's account, that we can safely conclude that Jesus gave similar teaching on separate occasions. This repetition illustrates the importance that Jesus attached to the subject of prayer.

11:1            This verse gives the setting for the teaching that follows. This is the fifth time that Luke referred to Jesus "praying" (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; cf. 22:32, 40-44; 23:46). It was apparently Jesus' frequent praying that alerted His disciples to its importance and made them feel their need for His help in their praying. This is the only time the Gospel writers recorded that someone asked Jesus to teach them something, another indication of the importance of this instruction. The disciples seem to have felt a greater need for help in learning how to pray than to preach. The disciples did not ask for instruction on the subject of prayer theoretically. They wanted help in their actual praying. Evidently they wanted Jesus to give them a prayer that they could use, that would be appropriate in view of their distinctive relationship to God as believers in Jesus. Other Jewish groups, such as John's disciples, had their own distinctive prayers.<sup>562</sup> Perhaps being in the area of John's former ministry brought him to the disciples' minds.

"Prayer is a necessity of spiritual life, and all who earnestly try to pray soon feel the need of teaching how to do it."<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>562</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 456.

<sup>563</sup>A. B. Bruce, p. 52.

11:2 Jesus' introduction to this prayer implied that He intended the disciples to repeat it verbatim. His introduction to the teaching that Matthew reported implied that He was giving them a model or sample prayer (Matt. 6:9). "Whenever" (Gr. *hoten*) implies that they would pray this prayer frequently.

Jesus first focused attention on the person of God. The term "Father" (Gr. *pater*, Aramaic *abba*) is both an intimate and a respectful title. By using it, the disciples were expressing the relationship that they enjoyed with God because of their relationship with Jesus (cf. John 20:17; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6). The closeness of their relationship with Jesus is apparent in that they could now address God as their Father, just like Jesus addressed God as His Father (cf. 10:21). This does not mean, of course, that disciples enjoy exactly the same relationship that the Son of God enjoys with the Father.

"The use of the intimate form was the amazing new thing that Jesus wished to teach his disciples, initiating them into the same close relationship with the father that he enjoyed . . ." <sup>564</sup>

Two sets of petitions follow. Two petitions relate to God's cosmic purposes, and three to the disciples' personal needs.

The clause "hallowed be your name" means "may everyone regard your name as holy" (cf. Lev. 22:32; Ps. 79:9; 111:9; Isa. 29:23). God's name is essentially the sum of His attributes, and effectively it is His reputation among people. This petition is as much an expression of worship as it is a petition. It asks God to act so people will regard Him as holy, to cause situations in which they will reverence and obey Him rather than blaspheming and sinning against Him.

"The aorist tense here suggests that a specific time of fulfillment is in mind. This may be the coming of the kingdom." <sup>565</sup>

This view finds support in the recurrence of the aorist tense, and a specific reference to God's "kingdom" in the second petition. However, the first petition is also for the honor of God's name generally. The coming of the kingdom is a desirable condition, because it will result in universal blessing, as well as great honor for God. If the messianic kingdom had already begun, as some scholars affirm, this prayer would hardly be necessary. This second petition addresses God's program.

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<sup>564</sup>Ibid.

<sup>565</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 947.

"Thus, in harmony with all Old Testament prophecy, the prayer taught by our Lord suggests not only that His kingdom is to be prayed for, but also that its coming to the 'earth' will be a definite crisis in history, not a long and gradual process of evolution. This is in sharp contrast with the Universal Kingdom which has always been present in the world, on earth as well as in heaven."<sup>566</sup>

This was a typically Jewish prayer so far, except for the addition of "Father." Both petitions were concerns of the Jews as they anticipated the arrival of the messianic kingdom.

11:3 The third petition, the first one in the second group of petitions, deals with the disciples' provisions. The parallel request in Matthew has the aorist tense indicating a simple act of giving (Matt. 6:11), but this one has the present tense suggesting a continuing daily provision. The ideas are complementary rather than contradictory.

Matthew's prayer also has "today," stressing the present need, whereas Luke's prayer has "each day," pointing to the disciples' continuing need for God's supply. "Daily" (Gr. *epiousion*) not only means day by day but also carries the connotation of sufficient or necessary.<sup>567</sup> This idea may be primary in *epiousion* here, since "each day" has already expressed the idea of God providing day by day.

"Bread" (Gr. *artos*) frequently represents food in general, and probably does here too (cf. 7:33; John 13:18; 2 Thess. 3:8). Thus it is improbable that Jesus meant that disciples should only request the barest necessities of life. The Jews in the wilderness learned to trust God for their food day by day (Exod. 16:4; Deut. 8:6-10). People in Jesus' day normally received their pay daily, so they understood this need too. It may be harder for *us* to remember that we are dependent on God for our daily sustenance, since most of us do not live from hand to mouth so literally. Nevertheless we live in a state of continual dependence on God (cf. John 15:5). This petition should remind us of that.

"The prayer Jesus teaches his followers embodies the urgency of giving without expectation of return—that is, of ripping the fabric of the patronage system by treating others as (fictive [i.e., imagined]) kin rather than as greater or lesser than oneself (cf. 6:27-38)."<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup>McClain, p. 36.

<sup>567</sup>Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Daily Bread Motif in Antiquity," *Westminster Theological Journal* 28 (1965-66):147-56.

<sup>568</sup>Green, p. 443.

11:4 The fourth petition requests God's pardon. Luke used the simple word "sins" (Gr. *hamartia*), rather than the Jewish idiom "debts" (Gr. *opheilemata*), that Matthew employed. The believer in Jesus has already received eternal forgiveness for the legal guilt of his or her sins (cf. 5:20; 7:47; Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Eph. 1:7). Therefore the forgiveness Jesus spoke of here is the forgiveness that is necessary for the maintenance of fellowship with the Father (cf. 1 John 1:5-10). A person's unwillingness to forgive others who have wronged him or her may indicate that he or she knows nothing of God's forgiveness (cf. 7:47). Conversely one's willingness to forgive other people shows that one recognizes his or her own need for forgiveness.

The fifth petition requests divine protection. This request does not imply that God might entice us into sin (cf. James 1:1-15). Nevertheless God does allow people to undergo temptation (Gr. *peirasmos*) in the sense of the testing of their faithfulness (4:1-12; cf. Deut. 6—8). This petition expresses the disciple's awareness of his or her need for God's help in avoiding excessive temptation and enduring all temptation. It is essentially a request for help in remaining faithful to God (cf. 22:40). The unusual reverse form of this petition is due to its being a figure of speech (i.e., litotes), in which the writer expressed a positive idea by stating its negative opposite. Luke made frequent use of litotes in the narrative portions of Acts (cf. Acts 12:18; 15:2; 17:4, 12; 19:24; 27:20). This construction accentuates the contrast with the preceding fourth petition.<sup>569</sup>

Note that these petitions cover all of our earthly life: the present (the need for daily bread), the past (forgiveness for previous sins), and the future (protection from coming trials).

### **The parable of the shameless friend 11:5-8**

Having helped His disciples pray, Jesus now gave them incentive to pray. He contrasted the character of God and the character of the reluctant neighbor in His story (cf. v. 13; 18:1-8). This parable contains a very helpful and encouraging revelation of God's character (cf. 10:22). Understanding the character of God removes many of the problems we have with prayer.<sup>570</sup> This parable also encourages disciples to pray in spite of no immediate answers. It addresses the common feeling that prayer may be useless since God does not grant answers as one might expect Him to.

"The point of the parable is clearly not: Go on praying because God will eventually respond to importunity; rather it is: Go on praying because God responds graciously to the needs of his children."<sup>571</sup>

<sup>569</sup>See also Thomas L. Constable, "The Lord's Prayer," in *Giving Ourselves to Prayer*, compiled by Dan R. Crawford (Terre Haute, Ind.: PrayerShop Publishing, 2005), pp. 70-75.

<sup>570</sup>See C. Samuel Storms, *Reaching God's Ear*, for a fuller development of this truth.

<sup>571</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 462.

11:5-6 Hospitality was a sacred duty in the ancient Near East. When visitors arrived, the host would normally provide lodging under his roof and food to eat. The host in this parable did not have enough bread for his guest, so he shamelessly appealed to his neighbor for some. The fact that he came knocking on his friend's door at such a late hour as "midnight" indicates the extent of his shamelessness.

"In the east no one would knock on a shut door unless the need was imperative. In the morning the door was opened and remained open all day, for there was little privacy; but if the door was shut, that was a definite sign that the householder was not to be disturbed."<sup>572</sup>

The host was willing to admit that he needed his neighbor's help, even though this caused him some embarrassment. Jesus did not explain why the man came so late, and the reason is immaterial.

11:7-8 In the typical one-room Palestinian home, the whole family, and often even the household animals, all slept near each other. In the parable, the man who came knocking was willing to suffer shame in the eyes of his neighbor, and probably in the eyes of all his neighbors, once his potentially inhospitable behavior became known. The fact that the man was willing to humble himself, and ask for help, moved the neighbor to get up and give his friend bread. Friendship alone was not enough. It was the fact that the man was willing to shamelessly admit his need and ask for help, at such an inconvenient hour, that moved the neighbor to give him what he needed. The Greek word *anaideia* means shameless, or avoidance of shame, not "persistence" (cf. Gen. 18:13-33; Matt. 15:22-28).<sup>573</sup> Green interpreted the phrase "because of his persistence": "in order to avoid dishonor."<sup>574</sup>

"*Persistence* here refers to shameless boldness more than to tenacity."<sup>575</sup>

Jesus was contrasting, not comparing, God's attitude with the friend's attitude (vv. 9-13).<sup>576</sup> God's attitude toward His children is the opposite of the attitude of the friend toward his knocking neighbor. God will grant answers to prayer if we will simply ask Him for help. But we have to

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<sup>572</sup>Barclay, p. 148.

<sup>573</sup>See Alan F. Johnson, "Assurance for Man: The Fallacy of Translating *Anaideia* by 'Persistence' in Luke 11:5-8," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22:2 (June 1979):123-31; Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 625.

<sup>574</sup>Green, p. 445.

<sup>575</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1716.

<sup>576</sup>See Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, pp. 125-33.

humble ourselves and ask for His help. Often we think we can handle a particular situation on our own, and thus do not pray for God's help. In these cases, we will receive no special help from our Father. But if we humble ourselves and ask Him for help, He will help us.

Some time ago I noticed that the door on our kitchen pantry was beginning to pull away from its frame, because I had mounted a rack on the inside that we use to store heavy jars and cans. The door was not latching properly, and I saw that it would not be long before we would be unable to close it. Being a do-it-yourselfer, I planned to fix it. It seemed to me that I would have to take the door off the hinges and plane it. I might have also had to remove the frame, repair it, reinstall it, and re-plaster and repaint around it. Then I remembered my friend Merton, who has built and repaired houses most of his long life. I humbled myself and gave him a call, asking for his help. He fixed the problem with one screw in five minutes. That is what praying shamelessly looks like. It is admitting that we need God's help and asking for it. The alternative is to try to get something done on our own.

### Encouragements to pray 11:9-13

Jesus continued His instruction by providing further encouragement to ask of God in prayer.

#### A promise from Jesus 11:9-10

11:9 Jesus introduced this promise with a phrase that underlined its reliability and gave His personal guarantee. Everyone who asks of God will receive from Him, not just the persistent (cf. Matt. 7:7-8). In the context, "everyone" is every one of His *children* (vv. 10, 13). God is more than a friend of believing disciples; He is their Father. Jesus urged His disciples to pray. He probably meant that we must "ask" in order to receive (cf. James 4:2). Those who "seek" God's attention and response in prayer will find it (cf. Jer. 29:12-13). Those who "knock" on the closed door of God's heavenly house, will find that He will open to them, and give them what is best (cf. v. 7).

"In other words, don't come to God only in the midnight emergencies, but keep in constant communion with your Father."<sup>577</sup>

The tense of the three verbs "ask," "seek," and "knock," in Greek, is the present tense, implying continuing action. Some interpreters have understood this to mean that Jesus was teaching the disciples to be persistent: "Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking." I

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<sup>577</sup>Wiersbe, 1:215. Author's italics removed.

tend to think that He meant: "Don't give up asking, seeking, and knocking, when answers to your prayers are not forthcoming." Rather than the present tense being a condition for answered prayer, it was probably intended to be an encouragement not to give up praying. "Don't lose heart, but keep on praying."

11:10 Verse 10 gives the justification for the promise in verse 9. It sets forth the absolute certainty of what Jesus just said. God will definitely respond to the prayers of His children. A stronger promise is difficult to imagine.

"Using language from everyday life, he [Jesus] teaches that, because God will arise and act on behalf of those in need, they ought to bring their requests to him."<sup>578</sup>

The response of many Christians to this promise is: I asked but did not receive. I sought God but did not feel I got through to Him. I knocked at His door, but He did not admit me. However, the unusual strength with which Jesus gave this promise should encourage us to believe Him in spite of appearances. We may not have received yet. We may not feel that we got through to God, but Jesus said we did. We may feel that we are knocking on heavens of brass, but Jesus promised that God entertained our prayer.

### **An argument from logic 11:11-13**

11:11-12 These two examples further enforce the point that God will respond to our prayers, and they stress that He will do so kindly (cf. Matt. 7:9-10). Since God is our heavenly Father, He will certainly do no less than a normal earthly father would do. Even a good earthly father would not give his son who asked for "a fish" or "an egg": "a snake" or "a scorpion." A snake can look like a fish, and scorpions sometimes breed in eggs.<sup>579</sup> Scorpions are known to pierce an egg, eat what is inside, and then use the shell as their home. Such a response would be cruel, rather than loving, since the substitution would involve no real giving—but deception and even danger.

11:13 Jesus drew His climactic conclusion (cf. Matt. 7:11). Since God is perfect, He will do much more than a sinful earthly father would do. When Jesus gave this teaching, the Holy Spirit did not yet indwell every believer (Acts 2:33; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). The greatest blessing God could give a believer then was the possession of His Spirit. Thus the gift of the Holy Spirit was God's greatest possible gift for the disciples who first heard this teaching. In effect, Jesus was saying that the heavenly Father would give the very best gifts to those who ask Him. Believers today do not need to ask God to give them the Holy Spirit, because He did this when they trusted in His Son (Rom. 8:9).

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<sup>578</sup>Green, p. 449.

<sup>579</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:242.

The fact that God gives only good gifts to His children explains why He does not give us everything we request, even things that look good to us. Thus we need to understand Jesus' promise—that God will give us what we ask (vv. 9-10)—as referring only to *things that are good for us*. God will without fail give only what is best to His children who request of Him in prayer.

"There is no such thing as unanswered prayer. The answer given may not be the answer we desired or expected. Even when it is a refusal of our wishes it is the answer of the love and the wisdom of God."<sup>580</sup>

In this important teaching on prayer, Jesus gave His disciples a distinctive prayer to pray, that expressed appropriate concerns for them based on their unique relationship to God. Then He showed how eager and ready God was to answer their prayers. Finally, He promised that God would definitely respond to their prayers, but only by giving them truly good gifts. Throughout, He stressed the character of God and the disciples' privileged relationship to Him.<sup>581</sup>

### **C. THE RESULTS OF POPULAR OPPOSITION 11:14-54**

Luke recorded the climax of the rejection of Jesus and His message, and then narrated Jesus' instructions to His disciples about how they should live in view of that rejection.

#### **1. The Beelzebul controversy 11:14-26 (cf. Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:19-30)**

The placement of these events in Luke's Gospel again raises the question of whether Luke recorded the same incident as Matthew and Mark, or if this was a similar but different one. I, along with many other students of the passages, believe it was probably a different occasion in view of the differences in the accounts.

The connecting idea with what precedes is the Holy Spirit (v. 13). Luke had stressed the Spirit's influence in Jesus' life and ministry, but the religious leaders rejected that possibility, concluding rather that Satan controlled Jesus.

"To understand the significance of Jesus' miraculous work, especially his exorcisms, one must understand 11:14-23."<sup>582</sup>

11:14-16 Luke again first presented the setting for the confrontation that followed. Jesus cast "a demon" out of a man whom it had made "mute." This sign of His messiahship amazed the multitudes that observed it (cf. 4:36; 9:42-43;

<sup>580</sup>Barclay, p. 149.

<sup>581</sup>For a biblical theology of prayer, see Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer*.

<sup>582</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 317.

et al.). Some of them attributed Jesus' power to the head demon, namely: Satan (v. 18). The spelling "Beelzebul" (NASB) is most common in the Greek text. "Beelzebub" (NIV) has come down to us from the Latin manuscript tradition. "Beelzebul" probably came from the Hebrew *baal zebul* meaning "Prince Baal." Baal was the chief Canaanite deity, and the Jews regarded him as the personification of all that was evil and Satanic (cf. Matt. 10:25). Another possible meaning is "lord of the dwelling" (cf. Mark 3:22).

Others demanded from Jesus an even more powerful "sign" than demon exorcism to validate His messianic claim. This unwarranted request constituted a test or provocation of Jesus.

"The narrator previously distinguished between the attitudes of the scribes/Pharisees and the crowd or people (7:29-30). Now the opposition to Jesus characteristic of the former is emerging in the latter."<sup>583</sup>

11:17-20 Jesus at least "knew" the "thoughts" of his critics by their request for a greater sign (v. 16), if not by prophetic insight.

"Luke shows a specific interest in Jesus' uncanny awareness of what goes on in people's minds . . ."<sup>584</sup>

Jesus argued, first, that the head of an army would hardly work with his enemy against his own troops. Second, if Satan was behind Jesus' exorcisms, it was logical to assume that he was behind the exorcisms that some recognized Jewish exorcists performed. Jewish exorcists practiced incantations against demons effectively (cf. Acts 19:13-14). Jesus' antagonists would have been unwilling to concede that Satan was behind these Jewish exorcisms. They wanted to maintain a double standard, believing that: their approved exorcists operated with God's power, but Jesus used Satan's. God gave the Jewish exorcists their power too. Jesus believed in a real devil who heads a kingdom that is strong and united (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; 6:10-18).

Jesus' allusion to "the finger of God" (v. 20) goes back to Moses' miracles in Pharaoh's court (Exod. 8:19). There the Egyptians confessed that "the finger (i.e., active power) of God" was at work when they could no longer reproduce Moses' miracles. Jesus claimed the same divine source of power for His miracles. His miracles indicated the coming of the Messiah, and the approach of His "kingdom." This was Jesus' third argument.

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<sup>583</sup>Tannehill, 1:150.

<sup>584</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 638.

- 11:21-22 The "strong man" in this parable is Satan, and the "stronger" man is Jesus. Satan had amassed much booty in terms of human captives, and had kept these people imprisoned. Jesus had come, had "attacked" Satan in the instances of His exorcisms, and had "overpowered" him. He had removed Satan's defenses, namely, his demons, and had set free those whom he had taken captive.
- 11:23 Continuing the figure of battle, Jesus reminded His hearers that whoever was not on Jesus' side was on His enemy's side. Changing the figure to reaping and herding, He made the same point again. Laborers in God's field, and among God's flock, who do not "gather" people—as sheaves and sheep into the barn and fold of the kingdom—with Jesus, "scatter" them abroad. There is no neutral ground. People either support Jesus or oppose Him.
- 11:24-26 These verses were probably a word of warning to Jesus' critics, who were scattering without Him, rather than gathering with Him (v. 23).<sup>585</sup> If so, they climax Jesus' argument. They warn against casting out demons, which some of these critics were evidently doing, without replacing them with something stronger, namely, the life of God that entered those who believed in Jesus (cf. John 3:16). A formerly demon-possessed person, who did not believe on Jesus, was in greater danger after his exorcism than he was before it. The expelled demon could return to inhabit his or her spiritually empty spirit with additional demons.

These final words then carried Jesus' warning further. Not only was it bad to oppose Jesus and attribute His works to Satan, but it was worse to exercise God's expulsive power without also preaching the gospel to people.

## **2. The importance of observing God's Word 11:27-28**

Instead of attacking Jesus' works, His critics should have received and obeyed His words. A woman's comment, shouted out from the crowd, triggered this response from Jesus, that provides a fitting conclusion to the previous incident.

The woman expressed how wonderful it must have been for Mary to have given birth to such a son as Jesus. This was an indirect way of complimenting Jesus. His response did not reflect unfavorably on Mary, nor did it bestow special status on her. Her privilege as the mother of the Messiah was great indeed (cf. 1:45). However, those who heard God's word of salvation through Jesus and His disciples, believed it, and acted upon it—had an even greater position. The implication that His hearers should do so was obvious. In the immediate context, the "word of God" was the teaching that Jesus had been giving. Jesus' words here should also warn us against venerating Mary too highly.

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<sup>585</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 479.

"Such praise must have been peculiarly unwelcome to Christ, as being the exaltation of only His Human Personal excellence, intellectual or moral. It quite looked away from that which He would present: His Work and Mission as the Saviour. Hence it was, although from the opposite direction, as great a misunderstanding as the Personal depreciation of the Pharisees."<sup>586</sup>

"Something very impressive is present in Jesus, but to be impressed is not enough. What counts is committed response to the message that Jesus brings."<sup>587</sup>

### **3. The sign of Jonah 11:29-32 (cf. Matt. 12:38-42; Mark 8:11-12)**

This teaching responded to the request of Jesus' critics for a sign (v. 16; cf. Matt. 16:1-4). It is the second main part of His answer to these opponents.

11:29-30 Luke's reference to the "crowds increasing" ties this verse in with the previous incident involving the criticism of His miracles (vv. 14-26). "Jonah" himself was the "sign" of impending judgment "to the Ninevites." His supernatural appearance and preaching triggered widespread repentance. Likewise the supernatural appearance and preaching of Jesus and the repentance that accompanied it signified impending judgment. The difference was that the positive response to Jonah's ministry, by Gentiles no less, postponed God's judgment. The negative response to Jesus' ministry did nothing to postpone God's judgment on Israel. This judgment consisted of the postponement of the kingdom and the destruction of Jerusalem. The rejection of Jesus' preaching was even more serious because miracles accompanied it. The title "Son of Man" presents Jesus as superior to Jonah.

Luke did not mention Jesus' reference to Jonah's three days and nights in the great fish, though that would be a sign that Jesus had come from God after the Resurrection (cf. Matt. 12:40).

*"The sign of Jonah* here refers to his prophetic call to repentance rather than to the resurrection foreshadowed by Jonah's return from the belly of the great fish."<sup>588</sup>

11:31-32 The "Queen of the South" (i.e., the Queen of Sheba) traveled a great distance to hear Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-13), yet the people of Palestine ("men of this generation") paid little attention to Jesus' wisdom. This was true even though the Son of Man was "greater than Solomon." Therefore their "judgment" was sure. Similarly, the people ("men") "of

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<sup>586</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:202.

<sup>587</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 649.

<sup>588</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1718.

Nineveh . . . repented at the preaching of Jonah," yet Jesus' hearers did not repent at His preaching despite His superiority to Jonah. Furthermore the Queen and the Ninevites both responded to spoken messages without any authenticating signs.

The neuter "something" may refer generally to the authority of the Son of Man, but it may also refer specifically to: His superior wisdom in the first comparison, and to His preaching in the second. Another view is that the "something" refers to God's action in Christ.<sup>589</sup> Significantly for Luke's original readers, the people who responded so admirably to the two Old Testament characters Jesus cited were Gentiles. By comparing Himself to the most wise and glorious Israelite king and the most effective Jewish prophet (in terms of audience response), Jesus taught His superiority in both roles.

#### **4. The importance of responding to the light 11:33-36**

This exhortation concluded the controversy about signs (vv. 16, 29-33), as Jesus' teaching about the importance of obeying God's Word (vv. 27-28) concluded the controversy about casting out demons (vv. 14-26). Both conclusions called on Jesus' hearers to respond to His teaching rather than continuing in the darkness of ignorance.

#### **The parable of the hidden lamp 11:33 (cf. Matt. 5:15)**

This was another parable that Jesus evidently used repeatedly during His itinerant teaching ministry. In Matthew's account, He used it to encourage the disciples to bear witness publicly (cf. Luke 8:16). Here, He used it to illustrate His own role as someone who dispels darkness.

". . . the ministry of Jesus was no hidden and obscure thing. It shines out brightly for all who would find their way by means of its brightness."<sup>590</sup>

#### **The parable of the bad eye 11:34-36 (cf. Matt. 6:22-23)**

11:34 Jesus also used this parable, at least the negative part of it, in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus compared the human eye to a lamp in both situations, not in the sense of being sources of light but as vehicles through which illumination comes. In Matthew's Gospel, He taught that a person's attitudes can affect his ability to "see" (i.e., comprehend spiritual truth), with the emphasis on the eye itself. Here, the emphasis is on the "light," and the point is the importance of admitting the light, in this case the gospel message, by accepting Jesus' teaching. Failure to receive Jesus' teachings results in spiritual blindness. The clear or healthy eye represents the ability to comprehend truth as it is, to "see" clearly, whereas the bad eye represents the inability to do so.

<sup>589</sup>Morris, p. 202.

<sup>590</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 659.

Another, albeit less popular, interpretation understands the eye as allowing light to go out of the body, rather than allowing it to come in.

"According to a physiology prevalent in Greco-Roman antiquity, the eyes do not function by allowing light to come in but by allowing the body's own light to go out. The eye is the conduit or source of the light that makes sight possible."<sup>591</sup>

11:35 If a person rejects Jesus' light (truth) for another so-called light, he or she will discover that the other light brings no true illumination, but "darkness." Normally people's eyes respond to light by admitting it, and the result is their illumination. That is how Jesus wanted His hearers to respond to His teaching, because the result would be spiritual illumination.

11:36 This verse presents the alternative to the situation described in the preceding verse. It concludes Jesus' exhortation on a positive note. Jesus, of course, used the "body" to represent "the whole" inner person, the personality, in the parable. The person who believes all of Jesus' teaching will experience "full" illumination.

#### **5. The climax of Pharisaic opposition 11:37-54 (cf. Matt. 23:1-36; Mark 12:38-40)**

The theme of opposition to Jesus continues in this section, but the source of opposition changes from the people generally to the Pharisees and, even more particularly, to their lawyers (scribes). Jesus' responses also changed from warnings and exhortations to denunciations. Jesus condemned the teachings of the Pharisees, the light that was darkness (v. 35), rather than the Pharisees and the lawyers themselves.

The differences in the Matthean account of Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:1-36) raise questions about what Jesus really said and how the evangelists recorded what He said.

"We know from his practice elsewhere that Matthew combines material from several sources and rearranges the order, whereas on the whole Luke does not conflate his sources or re-order his material. It is, therefore, unlikely that Matthew has preserved the original order here . . ." <sup>592</sup>

Probably we are again dealing with two different teaching occasions. This is Jesus' last address to the Pharisees recorded in Luke.

<sup>591</sup>Green, p. 465. Cf. Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 659.

<sup>592</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 492.

### The question of true cleanliness 11:37-41

"Bitter as was the enmity of the Pharisaic party against Jesus, it had not yet so far spread, nor become so avowed, as in every place to supersede the ordinary rules of courtesy."<sup>593</sup>

11:37-38 Many of Jesus' teaching opportunities arose during meals (cf. 14:1-24; Matt. 15:1-20; 23:1-36; Mark 7:1-22). This was one such occasion. Jesus offended His host by not washing ritually before eating. Luke omitted an explanation of the Jewish custom (cf. Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-4), and only recorded the reason for the Pharisee's objection. The Mosaic Law did not demand this washing (Gr. *baptizo*), but it had become customary, and the Pharisees viewed it as a safeguard against defilement.

11:39-40 Jesus did not criticize this Pharisee and his religious brethren for washing their hands before eating, or for observing ritual purification beyond what the law required. He used His host's objection as an occasion to point out the hypocrisy involved in Pharisaic teaching and practice. Those present would have understood Jesus' action as a breach of courtesy.<sup>594</sup> Evidently Jesus was willing to take this action because it was important for Him to issue these warnings to the Pharisees. The Pharisees typically neglected more important things while stressing the necessity of much less important things (cf. 6:27-36; 10:25-37). By washing ceremonially, they were only doing half of what God expected of them. They needed to purify themselves internally as well as externally. To wash the outside of a person, and not cleanse the inside, is as foolish as only washing the outside of a bowl without washing the inside.

"Did not he (the potter or God) who made the outside also make the inside (and therefore you must cleanse both)?"<sup>595</sup>

"The way to clean up a dirty vocabulary is not to brush your teeth but to cleanse your heart."<sup>596</sup>

11:41 Jesus' point was that giving to the poor would demonstrate that the person had cleansed himself inwardly and adequately. He may have been continuing the metaphor and speaking of a dish or vessel, which the NIV has supplied, but He was thinking of a person. He may have meant that the Pharisees should "give" food as an act of "charity," but the giving of what was theirs was the important thing.

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<sup>593</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:204.

<sup>594</sup>Green, p. 471.

<sup>595</sup>Plummer, p. 310.

<sup>596</sup>Wiersbe, 1:217.

### Three woes against the Pharisees 11:42-44

Jesus now specified two examples of the Pharisees' spiritual myopia (vv. 42-43), and then He compared them to something similar that defiles (v. 44). Emphasis on externals leads to error. When people "concentrate on the trivial they are apt to overlook the important."<sup>597</sup> Jesus announced His condemnation with the use of "woe."

11:42-43 The Pharisees typically tithed scrupulously, even their "garden herbs," two of which Jesus specified (cf. Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:22-29; 26:12-15). This was acceptable to Jesus, but they neglected giving more important things to God, including "justice" and "love." Normally the leaders of the synagogues occupied the front ("chief") "seats," so Jesus was criticizing the Pharisees' love of position and glory. "Respectful greetings" in public places pandered to their pride too.

11:44 The Pharisees scrupulously avoided touching graves to avoid ritual defilement. However, they themselves defiled other people who contacted them, as hidden graves defiled those who unknowingly walked over them (cf. Num. 19:16). While trying to remain *ritually pure* themselves, they were *spiritually defiling* many other people who were unaware of the Pharisees' evil influence on them. Their sins contaminated the whole nation. The Jews usually whitewashed these graves to warn people away from them.<sup>598</sup>

### Three woes against the lawyers 11:45-52

11:45-46 The lawyers (or scribes) were a distinct group, though most of them were Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees often acted together. The "lawyer" who spoke up wanted to distinguish his group as less guilty than the Pharisees, but Jesus refused to do so—because the scribes were as hypocritical as the Pharisees. The lawyers involved themselves more in the interpretation of the Law, whereas the Pharisees generally advocated and enforced those interpretations. The former group was a professional class, and the latter a religious party. By interpreting the Jewish traditions strictly, the scribes placed heavy moral burdens on the Jews. However, they had cleverly found ways of escaping their own responsibility to keep the Law, while at the same time giving the impression that they were obedient. This reflected lack of love for the rest of the Jews who had to labor under their demands. The Pharisees appear to have been offering little or no help or compassion for their fellow Jews who tried to follow their rules.

"The Mishnah lays it down that it is more important to observe the scribal interpretations than the Law itself (*Sanhedrin* 11:3). The reasoning is that if it was a serious

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<sup>597</sup>Morris, p. 204.

<sup>598</sup>Robertson, 2:167.

matter to offend against the Law which was sometimes hard to understand, it was a much more serious matter to offend against the interpretation which, the scribes thought, made everything clear."<sup>599</sup>

11:47-48 It was not morally wrong for the lawyers to take the lead in building new tombs to replace the older tombs of Israel's prophets. However, Jesus saw in this practice an ironic testimony to their opposition to God's recent prophets, specifically John the Baptist and Himself. By building these "tombs," the lawyers appeared to be honoring "the prophets," but they were also walling them in, and sealing them off from the people. They effectually did this when they turned the people away from the prophets whom God had recently sent to Israel. In this, they were following in the footsteps of their ancestors who "killed" the prophets.

"The attitude of the Scribes to the prophets was paradoxical. They professed a lip service and a deep admiration for the prophets. But the only prophets they admired were dead prophets; when they met a living one they tried to kill him."<sup>600</sup>

The relatives of a guilty criminal have sometimes given money to the family members of the victim of the criminal's crimes, blood money to atone for their shared guilt. Perhaps the lawyers were building the prophets' tombs with the same motivation.<sup>601</sup>

11:49-51 The lawyers claimed the greatest wisdom in Israel by declaring that their interpretations of Scripture were the correct ones. However, Jesus cited a greater Source of "wisdom": God.

The "Wisdom of God" may be a title for Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3).<sup>602</sup> However, it seems unusual for Jesus to refer to Himself this way. Besides, what follows is Old Testament revelation. It could mean "God in His wisdom"—making God the source of the words that follow (NIV).<sup>603</sup> God is definitely the ultimate source of wisdom and the wisdom that follows in the context, but this is an interpretation of the text rather than a translation of it. Another possibility is that it means "divine wisdom," and refers to Wisdom personified (cf. Prov. 1:20-33; 8).<sup>604</sup> However, what follows is not a revelation of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament that such a personification would imply.

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<sup>599</sup>Morris, p. 205.

<sup>600</sup>Barclay, p. 162.

<sup>601</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, "'You Build the Tombs of the Prophets' [Luke 11:47-51; Matt. 23:29-31]," *Studia Evangelica* 4 (1968):187-93.

<sup>602</sup>Geldenhuis, p. 346.

<sup>603</sup>Danker, p. 146; Manson, p. 102.

<sup>604</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 503.

The words that follow (vv. 49-51) are not a quotation from the Old Testament. Rather they embody the essence of Old Testament revelation about the fates of the prophets and those who oppose them. Therefore I tend to think that the "Wisdom of God" refers to the Old Testament that Jesus here summarized and added to (i.e., fulfilled, established).

The content of this revelation was that God's people would typically reject the prophets and messengers (cf. 9:1-6; 10:1-16) He sent them. The result would be that God would hold the present "generation" of rejecters responsible. This last rejection would be "the straw that broke the camel's back." It was the rejection of God's *own Son*, not just His servants (cf. 20:9-19). That would prove to be the rejection that would add the *last measure of guilt* that would result in God pouring out His wrath (Jerusalem's destruction, A.D. 70; Israel's scattering; Holocaust) for all those unjustified murders throughout history. "Abel" was the first righteous martyr (Gen. 4:8), and "Zechariah" the prophet the last (cf. Matt. 23:35; 2 Chron. 24:21-22). There had probably been other victims since Zechariah, but his murder was the last one in Old Testament history.

11:52 Jesus' third woe against the lawyers condemned them for taking "the key" of spiritual "knowledge" away from the people. This "key" is probably a reference to Jesus' teachings. Jesus called this "the key of knowledge," not "the keys of the kingdom" (cf. Matt. 16:19). The scribes professed to have the key to the understanding of the Old Testament. The people viewed them as the experts in it. However, they rejected Jesus' teachings, and therefore "did not enter" into the knowledge that acceptance of His teachings would have opened to them. In addition, they opposed Jesus, and thereby discouraged the people "who were entering" into that knowledge. This last woe is the climax of the six (vv. 42-52), and revealed the most serious offense of Israel's religious leaders.

Some interpreters view this verse as a clear statement that the messianic kingdom was a present reality when Jesus spoke these words.<sup>605</sup> However, I believe this conclusion is improper for the following reasons. First, "knowledge" is the stated subject of the verse, not the kingdom. Second, the subject of the kingdom is not in the context, but the subject of spiritual understanding is (vv. 33-51). Third, the Gospel writers did not present Jesus as inaugurating the kingdom at His first advent, but as offering it, and then postponing it, due to the Jews' rejection of their Messiah (cf. Matt. 12).

### **The hostility of the Pharisees and lawyers 11:53-54**

These inflammatory words of criticism and condemnation fanned the smoldering embers of Pharisaic hostility into an inferno of hatred and hostility. Luke wrote that these religious leaders now "questioned Him closely on many subjects." He had challenged

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<sup>605</sup>E.g., *Ibid.*, p. 507.

their expertise. Now they sought to defend themselves by discrediting Him. They were "plotting against Him," seeking to trip Him up and trap Him. They also tried to get Him to say something wrong, unwise, or inappropriate. This antagonism escalated shortly after the encounter that Luke just described (vv. 37-52). These verses document the Jewish religious leaders' official rejection of Jesus (cf. Matt. 12; Mark 12).

Luke's original readers would have learned the importance of accepting and believing Jesus' teachings as a result of Luke's selection of material in this section (11:14-54). To fail to do so results in dire consequences. Listening to the Word of God continues to be a major emphasis in this section. Furthermore, the hypocrisy that characterized the Pharisees and scribes, can also infect disciples of Jesus if they elevate ritual observance above real worship. Jesus developed this idea in the next pericope (12:1-12).

"The issues Jesus raises here [vv. 37-54] are dangers that those of a conservative theological bent always face. In pursuit of truth and the way of God, far too many people conduct their zeal for righteousness by making sure that every 'i' is dotted and every 't' crossed, and by watching over others to make sure they are acting properly. On the other hand, these same people have often lost sensitivity to God's call for justice. God wants us to care about those whose plight is less fortunate than our own (Rom. 12:16)."<sup>606</sup>

#### **D. THE INSTRUCTION OF THE DISCIPLES IN VIEW OF JESUS' REJECTION 12:1—13:17**

Teaching of the disciples continues as primary in this part of the third Gospel (9:51—19:10). Jesus' words to them at the beginning of the present section (12:1—13:17) broadened to include the crowds toward the end. Verses 12:1—13:9 are essentially one continuous discourse, with emphasis on vigilance in the face of crisis.<sup>607</sup>

"The coming judgment and the need for proper preparation are the threads that tie all of chapter 12 together."<sup>608</sup>

#### **1. The importance of fearless confession 12:1-12 (cf. Matt. 10:19-20, 26-33)**

Jesus used His condemnation of the Pharisees' hypocrisy as an occasion to warn His disciples against being hypocritical. The context of this teaching in Matthew's Gospel is Jesus' instruction of the Twelve before He sent them on their mission. Luke recorded that He also taught His disciples the importance of fearless witness under persecution as they moved toward Jerusalem.

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<sup>606</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 333.

<sup>607</sup>Green, p. 476.

<sup>608</sup>M. Bailey, p. 129.

### The leaven of the Pharisees 12:1-3

12:1 Luke set the scene for the following teaching by explaining that it happened when Pharisaic hostility had become intense (11:53-54). What Jesus proceeded to tell His disciples had opposition and persecution in view. In spite of this antagonism, Jesus had a very large following (Gr. *myriadon*, lit. ten thousand, but used here hypocritically as a superlative, cf. Acts 19:19; 21:20). Evidently its size kept increasing (cf. 11:29). However, the lesson that follows was for His disciples (cf. 20:45).

"Leaven" or yeast (Gr. *zymes*) has a pervasive effect and therefore is a good illustration of the influence of "hypocrisy." Elsewhere, Jesus warned the disciples of the *teaching* of the Pharisees, that He likened to leaven (Matt. 16:6, 12; Mark 8:15). Here he used leaven as an example of their hypocrisy. Leaven, as hypocrisy, starts small but expands and affects everything it touches.

"What is this yeast? Jesus defines it as 'hypocrisy,' an unfortunate transliteration of a Greek lexeme [i.e., a lexical unit of language], the meaning of which in Luke is closely aligned with the usage in the LXX; there it describes 'a person whose conduct is not determined by God and is thus "godless."' . . . Hence, Jesus' point is not that they are play-acting, but that Jesus regards them as misdirected in their fundamental understanding of God's purpose and, therefore, incapable of discerning the authentic meaning of the Scriptures and, therefore, unable to present anything other than the impression of piety."<sup>609</sup>

12:2-3 Nevertheless what is now unknown because of hypocrisy will one day become known. This is a general principle. On the human level there are exceptions to this principle, but Jesus undoubtedly had God, who knows all secrets, in mind. Verse 3 probably is a positive encouragement rather than an ominous threat. Jesus used it that way in the other contexts in which He made this statement (cf. 8:17; Matt. 10:26-27; Mark 4:22). If so, He meant the good news witness, that the disciples might try to hide because of the threat of persecution, would come out into the open eventually.

### Preparing for judgment 12:4-12

"The teaching about the Pharisees and the judgment leads naturally into a more general section on judgment and the importance of being prepared for it."<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>609</sup>Green, pp. 480-81.

<sup>610</sup>Morris, p. 208.

- 12:4 Jesus identified what followed as particularly important (cf. 6:27; 11:9; 12:5, 8). The unusual address "My friends" (Gr. *philois*) added a further encouragement to represent Jesus boldly, in spite of opposition, even though it might result in death. This word expressed confidence in the disciples, and approval of them as those entrusted with His secrets and who do His will. It contrasts with the rejection they faced in the world. This is the only place in the Synoptics where Jesus called His disciples His friends (cf. Matt. 12:48-50; John 15:13-15). Friends are not just people with whom we share common life, but those with whom we also share common commitments and goals. The writer of Hebrews made a similar distinction when he wrote of the Lord's partners (Gr. *metochoi*, Heb. 1:9).
- 12:5 Rather than fearing their persecutors, the disciples should "fear" God more. God has the power to affect eternal, not just temporal, destiny. Jesus was not implying here that the disciples would end up in eternal "hell" if they proved unfaithful (cf. John 10:27-28; 2 Tim. 2:11-13). He was warning them about the possibility of losing an eternal reward. He was citing God's punitive power to deter hypocrisy. This is Luke's only reference to hell (Gr. *geenna*), but elsewhere it is a place of eternal torment (cf. Matt. 5:22; 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-48; James 4:12; 1 Enoch 27:2).
- "Jesus taught the reality of hell unambiguously."<sup>611</sup>
- 12:6-7 The point of these two illustrations was that God is aware of more insignificant things than the disciples, yet He has concern for these things. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater (cf. 11:13). Since God knows about and has concern for these less important things, He will surely care for the disciples who are "more valuable." Sparrows were a cheap food source for the poor, and the "cent" (Gr. *assarion*) was a Roman coin worth about one sixteenth of a denarius, a day's wage (cf. Matt. 10:29).<sup>612</sup> These illustrations balance Jesus' singular warning to fear God (v. 5), with a double assurance of His fatherly concern for disciples. However, the Father's intimate acquaintance with their lives also constitutes a warning against hypocrisy.
- 12:8-9 Another special preface indicated the certainty and importance of what followed (cf. vv. 4-5). Confessing the "Son of Man" (i.e., Jesus as the divine Messiah) publicly (cf. Acts 7:55-56), or denying Him publicly, were the disciples' options (cf. 9:26). Confessing (Gr. *homologesei*) and denying (Gr. *arnesetai*) are polar expressions. In polarization, extreme terms highlight the alternatives. The disciples had to make a choice. Their choice would determine God's acknowledgment, or lack of acknowledgment, of them "before the angels" and the Father (cf. 7:28; Matt. 10:32-33; 11:11). The time of God's action will evidently be when

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<sup>611</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 959.

<sup>612</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 678.

He evaluates their lives as they stand before Him. For Christians this will be at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15). More or fewer rewards are in view. Jesus appears to have been viewing the totality of a disciple's witness, not every instance of it since He spoke of a final heavenly evaluation.

- 12:10 Criticism of Jesus was forgivable, but rejection of the Holy Spirit's testimony that Jesus was the Christ was not (cf. Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29). This warning continued the cautions against denying Jesus. Jesus implied that His disciples might face temptations to repudiate faith in Him. To deny Him publicly was bad, but to repudiate one's faith in Him was worse. Jesus did not mean that God would withhold pardon from the disciple who did this, or that he would lose his salvation. He presented the alternative, not as a real possibility for disciples necessarily, but as a warning that showed the seriousness of that type of denial—to discourage apostasy. To "blaspheme" someone means to speak ill or abusively of him or her.<sup>613</sup>
- 12:11-12 Some of the disciples could anticipate having to confess their belief in Jesus before hostile religious and political bodies, both Jewish and Gentile. They should not become anxious about the wording of their testimonies on those occasions. The situations themselves would provide enough intimidation. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit's help in formulating the proper defense then. The same "Holy Spirit," whom they might feel pressure to "blaspheme against" (v. 10), would help them if they remained faithful to Him (cf. 21:14-15; Matt. 10:19-20). Jesus was not speaking about normal preaching situations, but giving oral defense under persecution. Luke recorded many instances of this in Acts (e.g., Acts 4:8; 6:10; 7:55; et al.). Modern persecuted disciples have also testified to the Spirit's supernatural assistance of them that Jesus promised here.

The total effect of this teaching was to encourage the disciples to testify of their faith in Jesus—boldly—when faced with the temptation to remain silent or to deny their faith (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). All disciples need this encouragement frequently.

"Luke 12:4-34 is tied together by word links which highlight central themes. In addressing the disciples, Jesus is trying to counter two kinds of fear (note *phobeomai* in 12:4, 5, 7, 32) or anxiety (*merimnao* in 12:11, 22, 25, 26). Threatening opposition may cause fear (12:4, 7) and anxiety (12:11). Lack of provision for food and clothing may cause anxiety (12:22, 25, 25) and fear (12:32)."<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>613</sup>See Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of Man Seated at God's Right Hand and the Debate over Jesus' 'Blasphemy,'" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>614</sup>Tannehill, 1:244.

## **2. The importance of the eternal perspective 12:13-21**

Jesus continued to teach His disciples the importance of following Him faithfully. Responding to a request from someone in the crowd, presumably not a disciple, Jesus warned against greed. Greed is one of the greatest temptations that disciples, as well as other people, face. It has lured many disciples from the path of faithfulness.

"If in the earlier section the hypocrisy of the Pharisees introduced teaching for the disciples on avoiding hypocrisy and being fearless in confession, Jesus now uses the avarice of the crowd to introduce teaching for the disciples on trust in God and freedom from greed for material possessions (12:22-34)."<sup>615</sup>

### **The temptation of greed 12:13-15**

12:13 Evidently the person who made this request viewed Jesus as an ethical authority ("teacher," Gr. *didaskale*, cf. 7:40) that his brother would respect. His request appears to have been strictly materialistic, with no spiritual overtones. The man voiced a legitimate concern. The request provided the setting for the teaching that followed.

12:14 "Man" is a forceful address, but it was not insulting (cf. 5:20; 22:58, 60). By asking His question, Jesus forced the man to consider who Jesus was. This was the fundamental issue for this man. He was appealing to Jesus as a "judge," just as the Jews often appealed to rabbis to settle such disputes.<sup>616</sup> Jesus was in essence asking the man if he realized what He was doing—i.e., who Jesus was as evidenced by His messianic works. Ironically, God had appointed Jesus as this man's Judge, as well as everyone else's Judge. Hopefully the man faced the question of Jesus' authority over him and became a believer, but this was not Luke's concern in recording this incident.

By answering as He did, Jesus was also refusing to pass judgment on the situation the man had presented to Him. He was competent to deal with it, but He refused to do so because He wanted to deal with another issue, namely, the man's materialism.

"He [Jesus] came to bring men to God, not to bring property to men."<sup>617</sup>

12:15 Jesus warned the man and the crowd, including His disciples, against "every form of greed."

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<sup>615</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 521.

<sup>616</sup>Morris, p. 212.

<sup>617</sup>Ibid.

"Greed is the desire to have more, to get one's hands on whatever one can, to acquire without reference to one's own specific needs or the situation of others. The greedy person is confused about life, since a humanly meaningful and satisfying life has very little to do with how extensive one's possessions are."<sup>618</sup>

Greed is wrong because it exalts "possessions" to a place of importance that is greater than the place they occupy in life. Quality of "life" is not proportionate to one's possessions. There is more to life than that. Even an "abundance" of possessions does not bring fullness of life. The man had implied by his request that his life would be better if he had more possessions. Jesus said that was not necessarily so. People should seek God—rather than riches—because God *does* bring fulfillment into life (cf. Col. 3:1-4).

"John Wesley's rule of life was to *save* all he could and *give* all he could. When he was at Oxford he had an income of £30 a year. He lived on £28 and gave £2 away. When his income increased to £60, £90 and £120 a year, he still lived on £28 and gave the balance away."<sup>619</sup>

### **The parable of the rich fool 12:16-21**

- 12:16-18 Jesus told the parable of the rich fool to illustrate His point (v. 15). He presented the "rich man" as an intelligent farmer. The farmer did only what was reasonable. Jesus was not faulting him for his plans. Likewise the man's concern about his inheritance was a legitimate concern (v. 13).
- 12:19 The rich man's folly lay in what he failed to consider, not in the plans that he made. His words to himself indicate that he thought his life consisted in the abundance of his possessions alone—but there was more to life than he realized, namely: life beyond the grave. The man used a common form of address in speaking to himself (cf. Ps. 41:6, 12; 42:5). "Soul" or "self" translates the Greek *psyche* that frequently represents the whole person, as it does here (e.g., James 1:21; 5:20).
- 12:20 God said something different to the man than he had said to himself. This contrast shows the error of the rich man's thinking. In the Old Testament, a "fool" is essentially someone who disbelieves or disregards God (e.g., Ps. 14:1; cf. Luke 11:40). That is precisely what this man had done regarding the meaning of life. He had thought that he would be comfortable for many years to come (v. 19), but God demanded his life *that very* "night" (cf. James 4:13-16). This loss of life contrasts with his accumulation of

<sup>618</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 688.

<sup>619</sup>Barclay, p. 168.

possessions. Now he had nothing left, and his possessions would pass to his heirs (cf. Eccles. 2:18-19). This fact could not have escaped the notice of the man who posed the question about his inheritance (v. 13). Even if he got part of his brother's inheritance, he might not keep it long.

12:21 Jesus drew the application. A person who only enriches "himself," and does not lay up treasure in heaven ("toward God"), is a fool (cf. Matt. 6:19; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; James 1:10). "For himself" contrasts with "toward God." This translation preserves the form of the contrast in the Greek text. The point of the contrast is the difference between riches on earth and riches in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:19-21).

"The man in the story was called a fool for confusing time with eternity, his body for his soul, and what was his for what was God's."<sup>620</sup>

". . . as the grim Spanish proverb has it, 'There are no pockets in a shroud.'"<sup>621</sup>

In this teaching, with its illustrative parable, Jesus taught His disciples and the multitude to beware of a foolish attitude toward material possessions. The wrong attitude is that the richness of life depends on the richness of wealth. Disciples need to be aware of this viewpoint, because the desire to increase wealth can draw them away from following Jesus faithfully. This is especially true since Jesus promised them opposition and persecution, rather than wealth and comfort. Material possessions cannot provide the quality of life that intimacy with God can. Disciples should live with what God has revealed about life beyond the grave—specifically with reward or loss of reward clearly in view—rather than living for the present.

"A test of our heart is how we give. Are we generous or are we hoarders? This is a test that we have to engage in privately before the Lord. No one can tell someone else exactly how to answer such questions, for there is no magic percentage that is to be reached."<sup>622</sup>

### **3. God's provisions for disciples 12:22-34 (cf. Matt. 6:25-34)**

This pericope continues the subject of life and possessions (cf. "treasure" in vv. 21, 34). What Jesus implied in the parable of the rich fool He explicitly taught in these verses. His disciples should not think or act as the pagan world (v. 30) typified by the rich fool. From emphasis on greed and selfishness Jesus moved to worry, which is related.

12:22-23 Jesus addressed the following words more particularly to the disciples (cf. vv. 1, 13). It is foolish to store up material possessions with no regard for God. Therefore Jesus urged His disciples, who had considered God, to

<sup>620</sup>M. Bailey, p. 129.

<sup>621</sup>Barclay, p. 169.

<sup>622</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 346.

refrain from undue concern about possessions. The "life" (Gr. *psyche*) in view is the physical life (bodily function) that needs fuel. The "body" is the outward shell that needs covering. "Food" and "clothing" are just the needs of the present life. Consequently disciples should treat these needs as secondary, and not become anxious over them. There is more to life than these things. Formerly Jesus had warned against greed when one does not have possessions (v. 15). Now He warned against anxiety over them too. Anxiety ("worry") is foolish because life consists of "more than" what one eats and wears (cf. 4:4).

12:24 The "ravens" illustration shows that God provides for His creatures. The implication is that God will provide for people, and even more for His disciples, since they are more important to Him "than the birds." Jesus' choice of a raven for His illustration is remarkable, since ravens were rapacious and unclean birds of prey (Lev. 11:15), and are infamous for not feeding their own young, yet God makes sure that the young ravens eat. Birds do not and cannot provide for themselves as humans do and can, but God still provides for ("feeds") them. Again Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater (cf. vv. 6-7).

12:25 Did Jesus have age or stature in mind when He made this comparison? The NASB translators have rendered the Greek *pechys* as "cubit" and *helikia* as "life's span," interpreting Jesus' statement as a metaphor describing age. The NIV translators translated *pechys* as "hour" and *helikia* as "life." Both translations present Jesus speaking about the lengthening of life, not stature. This is understandable in view of verses 19-20. The rich fool could not extend his life. However, *pechys* means "cubit." It is a measure of distance rather than time. Probably Jesus used it metaphorically to refer to the least possible length of increase (cf. Ps. 39:5). The idea of wanting to increase one's height by 18 inches is ludicrous if taken literally. Hardly anyone would want to do that, though most people would like to lengthen their lives a little.

Jesus' point was that worry cannot prolong life any more than it can provide for life (v. 24). Worry can actually reduce one's life span.

12:26 Jesus drew the conclusion by arguing from the lesser to the greater again. If it is futile to worry about small matters that lie outside our control, it is even more foolish to worry about larger matters that lie even further outside our control.<sup>623</sup> The smaller matters include living longer, and the larger ones include all of life and its needs.

12:27 Jesus turned from zoology to botany to illustrate further the futility of worrying about material possessions. The flowers (Gr. *krinon*) cannot do anything whatsoever to provide for their own needs. They are totally

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<sup>623</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 963.

dependent on God. Still He provides for them and does so magnificently. He gives every common flower more glorious clothing than "Solomon," Israel's most glorious king, could provide for himself. Toiling and spinning to provide clothing seems to be in view. This was women's work in Jesus' day, in contrast to providing for the young (v. 24), which was men's work. Thus Jesus implied that His teaching was applicable to both male and female disciples.

12:28 "Grass" is a common term for all types of plant life. People burn the common vegetation for warmth, yet God has made it beautiful. How much more will God provide for people, who have a longer existence, and serve a higher purpose than the grass.

The disciples were "men of little faith" because they worried about the necessities of life rather than trusting God to provide these for them.

12:29 Obviously people have a responsibility to provide for their own needs (Gen. 1:29-30; 2 Thess. 3:10). Jesus was forbidding worrying over these things. He used hyperbole (i.e., overstatement for the sake of the effect) to make His point. The Greek word translated "worry" here is *meteorizesthe*, meaning "to raise up" or "to suspend." The idea is of a person in suspense or "up in the air" with anxiety about his or her needs.

"A little bit of reflection helps us to recognize that most worry is about things that can't be changed (the past), things that can't be controlled (the present), or things that might not happen (the future)."<sup>624</sup>

12:30 The reason worry about these things is wrong is that it is a pagan practice. The gracious heavenly "Father knows" His children "need these things." Therefore the believer should rely on Him to provide what is necessary.

"The materialistic world is like a group of passengers frantically scurrying to get the best deck chair on a sinking ship."<sup>625</sup>

12:31 Rather than seeking after material possessions, Jesus' disciples should seek after God's messianic "kingdom" and the lasting things associated with it. This means preparing oneself for it, and becoming an active participant in God's program leading up to it. Jesus promised that God would provide the material provisions of those who do so. The form of the Greek sentence and the context suggest that God's provision depends on the disciple's seeking for His kingdom. This is a conditional promise (cf. Matt. 6:33). The paratactic construction suggests a condition. Parataxis, literally

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<sup>624</sup>Inrig, p. 105.

<sup>625</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1722.

a placing side by side, is the literary device of setting clauses side by side without indicating with connecting words the co-ordinate or subordinate relation between them. Here, as in 10:28b for example, the first clause contains the condition for the realization of what the second clause contains.

However, we need to understand this promise in the larger context of life in a fallen world. We must realize that sometimes disciples get caught up in the consequences of sin and suffering, as do non-disciples. Even though God knows every sparrow that falls to the ground, He allows some to fall (Matt. 10:29-31). By the same token, He allows some of His disciples to experience privation and to die prematurely.

12:32 Jesus' command to turn attention from the acquisition of material provisions, to seeking kingdom concerns, undoubtedly created some uneasiness in His disciples. Likewise the hostility of the Pharisees and other enemies doubtless disturbed them. Therefore Jesus, speaking as the Shepherd of the "little flock" for which He would provide, urged them not to fear. They could release their hold on material things with the full assurance that the blessings of the kingdom—and eventual reward—would be theirs one day (cf. Dan. 7:27). The description of God as their "Father" giving them something, ties in with the earlier thought of receiving an inheritance (v. 13; cf. 11:13). Faithful disciples will receive an inheritance eventually.<sup>626</sup>

12:33 In view of this prospect, Jesus' disciples needed to cut back and live simply, so they could seek the kingdom ("treasure in heaven") without unnecessary materialistic distractions. By getting rid of ("selling") their "possessions," they were in effect preparing to receive their reward. Jesus pictured this as making "money belts" in anticipation of receiving something to put in them, namely: eternal rewards. Such "money belts" would not wear out, in contrast to the "money belts" that hold material wealth. Furthermore, their heavenly "treasure" would be secure, rather than vulnerable to theft and destruction (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-4).

"The generosity this text calls for has often been questioned. Are we really called to sell all our possessions? Jesus' point is that we must give up viewing what we call ours, as if it were a private possession to be hoarded."<sup>627</sup>

"The command to 'sell' and 'give' (or 'distribute') is not obsolete after Jesus' ascension, for the narrator portrays the life of the Jerusalem church in such a way as to indicate a

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<sup>626</sup>For helpful studies of the New Testament teaching about believers' inheritances, see Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 61-110; and William E. Brown, "The New Testament Concept of the Believer's Inheritance" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984).

<sup>627</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 352.

particular kind of fulfillment of Jesus' command. . . . The descriptions of this arrangement feature the words 'sell' and 'distribute' (using *piprasko* and *diamerizo* in Acts 2:45, *poleo* and *diadidomi* in 4:34-35), which correspond to the commands of Jesus in Luke 12:33 (*poleo* and *didomi*) and 18:22 (*poleo* and *diadidomi*)."<sup>628</sup>

12:34 As a principle, people think about and long for the place "where" their "treasure" resides: whether on earth or in heaven. Investing in heaven draws one's affections ("heart") in that direction, but if one's riches are on earth, he or she will think more about temporal things.

Jesus wanted His disciples to be free from unnecessary anxiety as they faced opposition and persecution for their faith. To remove it from them, He reminded them first that life consists of more than material possessions (vv. 22-24). Second, He told them that worry is foolish because it cannot effect objective change (vv. 25-28). Third, He noted that worry characterizes pagans (vv. 29-31). Then He encouraged them with an incentive not to fear, namely: that God would give them the kingdom (v. 32). Finally, He urged them to transfer their assets from earth to heaven. This would give them immediate peace as well as eventual reward (vv. 33-34).

#### **4. The coming of the Son of Man 12:35-48**

Jesus' teaching of the disciples continued without a break. However, the subject shifted from ceasing to be anxious about material possessions, to being ready for the Son of Man's coming. Freedom from anxiety can lead to laziness. Jesus did not want His disciples to be lazy but to prepare for His return. He taught this lesson with two parables. This teaching is the first indication in Luke that Jesus would leave His disciples and then return to them later.

#### **The importance of readiness 12:35-40**

Jesus pictured His disciples as servants waiting expectantly for their master's return (cf. Mark 13:33-37). He promised them a reward beyond imagination for their faithfulness. The parable of the 10 virgins is similar to this one in its teaching (cf. Matt. 25:1-13).

#### **Jesus' encouragement 12:35**

The word "treasure" occurred at the beginning and the end of the preceding teaching and indicated its subject (vv. 21, 34). In like manner, the word "ready" serves the same function in this pericope (vv. 35, 40). Disciples need to be ready for service, and ready to dispel the darkness, both in the future and in the present.

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<sup>628</sup>Tannehill, 1:247-48.

### The parable of the faithful servants 12:36-38

12:36 In this parable, the master returns *from* a wedding feast. Perhaps Jesus had the heavenly marriage supper of Jesus with His bride, the church, in view (cf. Rev. 4—5). The marriage supper in heaven will precede His second coming to the earth (Rev. 19). Jesus was not referring to the messianic banquet in verse 36, since that will *follow* the Second Coming. The disciples in view are on earth, and Jesus is returning from heaven. Thus this parable is most directly applicable to disciples living on the earth during the Great Tribulation. It also teaches Christian disciples to be ready for the Lord's coming at the Rapture. Jesus could have returned as soon as seven years after His ascension, so the disciples who first heard Him speak these words also needed to be ready.

"The sort of alertness Jesus counsels is not understood best as a set of activities but rather as a state of mind and heart. Disciples are to be the kind of people who are always on the alert."<sup>629</sup>

12:37-38 The blessing that Jesus promised was that the "Master" would "gird himself" (serve) His servants "and wait on them." This was unthinkable in Jesus' world (cf. John 13:3-8). However, Jesus enforced its certainty with a strong affirmation that Luke did not record Him using since 4:24. The messianic banquet *on earth*, at the beginning of the Millennium, is evidently in view here (vv. 37-38).

"Eschatological fulfillment, and specifically sharing in God's reign, is repeatedly pictured in terms of a festive meal in Luke. This association must be considered when interpreting the meal scenes and references to a future meal in the gospel, which have an unusually prominent place in Luke's account of the ministry of Jesus."<sup>630</sup>

Messiah will continue to serve His people during the messianic kingdom, but He will honor the faithful ("those slaves . . . on the alert") especially. The "second watch" was from 9:00 p.m. to midnight, and the "third" watch was from midnight to 3:00 a.m.—by Jewish reckoning. These periods represent the present world as a place (and time) of darkness, in which a disciple tends to sleep rather than bear witness.<sup>631</sup>

### The importance of watchfulness 12:39-40

12:39 Jesus chose another illustration of the importance of preparedness. He compared His return to the coming of a "thief" in this one. The point is that those whom He visited would not "expect" His return (v. 40). This

<sup>629</sup>Green, p. 501.

<sup>630</sup>Tannehill, 1:218. Cf. 13:28-29; 14:15-24; and 22:16, 18 and 30.

<sup>631</sup>E. Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament*, pp. 84-91.

illustration gives a warning, whereas the previous one provided encouragement. The previous one presented the possibility of delay, whereas this one features sudden and unexpected arrival.<sup>632</sup>

12:40 Jesus concluded by applying the illustrations. By using the title "Son of Man," Jesus may have been implying that the coming of the Son of Man that Daniel had predicted was in view (Dan. 7:13-14). That prophecy dealt with His coming in glory to rule. Elsewhere Jesus said He did not know the time of His return (Matt. 24:36). However, it will be unexpected because the exact day and hour are unknown, and His return will surprise many people (cf. Matt. 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13; Mark 13:32-33, 35).

### **The importance of faithfulness 12:41-48**

Faithfulness, as well, is important for disciples in view of the Lord's return, in addition to readiness.

#### **Peter's question 12:41**

Peter asked a clarifying question. He wanted to know if Jesus was aiming His warnings to "be ready" at the disciples alone, or at the disciples plus the crowd that was present and listening (v. 1).

#### **The parable of the two servants 12:42-48 (cf. Matt 24:45-51)**

12:42 Jesus answered Peter's question with one of His own. The answer to Jesus' question would give Peter the answer to his own question. Obviously the "faithful and sensible steward" pictures a disciple. Jesus' question also taught that He would give faithful stewards authority over other servants of His in the future (i.e., in the kingdom). Evidently, the words "give them their rations at the proper time" meant that faithful disciples, or loyal stewards, will be given positions of authority over fellow servants, by Christ, in the millennial kingdom (cf. 22:30; Matt. 19:28). It was common in Jesus' day for some servants to have authority over other servants within a household (cf. Matt. 18:21-35). Jesus was speaking of the *leaders* of His servants.

12:43-44 Leading disciples who faithfully serve their fellow servants of the Lord during His absence can count on receiving greater responsibility ("charge of all his possessions") after "He returns." These faithful disciples will become Jesus' chief administrators in the kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:27). Authority in the kingdom is in view.

12:45-46 However, the false disciple who disregards Jesus' warnings to be ready for His return, and who is unfaithful, abusive, self-centered, and self-indulgent, will end up "with the unbelievers."<sup>633</sup>

<sup>632</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 538.

<sup>633</sup>See Karl E. Pagenkemper, "Rejection Imagery in the Synoptic Parables," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:610 (April-June 1996):191-94.

"One of the most dangerous days in a man's life is when he discovers the word to-morrow."<sup>634</sup>

The judgments at the beginning of the messianic kingdom immediately following the Second Coming are in view (Matt. 25:31-46). Since these "disciples" perish eternally, they must correspond to the religious leaders of their day who were unbelievers. Their horrible end is appropriate, since they had great privilege and responsibility, but failed in their duty (having been pretenders and unbelievers from the start).

12:47-48 Jesus clarified the standard by which He would judge these unfaithful servants (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; Rom. 1:20—2:16; Heb. 10:28-29). The extent of their knowledge of their Master's will would affect their punishment (cf. Num. 15:30; Deut. 17:12; Ps. 19:13). Privilege increases responsibility (cf. 11:29-32; Rom. 2:12-13; James 3:1). This fact should not discourage disciples from discovering God's will, but should motivate them to maintain their faithfulness as they increase in knowledge. All of God's servants have a responsibility to know their Master's "will" as fully as they can—since they are His servants—and to *do* it.

"This concern to admonish the leaders of the church also appears in Jesus' farewell discourse the night before his death (22:24-38) and in Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18-35). These passages mention various abuses of position by church leaders."<sup>635</sup>

### **5. The coming distress 12:49-59**

Jesus' teaching on the same occasion continued. He clarified next that His disciples could anticipate a period of intense persecution. This is the reason He charged them to be faithful (vv. 41-48).

"In Luke 12:49—14:24, Jesus is calling on his audience to note the nature of the time—a time when God is making divisions among people, a time when people should be able to see what God is doing through Jesus, and a time when Israel had better respond before becoming nationally culpable for rejecting God's messenger."<sup>636</sup>

### **Division over Jesus 12:49-53 (cf. Matt. 10:34-36)**

Jesus addressed these words to His disciples primarily (cf. vv. 41-42).

12:49-50 In view of the context, Jesus' reference to "fire" must be as a symbol of *judgment* primarily, rather than purification, its other common meaning in

<sup>634</sup>Barclay, p. 172.

<sup>635</sup>Tannehill, 1:250.

<sup>636</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 363.

Scripture. He had just spoken of judging unfaithful (i.e., pretending, unbelieving) disciples (vv. 45-48). Now He explained that one of the purposes of His incarnation was to bring judgment to the earth (cf. 3:16). Perhaps Jesus wished this aspect of His ministry was taking place already, because it would result in the purification of His people and would usher in the kingdom. However, before Jesus' judging ministry could begin, Jesus Himself would have to undergo judgment, which He pictured as baptism. It would overwhelm Him, but only temporarily. He would rise from it as a person experiencing water baptism rises out of the water. The prospect of His baptism (i.e., the Cross) distressed Him, because it involved bearing God's wrath for the sins of humankind.

"What Jesus anticipates here is no mere fate or accident but a destiny, which God has set for him to fulfill."<sup>637</sup>

John wrote that God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world (John 3:17). He meant at His first coming. When Jesus returns at His second coming, then He will exercise judgment.

12:51-53 Evidently Jesus meant that He did not *only* come to bring ("grant") "peace on earth," but also "division." Jesus' earthly ministry began this division. From the time Jesus appeared preaching publicly, even households, the tightest social units, began to experience division. The many differences of opinion that divided people were caused by their personal beliefs about Jesus' person and work. This situation would continue. No familial relationship would escape the possibility of this division (cf. Mic. 7:6). This situation posed a crisis for the future. Chronologically, division in the Tribulation will precede peace in the Millennium.

"Since detachment from family is another repeated theme in Jesus' teaching about discipleship (see 9:57-62; 11:27-28; 14:26; 18:28-30), the inclusion of 12:51-53 helps to make Luke 12 a comprehensive discourse on central themes of Jesus' teaching to his disciples."<sup>638</sup>

### **Decision for Jesus 12:54-59**

Jesus again focused His teaching on the multitudes (cf. v. 13). He urged the people to discern the significance of the present times. This was important in view of the coming judgment and the present division of opinion concerning Himself. Luke did not indicate a chronological connection between this section and the preceding one, though there may have been one. He may have inserted this teaching here because of its logical connection with what precedes. In effect, Jesus was calling on the people to join the ranks of His faithful disciples before it was too late.

<sup>637</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 710.

<sup>638</sup>Tannehill, 1:252.

12:54-55 Rain clouds moved in from the Mediterranean to the west, and usually indicated showers. Southerly winds often brought hotter weather than normal, from the desert to the southeast. One commentary described this wind as: "a furnace blast of desert air (common in late spring) that can raise the temperature thirty degrees in an hour."<sup>639</sup>

12:56 The people could predict future weather from present signs, but they could not see that the events associated with Jesus' ministry indicated the arrival of Messiah (cf. Matt. 16:2-3). The present time was one of change and crisis. By calling His hearers "hypocrites," Jesus was saying He perceived that their professed inability to recognize Messiah's appearance was artificial. It was not that they could not see that He was the Messiah, but they did not want to see it in spite of the evidence.

"They understood the winds of earth, but not the winds of God; they could discern the sky, but not the heavens."<sup>640</sup>

12:57-59 Jesus urged His hearers to come to a decision before it was too late (cf. Matt. 5:25-26). They needed to "judge what" was "right" and believe on Jesus, before God judged them and condemned them for their unbelief. Jesus reminded them of the wisdom of settling their disputes with one another *before* they went to court, and a judge made the decision for them (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-11). The result of not settling out of court might be condemnation and confinement in a Roman debtors' prison, from which they could not escape easily. Jesus' point was that the unbelievers in the crowd needed to get things right with their adversary or "opponent" (Jesus) *before* the "judge" (God) sent them to "prison" (hell)!

The fact that Jesus presented the person in the illustration as escaping from prison by paying his debt, does not mean people can escape from hell by paying their way out. This false interpretation might lead one to pay money to the church in order to get his or her friends and or relatives out of hell (purgatory). Elsewhere Jesus taught that hell is a place of eternal torment from which no one can escape (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; John 5:29; Acts 24:15). Probably the man imprisoned in Jesus' illustration was not given an eternal sentence because it was an earthly prison, where a person could pay off his debt to be released. The parallels between divine judgment, and the human judgment that Jesus described in His illustration, are not exact.

### **6. A call to repentance 13:1-9**

Another comment by some people in the crowd led Jesus to give further teaching that He illustrated with another parable. The connecting idea with what precedes is judgment.

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<sup>639</sup>Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 362.

<sup>640</sup>Morris, p. 220.

### The need for repentance 13:1-5

- 13:1 Luke linked this incident chronologically with the preceding one. Apparently messengers from Jerusalem had just arrived with news about Pilate's act. This is the usual force of the Greek verb *apaggello*, translated "reported" or "told." Some "Galileans" had been in Jerusalem offering "sacrifices" at the temple. This may have been at Passover, since only at that time of year did non-priests offer sacrifices.<sup>641</sup> Pilate, the Roman governor of the province of Judea, may have killed them beside the altar in the temple courtyard. However, the figure of speech that Luke used to describe Pilate's action permits a somewhat looser interpretation. There are no extra-biblical references to this event currently extant.<sup>642</sup>
- 13:2-3 Many of the Jews in Jesus' day believed that tragedy or accident was the direct result of some personal sin (cf. John 9:1-3). Thus they concluded that the Galileans who had perished must have been *great* (or *greater*) "sinners." They based this view on a faulty theory of divine retribution (cf. Job 4:7; 8:20; 22:4-5). Jesus repudiated this theory and viewed the death of the Galileans as the consequence of sin generally. Jesus stressed the error of their view by placing the word "no" (Gr. *ouchi*) first in the sentence for emphasis (cf. v. 4). He then drew a conclusion. *Everyone* needs to "repent" because everyone is a sinner, all sin brings judgment, and "all" who do not repent "will perish."
- 13:4-5 Jesus reinforced His point by citing another apparently recent tragedy and repudiating the common view of judgment again. The pool of Siloam lay in the southeastern quarter of Jerusalem (cf. John 9:7, 11).<sup>643</sup> The Greek word *opheiletai* ("culprits" or "more guilty") means debtors. The Jews used this term as a synonym for sinners (cf. Matt. 6:12; 18:24). Jesus asserted that people who experience calamities are *not necessarily worse* sinners ("culprits") than people who do not. More important, "all" people "will" face God's judgment "unless" they "repent."

### The parable of the fruitless fig tree 13:6-9

This parable illustrated the need for repentance, but it also drew attention to God's grace in allowing time for repentance. This parable should not be confused with the incident in which Jesus cursed a fig tree (Matt. 21:19; Mark 11:13-14), or the shorter parable He told about a fig tree (Matt. 24:32).

- 13:6-7 This parable as a whole is very similar to Isaiah 5:1-7, though there the plant in view was a grapevine. The fig tree was another popular symbol of Israel (cf. Hos. 9:10; Jer. 8:13; 24:1-8; Mic. 7:1). By referring to a "fig

<sup>641</sup>J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, p. 207, footnote 4.

<sup>642</sup>See Finegan, *Light from . . .*, p. 157.

<sup>643</sup>Josephus, *The Wars . . .*, 5:4:2. See the diagram "Jerusalem in New Testament Times" at the end of these notes.

tree" and a "vineyard" together, Jesus left no doubt that He was speaking of Israel. God expected to find the *fruit of repentance* in Israel, but found virtually none. He had not found fruit in it for a long time, so He planned to judge it because it was not fulfilling its purpose.

"A fig tree was often given some time to bear good fruit since its root structure was complex and took time to develop. Three years would have been enough for the tree to yield some fruit."<sup>644</sup>

13:8-9 God was gracious with Israel and gave it more time to bear fruit. The implication seems to be that Israel was in this grace period during the ministry of Jesus. His ministry stirred up the nation and infused elements that should have resulted in fruit. Israel's response to Him would determine her national fate. Therefore repentance was crucial immediately, since the grace period was relatively short. God was giving Israel a last chance to fulfill its purpose by accepting Jesus as her Messiah.

"The most searching question we can be asked is, 'Of what use were you in this world?'"<sup>645</sup>

Perhaps Paul had this parable in mind when he compared Israel to an olive tree and revealed Israel's fate further (Rom. 11:17-24).

### **7. A sign of Jesus' ability to effect change 13:10-17**

There are several thematic connections that tie this pericope with what just preceded, and that show its role in the development of Luke's argument. Jesus had just called the nation to repentance (vv. 3, 5). Now He showed that change was possible with His power. He had pictured Israel in need of fruit (vv. 6-8). Now He illustrated His restorative powers. He had called the people to believe in Him (12:54-59). Now He gave them a sign that He was the Messiah. He had called the multitudes "hypocrites" because they refused to respond to the clear evidence before them (12:56). Now He called them "hypocrites" again, because they refused to act to relieve suffering on the Sabbath (v. 15).

"While in 4:31—8:40 there seemed to be a clear distinction between the crowd, which was favorable toward Jesus, and the scribes and Pharisees, who were not, Jesus begins to issue harsh warnings to the crowd in Luke 11—13, and, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, the crowd's attitudes are hardly distinguishable from those of the scribes and Pharisees, who reject Jesus' teaching on riches (16:14), think that proclaiming Jesus as king deserves a rebuke, and grumble when Jesus associates with tax collectors and sinners."<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>644</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1724.

<sup>645</sup>Barclay, p. 180.

<sup>646</sup>Tannehill, 1:157-58.

"In two sets of units set in sequential parallelism (13:10-35; 14:1-35), Luke explores a series of reversals and paradoxical inversions associated with the manifestation of the kingdom of God . . ." <sup>647</sup>

13:10-11 The Greek phrase *kai idou* ("and behold" in the NASB and untranslated in the NIV) suggests that Jesus may have suddenly become aware of the woman as He was speaking. <sup>648</sup> As usual, Luke noted the extent and duration of the affliction in order to spotlight the greatness of Jesus' cure. Evidently a demon played some part in the woman's suffering. This meant that Jesus' healing involved overcoming supernatural as well as natural forces.

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." <sup>649</sup>

The woman's physical condition was similar to Israel's spiritual condition (cf. 4:18-19). She may have had *spondylitis ankylopoietica*, a fusing of the spinal bones (vertebrae), or *skoliosis hysterica*, a hysterically induced paralysis, or some other condition. <sup>650</sup>

13:12-13 Perhaps Jesus "called" the woman "over" to Himself, rather than going to her, so everyone present would see what He would do. Again Jesus healed a woman with a word. His touch communicated compassion and linked the cause with the effect visually. Her recovery was instantaneous, and she began "glorifying God," the Source of her blessing (cf. 2:20; 5:25-26; 7:16; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47; Acts 3:8-9). She therefore recognized that Jesus was *God's* instrument of blessing.

13:14 As previously, Jesus' works proved controversial and provided another opportunity for Him to teach. The synagogue official showed more concern for Sabbath observance than for human suffering (cf. the previous Sabbath controversies in Galilee [Matt. 12:9-13] and in Jerusalem [John 5:16]). Instead of praising God with the woman, he criticized both her and Jesus, indirectly. Perhaps he felt safer addressing the people than Jesus. His advice to the assembled crowd amounted to keeping them from entering the kingdom (11:52). <sup>651</sup>

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<sup>647</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 721.

<sup>648</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 971.

<sup>649</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 9.

<sup>650</sup>See J. Wilkinson, "The Case of the Bent Woman in Luke 13:10-17," *Evangelical Quarterly* 49 (1977):195-205.

<sup>651</sup>Martin, p. 240.

13:15-16 Jesus called the unbelieving Jews "hypocrites." A hypocrite is someone who either pretends to be what he is not (as here), or disguises what he really is (cf. 12:1-2). These unbelievers were hypocrites because they did not understand God's purpose or the meaning of the Scriptures, and whose piety was therefore a sham.<sup>652</sup> Jesus then argued from the lesser to the greater again. A person is much more important than an animal (cf. 14:5).

The Jews regarded women as less important than men. Jesus viewed her as a "daughter of Abraham," a very exalted title that described a female descendant of the revered patriarch. Perhaps the Jews had denied the woman this title, concluding that her affliction was due to some great sin that she had committed (cf. vv. 2-5). Jesus freed her from her alien master ("Satan"), who had "bound" her "for 18 long years." Jesus' compassion refused to allow her to suffer one more day. Since the Sabbath was a day of worship and rejoicing, it was appropriate that Jesus healed her that very day.

"If Jesus had postponed the healing of this woman until the morrow no one could have criticized Him; but Jesus insisted that suffering must not be allowed to continue until to-morrow if it could be helped to-day."<sup>653</sup>

"As a result of Jesus' command, the fever 'released her.' While the verb *apheken* ('released') is shared with the parallel accounts, in Luke it is placed in a context where it has the full force of release from an oppressive confinement and illustrates the 'release (*aphesin*) for captives' of which Jesus spoke in 4:18."<sup>654</sup>

13:17 Jesus' action caused a double reaction. His opponents were feeling "humiliated," because Jesus obviously had divine power and compassion—but they had been criticizing Him (cf. Isa. 45:16). The "entire crowd was rejoicing," because they appreciated Jesus using His power for the welfare of the people, despite their hypocritical leaders' opposition (cf. Exod. 34:10).

This miracle is a concrete example of Jesus' authority, and the truthfulness of His assessment of the spiritual condition of Israel and her leaders.

This concludes Luke's section of material that records Jesus' instruction of His disciples in view of His rejection (12:1—13:17). The general movement of Jesus' teaching was from lessons about personal discipleship, and disciples' responsibilities, to lessons about the coming kingdom.

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<sup>652</sup>Green, p. 524.

<sup>653</sup>Barclay, p. 183.

<sup>654</sup>Tannehill, 1:84.

### **E. INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE KINGDOM 13:18—14:35**

The larger division of the Gospel that records Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem—and the Cross—continues with more teaching about the coming kingdom. The parables of the kingdom that begin this section (vv. 18-21) introduce this section. The difference in Jesus' teaching in the present section is a matter of emphasis rather than a clearcut change. The subtlety of this distinction is observable in that the commentators differ over where they believe the sections divide. Jesus' discipleship training also continues in this section.

#### **1. Parables of the kingdom 13:18-21**

The connection with what has preceded, that Luke's "therefore" suggests, is probably the reaction of the multitude (v. 17). Since the multitude reacted positively to Jesus, He taught them about the coming messianic kingdom. His previous comments about coming judgment made this teaching appropriate.

These parables occur in Matthew and Mark in a different context. Luke therefore may have reported Jesus' same teaching based on a different occasion, or he may have moved Jesus' teaching on the occasion Matthew and Mark reported to this place in his Gospel. The former alternative seems more probable.

#### **The parable of the mustard seed 13:18-19 (cf. Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32)**

The "kingdom of God" is the messianic kingdom that the Old Testament predicted. It would be an earthly kingdom over which Messiah would rule for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6). It is similar to "a mustard seed," in that it had a small beginning during the preaching of Jesus, but it would grow to be a very large entity. It will eventually encompass the whole earth and the entire human race (Ps. 2; Dan. 2:44; et al.). Luke did not mention its small beginning, only its large final form.

"The Jews had a proverb: 'Small as a mustard seed.'"<sup>655</sup>

The reference to "the birds" nesting "in its branches" may simply be an insignificant detail. However, it is probably an allusion to the "tree" in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, in which the birds evidently represent the Gentile nations that benefit from the tree (kingdom, Dan. 4:7-23). Several Old Testament passages use a tree with birds flocking to its branches, to illustrate a kingdom that people perceive as great (Judg. 9:15; Ps. 104:12-13; Ezek. 17:22-24; 31:3-14).

The point of the parable is the final large form of the kingdom. In this context, Luke probably wanted his readers to connect the great power of Jesus, manifested in the woman's healing (vv. 10-17), with the power that results in the tree's unusual growth into a worldwide kingdom. The kingdom would come with such seemingly inconsequential acts as the healing of an ill woman who lived on the margins of society.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>655</sup>Robertson, 2:189.

<sup>656</sup>Cf. Green, p. 527.

### **The parable of the yeast hidden in meal 13:20-21 (cf. Matt. 13:33)**

Jesus' similar introduction of this parable (cf. v. 18) suggests a similar point, but the fact that He gave a different parable implies a slightly different emphasis. Obviously the pervasive growth idea is present in both parables, but the second parable stresses the hidden nature of the transforming power (potency) more than the first one did. The idea of mysterious growth also carries over. The kingdom will imperceptibly, but powerfully, spread through humanity.

"It is perhaps worth noting also that yeast works from inside: it cannot change the dough while it is outside. But it is also important that the power to change comes from outside: the dough does not change itself."<sup>657</sup>

"It is the task of Christianity to make, not new things, but new men. And once the new men are created the new world will surely follow. This is why the Church is the most important institution in the world, for it is the factory where *men* are produced."<sup>658</sup>

### **2. Entrance into the kingdom 13:22-30**

Another question led to this teaching. The thematic connection with Jesus' words implying the small beginning of the kingdom (vv. 19, 21) should be obvious. As elsewhere, Luke recorded Jesus teaching lessons and using illustrations and expressions, which the other Gospel writers recorded Him using in other contexts. Jesus' repetition is understandable in view of His itinerant ministry and His great skill as a teacher.

13:22 Luke employed similar geographical summary statements in Acts, too, to indicate divisions in his narrative (e.g., 12:25; 14:27-28; 16:4; et al). They give a sense of movement and progress, in material that is essentially didactic. Jesus' general movement was toward "Jerusalem" and the Cross, though He seems to have proceeded without haste and with many pauses for teaching. The goal is the important feature, not how Jesus reached it. He gave the following teaching on the way.

13:23 Luke did not identify the questioner, who could have been a disciple or a member of the ubiquitous crowd. The questioner evidently wanted to know if he or she was correct in concluding, from Jesus' previous teaching (e.g., Mark 10:23-26), that only "a few" people would experience salvation. For the Jews, and probably for the questioner, salvation meant entering the kingdom as well as entering heaven. The identity of the people to whom Jesus responded is indefinite and unimportant.

13:24 Jesus did not answer the question directly. Instead of giving an impersonal answer, He explained how a person could enter the kingdom. A "narrow door" pictured an unpopular and difficult entryway (cf. Matt. 7:13). Jesus

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<sup>657</sup>Morris, p. 225.

<sup>658</sup>Barclay, p. 187.

meant the door was the way He taught, in contrast to the more popular way that the religious leaders taught. *Striving* referred to believing Jesus despite the intrinsic difficulty of believing and the opposition of others (cf. John 10:9). "Many" people would "seek to enter" the kingdom through ways other than the narrow door, but would be unable to enter. One writer argued that the striving in view involves submitting to Christ's Lordship.<sup>659</sup> But submitting to Christ's Lordship is nowhere a condition for entrance into the kingdom. Only faith in Jesus is.

13:25 The revelation that God would soon shut the narrow door of opportunity—to enter heaven and the kingdom—should have moved Jesus' hearers not to delay believing in Him. In one sense, anyone can believe as long as he or she is alive. In another sense, it becomes more difficult to believe as one procrastinates and as one grows older. However, in view of Jesus' illustration of the banquet that follows, it is more likely that He was thinking of the beginning of the kingdom. When the kingdom began, it would be impossible for unbelievers to change their minds and be saved. Therefore, in view of the kingdom's imminency—when Jesus uttered this warning—His hearers needed to believe without delay.

13:26-27 When the kingdom began, no amount of appeal—based only on friendship or familiarity with Jesus—would avail. Jesus had extended fellowship to His hearers, and had taught them the way of salvation, but they had rejected His offers. In Matthew, Jesus clearly identified the person who shut the door as Himself (cf. Matt. 7:22-23). He will also be the person who will utterly forsake and pronounce judicial rejection on unbelievers for their lack of righteousness (cf. Ps. 6:8).

13:28-29 The phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" elsewhere describes eternal punishment in hell (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).<sup>660</sup> There is no reason to conclude that it means something else here. "Weeping" expresses sorrow (cf. 6:25; Acts 20:37; James 4:9; 5:1), and "gnashing" or grinding the "teeth" pictures anger and hatred (cf. Job 16:10; Ps. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Lam. 2:16; Acts 7:54). These feelings will arise in people outside the kingdom as they view others within it.

The judgment at the beginning of the kingdom is in view. Evidently God will raise dead Old Testament saints to life then, to enter the kingdom (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

The Old Testament revealed that Gentiles would also participate in the messianic banquet that will inaugurate Messiah's earthly reign (cf. Isa. 25:6-7; 60; 62:2-9; 65:13-14; Ezek. 34:12-14; 39:17-20). People coming from the four compass points would be Gentiles rather than the Jews, who

<sup>659</sup>John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>660</sup>See Pagenkemper, pp. 183-86, 188-90.

lived primarily in Palestine. Jesus said that many Jews would not enter the kingdom (cf. Matt. 8:10-12). Many of Jesus' hearers were undoubtedly trusting in their Jewish blood and heritage to get them into the kingdom, so Jesus' words would have shocked them.

- 13:30 The people who are "last" in this context probably refer to Gentiles, whom the Jews regarded as least likely to enter the kingdom (cf. Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31). The ones who are "first" were the Jews. They considered themselves to be superior to Gentiles in many ways. They were also the first and the foremost objects of Jesus' ministry.

### **3. Jesus' postponement of the kingdom 13:31-35**

Another comment triggered teaching of a similar nature. The continuing theme is the messianic kingdom.

- 13:31 This incident followed the former one chronologically. Therefore it is probable that Jesus' words about Jews not entering the kingdom and Gentiles entering it had caused the Pharisees to gnash their teeth in anger against Him. Luke's presentation of the Pharisees has been consistently antagonistic, so it is reasonable to assume that their suggestion had a hidden motive. They may have wanted to scare Jesus into retreating rather than continuing on toward Jerusalem where Herod awaited Him. Or perhaps Herod was using the Pharisees to pass on a death threat to Jesus.

Did "Herod" Antipas really want "to kill" Jesus? He kept trying to see Jesus (9:9), and when he finally did he, was very glad for the opportunity, hoping that Jesus would perform a miracle (23:8). However, he proceeded to mock Jesus and to treat Him with contempt (23:11). It appears that the Pharisees were overstating Herod's hostility at this time. Their warning posed a temptation for Jesus to depart from His Father's will for Him, but He did not yield to it.

- 13:32-33 Jesus' reply to the Pharisees shows that He viewed them as Herod's messengers. They were as antagonistic to Him as they claimed Herod was. A "fox" is, of course, a proverbially dangerous and cunning animal that destroys and scavenges (cf. Song of Sol. 2:15; Lam. 5:17-18; Ezek. 13:4; 1 Enoch 89:10, 42-49, 55). Jesus walked in the light, but foxes went hunting in the dark. In Jesus' day, foxes were also insignificant animals (cf. Neh. 4:3; Song of Sol. 2:15). Jesus viewed Herod similarly. Though foxes are also cunning (deceiving, evading), there is no evidence in Luke that Herod acted this way, so this is probably not a characteristic that Jesus was imputing to him.

Jesus explained that He would not run from "Jerusalem," but would continue moving toward it, and ministering as usual as He went. He would reach Jerusalem in three days. This may have been a reference to three literal days, in which case it appears to refer to Jesus' second visit to

Jerusalem rather than to His third and final visit.<sup>661</sup> This seems unlikely in view of Jesus' statement about visiting Jerusalem in verse 35. Probably this was an idiomatic expression indicating a relatively short, limited period (cf. Hos. 6:2).<sup>662</sup> In this case, the three days would refer to the time of present opportunity, culminating in the end of that opportunity.<sup>663</sup>

Jesus spoke of the city as His "goal," because it would be in Jerusalem that He would reach the goal of His ministry, namely: His passion. He acknowledged that He would die there. He viewed dying "outside" Jerusalem as inconsistent and incongruous with the tradition of prophets who had died inside the city at the hands of the Jews (1 Kings 18:4, 13; 19:10; Jer. 26:20-23; Neh. 9:26; cf. Acts 7:52). Jesus obviously did not mean that "all" the prophets died in Jerusalem. He meant that since Jerusalem had killed so many prophets, it was appropriate for Him to die there, too.

13:34-35 The double reference to the city—"Jerusalem, Jerusalem"—following as it does the name of the city at the end of verse 33, draws attention to it. It was the city of Jesus' destiny and the pathetic, unresponsive object of His love. Jesus' lament, in a kind of soliloquy, recalls Jeremiah's lamentation over Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians (cf. Jer. 12:7; 22:5; Lam.). The city was heading for a similar fate under the Romans for rejecting Jesus. The "house" left *desolate* is perhaps the temple (cf. 1 Kings 9:7-8), though this could be a reference to the nation as a whole, the city, or the Davidic dynasty (cf. Jer. 22:1-8).

"The great expectations in the birth narrative for the redemption of Israel and Jerusalem are not being realized in the anticipated way and with the anticipated fullness, because Jerusalem is failing to recognize the time of its visitation. The great expectations aroused at the beginning contribute to the tragic effect of this turn in the plot, for we feel the loss more keenly in contrast to these great hopes."<sup>664</sup>

The city would "not see" Jesus until the Triumphal Entry (Ps. 118:26; Matt. 21:1-9; Luke 19:28-38). However, the final and true fulfillment of the prophecy of the people of Jerusalem hailing the arrival of their Messiah is still future (Matt. 23:39). Jesus gave two predictions of the fulfillment of Psalm 118:26. The one here was fulfilled at the Triumphal Entry. The second one, that He gave after the Triumphal Entry (Matt. 23:39), will be fulfilled at the Second Coming.

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<sup>661</sup>Hoehner, p. 62.

<sup>662</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 571-72.

<sup>663</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 974.

<sup>664</sup>Tannehill, 1:160. See also idem, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985):69-81.

Jesus' lament constituted a formal rejection of Israel for her rejection of her Messiah (cf. Matt. 23:37-39). Jesus used Jerusalem figuratively (i.e., in metonymy) for the whole nation. However, Jesus rejected her with a broken heart. He continued to offer Himself to the nation, but its fate was now irrevocable.

#### **4. Participants in the kingdom 14:1-24**

This section contains the record of several incidents that happened when Jesus was the dinner guest of a leading Pharisee. It records Jesus' "table-talk." Jesus had just announced that He would leave Jerusalem desolate (13:35). The present section justifies Jesus' condemnation by showing that the root of Israel's problems lay with her leaders, specifically the Pharisees. It also gives the rationale for Jesus excluding many Jews from the kingdom and admitting Gentiles (13:28-30).

#### **The healing of a man with dropsy 14:1-6**

Nolland noted that the parallel incident, in 13:10-17, features a woman, and this one features a man, illustrating Luke's concern to balance men and women.<sup>665</sup>

14:1           The meal setting continues through verse 24, and the Sabbath setting concludes what has preceded (13:10-23). However, the meal setting is secondary to the attitude of the Pharisees who were present. They had already decided to do away with Jesus (11:53-54). Now the "Pharisees" and "lawyers" were "watching Him" like vultures waiting to pounce on their prey at the first opportunity (vv. 1, 3). Views of the Sabbath were a major source of disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees (cf. 6:1-5, 11; 13:10-17). Quite possibly this leading Pharisee, perhaps a member of the Sanhedrin, had set a trap for Jesus by inviting him to his house for a Sabbath meal. Jesus had already violated Sabbath traditions on at least seven different occasions (4:31-37, 38-39; 6:1-5; John 5:1-9; Luke 6:6-10; 13:10-17; John 9). Table fellowship implied friendship, but clearly this was hypocritical on this occasion.

14:2           The text does not say that the host had planted the sick man among his guests to test Jesus, but that seems likely. Luke's description of the man's presence implies that. Luke wrote: "there" he was "in front of" Jesus. The name of the man's disease is misleading. "Dropsy" (Gr. *hudropikos*, edema) is a condition that causes the body to swell up due to the accumulation of fluid in the body tissue or the body cavities. It often results from a faulty heart or diseased kidneys.<sup>666</sup> Today, we might say that this man had "a serious fluid-retention problem."<sup>667</sup> The rabbis regarded this condition as the result of immorality.<sup>668</sup>

<sup>665</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 723.

<sup>666</sup>*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Diseases of the Bible," by R. H. Pousma, 2:134; Green, p. 546.

<sup>667</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 747.

<sup>668</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 579.

- 14:3-4 Jesus took the initiative and asked the Pharisees and lawyers for their opinion, thus shifting the burden of proof to them. He asked for their interpretation of what the Mosaic Law allowed (cf. 6:9). When they raised no objection, He proceeded to "heal" the man (cf. 6:10). Jesus could have waited a day, but He performed the miracle "on the Sabbath" to launch the teaching that followed. Perhaps He dismissed the man to remove him from the arena of controversy, and to center the discussion on the issue rather than on a person.
- 14:5-6 Jesus proceeded to show the logic of His action (cf. Matt. 12:11). The Old Testament and rabbinic tradition permitted saving "a son," or even even an animal, in such a situation (cf. Exod. 23:4-5).<sup>669</sup> Jesus implied that the sick man belonged to Him. This was the case, since Jesus is the possessor of heaven and earth. His critics had "no reply," since Jesus' logic was irrefutable. Besides, they already knew what He believed about the relative importance of helping people and observing the Sabbath (6:1-11; 13:10-17).

This incident set the stage for the discussion that followed. That seems to be its primary purpose in Luke's narrative. This fact accounts for the lack of development that Luke gave this incident. Above all else, it established Jesus' authority to teach the lessons that followed immediately.

### **The parable of the seats at the wedding feast 14:7-11**

Jesus next gave the assembled guests a lesson on the importance of humility. By identifying this teaching as "a parable" (v. 7), Luke informed his readers that the lesson has importance in people's relationship to God, not just interpersonal relations. Jesus gave the parable originally to correct the pride of the Pharisees.

- 14:7 Customarily people reclined on low couches for important meals, such as this one, resting on their left sides. Where a person lay around the table indicated his status. In the typical U-shape arrangement, the closer that one was to the host, who reclined at the center or bottom of the U, the higher was his status ("place of honor"). Jesus' fellow guests had tried to get the "places of honor" closest to their host to showcase their own importance.
- 14:8-10 Jesus' teaching from here on in this section centers on the concept of being invited (called, Gr. *kaleo*, vv. 8 [twice], 9, 10 [twice], 12 [twice], 13, 16, 17, 24).

The meal in the Pharisee's house was not a wedding feast. Jesus used that type of banquet in His parable, because He was speaking of the messianic banquet at the beginning of the kingdom. Then Israel would unite with her

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<sup>669</sup>Mishnah *Shabbath* 128b.

Messiah. Evidently Jesus' point was that the Jews present should learn a spiritual lesson about the kingdom from the simple social situation He described. Everyone realized that seeking a prominent place for oneself at a banquet could lead to personal embarrassment. Jesus' hearers were to learn from this not to seek prominence for themselves but to humble themselves. In relation to the kingdom, this meant being willing to forego present prominence, which the Pharisees so desired, and humbling oneself by associating with Jesus as a disciple. The implication was that those who so humbled themselves now with Jesus, would experience exaltation by God in the kingdom when it began (v. 11).

The reason one should humble himself is that someone else has invited him. He is a guest, not the host. Jesus further stressed this dependent relationship by using passive verbs. This was not only to avoid direct reference to God, out of respect, but to present God as the exalted Host. A person's position in the kingdom depends on God, not on his own self-seeking.

- 14:11 This verse expresses the principle involved (cf. 13:30; 18:14; Matt. 23:12). Self-exaltation leads to humiliation, whereas humility results in exaltation (cf. Prov. 25:6-7). The principle operates in the present and in the future. It operates in social situations and in kingdom situations.

This parable then was a lesson for the Pharisees especially, but also for Jesus' disciples and everyone else present, on the importance of humility. Participants in the kingdom, and honored guests in the kingdom, would be those who humbled themselves by following Jesus.

#### **The lesson about inviting guests 14:12-14**

Jesus addressed the former parable to His fellow guests, but He directed this teaching particularly to His host. This lesson, like the former parable, could have applied only to social relationships. However, Jesus' teaching was never simply ethical. It always had a spiritual dimension (cf. 6:32-36). Jesus was teaching on both levels. If the Pharisees did not perceive or rejected the lesson about Jesus' ministry, they could at least profit from the ethical instruction. In much of Jesus' teaching, the alternatives were not really "do not do this but do that," as much as "do not do as much of this as that." This was common Semitic idiom, and it accounts for Jesus' strong statements.

The principle that Jesus recommended to His host, for selecting guests, is one that God had used in inviting people to the messianic banquet. Inviting those who could not repay the favor resulted in the greater glory of earthly hosts, as well as for the divine Host. If earthly hosts behaved as the heavenly Host, that behavior would demonstrate true righteousness, and God would reward it. Otherwise they would only receive a temporal reward from their guests. This lesson vindicated Jesus' ministry to the "have nots," and explained why He did not cater to the "haves" (cf. 4:18; 6:20-21). It also indirectly appealed to the Pharisees to receive Jesus' invitation to believe on Him for blessing.

"We cannot be certain that the ruler of Luke 14 was a silent believer like the ones mentioned in John 12. Perhaps he was not, because he had invited Jesus to dinner at the risk of criticism from his fellow Pharisees. But one thing we *do* know is that he *was* a believer, for if he had *not* been, then a *guarantee* of reward could not have been given to him.

"What a fortunate host this man was! In return for this dinner, he gets from our Lord an invaluable lesson in Christian etiquette. If a believer uses his hospitality to entertain people who have no way of repaying him for it, God Himself becomes the Paymaster. And the resurrection of the just, which includes of course the Judgment Seat of Christ, becomes the *payday*!

"When was the last time that you or I extended hospitality in such a way that it would only be repaid to us in that future *resurrection payday*? Maybe we should rethink our guest lists!"<sup>670</sup>

### The parable of the great banquet 14:15-24

Jesus continued to use the meal in the Pharisee's house to teach about the messianic banquet and the kingdom to come. He had taught the importance of humbling oneself to participate (vv. 7-11), and had justified that requirement (vv. 12-14). Now He invited His hearers to humble themselves, so they could participate, and He warned those who rejected His invitation of their fate.

- 14:15           The fellow guest who voiced this comment, appears to have understood that Jesus had been talking about the kingdom, and not just about social propriety. Alternatively, his or her comment may have been simply a pious reference to the kingdom, but this seems unlikely. The speaker seems to have assumed that he or she would be one of the "blessed" referred to. The speaker may have intended to correct Jesus' implication that some of those present might not participate (vv. 13-14; cf. 13:28-29). Jesus used the comment as an opportunity to clarify who would participate. A similar though obviously different parable occurs in Matthew 22:1-14.
- 14:16-17       In the parable, the host corresponds to God, and the servant (Gr. *doulos*) represents Jesus. The people invited were the Jews primarily. In Jesus' day, a banquet took a long time to prepare.<sup>671</sup> Similarly, God had been preparing His messianic banquet for centuries.
- 14:18-20       Those invited refused to participate. They tried to excuse themselves by giving acceptable reasons for not attending the banquet. The three "excuses" Jesus cited are only representative of many others that other invited guests undoubtedly gave.

<sup>670</sup>Zane C. Hodges, "Stop and Think! (Luke 14:13-14), Rewardable Hospitality," *The KERUGMA Message* 3:1 (Spring 1993):3.

<sup>671</sup>Morris, p. 233.

". . . in each of the following excuses, we are dealing with a personal preoccupation rather than with a reasonable priority. The man's priorities are ultimately those warned against in 17:31."<sup>672</sup>

One man begged off on the ground that he had recently become the owner of some real estate, and needed to tend to it. Apparently he was proud of his position as a landowner in his community. Another person with new possessions ("five yoke of oxen") expressed his greater interest in them than in the invitation. The fact that both of these men inspected their purchases, after they bought them, shows their love of them, since they would undoubtedly have also inspected them before buying them. A third man cited his recent marriage as his excuse, implying that pleasure was more important to him (cf. Deut. 24:5). These individuals represent the many who have declined to accept Jesus' gospel invitation for similar reasons.

14:21-22 The host legitimately "became angry," in view of his gracious invitation and sacrificial preparations. Rejection constituted a personal insult. He decided to open the banquet to anyone who would come, not just the people who considered themselves the privileged few who were the most obvious choices (cf. Rom. 9:4-5). These rejecters correspond to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. The other people the host invited, correspond to those in Jesus' day whom the self-righteous Jews regarded as deficient, including: the publicans, the sinners, and the Gentiles (cf. vv. 2-4, 13). Even though many of the needy responded, there was still plenty of room at the banquet table.

The "streets" (Gr. *plateia*) carried all manner of people, and the "lanes" or alleys (Gr. *rhyme*) were where the lower elements of society felt more comfortable.<sup>673</sup> The servant's commission became urgent ("compel them"), because the feast waited for guests.<sup>674</sup> Note that Jesus now described the host as "Master" or "Lord" (Gr. *kyrie*), hinting that *God* is in view.

14:23-24 The host then sent his servant farther out into the countryside to find guests wherever he could. Those taking refuge against the "hedges," fences, and walls (Gr. *phragmos*) would have been people who were especially destitute and needy. The Jews did not normally put hedges around their fields, so the picture is of the servant going out into the heathen world.<sup>675</sup> Compelling (Gr. *anagkazo*) did not involve forcing them against their wills, but urging them to come. It manifested "an insistent hospitality."<sup>676</sup> These people doubtless represent the remainder of

<sup>672</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 756.

<sup>673</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 978.

<sup>674</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 590.

<sup>675</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:251.

<sup>676</sup>Manson, p. 130.

humankind living far from the site of the banquet (i.e., Jerusalem). They are the spiritually needy, Jews and Gentiles alike, both in Jesus' day and in the ages that followed—before the banquet begins at the commencement of the Millennium (cf. 13:28-30). None of those who received initial invitations, and declined the host's gracious offer, would enjoy the banquet (cf. 13:34-35).

Thus, Jesus' correction of the original comment (v. 15) affirmed that those who would eat bread in the kingdom, would be the objects of God's special favor, and therefore happy (blessed). However, they would be those who responded to God's gracious invitation that He extended through His Servant Jesus, not those who anticipated the banquet but refused the invitation. This parable would have helped Jesus' original disciples appreciate their privilege and the urgency of their mission. Likewise, Luke's original readers and all subsequent disciples should learn the same lesson. The parable contains a revelation of God's program through the church, that Israel's rejection of her Messiah, and God's consequent postponement of the kingdom, made necessary (cf. Rom. 11).

### **5. The cost of discipleship 14:25-35**

Luke had just recorded Jesus' teaching about God's gracious invitation to enjoy the messianic banquet in the kingdom. It was free for all who would respond. Jesus taught elsewhere that responding meant believing on Him. Now Luke recorded Jesus' teaching that though salvation was free, discipleship was costly. This is important balancing revelation. Salvation guarantees heaven, but it also calls for complete commitment to Jesus, not to secure heaven but to express gratitude for heaven.

"The theme of the cost of accompanying Jesus runs like a refrain throughout Lk. (9:57-62; 18:24-30)."<sup>677</sup>

#### **The setting of these parables 14:25-27**

- 14:25 Luke described a setting different from the preceding meal. Jesus was on the road again heading toward Jerusalem. It was evidently the great size of the multitude ("large crowds") that accompanied Him, that led Him to say what He did.
- 14:26-27 Curiosity is one thing, but discipleship is another. There were many people who were accompanying Jesus who were not really following Him in the sense of learning from Him. They simply wanted to benefit from His ministry.

"Once someone was talking to a great scholar about a younger man. He said, 'So and so tells me that he was one of your students.' The teacher answered devastatingly, 'He may have attended my lectures, but he was not one of my

<sup>677</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 591.

students.' There is a world of difference between attending lectures and being a student. It is one of the supreme handicaps of the Church that in the Church there are so many distant followers of Jesus and so few real disciples."<sup>678</sup>

Jesus mentioned two qualifications for being His disciple. First, one must be willing to give up his or her primary allegiance to family and self. Jesus taught His disciples to love their enemies rather than hating them (6:27-38). He was not contravening the teaching of the fifth commandment either (18:20). He spoke positively about loving oneself too (10:27). He clearly meant "hate" in a relative, rather than an absolute sense, here. Compare Genesis 29:31, where "unloved" is literally "hated," in the Hebrew text.

"The language of hate is typical Semitic hyperbole (Prov 13:24; 2 Sam 19:6; cf. Gen 29:30-33 . . .; Mal 1:2-3; Deut 21:15-17) . . ."<sup>679</sup>

". . . in this context, 'hate' is not primarily an affective quality but a disavowal of primary allegiance to one's kin. . . . Again, then, 'hating' one's self should not be taken as a reference to an affective self-abhorrence, but as a call to set aside the relationships, the extended family of origin and inner circle of friends, by which one has previously made up one's identity."<sup>680</sup>

Second, a disciple must bear the burden of public identification with Jesus, even to death if necessary (9:23; cf. Deut. 13:4; 1 Kings 14:8; 18:21; 2 Kings 23:3). Luke recorded this command in more detail than Matthew did, perhaps because of his Gentile readers' greater need for challenge and encouragement in view of persecution (cf. Matt. 10:37-38).

"Salvation is open to all who will come by faith, while discipleship is for believers willing to pay a price. Salvation means coming to the cross and trusting Jesus Christ, while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Jesus."<sup>681</sup>

"Crucifixion was common enough in Palestine since the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and Alexander Jannaeus."<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>678</sup>Barclay, p. 203.

<sup>679</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 762.

<sup>680</sup>Green, p. 565.

<sup>681</sup>Wiersbe, 1:232.

<sup>682</sup>Robertson, 2:201.

"Discipleship means giving one's first loyalty."<sup>683</sup>

### **The parable of the tower builder 14:28-30**

Jesus then told another parable. His point was that those in the crowd, who were considering becoming disciples of His, should "calculate (count; consider) the cost" before they embarked on a life of discipleship.

"The simple fact is that the New Testament never takes for granted that believers will see discipleship through to the end. And it never makes this kind of perseverance either a condition or a proof of final salvation from hell.

"It . . . is simply a theological illusion to maintain that a Christian who has embarked on the pathway of discipleship could never abandon it. In the spiritual realm, this notion is as naive as an earthly father who declares, 'My son would never drop out of school!'"<sup>684</sup>

A person who begins following Jesus, and then stops following Him, only makes a fool of himself. The Greek word *purgos* can mean either tower or farm building. Probably many of Jesus' hearers were farmers.

### **The parable of the king going to battle 14:31-33**

14:31-32 This second parable makes essentially the same point as the previous one. However, the cost of failure in this one is not just embarrassment, but personal destruction. It is very important to assess the strength of one's enemy correctly. Jesus was not encouraging people to stop following Him because they feared they could not withstand temptations. He wanted them to follow Him, but intelligently, not naively. There were probably no kings in Jesus' audience, but the people could easily put themselves in the place of a "king."

"Discipleship to Jesus Christ is not an invitation to a Sunday school picnic. It is an invitation to spiritual warfare."<sup>685</sup>

14:33 Jesus now applied the parables (cf. vv. 26-27). Obviously the Twelve had not literally given away everything they owned, but they had adopted a lifestyle conducive to fulfilling their mission, which involved relatively few possessions. Therefore we should probably understand Jesus' command as requiring a *willingness* to part with "possessions," as necessary, to follow Jesus faithfully (cf. 12:33). Elsewhere Jesus taught

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<sup>683</sup>Morris, p. 235.

<sup>684</sup>Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* pp. 80, 82.

<sup>685</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

His disciples to manage the possessions—that they *did* have—wisely (16:1-12). A person should not begin a venture without the assurance of sufficient resources to finish it. Similarly one should not begin following Jesus, without being willing to sacrifice anything—possibly everything—to complete that project successfully.

### **The importance of following Jesus faithfully 14:34-35**

In conclusion, Jesus compared a disciple to "salt." Salt was important in the ancient East because it flavored food, retarded decay, and in small doses fertilized land.<sup>686</sup> It was also used as a catalyst for burning fuel such as cattle dung.<sup>687</sup> Some of these uses are in view in this passage, but its use as a flavoring agent seems to be primary.<sup>688</sup> Most salt in the ancient world came from salt marshes, or the like, rather than from the evaporation of salt-water—so it contained many impurities. The sodium was more soluble than many of the impurities. It could leach out, leaving a substance so dilute that it was of little worth.<sup>689</sup>

Just as a disciple can cease to follow Jesus, so salt can lose its saltiness. In that case both things become useless. What distinguishes a disciple of Jesus from a non-disciple, what makes him or her "salty," is his or her allegiance to Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50). Farmers added salt to animal dung to slow down the fermentation process, so that they could preserve it as fertilizer until they needed to use it.<sup>690</sup> The disciple who does not continue following Jesus faithfully falls under divine judgment—not that he will lose his salvation, but part of his reward: specifically the opportunity for further significant *service*.

Jesus urged His hearers to listen carefully to what He had said (cf. 8:8). Prospective disciples need to realize the implications of following Jesus, and *only then* choose to follow Him—faithfully.

"His [Luke's] main point is that successful discipleship requires Jesus to be a priority in life."<sup>691</sup>

### **F. GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SINNERS CH. 15**

The present section is a development of the theme of Jesus calling the poor and needy to salvation. This motif has appeared earlier in Luke's Gospel (cf. 14:2-5, 13-24; et al.). Luke had a special interest in this group, probably because he wrote his Gospel for the Gentiles, and many of them fell into this category. This group constitutes the largest target of the Christian mission.

<sup>686</sup>Eugene P. Deatrick, "Salt, Soil, Savor," *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (1962):44-45.

<sup>687</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1728.

<sup>688</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 765.

<sup>689</sup>Donald A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Matthew-Luke*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 138.

<sup>690</sup>Deatrick, p. 46.

<sup>691</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 401.

"The section 15:1-32 defends and commends preoccupation with the lost, and overflowing joy at their restoration. We all respond this way with what is our own, and this attitude corresponds to the concerns of a father's heart for his own children, each one of whom is singularly precious in his sight."<sup>692</sup>

### **1. The setting for Jesus' teaching 15:1-2**

Luke just recorded that Jesus called a would-be disciple to pay attention to what He said (14:35). Now he noted that many "tax collectors" and "sinners" were doing precisely that. Thus he presented these groups of needy spiritual outcasts as responding to Jesus' ministry. However, Luke also noted, in contrast, that the "Pharisees" and "scribes" were critical of Jesus (cf. 5:29-30). They were not really listening to Him. Probably he balanced two positive groups (tax gatherers and sinners) with two negative groups (Pharisees and lawyers) to heighten the contrast further. "All" is perhaps hyperbole for "very many," or it may refer to the tax gatherers and sinners in the place where Jesus was at this time.<sup>693</sup> Receiving and eating with sinners demonstrated openness to them and fellowship with them.

"The *sinners* were the immoral or those who followed occupations that the religious regarded as incompatible with the Law."<sup>694</sup>

The following parables taught the religious leaders that sinners' return to God should be a cause for rejoicing rather than grumbling (cf. 19:7). One writer titled these parables "The Searching Shepherd," "The Searching Woman," and "The Seeking Father."<sup>695</sup> Shepherds, unmarried maidens, and rebellious sons were all examples of disenfranchised people who were usually excluded by the religious establishment of Jesus' day.<sup>696</sup> The first parable emphasized the lost condition, the second the search, and the third the restoration.<sup>697</sup>

### **2. The parable of the lost sheep 15:3-7 (cf. Matt. 18:12-14)**

Matthew also recorded this parable as part of Jesus' discipleship training. Jesus' point was that God does not want any of His "sheep" to wander away from their Shepherd. He seeks them out and brings them home. It was a call to the disciples to exercise responsible pastoral leadership. Luke showed that Jesus used the parable to accentuate God's "joy" when one of His lost "sheep" gets saved. It taught the Pharisees and lawyers how important the salvation of one "sinner" is to God. Jesus evidently used the same parable on two separate occasions to teach different lessons.

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<sup>692</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 767.

<sup>693</sup>Robertson, 2:204.

<sup>694</sup>Morris, p. 237.

<sup>695</sup>J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 99.

<sup>696</sup>M. Bailey, p. 135.

<sup>697</sup>Edersheim, 2:255.

- 15:3-4 Probably many of Jesus' hearers were shepherds, since this was one of the most common occupations in Palestine. A flock of "100 sheep" was fairly common for a small farmer.<sup>698</sup> Herds normally numbered between 20 and 200.<sup>699</sup> It was also normal for a shepherd to count his sheep every night.<sup>700</sup> The Greek word *eremos* can mean "wilderness" (AV), but probably it means "open pasture" (NASB) or "open country" (NIV) here. The sheep was lost because of foolishness (cf. 1 Pet. 2:25). Note that all the sheep belonged to the shepherd.
- 15:5-6 The contrast between the "lost" and the "found" condition of the one sheep was the cause for the shepherd's great rejoicing. His joy at the secure condition of the sheep is the point of the parable. The parable also pictures the shepherd (Jesus) taking the initiative in seeking the lost, a major theme in Luke (cf. 19:10; et al.). By picturing the shepherd carrying the sheep home "on his shoulders," Jesus was communicating His loving care of those He saves. His action depicted common rural practice.
- 15:7 The "99 righteous persons" represent the self-righteous Pharisees and lawyers (v. 2). Jesus was using the term "righteous" in irony. They were not really righteous, but they considered themselves righteous. The contrast then is between God's "joy over one" sinner's salvation, compared to His sorrow over 99 self-righteous people's lack of salvation. "In heaven" means in God's presence (cf. v. 10).

Jesus revealed that even though sinners coming to Jesus made the Pharisees grumble, this rejoiced God's heart. The parable showed how out of harmony they were with God. It also vindicated Jesus' contacts with sinners.

### **3. The parable of the lost coin 15:8-10**

Jesus' repetition of the same point, in another, similar parable, shows the importance of the lesson He wanted His hearers to learn.

Again, Jesus' concern for women comes out in this illustration with which His female listeners could identify. In the previous parable, a relatively rich man lost one of his sheep, whereas in this one a relatively poor woman lost one of her coins. The "silver coins" in view would have been Greek drachmas, the equivalent of Roman denarii, each worth about a day's wage. They may have been part of the dowry, or the savings, that some Palestinian women wore around their heads on a chain.<sup>701</sup>

In any case, the "coin" she "lost" was precious to her, even though it did not represent great wealth. Its value is clear from the trouble to which she went to find it. The sheep was lost because of its foolishness (v. 4), but the coin was lost because of the woman's

<sup>698</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 133.

<sup>699</sup>*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1729.

<sup>700</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 981.

<sup>701</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, p. 100; idem, *The Parables . . .*, pp. 134-35.

carelessness, through no fault of its own but by surrounding circumstances. Peasants' houses in Palestine normally had no windows, so she needed to get "a lamp" to help her see.<sup>702</sup>

Similarly, it cost Jesus much to seek and to save the lost. God actually searches for lost sinners (cf. Gen. 3:8-9)! The woman's recovery of what had been "lost" led to great "joy" and "rejoicing."<sup>703</sup>

This parable repeated the point of the previous one, namely, that there is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents. However, it also stresses the fact that God willingly goes to great lengths to seek out and to find the lost. This attitude contrasts with that of the Pharisees and lawyers (v. 2). According to Morris, there is no rabbinic equivalent to God seeking sinners.<sup>704</sup>

An almost identical parable to this one was common among the Jews of Jesus' day.<sup>705</sup> However, in the Jewish parable, the moral was that a person should search the Torah more diligently than this woman searched for her lost coin, since Torah study would yield an eternal reward, not just temporal enjoyment. It taught the merit of works, whereas Jesus' parable taught the compassion of the Savior and the joy in heaven over the salvation of the lost.

Perhaps Jesus intended to focus on the Jews in the first parable, since He compared the lost one to a sheep from the *Master's* fold (Israel). The second parable may compare the lost coin to a Gentile, since a Greek coin was lost. This is the only reference to this coin in the New Testament. If so, the numbers may be significant. Only a small number of Jews would experience salvation, compared to a greater proportion of Gentiles who would believe the gospel. The Book of Acts reveals the comparative unresponsiveness of the Jews and the receptivity of the Gentiles.

#### **4. The parable of the lost son 15:11-32**

This third parable in the series again repeats the point of the former two, that God gladly receives repentant sinners, but it stresses still other information. The joy of the father, in the first part of the parable, contrasts with the grumbling of the elder brother in the second part. The love of the father was equal for both of his sons. Thus the parable teaches that God wants all people to experience salvation and to enter the kingdom.

"This parable is often called 'The Prodigal Son,' but it is really about different reactions to the prodigal. The key reaction is that of the father, who is excited to receive his son back. Thus a better name for the parable is 'The Forgiving Father.' A sub-theme is the reaction of the older brother, so that one can subtitle the parable with the addendum: 'and the Begrudging Brother.'"<sup>706</sup>

<sup>702</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 603.

<sup>703</sup>See A. F. Walls, "In the Presence of the Angels' (Luke xv. 10)," *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959):314-16.

<sup>704</sup>Morris, p. 239.

<sup>705</sup>See Edersheim, *The Life* . . . , 1:581.

<sup>706</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 412.

### The younger son 15:11-24

15:11-12 The man in the story "had two sons," a "younger" one and an "older" one (v. 25). Now the "younger" son's inheritance would normally have been one-third of his father's estate, since the older son would have received a double portion (Deut. 21:17). However, a disposition of the father's estate before his death probably would have yielded this son about two-ninths of the total.<sup>707</sup> Jesus did not explain the exact terms of the settlement since they were insignificant details. However, the younger son's request evidently precluded any future claim on his father's estate (v. 19).

Normally the inheritance did not pass to the heirs until the death of the father. To request it prematurely was tantamount to expressing a wish that the father would die.

". . . to my knowledge, in all of Middle Eastern literature (aside from this parable) from ancient times to the present, there is no case of any son, older or younger, asking for his inheritance from a father who is still in good health."<sup>708</sup>

This father's willingness to accommodate his younger son's request shows that he was gracious and generous, and it illustrates God's willingness to permit each person to go his or her own way. Possibly the older son also received his inheritance at the same time (v. 31), though this is not certain. The implication is that the younger son was an older teenager, since men usually married about then, and this young man was apparently unmarried.<sup>709</sup>

"The elder brother did not take full possession of his share of the property when the division was made. Rather, in accord with an available Jewish custom, the father transferred ownership, to take effect at the time of his own death, retaining for himself the lifetime use of the produce of the estate. So the elder son, though holding title to the estate, had continued to work on the estate under the authority of his father."<sup>710</sup>

15:13-16 Evidently the younger son turned his assets into cash, and then departed to "live it up." He may have wanted to "find himself," but he ended up losing himself. In the first parable, the sheep got lost because of its nature to wander away. In the second, the coin was lost due to circumstances beyond its control. In this third parable, the son gets lost as a result of his own choice.

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<sup>707</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, p. 107.

<sup>708</sup>M. Bailey, p. 164.

<sup>709</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 607.

<sup>710</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 790. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 782.

Feeding pigs was, of course, unclean work for a Jew, and a job that any self-respecting Jew would only do out of total desperation (Lev. 11:7). However, the younger son was willing to do this because his need had become so great. The pigs and the young man both evidently ate the seeds ("pods") of carob trees.<sup>711</sup> This was not very nourishing or appetizing fare. There was a Jewish saying that went: "When Israel is reduced to the carob-tree, they become repentant."<sup>712</sup> This son had sunk so low that no one showed him any compassion.

". . . neither sense nor reason exists in sin but the very contrary."<sup>713</sup>

The Pharisees would have recognized this young man as representing the sinners whom they despised.

15:17-19 "He came to his senses" is an idiom that indicates repentance.<sup>714</sup> He changed his mind and his attitude, and decided to make a change in his behavior. The young man used "heaven" as a euphemism for God (vv. 18, 21). The Jews frequently did this to avoid using God's name in vain, and there are many examples of this in Luke. The young man meant that he viewed his actions as sin against his father *and against God* (cf. Ps. 51:4).

The son's proposal to his father, as well as his planned speech, shows the genuineness of his humility and repentance. He was willing to serve his father as a day laborer ("hired" hand), since his father had a reputation for paying his servants generously (v. 17). Ordinary slaves were in a sense members of the household, but day laborers could be dismissed with a day's notice.<sup>715</sup>

". . . the boy's proposal indicates that, while he desires the father's house, he doesn't understand the father's heart."<sup>716</sup>

15:20 Since the father "saw" his son while he was still a great distance from his house, he had apparently been scanning the distant road daily hoping to see him. The father's "compassion" reflects some knowledge of his son's plight. Perhaps he had kept tabs on him since he left home. The father put feet to his feelings by running out to meet his son, even though it was undignified for an older man to run in Jesus' culture. Embracing and kissing him continually also expressed the father's loving acceptance (cf. Gen. 45:14-15; 33:4; 2 Sam. 14:33; Acts 20:37). This attitude also

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<sup>711</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 984.

<sup>712</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:261.

<sup>713</sup>Lenski, p. 812.

<sup>714</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 130. See also Greg Forbes, "Repentance and Conflict in the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42:2 (June 1999):211-229.

<sup>715</sup>Barclay, p. 212.

<sup>716</sup>Inrig, p. 19.

contrasts with the elder brother's attitude and the Pharisees' attitude. The father initiated the restoration of fellowship before the son could finish his confession. This shows the father's eagerness to forgive. The word translated "kissed" (Gr. *katephilesen*) may mean either "kissed many times" or "kissed tenderly."<sup>717</sup>

15:21-24 Evidently the father cut his son's confession short, because he knew what was in his heart (cf. 1 John 4:18). Rather than simply accepting his son back, much less making him a servant, the father bestowed the symbols of honor, authority, and freedom on him (cf. Gen. 41:42; Esth. 3:10; 8:8).<sup>718</sup> Sandals and a ring were marks of a free man, but slaves went barefooted.<sup>719</sup> Then he prepared a banquet for him, which in Jesus' story probably represents the messianic banquet (13:29; 14:15-24). People in Jesus' day ate far less meat than modern westerners do, so eating meat indicates a very special occasion.

"Everything the younger son had hoped to find in the far country, he discovered back home: clothes, jewelry, friends, joyful celebration, love, and assurance for the future. What made the difference? Instead of saying, 'Father, *give* me!' he said, 'Father, *make* me!' He was willing to be a servant!"<sup>720</sup>

The son had determined to leave the father permanently, and so was "dead" and "lost" to his father. He now had new "life" and was "found" (cf. Eph. 2:1-5). If the sheep was lost through foolishness, and the coin through carelessness, the son was lost through willfulness.<sup>721</sup> The son's return was just the beginning of rejoicing, the implication being that it would continue through the messianic kingdom (i.e., the Millennium). Jesus' hearers would have understood Him to be teaching that sinners would enter the kingdom because they came to God by believing in Jesus.

"There is a Buddhist story that provides a fascinating contrast to the Lord's story. It also tells of a son who left home and returned years later in rags and misery. His degradation was so profound that he did not recognize his own father. But his father recognized him and told the servants to take him into the mansion and to clean him up. The father, his identity unrevealed, watched his son's response. Gradually, time wrought changes, and the son became dutiful, considerate, and moral. Satisfied, the father

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<sup>717</sup>Morris, p. 242.

<sup>718</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 130.

<sup>719</sup>Robertson, 2:211.

<sup>720</sup>Wiersbe, 1:236.

<sup>721</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:233-35.

finally revealed his identity and formally accepted his son as his heir.

"The Pharisees would have understood and approved of such a story. It makes sense to wait for a son to achieve worthiness. It is reasonable to treat a repentant person according to the stage of penance achieved. But that is not the Father our Lord describes. It is not a parable of merits. Here is a picture of grace."<sup>722</sup>

"Here it deserves special notice, as marking the absolute contrast between the teaching of Christ and Rabbinism, that we have in one of the oldest Rabbinic works a Parable exactly the reverse of this, when the son of a friend is redeemed from bondage, not as a son, but to be a slave, that so obedience might be demanded of him."<sup>723</sup>

"To an alarming degree it [the evangelical church of today] has lost touch with the unconditional love of God."<sup>724</sup>

"The first lesson is that repentance is always possible for those who want to return to God."<sup>725</sup>

### **The older brother 15:25-32**

15:25-27 Jesus pictured the older brother, symbolic of the Pharisees and scribes, as working hard for the father. The Jews, as well as the Jewish religious leaders, equally enjoyed the privileged status of an older brother in the human family, because God had chosen them for special blessing (Exod. 19:5-6). The older brother was outside the banquet, having missed it apparently because of his preoccupation with work and his distant relationship with his father. For him, and for the Pharisees, all was based on merit and reward. He viewed himself more as the father's servant than as his son.

15:28 The older son's anger, at the father's forgiveness and acceptance of his brother, contrasts with the father's loving compassion demonstrated by his coming out and entreating him. Similarly, the Pharisees grumbled because God received sinners and welcomed them into His kingdom (v. 2). Nevertheless God reached out to them through Jesus, just like the father reached out to his older son. The same tenderness marked the father's dealings with the elder brother as marked his dealings with the younger brother.

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<sup>722</sup>Inrig, pp. 20-21.

<sup>723</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:262.

<sup>724</sup>Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* p. 18.

<sup>725</sup>Blomberg, p. 36. Italics omitted.

15:29-30 After a disrespectful address ("Look here!"), the older son boasted of what he had done for his father, and than blamed him for not giving him more. Clearly he felt that the father's response should have reflected justice rather than grace. He was counting on a reward commensurate with his work (cf. Matt. 20:12). This hardly reflects a loving relationship.

"He hasn't stayed home because he loved his father, but because working in his fields was a way to get what he wanted."<sup>726</sup>

Wiersbe pointed out parallels between the prodigal's coming to his father and the sinner coming to God through Christ. The prodigal was lost (v. 24); Jesus said, "I am the way." The prodigal was ignorant (v. 17); Jesus said, "I am the truth." The prodigal was dead (v. 24); Jesus said, "I am the life" (John 14:6).<sup>727</sup>

The older son refused to acknowledge his brother *as his brother*, since he had so dishonored his father. By calling him his father's son ("this son of yours"), he was implying that the father shared his younger son's guilt. Everyone in this chapter experienced joy except this elder brother.

"The proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve."<sup>728</sup>

Essentially, what the elder son wanted was recognition (cf. 17:7-10; Matt. 20:11). He felt that his father had made his brother superior to him.<sup>729</sup>

"The second lesson is that God's people ought not to begrudge his generosity for even the most wayward of sinners."<sup>730</sup>

15:31-32 The father responded to the older son's hostility with tenderness and reason. The Greek word *teknon*, translated "child" or "son," is a term of tender affection. The father pointed out his older son's privileged position, as always benefiting from his father's company. This was a uniquely Jewish privilege that the nation's religious leaders enjoyed particularly (cf. Rom. 3:1-2; 9:4). "All" that God "had" was Israel's, in the sense that they always had access to it—because of the privileged relationship He had established with the nation.

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<sup>726</sup>Inrig, p. 25.

<sup>727</sup>Wiersbe, 1:236.

<sup>728</sup>Morris, p. 244.

<sup>729</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 787.

<sup>730</sup>Blomberg, p. 37. Italics omitted.

The older son could have celebrated with a fattened calf whenever he wanted. It was necessary (right, not just good; "we had") "to celebrate" the *return of sinners*, implying that the older brother should have joined in the rejoicing. The reason for the rejoicing was the salvation of the lost ("this brother of yours was dead"—and now lives). The parable closes with the father's implied invitation to the older son to enter the banquet. That invitation was still open to the Pharisees when Jesus told the parable.

". . . the third lesson that this parable teaches is that God in his lavish love forgives the sins of both sons and wants us to do likewise."<sup>731</sup>

"Thus the parable teaches that God loves sinners, that God searches for sinners, that God restores sinners, and that God confers the privileges and blessings of sonship on those who return to Him."<sup>732</sup>

"The sheep went lost through sheer foolishness. . . . The coin did not go lost at all; it was lost *through no fault of its own*. . . . The son *deliberately went lost*, callously turning his back on his father."<sup>733</sup>

There are two interpretations of these three parables that are common among evangelicals. Some see them as teaching the restoration to fellowship of believers. They cite the fact that the man owned the sheep that he lost, the woman owned the coin, and the lost son was a son of his father. They view these relationships as indicating the saved condition of the lost objects in the parables.

Other interpreters view the lost objects as representing unbelievers. This seems more probable, since Jesus was speaking to Pharisees and lawyers who rejected God's salvation—that He extended through Jesus. They grumbled against Jesus because He received sinners who believed on Him. Even more unexpected, the younger son received a new position, that he had not enjoyed previously, after he returned (v. 22). The Jews were God's children only in the sense that God had adopted them into a special relationship with Himself (Exod. 19:5-6). They still had to believe on Jesus to obtain eternal life (cf. Gen. 15:6).<sup>734</sup>

On one level these parables deal with Israel's religious leaders, but on another level they deal with all the Jews. The unbelief that characterized the Pharisees and lawyers also marked the nation as a whole. Therefore it seems that these parables teach that: God reaches out to the Gentiles in view of Israel's unbelief, as well as extending salvation to Jewish sinners in Jesus' day. As Luke's Gospel unfolds from Jesus' postponement of the kingdom onward (13:34-35), Jesus' mission primarily to the Jews declines, and His worldwide mission to the Gentiles becomes an ever-increasing emphasis.

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<sup>731</sup>Ibid., p. 38. Italics omitted.

<sup>732</sup>Pentecost, *The Parables* . . . , p. 105.

<sup>733</sup>Barclay, p. 214.

<sup>734</sup>Martin, p. 244.

## **G. JESUS' WARNINGS ABOUT RICHES CH. 16**

This section, as those immediately preceding and following it, contains parabolic teaching and other instruction that calls for a decision to believe in Jesus.

". . . chap. 15 has emphasized divine initiative and heavenly joy, with repentance in the background; now human responsibility is stressed, especially in connection with the attitude to and the use of wealth, and the divine initiative is only briefly alluded to."<sup>735</sup>

All the teaching in this chapter deals with material possessions. The section begins with instruction for the disciples, and then moves to a lesson for the Pharisees.

### **1. Discipleship as stewardship 16:1-13**

Jesus instructed His disciples about their use of material possessions. He taught them to be prudent in the use of wealth and to beware of the danger of loving it (cf. 1 Tim. 6:10).

#### **The parable of the shrewd manager 16:1-9**

"Luke 16:1-8 contains probably the most difficult parable in Luke."<sup>736</sup>

16:1        The linguistic connection that ties this parable with its preceding context is the word "squander" (Gr. *diaskorpizo*, cf. 15:13). This is the clue to the thematic connection, namely, the prudent use of money. The younger son in the parable of the lost son, who represented the sinners whom Jesus received, did not manage his inheritance well. He squandered, wasted, and dissipated it. The story that follows gives an example of a wise use of some money that a master entrusted to his prodigal servant.

As the story opens, the steward ("manager") or agent (Gr. *oikonomos*) is in trouble for unwisely using his master's money. He was behaving as the younger son in the previous parable. In Jesus' day, wealthy landowners often turned over the management of some of their money to a manager, whose responsibility was to invest it to make more money for the master. Today a stockbroker, a banker, or an investment counselor serves his or her clients in a similar way. Such a manager enjoyed enviable status in Jesus' world, so much so that people were actually known to sell themselves to gain such an advantageous position.<sup>737</sup>

16:2        There is no indication in the parable whether the manager failed his master innocently or deliberately. That is unimportant. For whatever reason, his

<sup>735</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 802.

<sup>736</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 418.

<sup>737</sup>Yvon Thébert, "The Slave," in *The Romans*, pp. 156-57; Jean-Paul Morel, "The Craftsman," in *ibid.*, p. 223.

boss fired him and asked him to turn in his account books that would show what he had done (cf. Matt. 12:36; Acts 19:40; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5).

16:3-4 Before doing so, the manager decided to do something that would enable him to get another job with one of the people who owed his master money. He realized that he had to use his head, since he was not strong enough for manual labor, and he was too proud to resort to begging to earn a living. His plan of action would guarantee him a job and respectability, but immediate action was imperative.

16:5-7 The manager's plan involved discounting the debts of the people who owed his master money, probably by canceling the interest they owed. The fact that he dealt in commodities rather than cash is inconsequential, since many traders dealt on these terms in Jesus' day, as they do in ours.

"These debts are large business debts, either lease arrangements on land or commercial borrowing by the merchant classes. The steward had the authority to write and even rewrite contracts in the name of his master."<sup>738</sup>

One "measure" ("bath") equals about nine gallons of liquid, and one "measure" ("cor") equals around 10 to 12 bushels.<sup>739</sup> Therefore, the discount each one received represented a significant amount of money, and drew the goodwill of the debtors to the manager. The debtors were probably people who had received goods from the master's estate and had given the agent a promissory note rather than cash. This was and is a standard accepted way of doing business. In Jesus' culture, one favor was expected to produce another favor in return.<sup>740</sup>

Did the manager dishonestly cheat his master out of what others owed him, or did he deduct the interest that would have come to him as the agent for each transaction? The first alternative is a real possibility.<sup>741</sup> However, it seems unlikely that Jesus would have proceeded to commend the manager, and hold him up to the disciples as an example to follow, if he was that dishonest (v. 9). Furthermore, if the manager had chosen to cheat his employer further, he probably would have ended up in jail, rather than in the good graces of his master's debtors.

The second alternative is possible and probable.<sup>742</sup> The manager could well have received a commission for each of the transactions that he had negotiated for his employer, and deducted these commissions from the

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<sup>738</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 803.

<sup>739</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 799.

<sup>740</sup>Blomberg, p. 83.

<sup>741</sup>Derrett, *Law in . . .*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>742</sup>J. A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, pp. 175-76; *idem*, "The Story of the Dishonest Manager," *Theological Studies* 25 (1964):23-42. See also Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:267; and J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 4:317-19.

debtors' costs. Even a 100 percent commission (v. 6) was not unknown in Jesus' culture.<sup>743</sup> Probably the commission was part of the original bill.<sup>744</sup> Another possibility is that the steward eliminated his fee plus illegal interest that had been charged.<sup>745</sup> Or the steward may have lowered the price on his own authority.<sup>746</sup> It appears that the steward cancelled the interest due that would have come to him as a commission. Whatever the sum that the servant discounted, it must have come out of his own pocket rather than that of his employer.

- 16:8 The master commended the steward/manager's shrewdness or prudence (Gr. *phronimos*, i.e., practical wisdom) in spending his (the steward's) own wealth (his commission) to secure his future (cf. 12:42; Matt. 10:16). He commended him for his wise use of opportunity.

"In accord with the demands of Greco-Roman reciprocity ethics, they [the debtors] would feel honor bound to repay a good turn with generosity also of a high level."<sup>747</sup>

The rich man did not, of course, approve of the manager's earlier squandering his master's money through incompetence or dishonesty (v. 1), whichever trait may have characterized him. That simply marked him as an unrighteous man ("unjust steward"). The fact that he had not been shrewd at first, accentuates his later shrewdness as being even more commendable.

The "sons of this age" are unrighteous unbelievers who live by the principles that govern most people in the present age. "Sons of the light" are people who live in the light of God's revelation, and are therefore believers (cf. 11:33-36; Eph. 5:8). The implication is that they are believers who are in fellowship with God (cf. 1 John 1:7). Jesus' point was that prudent dealings characterize unbelievers more than believers. Disciples can do well by learning from them, in the way they anticipate the future. People "of the light" should be as shrewd in their kingdom investments for God, as people "of the darkness" are in their business investments for themselves.

- 16:9 Jesus next explained the application of the parable for His disciples. They should spend their money purposefully, to make friends who would later welcome them into the kingdom, and heaven ("eternal dwellings"), when the disciples died. In other words, disciples should sacrifice their money to bring others to faith in Jesus, and so secure a warm reception into heaven.

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<sup>743</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 619.

<sup>744</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, "'Take thy Bond . . . and Write Fifty' (Luke xvi. 6) The nature of the Bond," *Journal of New Testament Studies* NS23 (1972):438-40.

<sup>745</sup>Inrig, p. 112.

<sup>746</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 803.

<sup>747</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 800.

"Did you hear about the IRS worker who was given notice that he was being laid off and who then mailed twenty good friends large, undeserved tax refund checks? Or did you hear about the hospital administrator, about to lose his job, who reduced the bills of several prominent patients by several thousand dollars? Or how about the just-fired defense contractor who changed five-hundred-dollar screw orders to five dollars? Each made many new friends as a result and thereby received several new job offers."<sup>748</sup>

Jesus pictured the converts as dying before the disciples, and welcoming them into heaven when the disciples arrived. Disciples should use their money to lead people to Jesus Christ. Neither should they consume it all on themselves, pass it all on to their heirs, or hoard it, but invest it in "the Lord's work."

The word "mammon" is probably a transliteration of the Hebrew word *mamon*, meaning "what one trusts," and therefore "wealth." Another view is that it transliterates the Aramaic *mamona*, meaning "wealth," "money," or "property." "Mammon of unrighteousness" means worldly or material wealth, wealth associated with unrighteous living contrasted with heavenly treasure (cf. 12:21). The phrase does not mean wealth acquired by dishonest means. "When money fails" is another way of saying "when you die." Money no longer supports a person after he or she dies. Even though money will fail us when we die, those whom we have led to salvation will not die. They will welcome us into eternal, in contrast to temporal, dwellings. Thus Jesus contrasted the temporary nature of money with the eternal value of saved lives.

"A foolish person lives only for the present and uses personal wealth only for the present. A wise person considers the future and uses personal wealth to reap benefits in the future . . ."<sup>749</sup>

The reason Jesus taught this lesson appears to have been the Pharisees' money-grabbing reputation (cf. v. 14; 20:47). This practice should not characterize His disciples.

### **The implications of heavenly stewardship 16:10-13**

Jesus proceeded to draw two more lessons from the parable He had just told. One was the importance of faithfulness for Jesus' agents. The other was the importance of undivided loyalty to Jesus.

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<sup>748</sup>Blomberg, p. 82.

<sup>749</sup>Pentecost, *The Parables* . . . , p. 110.

- 16:10-12 Trustworthiness does not depend on the amount for which one is responsible, but on character (cf. 1 Tim. 3:5). Faithfulness in the use of money now, demonstrates a trustworthy character that God will reward with responsibility for greater riches in the kingdom later. Unfaithfulness does not just demonstrate untrustworthiness but unrighteousness. By using the word "mammon," Jesus probably intended the disciples to include all the worldly things in which people trust, not just money. These would include one's time and talents, in addition to his or her treasure. If disciples squander what God has entrusted to their care on the earth, "who will" give ("entrust to") them their own things to manage in heaven, such as authority over others in the kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17)? The rhetorical question answers itself. God will not.
- 16:13 Even though one may have both God and Mammon, namely, be a believer and have earthly resources, it is impossible to "serve" them both. They both demand total allegiance (cf. Matt. 6:24). Love for "God" will result in Mammon taking second place in life. Conversely, if one puts Mammon first, God can have only second place (cf. 1 Tim. 6:10). This fact should serve as a warning against unfaithfulness to God, and as a warning against enslavement by Mammon. Jesus personified Mammon to picture it as God's rival. Disciples obviously can serve God and Mammon, but they cannot be the *servant*, in the truest sense of that word, of *both* God and Mammon. They can only be the servant of one.<sup>750</sup>

## **2. Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees for their greed 16:14-31**

The Pharisees, who were listening to Jesus' instructions to His disciples, scoffed at Him, because they tried to serve both God and Mammon (v. 13). They tried to appear pious and at the same time accumulate all the wealth they could (cf. 20:47). Jesus therefore addressed their greed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:2).

### **The importance of submission to God's Word 16:14-18**

Jesus began His response to the Pharisees' rejection of His teaching by pointing out the importance of submitting to God's Word.

- 16:14-15 Jesus rebuked His critics for their hypocrisy. They were able to explain their covetous practices to the Jews to their own satisfaction. Probably they reasoned that any wealth that they could accumulate was a sign of God's blessing on them. This was a common misinterpretation of the law in Jesus' day, as it is in ours. Their ostentatious display when giving alms may have been part of this hypocrisy too (cf. Matt. 6:2-4), but God was their real Judge, and He knew their greedy "hearts" (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 7:10).

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<sup>750</sup>See Dave L. Mathewson, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13): A Reexamination of the Traditional View in Light of Recent Challenges," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38:1 (March 1995):29-39.

What many people esteem highly is the pursuit of money. That is detestable to God because it is idolatry. It robs people of their future, and it insults God—who alone is worthy of our supreme devotion. Jesus illustrated this point with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus that follows (vv. 19-31). The Pharisees' values were wrong. What really mattered, and what they should have concentrated on, was the kingdom and God's Word. Rather than using money to "make friends" (v. 9), the Pharisees "were lovers of money."

- 16:16 The Hebrew Scriptures should have been of primary importance to the Pharisees. They pointed to the coming of Messiah. Since "John" the Baptist had arrived, the message that he and Jesus "preached" was that the Messiah was present, and "the kingdom" was at hand. A new era had begun with John's preaching, albeit not the kingdom. The Pharisees had disregarded that preaching, and in doing so had rejected the teaching of the Old Testament—even though their fellow Jews were desperately trying to get ("forcing" their "way") "into" the kingdom (cf. 13:24; 14:15; Mark 7:8-9).

The fact that Jesus said something similar about the kingdom, on another occasion that Matthew recorded, has raised questions about Jesus' meaning here and there (cf. Matt. 11:12-13). In Matthew, Jesus' point was this: The Jewish religious leaders were trying to bring in the kingdom in their own carnal way, while refusing to accept God's way that John and Jesus announced. In the different teaching situation that Luke recorded, Jesus said something similar but slightly different. His point here was that many of the Jews were eager to enter the kingdom, but the religious leaders were hindering them by rejecting John and Jesus' ministries.

". . . those pressing into the kingdom must be at least as much in earnest as the violent men of Palestine who tried to bring in the kingdom by force of arms. In the context we may think of men like the astute steward."<sup>751</sup>

- 16:17 Regardless of the Pharisees' views, the Old Testament would stand as the final authority. Verse 17 is a very strong attestation to God's preservation of Scripture (cf. Matt. 5:18). The implication was that Jesus' teachings would likewise endure.
- 16:18 Jesus next cited an example of the continuing validity of the Old Testament and the Pharisees' disregard of it. God still expected and expects submission to His Word. The Pharisees did not condone adultery, though they permitted divorce (Deut. 24:1-4). Some Pharisees permitted a man to divorce his wife and then remarry another woman, though most of

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<sup>751</sup>Morris, p. 251.

them did not grant women the same privilege.<sup>752</sup> Jesus condemned such conduct as a violation of the seventh commandment. This was an example of the Pharisees justifying themselves in the eyes of men but not being just before God (v. 15). Jesus both affirmed and clarified the Old Testament revelation. Therefore for the Pharisees to disregard His teaching about money was equivalent to rejecting other divine revelation.

This teaching on "divorce" supplements other statements that Jesus made on the same subject on other occasions (cf. Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11). Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11 evidently record one teaching incident. Matthew 5:32 occurs in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Luke's reference reflects a third context. As in Mark 10:11, Jesus omitted the exception clause here (cf. Matt. 5:32; 19:9). He evidently did not want to draw attention to the exceptional case, because to do so would weaken His main point, namely: that people should not divorce. Matthew included Jesus' permission to divorce for fornication, because the subject of how to deal with divorce cases involving marital unfaithfulness was of particular interest to the Jews.

"The basic application to this small unit is to respond with obedience to the kingdom demand for ethical integrity, whether it be in how we deal with our resources or how we approach our marriages."<sup>753</sup>

### **The parable of the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31**

In this parable the rich man and his brothers, who did not listen to Moses and the prophets (vv. 29-31), represent the Pharisees (vv. 16-17). The Pharisees believed in a future life and a coming judgment, but they, as the rich man, did not allow those beliefs to deter them from the pursuit of present wealth (v. 14). Jesus announced that even His resurrection would not change them (v. 31). This parable also affirmed Jesus' teaching on a future reversal of fortunes (1:53; 6:20-26; 12:16-21; 13:30; 14:11), and the fact that present decisions affect future destiny for the saved and the unsaved.

The rabbinic story of how Abraham sent his steward Eleazar ("God is My Help"), of which Lazarus is the Greek form of the name, to Sodom to test the hospitality of its citizens may be the origin of this parable.<sup>754</sup> Jesus may have built His parable on that story, which was extra-biblical, but perhaps factual, or merely fictional.

16:19-21 Jesus began the parable by introducing its two main characters. He presented the "rich man" as living selfishly, in the "splendor" of luxury, and rejoicing in his present earthly prosperity (cf. 16:1, 13). Only the very wealthy of Jesus' day could afford to dress in the expensive "purple" garments that kings wore. The rich man also possessed the best undergarments made of "fine linen."

<sup>752</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 631.

<sup>753</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 429.

<sup>754</sup>Derrett, *Law in* . . . , pp. 86-92.

"White garments underneath a purple robe—this was the sign of the highest opulence."<sup>755</sup>

"Lazarus," on the other hand, was: poor, incapacitated, begging, diseased, hungry, unclean, and despised. These descriptions set the stage for the dramatic reversal in the conditions of these two men that follows (vv. 22-24). Obviously the rich man had disregarded the Old Testament teaching that the Israelites should care for the poor among them (cf. Prov. 14:21; 19:17; 21:13; 28:27).

The fact that Jesus named the beggar, and not the rich man, hints at the ultimate greater importance of Lazarus. He was not the brother of Mary and Martha (John 11). This is the only parable that Jesus taught in which He named one of the characters. The fact that Jesus mentioned his name does not necessarily mean that he was a real person. However, he could have been.<sup>756</sup> Everything else about this story indicates that this was a typical invented parable.

"The naming of the poor man as Lazarus and the failure to name the rich man personalizes the level of concern for the poor man, while making clear that the rich man is a representative figure. God cares for each poor person and is fully aware of their plight. The rich man could be any rich individual."<sup>757</sup>

Lazarus was a common name, the equivalent of the Hebrew Eleazar, meaning "whom God has helped." Abraham, also mentioned in this parable, had a servant named Eleazar who was evidently a Gentile (Gen. 15:2). This fact has led some students of this passage to seek an interpretation that comes from Abraham's experience.<sup>758</sup> One such writer concluded that Jesus was teaching that severe judgment would come on the Jews if they failed to repent.<sup>759</sup> However, the connections with Abraham's history seem so obscure that Jesus' hearers would have missed them. Tradition has given the name Dives, the Latin word for "rich," to the rich man, but there is no basis for this in the text.<sup>760</sup>

"Giving Lazarus a name helps to personalize him, and the description of his piteous condition encourages readers to sympathize with him and to condemn the rich man's

<sup>755</sup>Green, p. 605. See also Gladys Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.*, p. 81.

<sup>756</sup>R. Summers, *Commentary on Luke*.

<sup>757</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 431.

<sup>758</sup>E.g., Derrett, *Law in . . .*, pp. 85-92; idem, "Fresh Light on St Luke xvi. II. Dives and Lazarus and the preceding Sayings," *New Testament Studies*, 7 (1960-61):364-80. Cf. Blomberg, p. 50.

<sup>759</sup>C. H. Cave, "Lazarus and the Lucan Deuteronomy," *New Testament Studies* 15 (1968-67):319-25.

<sup>760</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 634-35.

callousness. It is not simply being wealthy but this callousness toward the suffering poor which is condemned in the parable."<sup>761</sup>

That Lazarus lay among unclean "dogs" heightens his abject condition. The dogs that came and licked his sores would have aggravated them, not alleviated them.<sup>762</sup>

16:22-24

These verses describe the two destinies of the men, which were as different as their lives on earth had been. The "angels" assist God in caring for humans (Heb. 1:14). They escorted Lazarus' spirit "to Abraham's bosom," whereas the rich man simply experienced burial without heavenly honors. The point is the care that God lavished on Lazarus. Jesus pictured Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, enjoying the future messianic banquet in the millennial kingdom (cf. 13:28-29). Formerly the rich man had enjoyed banquets, while Lazarus had begged for scraps from his table (v. 21)—but now the tables had turned.

The figure of Abraham's bosom connotes a place of security, godly fellowship with other Old Testament believers, and honor. "Hades" is the general name for the place of departed spirits (cf. 10:15), and it is the equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol. However, in the New Testament, Hades always refers to the abode of the unsaved dead *before* their resurrection and condemnation at the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). Gehenna is a different place, the lake of fire, which is the final destiny of all unbelievers following the great white throne judgment (12:5). At the beginning of the messianic kingdom, only unbelievers will be in Hades, since God will have resurrected all Old Testament saints including Lazarus (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). "Paradise" (23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4) is a euphemism for God's presence, the place where all believers' spirits go, regardless of when they die, until the resurrection of their bodies.<sup>763</sup>

For the rich man, Hades was a place of "torment." He could see the righteous "far away," but could not leave Hades to join them. This revelation by Jesus Christ refutes the doctrine of "soul sleep," the theory that when people die they become unconscious. The rich man appealed to Abraham to "send Lazarus" to extend him some "mercy." His address, "Father Abraham," was typically respectful for a Jew (cf. 3:8; John 8:39). However, the rich man's appeal to his racial connection with the father of the Jews was ineffective. This fact should have warned the listening Pharisees not to count on their Jewish heritage to admit them into the kingdom.<sup>764</sup> The rich man still viewed Lazarus as a *servant*—who could

<sup>761</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:131.

<sup>762</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:279.

<sup>763</sup>See the Appendix "What happens to a person after he or she dies," at the end of these notes, for five diagrams.

<sup>764</sup>See *ibid.*, 1:271, for evidence that the Jews believed that their physical connection to Abraham guaranteed their salvation.

*help him*—rather than as an equal. His judgment had not led him to repent of his selfishness—even in death! Obviously many modern ideas about hell are traceable to this parable.<sup>765</sup>

16:25-26 The title "child" or "son" (Gr. *teknon*) is a tender one that expressed compassion for the rich man in his misery (cf. 15:31). Abraham's reminder of the rich man's previous comfort was not an attempt to justify his present "agony." God had not sentenced him to torment because he had previously been comfortable, just to balance things out. It reminded the rich man of the reason he was now in torment. He had chosen a life of personal comfort rather than a life of allegiance to God's Word (cf. 12:21).

His *sin* was not that he had done something bad, but that he had done nothing, when he should have done something good. Furthermore it was too late for repentance. Notice that there is no suggestion of a middle ground between Hades and Abraham's bosom—no purgatory.<sup>766</sup> Lazarus had been one of those poor and crippled, who had responded to Jesus' invitation, and had become a believer (cf. 4:18; 14:13, 21). Hades is not only real and terrible, but it is final.<sup>767</sup>

16:27-31 Was the rich man sincerely concerned about his brothers, or was he backhandedly implying that he had not received adequate warning of coming judgment? I tend to favor the former motivation.

Clearly the testimony of the Old Testament (v. 16) was more convincing than any testimony from a person who might return to the living with a message from Hades. This statement condemned the Pharisees who were listening to Jesus, but had explained away the Old Testament revelation about Messiah, and had asked Jesus for more signs (11:16). It also strongly implied that they would not believe on Jesus, even though He *would* rise from the dead (cf. 9:22; 11:29-30; 13:32).

"The primary use of miracles in Scripture was not to *convince* people of the truth by replacing the Bible, but rather to *confirm* the truth of Scripture."<sup>768</sup>

The testimony of the Scriptures is powerful because that is what God has chosen to use to bring conviction of spiritual need (cf. Heb. 4:12). Angels had appeared to people in Old Testament times, but hardhearted people did not believe them either (Gen. 19:14). Evidently people in Hades have a concern for the lost on earth, but they can do nothing about it.

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<sup>765</sup>See Flavius Josephus, *An Extract Out of Josephus' Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades*, for this first-century Jewish Ebionite Christian's understanding of Hades, the lake of fire, eternal punishment, Abraham's bosom, heaven, and related matters—which is biblical and helpful.

<sup>766</sup>See Edersheim, *Sketches of . . .*, pp. 175-77, for a summary of Rabbinic teaching on heaven and hell.

<sup>767</sup>Inrig, p. 128.

<sup>768</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

"There is an implication that the rich man's unpleasant situation was due not to his riches (after all, Abraham had been rich), but to his neglect of Scripture and its teaching. But the rich man does not agree. He knows how he had reacted to the possession of the Bible."<sup>769</sup>

Not long after this teaching, Jesus *did raise* someone from the dead who bore witness to His identity: another Lazarus. What was the reaction of the Pharisees? They tried to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 11:45-53; 12:10-11). Perhaps this is the key to why Jesus gave the poor man in this parable the name "Lazarus." Perhaps He wanted the Pharisees to remember the lesson of the "Lazarus" in this parable—when He later raised the other *Lazarus* from the dead!

These verses should warn us against putting too much hope in signs and wonders to persuade people to believe in Jesus (cf. John 10:41-42). The Word of God is a more convincing witness to Him than any miracle. This does not mean that miracles are valueless. God used them to corroborate the testimony of Scripture in the past, and He may do so occasionally today, but Scripture is the Holy Spirit's primary tool in bringing people to repentance (cf. John 16:7-15).

This teaching concerning *greed* warned both the disciples and the Pharisees. Both groups ought to serve God as faithful servants, rather than serving Mammon.<sup>770</sup> We should also beware of the possibility of disbelieving Scripture and explaining it away—if we make Mammon our god—as the Pharisees did.

"Two themes dominate: the idea of divine evaluation in the afterlife and the hardness of heart that cannot be overcome even by resurrection."<sup>771</sup>

"The dialogues from the afterlife in this passage reveal a series of vital truths that serve as correctives to some modern erroneous doctrines. (1) There is immediate consciousness after death; therefore soul sleep is not taught in the Bible. (2) Post-death destinies are irreversible; therefore there is no purgatory or second chance of salvation after death. (3) No one can lose or gain salvation after death. The decisions of this life are final and determinative. (4) The judgments that determine the eternal destinies of either torment or blessing are just. (5) Signs should never be sought as a substitute for the Word of God. The Word of God is the only adequate basis for faith (16:29; see Rom. 10:17)."<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>769</sup>Morris, p. 154.

<sup>770</sup>See Blomberg, pp. 45-52.

<sup>771</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 432.

<sup>772</sup>M. Bailey, p. 137.

## **H. JESUS' WARNING ABOUT DISCIPLES' ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES 17:1-19**

Jesus had been teaching the disciples about avoiding what men esteemed highly, but which God viewed as detestable, namely: the pursuit of money (16:15). By pursuing money hypocritically, the Pharisees had turned many of their fellow Jews away from Jesus (11:52). Jesus now warned the disciples about the possibility of their own improper actions and attitudes.

### **1. The prevention of sin and the restoration of sinners 17:1-4**

17:1-2 The introductory "and" (*de* in the Greek text, not translated in the NIV) indicates a logical connection with what has preceded. "It is inevitable" that disciples retard the spiritual progress of others, occasionally, because none of us is perfect. However, that does not excuse personal responsibility when someone causes another to stumble into sin or apostasy (cf. 11:52). It is a very serious offense to hinder the progress of a spiritually immature believer, whom Jesus spoke of here as a child (cf. Matt. 18:6). "Woe" recalls Jesus condemnation of the Pharisees in 6:24-26. It indicates the seriousness of this offense.

17:3-4 Jesus proceeded from warning against leading people into sin, to the subject of helping those who do fall. The disciple's responsibility in such cases is twofold: admonition of the sinner, and generous forgiveness of the penitent (cf. Matt. 6:12; 18:15, 21-22).

"The saying implicitly forbids the nursing of grudges and criticism of the offender behind his back."<sup>773</sup>

### **2. The disciples' attitude toward their duty 17:5-10**

Jesus again followed instruction with illustration.

#### **The importance of trusting God 17:5-6**

17:5 Luke referred to the Twelve as "apostles" here, probably to highlight the importance of this teaching for disciple leaders. Evidently the apostles concluded that such a magnanimous approach to forgiving would require more "faith" in God than they possessed. They would have to believe that God could change a person's heart, even if he gave no evidence of genuine contrition: by repeatedly sinning and then repeatedly professing repentance.

17:6 Jesus encouraged the disciples by reminding them that only a little trust in God's ability can result in unbelievable change (cf. Matt. 17:20; 21:21; Mark 11:23). A "mustard" seed was proverbially small (cf. 7:13). Mulberry trees grew to be as tall as 35 feet and were difficult to uproot.<sup>774</sup>

<sup>773</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 642.

<sup>774</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 994.

"At the present time both the black mulberry (sycamine [Gr. *sukaminoi*, here]) and the white mulberry (sycamore [Gr. *sukomorean*, 19:4]) exist in Palestine. . . . Both trees differ from the English sycamore."<sup>775</sup>

This response by Jesus amounted to telling the disciples that they did not need more faith. They just needed to use the faith they had.

"This word of Jesus does not invite Christians to become conjurers and magicians, but heroes like those whose exploits are celebrated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews."<sup>776</sup>

"It is not so much great faith in God that is required as faith in a great God."<sup>777</sup>

### **The parable of the unworthy servant 17:7-10**

17:7-9 Jesus told this parable to teach His disciples that warning sinning disciples, and forgiving those who sinned and repented: was only their *duty*. It was not something for which they should expect a reward from God. The Pharisees believed that their righteous deeds put God in their debt, as did many of the Jews. God will indeed reward faithful service (12:35-37, 42-48). However, that is not because His servants have placed Him in their debt, but because He graciously gives them more than what is just. The teaching in chapter 12 (vv. 35-37, 42-48) deals with the Master's grace, whereas the teaching here in chapter 17 (vv. 7-10) stresses the servant's attitude.

Perhaps Jesus selected the example of a servant laboring in the field or tending sheep because this is the type of service His disciples render. In the situation Jesus pictured, the individual servant had several different responsibilities to his master. Jesus did not picture a large estate in which each slave had only one specialized task. Again the parallel with disciples' duties is realistic. The point is not the master's attitude in failing to express thanks for services rendered, but the servant's attitude in doing his duty without placing his master under obligation to him.

17:10 Jesus drew the application. His disciples should have the same attitude as good servants. By claiming to be "unworthy," they were not saying that they were totally worthless people. They meant that they were unworthy of any reward, because all the service they had rendered was simply their duty to their Master. In the context, the particular duty in view was

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<sup>775</sup>Robertson, 2:226.

<sup>776</sup>Manson, p. 141.

<sup>777</sup>Morris, p. 256.

forgiving generously (vv. 3-4), but the teaching applies generally to all the duties that disciples owe God.

Jesus and the apostles taught elsewhere that the prospect of reward should motivate disciples to serve the Lord (Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 John 2:28; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:1-4). Jesus was not contradicting that here. Here, His point was that God is under no obligation to reward us. He will do so because He chooses to do so, not because He has to do so. Our attitude should be that God does not need us to serve Him, and that serving Him is only our duty—for which He is under no obligation to reward us.

### **3. The importance of gratitude 17:11-19**

Luke's narration of this miracle focuses on the response of the Samaritan whom Jesus healed. It is not so much a story that he intended to demonstrate Jesus' divine identity, though it does that. It is rather another lesson for the disciples on an important attitude that should characterize them. It balances Jesus' previous teaching on the stern demands of discipleship with a demonstration of His healing mercy, and the appropriate attitude of gratitude for that mercy that should characterize His disciples.

"Not only is this narrative peculiar to Luke, but it also stresses several characteristically Lukan themes. Jerusalem is the goal of Jesus' journey (cr. 9:51; 13:33); Jesus has mercy on social outcasts; he conforms to Jewish norms by requiring that the lepers go for the required priestly declaration of health (cf. Lev. 14); faith and healing should bring praise to God (cf. 18:43; Acts 3:8-9); and the grace of God extends beyond Judaism, with Samaritans receiving special attention (cf. 10:25-37)."<sup>778</sup>

17:11-13 Verse 11 is another geographical progress report (cf. 9:51; 13:22). These notations usually indicate the beginning of new sections in Luke and Acts, but there is continuity in the subject matter of Jesus' teachings from what precedes. A new subject begins at the end of this pericope.

It was common for Galilean Jews to travel through Samaria on their way to Judea and Jerusalem.<sup>779</sup> This incident happened somewhere close to the border between southern Galilee and northern Samaria. This accounts for the inclusion of Jewish and Samaritan lepers in one group. Their common affliction had brought them together. The lepers stood at a distance from others because they were unclean, and possibly because their disease was contagious. Biblical leprosy was contagious in some stages but not in others (cf. Lev. 13—14). Their address to Jesus as "Master" (Gr. *epistata*, a word found only in Luke in the New Testament) indicated a measure of faith in Him.

<sup>778</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 995.

<sup>779</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 20:6:1.

"When used elsewhere in the Third gospel, 'Master' denotes one who has authority consistent with miraculous power."<sup>780</sup>

The lepers realized that their only hope for healing was Jesus' "mercy," not their worthiness. Their condition made obvious what they wanted Jesus to do for them, namely, remove their leprosy.

17:14 Probably the lepers did not expect Jesus to respond as He did. Rather than touching them, or pronouncing them clean, He gave them a command. The command implied that by the time they reached the priest, they would have experienced the prerequisite healing for presentation. Normally a command to show oneself to a priest followed a cure (5:14; cf. Lev. 13:49; 14:2-3). The priestly examination would result in the lepers resuming normal lives.

The priests were not healers or therapists, of course, but "health care professionals" who were "purity inspectors."<sup>781</sup> However, these lepers could have refused to go, and or they could have repeated their request to Jesus.

Jesus was testing their faith and obedience. If they really regarded Him as their Master, they should obey Him. They decided to obey—and immediately experienced healing (cf. 5:12-16). Jesus healed them from a distance (cf. 2 Kings 5:10-14).

The lepers' response would have taught the disciples and everyone else present the importance of trusting and obeying Jesus' word. This was a lesson that Jesus had been teaching both the Pharisees and the disciples (16:15-31). This miracle showed the benefit of obeying Jesus' word because of belief in Him (cf. 6:10; Matt. 12:13; Mark 3:5). This lesson was not the main reason Luke recorded this incident, however.

17:15-16 The "one" leper who returned loudly gave God the glory for his healing. He thereby acknowledged that Jesus was God's agent. His prostrate posture and his thanksgiving expressed his great gratitude to Jesus (cf. 5:12; 8:41; 18:11; 22:17, 19; Ps. 103:2; Acts 5:10; 28:15). The fact that "he was a Samaritan," rather than a Jew, is the key point in the incident. Luke's mention of this fact set the stage for Jesus' teaching that followed.

"Here, Luke's christology reaches impressive heights as he presents Jesus in the role of the temple—as one in whom the powerful and merciful presence of God is realized and before whom the God of the temple (whether in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim!) can be worshiped."<sup>782</sup>

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<sup>780</sup>Green, p. 623.

<sup>781</sup>Ibid., p. 624.

<sup>782</sup>Ibid., p. 626.

17:17-19 Jesus' questions highlighted the ingratitude of "the nine" other lepers who were Jews (v. 18). They also made the point that Luke wanted to stress by recording this incident. The Jews had more knowledge about Messiah and His coming than foreigners. They should have recognized who Jesus was, and expressed their gratitude as well. Their lack of responsiveness was typical of the Jews in Jesus' day (cf. 15:3-10). In closing, Jesus clarified that it was the man's "faith" in Him, that led to his obedience and was responsible for his restoration, not just his obedience. Jesus was not implying that the other nine lepers lacked faith. They also believed in Him (v. 13).

The incident teaches that people whom Jesus delivers, and who believe on Him, have a moral obligation to express their gratitude to Him for what He has done for them. It also illustrates the fact that the Jews were happy to receive the benefits of Jesus' ministry, without thanking Him or connecting His goodness with God. The chiasmic structure of Jesus' three questions (vv. 17-18) is another indication that the focus of attention is on the ingratitude of the nine healed lepers.

### **I. JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT HIS RETURN 17:20—18:8**

Again an action by the Pharisees led to a brief answer from Jesus followed by a longer explanation for the disciples (cf. 15:1—16:13; 16:14—17:19). Luke's conclusion of Jesus' teaching on this occasion included a parable (18:1-8).

#### **1. A short lesson for the Pharisees 17:20-21**

Jesus' teaching about the arrival of the kingdom arose out of a question from the Pharisees. It was a reasonable question, since both John the Baptist and Jesus had preached for some time that the kingdom was at hand. Probably they asked it to discredit Jesus, who now spoke of the kingdom as postponed (cf. 11:53-54; 13:34-35). Most of the Jews expected a Messiah, according to their messianic ideas, to appear very soon and free them from their Roman yoke.

"The form of the Pharisees' question shows that they are thinking of the Kingdom as something still future. They believe that it will come; and they ask 'when?'"<sup>783</sup>

Jesus probably meant that the particular signs that the Pharisees asked Jesus to perform would not precede the messianic kingdom (11:29).

Another view is that Jesus meant *no observable* signs will precede the kingdom.<sup>784</sup> However, He told the disciples that the "sign of the coming of the Son of Man" would precede it, which will announce His return like "lightning" flashing across the sky (Matt. 24:3, 27).

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<sup>783</sup>Manson, p. 304.

<sup>784</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 654-55; Manson, p. 304.

A third view is that Jesus meant that the coming of the kingdom would not be an observable process.<sup>785</sup> Still, as the Old Testament predicted the coming of Messiah to reign, it certainly would be observable.

A fourth view is that Jesus meant that the kingdom would not come because the Jews observed certain rites such as the Passover.<sup>786</sup> They could not make it begin. Many of the Jews in Jesus' day apparently believed that Messiah would come at a Passover celebration.<sup>787</sup> The Greek word *parateresis*, translated "signs to be observed" (NASB) or "careful observation" (NIV), literally means "watching," "spying," or "observation." Nevertheless there is nothing in the context that connects with the idea of observing Jewish rites.

There would be no dramatic change in Jesus' day to announce that the kingdom had arrived either. The kingdom was already among Jesus' hearers in the person of the King (11:20), but because the nation had rejected Jesus His hearers would not see the kingdom. God had postponed it (13:34-35).

". . . a kingdom can hardly be 'here' or 'there', and so the reference must be to the ruler himself."<sup>788</sup>

The NIV translation "within you" (Gr. *entos hymon*) is unfortunate because it implies a spiritual reign within people. The Old Testament teaching concerning the messianic kingdom was uniformly an earthly reign that included universal submission to God's authority. Nowhere else does the Old or New Testament speak of the kingdom as something internal.<sup>789</sup> Besides, even if the kingdom were internal, it would hardly have been "within" the unbelieving Pharisees whom Jesus was addressing.

It was "in your [their] midst" (NASB) or "among" (NRSV) them, because the Messiah was standing right in their presence.<sup>790</sup> *If* they had believed on Him, the kingdom would have begun shortly—immediately after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 9:24-27), and His Second Coming. It was within their reach.<sup>791</sup>

It may be asked: "If the Jews *had* believed on Jesus, how would He have been crucified?" Jesus' crucifixion was, of course, predicted in the Old Testament (Ps. 22:16; Isa. 53:5). Evidently the Romans would have crucified Him. The Jews did not have the authority to crucify people. The charge against Jesus in his trial before Pilate was that He had made Himself out to be a king (Mark 15:2). Perhaps Pilate would have had Jesus crucified even though the Jews believed on Him. This is an entirely *hypothetical* possibility, however, since the Old Testament predicted that the Jews would *not* believe on their Messiah (Isa. 53:3-5, 7-9).

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<sup>785</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 997.

<sup>786</sup>R. J. Sneed, "'The Kingdom of God is within you' (Lk. 17, 21)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24 (1962):363-82.

<sup>787</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 653.

<sup>788</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 655. Cf. Morris, p. 259.

<sup>789</sup>Manson, p. 304; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 655.

<sup>790</sup>See McClain, pp. 272-73.

<sup>791</sup>C. H. Roberts, "The Kingdom of Heaven (Lk. xvii. 21)," *Harvard Theological Review* 41 (1948):1-8.

## **2. A longer explanation for the disciples 17:22-37**

This teaching is quite similar to portions of the Olivet Discourse (cf. Matt. 24:23-28, 37-39), though the differences suggest separate teaching situations. It is one of several teachings that Luke recorded that deals with the future (cf. 12:35-48; 14:7-24; 21:5-33). This one stresses the distant future and the Second Coming. The teaching in chapter 21 deals mainly with the near future—from Jesus' perspective—and the destruction of Jerusalem.

### **Characteristics of the last days 17:22-33**

- 17:22-23 Jesus next gave His disciples more instruction about the coming of the kingdom. "One of the days of the Son of Man" refers to one of the future days when the Son of Man will be reigning on the earth (cf. vv. 24-25, 30), perhaps the first day.<sup>792</sup> The use of "Son of Man" recalls Daniel 7:13-14, which predicts the earthly reign of Messiah. The disciples would desire ("long") "to see" the kingdom come, because they would suffer severe persecution before Jesus returned. There would be many false alarms about His return, but disciples should not allow others to mislead them (cf. Matt. 24:23; Mark 13:21).
- 17:24-25 Jesus' return will be unmistakable (cf. Matt. 24:27, 30). The messianic kingdom will not creep up on people. People living on the earth then will not discover that it began some time ago, and that they are suddenly aware of being in it. It will not take place in some remote, out-of-the-way place that only a few people will observe. Everyone will know when it begins. It will be as unmistakable as a lightning flash that illuminates the whole earth and sky. However, before the Son of Man begins His reign, He first had to "suffer" and experience rejection by the unbelieving Jews of His day (cf. 9:22, 41; 11:29, 31-32, 50-51; 24:26, 46; Matt. 16:21; Acts 17:3).
- 17:26 When Jesus said "the days of the Son of Man" would be similar to "the days of Noah," He meant "the days" just before the Son of Man's reign. This is clear from the comparison with the beginning of the Flood. Both in Noah's days, and toward the end of the Tribulation just before Jesus returns, people were and will be unresponsive to preached warnings of coming judgment (cf. Matt. 24:37-39; 2 Pet. 2:5). In Noah's day, "The wickedness of man was great on the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11).
- 17:27 "Eating and drinking" and "marrying and being given in marriage" are phrases that describe people living life normally. The return of Jesus would suddenly disrupt their lives and call them to a judgment. People living in Noah's day were unprepared for the Flood. Similarly, most people living just before the Second Coming will be unprepared for the

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<sup>792</sup>Plummer, p. 407.

judgment that will follow Jesus' return, and they will perish in it (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

- 17:28-29 This second example of unexpected judgment ("days of Lot") reinforces the first. It also repeats the hope that some will escape divine condemnation when the Son of Man returns, namely: the *righteous* living on earth then. By comparing moral conditions on the earth at the Second Coming with "Sodom," Jesus was picturing the worst kinds of evil running rampant. Destruction that was unexpected by most people fell quickly and suddenly, and interrupted normal daily living ("destroyed them all").
- 17:30-31 The word "apocalypse" comes from the Greek word *apokalypso*, meaning "to appear," that occurs here. Jesus' sudden appearing at the Second Coming will constitute the greatest apocalypse in history. When it begins, everyone must flee for cover (cf. Matt. 24:17-18; Mark 13:15-16; Luke 21:21).
- 17:32-33 "Lot's wife" is an instructive example of someone who underestimated the destructive power of God's judgment, and perished because she was slow to seek refuge. She sought to preserve her former way of life, and in doing so she perished (Gen. 19:26; cf. Matt. 10:39). Similarly, people living when Jesus returns will need to seek physical refuge rather than clinging to earthly treasures (cf. ch. 12). The salvation of Lot's wife is debatable. Therefore we should probably take her example as a warning to all people, including believers. This view finds support in the "whoever" of verse 33. Physical destruction is in view (v. 31).

### **The parable of the one taken and the one left 17:34-36**

The point of these examples is that when Jesus returns He will separate people, even those who are intimate companions. The unstated reason is implicit, namely, to judge some and not the others. Some will be ready for His return and others will not. The idea of sudden destruction resulting in judgment runs through the entire passage.

The presence of "two" men "in one bed" may be another indication of the moral condition of that time. The Greek masculine gender could describe a man and his wife, however. But the main idea is their close association. It was common for a mother and daughter, or "two" female ("women") friends, to grind grain together in Jesus' day (cf. Matt. 24:41). Perhaps Jesus intended the fact that one separation takes place at night, and the other during daytime, to reinforce the fact that He could return at any time (day or night). In any case, *whenever* He returns: some people on earth will be sleeping and others will be awake. Those "taken" will experience punishment and will die, while those "left" will enter the kingdom, since they will be believers. This is the opposite of what will happen at the Rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-17). At that event Jesus will take the godly into heaven, and will leave the unbelievers on earth to enter the Tribulation.<sup>793</sup>

<sup>793</sup>See Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come! A Definitive Study of the Rapture of the Church*, pp. 176-91, for a discussion of the differences in the biblical descriptions of the Rapture and the Second Coming, which argue for a pretribulation Rapture.

A scribe probably inserted verse 36 (cf. Matt. 24:40). It is absent in the best ancient Greek manuscripts.

### **What to look for 17:37**

Evidently the disciples (v. 22) wanted to know where this judgment would occur. Rather than giving them a geographical site, Jesus told them what to look for. The presence of corruption would signal the coming of One to clean it up. Similarly, the presence of a dead "body" outdoors indicated that "vultures" would be along soon to eat the carrion. Jesus may have been using a proverbial expression. Perhaps the "vultures" here represent Israel's hostile enemies, and the "body" is Israel at the end of the Tribulation period (cf. Matt. 24:28; Rev. 19:21). Another preferable interpretation follows:

"Vultures hovering over dead bodies graphically depict the death and judgment that comes with Jesus' return as the judging Son of Man (17:37)."<sup>794</sup>

The general teaching of the parable is that Jesus' appearing and the beginning of the kingdom will be sudden, and unexpected by most people who are alive then. It will be an unmistakable event in history, and will involve physical danger for earth-dwellers, because divine judgment will follow immediately. No one will be able to miss it when it occurs.<sup>795</sup> Jesus did not say exactly when it would occur, but clearly it would not happen immediately. An interval of time would have to elapse.

### **3. The parable of the persistent widow 18:1-8**

Jesus continued His instruction to the disciples about His return. He told them a parable designed to encourage them to continue praying while they lived in the interval before His second coming. Luke mentioned widows more than all the other Gospel evangelists combined (2:37-38; 4:25-26; 7:11-17; 18:1-8; 20:45-47; 21:1-4; cf. Exod. 22:22-24; Deut. 14:28-29; 16:9-15; Ps. 146:9; Isa. 1:17, 23; Jer. 7:6; Acts 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:3-10; James 1:27).

18:1        The audience for this parable was the disciples (17:22). Luke identified Jesus' reason for giving it clearly. He wanted to encourage them to continue "to pray" and "not to lose heart" (grow discouraged). The reference to "all times" or "always" (not continuously, but in all circumstances) indicates that the interval between Jesus' present ministry and His future return is in view (17:22-37; cf. 18:8). This was, then, instruction concerning what the disciples should do in the inter-advent period in view of Jesus' second coming. When He returns, Jesus will balance the scales of justice. In the meantime, disciples need to continue expressing their faith in God by requesting His grace.

<sup>794</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 137.

<sup>795</sup>Cf. Barclay, p. 230.

"Jesus' teaching goes beyond that of the Jews, who tended to limit the times of prayer lest they weary God. Three times a day (on the model of Dn. 6:10) was accepted as the maximum."<sup>796</sup>

"The antidote to despair is not determination but dependence, not positive thinking but prayer."<sup>797</sup>

18:2-3 Jesus pictured this judge as failing to do what the Mosaic Law required of Israel's judges. In the Old Testament, "fear of God" was primarily fear of Him as Judge. This judge was a man of the world (cf. 16:8). Luke's Gentile readers undoubtedly knew of judges who were similar to him.<sup>798</sup> Whether this judge was a Jewish or a Roman judge is unclear and irrelevant. In view of the access that the widow enjoyed to his presence, he seems to have been a lower official rather than a judge in Israel's supreme court.<sup>799</sup> In first-century Palestine, a single judge often handled the type of monetary case that this widow presented to this judge.<sup>800</sup> Jesus contrasted God with him, rather than comparing God to him (cf. 11:5-8).

Widows were the personification of dependence, helplessness, and vulnerability in Israel (cf. Exod. 22:22-24; Ps. 68:5; Lam. 1:1; James 1:27). This "widow" kept asking the "judge"—repeatedly—for "protection" from those who opposed her, not for their punishment.<sup>801</sup> In the parable she represents the disciples, who were equally dependent on God for protection from the non-disciples who opposed them for their allegiance to Jesus.

18:4-5 The judge granted the widow's petition solely because of her persistence. Jesus was not teaching that God takes the same attitude toward disciples that this judge took toward this widow. Again, the judge contrasts with God. His point was that since persistence is effective with unjust judges, how much more effective it will be with the righteous Judge.

The phrase "wear me out" translates an idiom that literally means "strike under the eye" (Gr. *hypopiaze me*, cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). We could translate this idiom "lest she give me a black eye." Figuratively a black eye represents a damaged reputation, shame. Consequently, the judge apparently feared that by refusing to respond to the widow, his reputation would suffer (cf. 11:8), not that she would assault him physically.<sup>802</sup> He granted her request for selfish reasons.

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<sup>796</sup>Morris, p. 262.

<sup>797</sup>Inrig, p. 152.

<sup>798</sup>Danker, p. 184.

<sup>799</sup>See J. D. M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: The Unjust Judge," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971-72):178-91.

<sup>800</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 153.

<sup>801</sup>Plummer, p. 412.

<sup>802</sup>Derrett, "Law in . . .," p. 191; Robertson, 2:231-32.

18:6-8 Jesus proceeded to apply the parable for His disciples. Listening carefully to the judge's words was important, because only then could the disciples see that Jesus was teaching by contrast. God would never respond to a cry for help as this judge did—slowly and begrudgingly. In view of His character, disciples can count on Him giving them the protection they need. The term "elect" is a reminder that He has chosen those who call to Him (cf. Matt. 22:14; Mark 13:20, 22, 27). This is another reason He will respond to their call. The widow was helped, even as a stranger to the unjust judge. The parable implied that the Father would not "delay" to give the protection His disciples need.

Though God has allowed some disciples who call on Him for help during persecution to die, He nevertheless gives added grace to them (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9). The "justice" He will provide *speedily* is protection from the attacks of spiritual opponents (v. 3). It is justice because the disciple is suffering unjustly when he or she stands for Jesus and consequently experiences persecution.

"God longs to vindicate the saints, and he will do so. When he does, his justice will be swift and sure, and our suffering will seem short-lived compared to the glory to follow. In the meantime he protects us."<sup>803</sup>

Jesus' final question suggests that there will be comparatively few on the earth who will have remained faithful and who still believe that He will return (17:22—18:1).<sup>804</sup> Few will persist in their faith like this widow did.<sup>805</sup> The Second Coming is in view, not the Rapture. The phrase "Son of Man" links this question with Jesus' former teaching about His return (17:22, 24, 26, 30). This is all the more reason disciples need to keep praying. Prayer not only secures God's help during persecution, but it also demonstrates faith in God.

This parable then is an encouragement for disciples who experience opposition for their faith during the inter-advent age. We should continue to ask God for protection from those who oppose us for our commitment to Jesus Christ. God will respond speedily by giving us the help that we need. This will result in the continuing demonstration of faith in God when He is visibly absent from the world during this period. The parable is an exhortation to persevere in the faith rather than apostatizing (i.e., turning away from it). God will vindicate His elect at the Second Coming (cf. Ps. 125:2-3; Rev. 6:9-11). That will be His ultimate answer to these prayers of His people, but immediate help before that coming is primarily in view in this parable.

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<sup>803</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 455.

<sup>804</sup>See David A. Mappes, "What Is the Meaning of 'Faith' in Luke 18:8?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167:667 (July-September 2010):292-306.

<sup>805</sup>Robertson, 2:232.

"At least three lessons, then, emerge in this passage: First, pray perseveringly, work perseveringly, with optimism, confident that God much more gladly than the judge in this passage often does want in this life to grant us answers to our requests. Second, consider the helpless, and the injustice of this world that they experience, as a larger topic for your prayer life and for your actions, which often give those prayers feet. Finally, recognize that, even in those areas in which God does not in this age grant us our requests, he remains eager to grant justice but has good reasons for his delay."<sup>806</sup>

## **J. THE RECIPIENTS OF SALVATION 18:9—19:27**

Luke next developed the idea of "faith on the earth" that Jesus introduced in verse 8. This whole section clarifies how people become believers. This subject is a fitting conclusion to the part of Luke's Gospel that deals with Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27). Essentially, this section records Jesus' teaching that salvation and eventual entrance into the kingdom come by God's grace through faith, rather than by claims to legal righteousness. The apostle Paul wrote about the process of justification (e.g., Rom. 3:21—5:21), but Luke's concern was the recipients of it.<sup>807</sup> In 18:9-30, Luke illustrated entry into the kingdom of God from a position of deficiency.<sup>808</sup>

### **1. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector 18:9-14**

The superficial connection between this pericope and the preceding one is that they both contain parables about prayer.

"This parable follows as giving the spirit in which men should pray."<sup>809</sup>

However, the more significant link is the people of faith (v. 8). This parable graphically contrasts those who reject Jesus' gospel with those who receive it. Jesus drew a verbal picture to identify the characteristic traits of two representative groups of Jews. Both parables deal with righteousness: the unrighteous judge in the first one, and the self-righteous Pharisee in the second.

18:9            This verse sets the stage for the parable that follows (cf. 18:1; 19:11). "And" signals the continuation of immediately preceding lessons and themes for the reader. Obviously, Pharisees are the people that Jesus was criticizing in this parable (v. 10), but Luke introduced Jesus' teaching by highlighting the characteristic about the Pharisees that Jesus addressed: self-righteousness. This is a characteristic that many more people than the Pharisees possess, including many of Luke's readers. The only alternative to believing in Jesus is trusting in one's own righteousness for acceptance with God. This always results in elevating oneself, at the expense of others, and looking down on others.

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<sup>806</sup>Blomberg, p. 177.

<sup>807</sup>Danker, p. 185.

<sup>808</sup>Nolland, *Luke 9:21—18:34*, p. 878.

<sup>809</sup>Morris, p. 264.

- 18:10 The Pharisees generally rejected Jesus and His gospel, whereas the tax collectors responded positively (cf. 5:12, 27; 7:34, 37; 15:1-2; 16:20). They were at opposite ends of the social and spiritual scales in Judaism. The former were the epitome of righteousness, and the latter of unrighteousness. The "temple" was the customary place of prayer. Since it stood on a hill in Jerusalem, people literally "went up" to it "to pray."
- 18:11-12 Standing was a normal posture for prayer among the Jews of Jesus' day. It did not in itself reflect the Pharisee's pride (cf. Matt. 6:5). Even though "the Pharisee" addressed "God" *in prayer*, Jesus noted that he was really talking "to himself," and reviewing his own self-righteousness. He told God what a superior person he was, using the behavior of others as his standard. He took pride in his supposed superior status, and the works he performed that separated him from others. The most pious Pharisees fasted "twice a week" (cf. 5:33)—on Thursdays and Mondays—during the weeks between Passover and Pentecost, and between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication. They believed that on a Thursday Moses had gone up into Mount Sinai, and that on a Monday he had come down, after receiving the Law the second time.<sup>810</sup> This Pharisee was also scrupulous about tithing (cf. 11:42).

"Never, perhaps, were words of thanksgiving spoken in less thankfulness than these. For, thankfulness implies the acknowledgment of a gift; hence, a sense of not having had ourselves What we have received; in other words, then, a sense of our personal need, or humility."<sup>811</sup>

"The 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men' (Luke xviii. II) seems like the natural breath of Rabbinism in the company of the unlettered, and of all who were deemed intellectual or religious inferiors; and the parabolic history of the Pharisee and the publican in the gospel is not told for the special condemnation of that one prayer, but as characteristic of the whole spirit of Pharisaism, even in its approaches to God."<sup>812</sup>

- 18:13 "But" introduces the striking contrast between the two individuals. The tax gatherer's geographical "distance" from the Pharisee symbolized the difference. His unwillingness to even "lift his eyes," much less his hands, "to heaven" in prayer pictures his feeling of unworthiness (cf. Ps. 123:1; Mark 6:41; 7:34; John 11:41; 17:1). "Beating his breast" (chest) expressed contrition, which he articulated in his prayer. He did not boast of his own

<sup>810</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 197; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "nestis," by J. Behm, 4:930.

<sup>811</sup>Edersheim, 2:289-90.

<sup>812</sup>Idem, *Sketches of . . .*, p. 31.

righteousness, but pled with God for mercy, acknowledging his sin (cf. Ps. 51). He used "God" as the standard of righteousness, and confessed that he fell short. He knew that his only hope was God's mercy. The Pharisee felt no need and voiced no petition, whereas the publican felt nothing but need and voiced only petition.<sup>813</sup>

"This parable is really the parable of the two prayers. In those prayers appear two kinds of hearts, whose contrast is not only seen in the way they make their request, but also in the way they approach God."<sup>814</sup>

Literally, the publican asked God to "be propitious" (Gr. *hilaskomai*), or satisfied. Since Jesus made propitiation (satisfaction) for the sins of humankind on the Cross, no one needs to pray this prayer today. However, when the tax collector prayed it, propitiation through Jesus Christ's blood was not yet available. It is, of course, permissible today to ask God to be merciful to us as sinners, but we need to remember that He has already done that through Jesus Christ. The good news of the gospel is that God is propitious (satisfied; cf. 1 John 2:2).

"Merciful" is a translation of the ". . . Greek *hilaskomai*, used in the Septuagint and N.T. in connection with the mercy seat (Ex. 25:17, 18, 21; Heb. 9:5). An instructed Jew, the tax collector was thinking, not of mercy alone, but of the blood-sprinkled mercy seat (Lev. 16:5 . . .). His prayer might be paraphrased, 'Be toward me as thou art when thou lookest upon the atoning blood.' The Bible knows nothing of divine forgiveness apart from sacrifice . . ."<sup>815</sup>

18:14 Jesus declared the tax collector "justified" (i.e., *declared* righteous, a judicial act, not *made* righteous; cf. Rom. 3:24-25). God declared him righteous because he looked to God for the gift of righteousness, rather than claiming to be righteous on his own merit as the Pharisee did.<sup>816</sup>

". . . after pardon of sins has been obtained, the sinner is considered as a just man in God's sight."<sup>817</sup>

Jesus repeated the principle that God humbles those who exalt themselves, but He exalts those who humble themselves (cf. 13:30; 14:11). In the context, Jesus meant that to be righteous in God's sight, one must

<sup>813</sup>Idem, *The Life . . .*, 2:292.

<sup>814</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 460-61.

<sup>815</sup>*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1108.

<sup>816</sup>See F. F. Bruce, "Justification by Faith in the non-Pauline Writings of the New Testament," *Evangelical Quarterly* 24 (1952):66-77.

<sup>817</sup>Calvin, 3:11:3.

acknowledge his lack of personal righteousness, rather than pretending to have righteousness that he does not have. Justification depends on God's grace, not on human works or merit.

Many modern Christians have heard this parable so often, that they immediately associate Pharisees with self-righteous hypocrisy, and tax collectors with humble piety. In Jesus' day the Jews viewed them differently. It was the Pharisees who were the models of righteous behavior, and the tax collectors who epitomized sinfulness. Therefore this parable undoubtedly made a great impact on the disciples.<sup>818</sup>

## **2. An illustration of humility 18:15-17 (cf. Matt. 10:13-16; Mark 19:13-15)**

Luke included this incident of Jesus receiving children in order to illustrate the type of humility that is necessary for someone to receive salvation. The idea of humility is the connecting link with what precedes. Humility is necessary to receive God's grace.

Since 9:50, Luke departed from the general narrative that Matthew and Mark recorded, and included much material that does not appear in those Gospels. Here at 18:15, he rejoined the story line of the other synoptic writers. There is more duplication of incidents in the chapters that follow than we have seen recently.

18:15           The antecedent of "they" (NASB) is the "people" generally (NIV). People brought their infants (Gr. *brephe*) to Jesus so He would pray for God to bless them (cf. Matt. 19:13). Luke alone used *brephe*, probably to stress the dependent condition of these children. It was customary for the Jews to bring their small children to rabbis for blessings.<sup>819</sup> The disciples probably discouraged the parents from doing this, because they thought Jesus had more important things to do.

18:16-17       Jesus, however, corrected the disciples, "rebuking them," and encouraged the parents to continue bringing their children to Him. Jesus had an interest in the children because they illustrated the humility necessary to enter the kingdom. Obviously infants are not humble in the same sense that adults show humility, but infants are humble in the sense of being totally dependent and unable to provide for themselves. They receive rather than provide, and in those qualities they are good examples of humility. Without this sense of being unable to provide for oneself, and a willingness to receive from another, no adult can "enter" the kingdom.

Jesus also had an interest in these children for their own sake. As we have seen, one of Luke's characteristic emphases in his Gospel was Jesus' interest in the needy, the outcasts, and other types of dependent people (4:18; et al.).

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<sup>818</sup>Blomberg wrote a sermon on this parable that he titled "The Parable of the Recovering Homosexual," pp. 156-64.

<sup>819</sup>Carson, p. 420.

### **3. The handicap of wealth 18:18-30**

This is another lesson on riches that Luke recorded (cf. 6:24; 8:14; 11:41; 12:13-34; 16), but the context here is instruction on wealth as it pertains to entering into salvation and the kingdom. Someone might conclude from the previous incident that salvation depends only on the proper human attitude. This teaching clarifies that while the correct attitude is crucial, salvation is the work of God for man, not man's work for himself. This is important revelation for unbelievers, but also for disciples charged with bearing the gospel message to the ends of the earth.

"The religious leaders have repeatedly been presented as people who exalt themselves (11:43; 14:7-11; 16:15; 18:9-14) and as greedy rich people who neglect the poor (11:39-41; 14:12-14; 16:14, 19-31). However, Jesus has not given up all hope that some of these people will change. This is apparent in the scene in 18:18-27."<sup>820</sup>

#### **Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler 18:18-23 (cf. Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22)**

The rich young ruler, with his pride, contrasts dramatically with the humble infants in the last pericope.

- 18:18        The young "ruler" believed he could "do" something to earn "eternal life," and he wanted to make sure he had not overlooked it (cf. 10:25). John 3:3-15 shows that eternal life includes life in the messianic kingdom. To obtain eternal life meant to enter the kingdom (John 3:3-5). Luke and Mark both have him using the word "inherit" (Gr. *kleronomeso*), while Matthew wrote "obtain" (Gr. *scho*). This difference probably reflects Matthew's use of the young man's original word. Mark and Luke probably used the word "inherit" for their Gentile readers, to clarify what was in the rich young ruler's mind. He was talking about getting something that he, as a Jew, thought he had a good chance of obtaining based on his ethnic relationship to Abraham.
- 18:19        Jesus' question accomplished two things. It set the standard for goodness, namely: "God alone" (cf. v. 11). It also confronted the man with the logical implication of his question (v. 18), namely, that Jesus was God. That the man did not believe that Jesus was God seems clear from his response to Him (v. 23).
- 18:20-21     Jesus returned to the young man's question (v. 18). If he wanted to obtain eternal life by doing something, he would have to keep God's laws. The rabbis taught that people could keep the Law in its entirety.<sup>821</sup> Jesus cited the fifth through the ninth commandments, from the Decalogue, that deal

<sup>820</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:187.

<sup>821</sup>Morris, p. 267.

with a person's responsibilities to his or her fellow man (Exod. 20:12-16). By doing so, He affirmed the authority of the Old Testament. He was also gracious with the man, by not referring to the commands about people's responsibilities to God, or the command about coveting. The man's response indicated that he had kept the letter of the law (cf. Phil. 3:6).

- 18:22 Having passed the first test to his satisfaction, Jesus now presented him with the higher hurdle of not coveting, the tenth commandment (cf. Rom. 7:7-8). Jesus' command exposed the man's greed, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Thus this man had really violated the first and the tenth commandments, though he thought he had kept them. If he had been willing to give away his possessions, he would have shown that he was repudiating his greed. By following Jesus, he would have shown that he was repudiating his own self-righteousness. These would have been the appropriate fruits of his repentance. "Treasure in heaven" implies eternal reward (cf. 12:33-34). Rabbinism prohibited giving away all of one's possessions.<sup>822</sup>
- 18:23 The man's sorrow on hearing Jesus' command was proportionate to his great wealth. His unwillingness to part with his riches showed that he valued them more than treasure in heaven. He really wanted material wealth more than eternal life (v. 18).

The other Synoptic evangelists recorded that at this point the young man *went away* (Matt. 19:22; Mark 10:22). He is the only person in the Gospels who came to Jesus and went away in a worse condition than when he came.

Jesus' logic is quite clear in this conversation. He reasoned that only God is *perfect* (v. 19). Further yet, God's standard for obtaining eternal life by good works is *perfection* (vv. 20-21). Therefore, no one can obtain eternal life by good works.

### **Jesus' teaching about riches 18:24-30 (cf. Matt. 19:23-30; Mark 10:23-31)**

Jesus continued talking with His disciples about the preceding conversation. However, Luke did not identify the disciples as those to whom Jesus spoke. This gives the impression that what Jesus said has relevance to *all people*, including the readers, as it does.

- 18:24-25 Luke alone mentioned that Jesus "looked at" the young man and then spoke. He probably did this to make the connection—between Jesus' comments that followed and the young man's attitude—clear to his readers. Jesus said that wealth makes it difficult, but not impossible (cf. 19:1-10), for rich people to obtain salvation. Riches are a handicap because they present two temptations to the wealthy (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9-10). First, rich people sometimes wrongly conclude that because they are rich,

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<sup>822</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:342.

they are superior to the poor, or perhaps more blessed by God, and therefore do not need God's grace. Second, they may conclude that because they are rich they are secure, and therefore they fail to plan for the future beyond the grave.

"John D. Rockefeller . . . once said that riches were 'a gift from heaven signifying, 'This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.'"<sup>823</sup>

A camel going through the eye of a sewing needle (Gr. *belones*) was evidently a proverbial expression describing a very difficult thing.

18:26-27 The Jews viewed wealth as a sign of God's blessing, since God had blessed many of the most godly in the past with riches (e.g., Abraham, Job, Joseph, David, et al.). The idea that riches really could hinder a person entering the kingdom, rather than paving the way for his acceptance, shocked them. Apparently Jesus meant that *no one*—even the rich—could "enter the kingdom." Entrance is "impossible" from the human viewpoint, but "God" *can* produce repentance and faith in the heart of anyone, even the rich (cf. 1:37; Gen. 18:14). Being "saved" (v. 26) in this context means being delivered into the millennial kingdom.

18:28 Peter reminded Jesus that the Twelve had done what the rich young ruler had been unwilling to do (cf. 14:26-27). His comment, as Luke and Mark recorded it, was an implicit request for assurance that they would enter the kingdom (cf. Mark 10:28).

"It is surprising that, although generally Jesus does not think in terms of seeking reward, here he is prepared to respond to Peter's saying. This suggests that Peter's question was not regarded by the Evangelists as an implicit claim for a selfish reward. Rather it is seen as an opportunity to give a promise that self-denial for the sake of the kingdom will be vindicated."<sup>824</sup>

18:29-30 For emphasis, Jesus introduced His reply with the preface that affirmed the truthfulness of what followed. Everyone who denies himself or herself the normal comforts and contacts of life, to advance God's mission, will receive a greater reward from God for doing so. Luke used the phrase "for the kingdom of God" (v. 29; cf. v. 25), whereas Matthew used "for My sake" (Matt. 19:29), and Mark wrote "for My sake and for the gospel's sake" (Mark 10:29). These are all synonymous concepts.

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<sup>823</sup>Wiersbe, 1:250.

<sup>824</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 688.

First, that person will receive deeper spiritual comfort and more satisfying human contacts in the present life (cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). Second, he or she will receive an even better, and infinitely more enduring life, in the coming kingdom. Jesus and the apostles spoke of inheriting "eternal life" as a reward for self-sacrifice (Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:30; John 12:25-26; Rom. 2:7; 6:22; Gal. 6:8), and as the gift of God that comes to everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23).<sup>825</sup> Jesus included eternal life here, along with rewards, because it provides the ultimate contrast with what disciples give up now. This is not teaching that self-sacrifice (works) contributes to salvation; "eternal life" is distinguished here from "eternal salvation." Giving up a wife may refer to passing up marriage, rather than leaving a wife, or periods of separation to engage in kingdom business may be in view.

**4. Jesus' passion announcement and the disciples' lack of perception**  
**18:31-34 (cf. Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34)**

Jesus' passion announcements to His disciples constitute important structural markers in Mark's Gospel. Luke and Matthew did not use them this way. The incident before us was the third passion announcement that Jesus gave, besides other allusions to His death that He made (cf. 5:35; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25).

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>
First passion announcement	16:21-23	8:31-33	9:22
Second passion announcement	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43-45
Third passion announcement	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34

Luke presented this announcement as part of his travelogue that records Jesus moving from Galilee to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27). He played down the amazement and fear of the disciples that Mark stressed here. Instead he focused the reader's attention on the disciples' failure to understand what was going to happen in Jerusalem. There is a continuation of the theme of responding to Jesus' words that precedes. The rich young ruler failed to respond to the good news that Jesus proclaimed. Similarly the disciples, though believing the gospel, failed to respond to the bad news He told them. There is also a continuation of the theme of entering the kingdom. The disciples would enter because they believed in Jesus, but they would have to go through trials and tribulations, as Jesus would, before they did. The death of Jesus provided the basis for God's gracious dealings with believers through His Son (vv. 26-27).

18:31            Luke alone recorded that the things that would happen to Jesus in "Jerusalem" would be a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (cf. 12:50; 22:37; Acts 13:29). Luke apparently stressed the fact that Jesus'

<sup>825</sup>See Dillow, pp. 135-45, for an explanation of the biblical teaching regarding inheriting eternal life as a reward.

ministry fulfilled prophecy to increase his readers' confidence in Him (cf. 2:25-38; 22:37).

The Hellenistic mind resisted the idea that a God-man could be truly human. The ancient Greek concept of the gods visiting human beings lay behind this difficulty. Consequently Luke presented much evidence for his Greek readers, throughout his Gospel, that Jesus was a real man. The Jews, on the other hand, had difficulty accepting the fact that Jesus was truly God. This accounts for Matthew's stress on Jesus' deity. Throughout church history there have been those who, like the Greeks, had trouble accepting Jesus' full humanity and others, like the Jews, who have resisted His full deity.

- 18:32-33 This was Jesus' first reference to the Gentiles' role in His trial and death. Luke's inclusion of this detail suggests that he did not want his Gentile readers to miss the guilt of "Gentiles" for Jesus' death. The passive construction pictures Jesus as the victim of Gentile wrath.

"Not one prophet ever said all this, but the prophets together did say all this. Hence, this is a summation."<sup>826</sup>

- 18:34 Luke alone repeated *three* times that the disciples failed to "comprehend" Jesus' words. It seems strange that *God* would have intentionally hidden the meaning of Jesus' words from the disciples, because Jesus had just told them plainly what He wanted them to know: that He would die. Probably the disciples' own way of thinking (their pre-conception of what lay ahead) prevented them from understanding Jesus' words (cf. 9:45; 24:16, 25-26). The illumination of believers is a necessary work of God's Spirit that is supernatural. The Twelve probably did not believe that such a fate could befall Jesus because they misunderstood His messianic mission.

"The failure of the disciples to understand the necessity of Jesus' suffering and rejection involves the following interrelated defects: (1) a failure to understand God's plan as announced in Scripture, including God's way of working by using human opposition to fulfill the divine purpose; (2) a failure to accept rejection and suffering as a necessary part of discipleship; (3) a failure to reckon with the rejection of Jesus, resulting in premature, overly optimistic expectations for the immediate enjoyment of the messianic salvation; (4) rivalry over rank because of a failure to recognize that only those who devote their lives as servants can be great as Jesus is great."<sup>827</sup>

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<sup>826</sup>Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 845.

<sup>827</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:254.

**5. The healing of a blind man near Jericho 18:35-43 (cf. Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52)**

Luke's primary purpose for including this incident in his narrative seems to have been to show that God, through Jesus, can give insight to those who humbly call on Him for mercy. Here was another humble outcast, similar to the tax collector (cf. v. 13) who experienced salvation because of his faith (v. 42). Jesus not only saved him but also opened his eyes—physically and spiritually!

18:35 Luke wrote that Jesus met the blind man as He "was approaching Jericho," but Matthew and Mark said that the incident occurred as Jesus was leaving that town (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46). There have been many explanations of this apparent contradiction. A summary of the most popular ones that reflect a high view of the biblical text follows.

One view is that there were three separate incidents. Matthew recorded two blind men and Mark said there was one and his name was Bartimaeus. However, the similarities between the stories argue for a single incident, with Mark and Luke concentrating on the more prominent of the two blind beggars. Another view is that Jesus performed two separate healings, one as He entered Jericho and another as He left. Again the similarities of the descriptions argue for one incident.<sup>828</sup> A third view is that there was just one incident but it took place in two stages. Jesus met the men as He entered Jericho but healed them as He departed. This is possible, but it seems unlikely in view of the Evangelists' accounts of the incident. A fourth, and preferable explanation, is that there was one incident that happened as Jesus was leaving old Jericho and entering new Jericho.<sup>829</sup> The problems with this view are essentially two. There is no evidence that people still inhabited the old town, and it is not certain that the name of the old town was still Jericho.

18:36-37 Luke alone mentioned that it was the noise of the multitude passing him by that led the blind man to ask what was happening. The writer may have included this detail simply to present a more vigorous scene, or the inclusion may reflect his characteristic interest in the multitudes, or both.

18:38-39 "Son of David" was a messianic title that expressed the man's faith in Jesus as Israel's Messiah (cf. 1:27, 32; 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24). Like the tax collector (v. 13), he called out for "mercy" without claiming any merit. His insistence reflected his belief that Jesus *could* help him, and his hope that Jesus *would* help him. Opposition only made him more adamant in his desire.

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<sup>828</sup>See Zane C. Hodges, "The Blind Men at Jericho," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122:488 (October-December 1965):319-30.

<sup>829</sup>See Flavius Josephus, *The Wars . . .*, 4:8:3, for the identification of these two Jerichos.

18:40-43 Jesus evidently asked His question to elicit the blind man's faith. He certainly knew what the man wanted. The title "Lord" here obviously reflects more than simple respect. It expressed the man's faith. Jesus' words would have left no doubt that He was responsible for the miracle. He hastened to clarify that the man's "faith" was the instrumental cause of the healing. Luke stressed this again for his readers' benefit (cf. 7:50; 8:48; 17:19). Divine power was the effectual cause of the healing.

The responses to the instantaneous (1:64; et al.) healing were what they should have been. The man "began following" Jesus, and "glorifying God" (cf. v. 23). Likewise the observers' reaction was to give "praise to God." Only Luke recorded the glorifying and praising of God that took place then (cf. 2:20; 5:25; et al.). This reflects his interest in the joyful outcome of salvation (cf. 5:26; 17:18; Acts. 2:47; 3:9).

Luke probably included this incident, partially, to contrast the faith of the blind man with the unbelief of the religious leaders. Again the humble received salvation, while others who failed to realize their need for Jesus' grace did not. The incident was a lesson for the disciples, as well as for the multitudes.

### **6. Zaccheus' ideal response to Jesus 19:1-10**

This section in Luke's long narrative of Jesus' ministry as He traveled to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27) is climactic. It is a choice example of Jesus offering salvation to a needy person. Zaccheus accepted Jesus' offer, and responded appropriately with joy and the fruits of repentance. He also gave an excellent example of how disciples should use what wealth they have. The section closes with a summary of Jesus' ministry, that also serves as the key verse in this Gospel.

Zaccheus displayed traits of the tax collector in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14). They shared the same despised occupation, the same sense of personal need, and the same childlike humility and receptivity toward God. He also resembles the rich young ruler (18:18-23). He, too, had wealth, but his response to Jesus was precisely the opposite of that other rich man. His salvation is a great example of the truth that with God all things are possible (18:25-27). Zaccheus, moreover, demonstrated the same faith in Jesus, and consequent insight into his responsibility to follow Jesus and glorify God, that the blind man did (18:35-43). His story brings together many themes that Luke interwove, in this section, in which he showcased the recipients of salvation (18:9—19:27).

"The incident contains several primary Lukan features: the universal appeal of the gospel (vv. 2-4); the ethical problem of wealth (v. 2); the call of a 'sinner' who was in social disfavor (v. 7); the sense of God's present work (vv. 5, 9); the feeling of urgency ('immediately,' *speusas*, v. 5), of necessity ('must,' v. 5), and of joy (v. 6); restitution, with goods distributed to the poor (v. 8); and, above all, salvation (vv. 9-10)."<sup>830</sup>

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<sup>830</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1007.

- 19:1 Probably the *new* "Jericho" that Herod the Great had built is in view (cf. 18:35). It stood immediately to the south of old Jericho. Jesus was passing through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem and the Cross.
- 19:2 Luke underlined Zaccheus' occupation and wealth, two things that Jesus had taught His disciple about earlier. Tax collectors represented social outcasts, but they typically responded positively to Jesus' ministry. "Zaccheus" ("the just" or "pure") was a "chief tax collector" (Gr. *architelones*), which probably made him the object of special hatred in Jericho. The wealth that he had accumulated through his occupation probably made his neighbors hate him even more. They probably ridiculed him for his name too. It is an abbreviated form of Zechariah, and means "the righteous one." Tax collectors normally became wealthy by extorting more taxes from their fellow Jews than the amount they owed Rome. Jericho would have been a main tax-gathering site, since many people who approached Jerusalem and Judea from the east passed through it. "Rich" people typically did not respond positively to Jesus' ministry. How would Zaccheus respond: as a typical tax collector, or as a typical rich man?
- 19:3-4 Zaccheus' curiosity about Jesus was understandable, since one of Jesus' disciples had been a tax collector (5:27-30). In addition, Jesus had a reputation for associating with people in his profession (5:29-30; 7:29, 34; 15:1). Luke's reference to Zaccheus' "stature" prepares the reader for his climbing a tree to see Jesus (v. 4). Some interpreters believe that "small in stature" (Gr. *elixia*) refers to Zaccheus' young age, rather than to his height. Some also believe that Zaccheus had to climb a tree because the people refused to allow him to see Jesus, due to their hatred of him, rather than because he was short.<sup>831</sup> Barclay used his imagination in describing Zaccheus' dilemma:

"For Zacchaeus, to mingle with the crowd at all was a courageous thing to do, for many a man would take the chance to get a nudge, or kick, or push at this little tax-collector. It was an opportunity not to be missed. Zacchaeus would be black and blue with bruises that day. He could not see—that crowd took an ill delight in making sure that he could not see."<sup>832</sup>

The Greek word that names this tree as a "sycamore" refers to a species of fig tree that was a very delicate evergreen, easily destroyed by cold (cf. Ps. 78:47).<sup>833</sup> It is interesting that Zaccheus did some childlike things, namely, running to see Jesus and climbing a tree, unusual activities for an adult government official. Jesus had formerly commended the tax collector in

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<sup>831</sup>See Green, pp. 669-70.

<sup>832</sup>Barclay, p. 244.

<sup>833</sup>Edersheim, *Sketches of . . .*, pp. 33-34.

His parable for childlike faith (18:13). He had also taught the importance of childlike faith (cf. 18:16-17).

"The crowd as [a] physical barrier and Zacchaeus' strange position up in a tree can serve as spatial symbols of his isolation from his community."<sup>834</sup>

19:5-6 Jesus initiated a relationship with Zacchaeus. Since He called him by name, He evidently knew about him, though Zacchaeus had obviously not seen Jesus formerly. Jesus not only wanted to talk with him but to "stay" in his "house." Jesus spoke as though He felt compelled to do this, as is clear from the recurrence of one of Luke's favorite words, "must" (Gr. *dei*, cf. 4:43; et al.). "Today" and "hurry" further stress urgency for the fulfillment of God's plan (cf. 2:11; 4:21; 19:9).<sup>835</sup> This attitude was typical of Jesus, who sought out lost people. Zacchaeus "gladly" and obediently responded to Jesus' offer.

". . . the coming of Jesus to share his home is a sign of fellowship and ultimately forgiveness."<sup>836</sup>

Verse 5 records an instance of divine sovereignty and verse 6 human responsibility.<sup>837</sup>

19:7 "They" (NASB) were the people in the crowd (v. 3). It was as though Jesus had become the guest of a Mafia godfather (cf. 5:29-30; 15:1-2). However, table fellowship implied even more comradeship than eating in someone else's home does today. Staying in a person's home amounted to sharing in his sins.<sup>838</sup>

19:8 Zacchaeus' stood still ("stopped") to make his promises, thus symbolizing their solemnity. He addressed Jesus as "Lord," implying respect and Jesus' deity (cf. v. 9). His statement was a response to Jesus' gracious initiative and the crowd's disapproving reaction. His plan to "give half" his wealth "to the poor," and to reimburse generously ("four times") anyone whom he had cheated, testified to the genuineness of his faith in Jesus (v. 9). The Mosaic Law only required adding 20 percent to the amount due when restitution was necessary (cf. Lev. 5:16; Num. 5:7). When a Jew stole an animal that he could not restore, he had to repay about fourfold, but if he was caught with the stolen property, he had to repay double (Exod. 22:1, 4). Zacchaeus' words were the signs of true repentance (cf. 3:8; 14:33; 18:22).

<sup>834</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:123.

<sup>835</sup>Ellis, p. 221.

<sup>836</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 697.

<sup>837</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1007.

<sup>838</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 697.

"Zacchaeus is an example of radical repentance, not of practical wisdom, and it is assumed that his response will leave him pretty much in the same financial state required of the rich ruler."<sup>839</sup>

It is possible to interpret Zaccheus' verbs as present progressives, namely, as a statement of his customary practice, rather than as a promise: "My customary practice is to give half of what I have to the poor . . ." In this case, Zaccheus was vindicating himself, and was in no need of repentance, because he was behaving as a true child of Abraham should.<sup>840</sup> I tend not to prefer this interpretation, because of Jesus' words that follow: "Today salvation has come to this house . . .", implying that "salvation" had not been there previously.

"Unlike the rich ruler, Zacchaeus does not employ his wealth so as to procure honor and friends; rather, he is a social outcast who puts his possessions in the service of the needy and of justice."<sup>841</sup>

Some commentators believed that the conditional clause "if I have defrauded anyone of anything" should better read "from whomsoever I have wrongfully exacted anything." This translation would indicate that Zaccheus had defrauded people.<sup>842</sup> However, the NASB and NIV translators did not necessarily think that he had. Whichever is the correct translation, it seems clear that the main point is not the extent of Zaccheus' guilt but his attitude toward it.

19:9 Jesus assessed Zaccheus' promises as an evidence of saving faith. "Salvation" had "come to" his "house," because Zaccheus had exercised saving faith, and had thereby proved to be a genuine descendant "of Abraham"—the spiritual father of all believers.<sup>843</sup> His faith and works proved that he was a true, spiritual son of Abraham, and not just one of his physical descendants (cf. Gen. 15:6; 22:1-19). Now he could enter the kingdom, not because he was a Jew physically but because he was a believer in Jesus.

"This ["He also is a son of Abraham"] will seem to be an irrelevant remark unless we recognize that the principal tension in the story is caused by the rejection of Zacchaeus by the Jewish community."<sup>844</sup>

<sup>839</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:124. Cf. 7:36-50; and Matt. 26:6-13.

<sup>840</sup>See Green, pp. 671-72.

<sup>841</sup>Ibid., p. 672.

<sup>842</sup>E.g., Robertson, 2:240; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 698; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1007; and Morris, p. 273.

<sup>843</sup>Ellis, p. 220.

<sup>844</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:124.

19:10 Jesus summarized the present purpose of the Son of Man's ministry that found fulfillment in Zaccheus' salvation (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15). Jesus had sought out many, especially among the lost sheep of Israel. He had saved those who would accept His gracious offer of salvation. This verse is the key verse in the third Gospel, because it expresses concisely the ministry of Jesus as Luke presented it (cf. 4:18-19; 15:5, 9, 24).

"This whole incident is the epitome of the messianic mission described in Luke 4."<sup>845</sup>

Throughout this Gospel, Luke presented Jesus as appealing primarily—though not exclusively, of course—to the poor, the lame, the demon-possessed, the blind, etc.: the marginalized in that society. Those were the people who were looking for deliverance. Does this emphasis not say something to Christians today about *whom* we should be seeking out? That these same unfortunate types of people are still the most ready to accept the salvation that Jesus came to bring?

### **7. The parable of the minas 19:11-27**

This parable serves in Luke's narrative as a conclusion to the section on salvation's recipients (18:9—19:27). It provides something of a *denouement* (i.e., a final unraveling of the plot), following the excellent example of Zaccheus' faith and the summary statement describing Jesus' ministry. In this teaching to the people, who were observing His meal with the tax collector, Jesus taught several important lessons. He repeated His coming rejection and future return, and He clarified the time when the kingdom would appear. He also explained the duty of His disciples during His absence from the earth. Both the nation of Israel and the disciples had duties to Jesus. This parable summarizes Jesus' teaching on this subject.

The parable also prepared the people for the postponement of the kingdom. Most of the people who believed on Him expected it to arrive when Jesus reached Jerusalem. This teaching should have dispelled those hopes.

This parable is similar to the parable of the talents that Jesus gave later in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 25:14-30). However, that one lacks the emphasis on the rejection of Jesus, which was appropriate for the mixed audience that Jesus addressed in Zaccheus' house (v. 27).

19:11 The connection between Jesus being "near Jerusalem," and "the kingdom" appearing "immediately," implies that the believers in the crowd expected Jesus to begin the kingdom when He arrived there. Jesus had just told Zaccheus that salvation had come to his house that day (v. 9), but salvation would not come to Israel for some time. Even though the Son of Man had come to seek and to save the lost (v. 10), the national deliverance of Israel would have to wait. What follows is another of the many passages in Luke that records Jesus' teaching about the future.

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<sup>845</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1008.

"In 19:11 the disciples are pictured as expecting something that should have been and could have been apart from the rejection of Jesus. But because of this rejection, the messianic kingdom for Israel does not come immediately, as the disciples mistakenly hoped. We see that in Luke-Acts the problem of eschatological delay is intertwined with the problem of Jewish rejection."<sup>846</sup>

19:12 The "nobleman" represents Jesus. The "distant country" he went to stands for heaven, and the place he would "return" to is the earth. Jesus went to heaven to receive the kingdom from His Father. The correctness of these identifications becomes clearer as the parable unfolds.

A situation similar to the one Jesus described had happened not long before Jesus gave this parable, and He may have had it in mind.<sup>847</sup> Herod Archelaus, one of Herod the Great's sons, had visited Rome after his father's death in 4 B.C., to receive Caesar's confirmation to reign over a section of Palestine, bestowed on him in his father's will.<sup>848</sup> Other Herods—Herod the Great, Antipas, Philip, and Agrippa I—also had to go through this procedure, but the case of Archelaus most closely parallels this parable.<sup>849</sup>

Jesus was announcing a postponement of the kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6-7). Some time would elapse between His ascension and His return. This scenario suggests that the messianic kingdom will not begin until Jesus returns to the earth to rule. Some amillennial interpreters take this reference to the kingdom allegorically.<sup>850</sup>

19:13 Before departing, the king entrusted "ten" of his servants (Gr. *doulous*) with equal responsibility for advancing his interests while he was absent. A "mina" was a Greek coin worth 100 drachmas, or slightly more than three months wages.<sup>851</sup> In the parable, it probably represents the life potential that each servant of Jesus has to invest for His glory. "Ten" is apparently a rounded number representing *all* His servants. Jesus did not mean just the Twelve. He pictured His servants in the role of modern investors, who were responsible to increase the amount of money He had entrusted to each during His absence.

"Someone has said, 'The nicest thing about God is that He trusts us to do so much by ourselves.'"<sup>852</sup>

<sup>846</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:260.

<sup>847</sup>Robertson, 2:241.

<sup>848</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 17:9:3; 17:11:4; and 17:13:5.

<sup>849</sup>Cf. Edersheim, *Sketches of . . .*, p. 10. See also Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 261-62.

<sup>850</sup>E.g., Morris, p. 274.

<sup>851</sup>*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "money," by H. W. Perkin, 3:409.

<sup>852</sup>Barclay, p. 247.

In the parable of the talents, each servant received a different sum, representing the unique set of gifts and talents that each has compared with the others. In this parable, each servant received the same sum ("one mina"), representing the one life that each has to invest for the Master.

- 19:14 The citizens of Herod Archelaus' territory opposed his reign, though his credentials were impeccable. They persuaded Caesar Augustus to give him only half of his father's kingdom, and to award him the title "ethnarch" rather than king.<sup>853</sup> Similarly the Jews, and particularly their leaders, resisted Jesus' rightful claim to be their King.
- 19:15 Jesus was speaking of His second coming here. He will return having received authority to reign on earth from His Father (cf. Dan. 7:13-14). After His return, and before He begins to reign, He will call His servants to give an accounting of their stewardship. Later New Testament revelation indicates that Christians, believers who have lived between Pentecost and the Rapture, will have to give their accounting at the judgment seat of Christ following the Rapture (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:1-10). Other believers, mainly those who have lived in Old Testament times and the Tribulation, will give their accounting at the judgment in view here, that precedes the Millennium. The basis of these two believers' judgments is not their saved or lost condition, but the profitability of their lives for the Master's benefit.
- 19:16-17 The first servant reported a 1,000 percent return on the master's investment. This report earned the master's praise and a great reward. The servant had faithfully fulfilled his responsibility. The master considered what the servant had received in trust as "a very little thing." His reward consisted of "authority over ten cities" in the future, and was enormous compared to what the servant had received to invest. In view of the chronology of this judgment, the reward will apply to the messianic kingdom that will follow, and probably eternity after that. Authority to rule (serve) groups of other people under the King's authority—during the Millennium and throughout eternity—is the reward. Throughout history, kings have rewarded faithful servants by giving them positions of significant responsibility over others in their kingdoms (cf. Dan. 6:3). Modern government leaders typically do the same thing. The Master's decision reflects the principle that he who is faithful in little will be faithful in much (16:10-12).
- 19:18-19 The second servant had also been faithful, but he had only earned a 500 percent return on the master's investment. He did not receive as much commendation as the first servant, or as much reward, but his reward was also proportionate to his service. This shows that rewards will vary depending on a servant's effectiveness.

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<sup>853</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 17:9:3-7 and 17:11:1-4; idem, *The Wars . . .*, 2:2:1-3.

"The reward is not rest, but the opportunity for wider service."<sup>854</sup>

19:20-21 Another servant reported that he had not earned anything with the master's deposit. Keeping money in a scarf (Gr. *soudarion*) was a common practice in Jesus' day, but it was unsafe and unproductive.<sup>855</sup> This person represents someone who does nothing of eternal value with his life. The servant explained that his fear of the master was responsible for his lack of fruit (cf. Matt. 25:25). It was appropriate for him to fear the master, since the master would eventually bring his servants to account, but the servant's action in view of his fear of the master was improper. He should have gotten busy and served the master since he feared him. His assessment of the master was correct, but it did not have the proper effect on him.

God seeks a disproportionately high return on His investments, so the servant's conservatism was sinful. He appears to have felt that he would receive no reward for his work for the master if he ever returned. He should have taken some risks. Faithful stewardship involves taking calculated risks.<sup>856</sup> "Taking up what one had not laid down," and "reaping what one had not sown" (v. 21), were evidently proverbial expressions similar to "getting blood out of a stone."<sup>857</sup> They described a strict, exacting person.

19:22-23 The master said he would judge the servant on the basis of his own words, namely, that the master was an exacting man who demanded much from his servants (v. 21). Rather than commending him, the master condemned this servant, calling him "worthless," that is, unproductive (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27; James 2:14, 16, 20, 26). He had produced nothing of value for the master. The master's character should have moved the servant to productive service rather than passive sloth. Even by depositing his investment in a bank, the servant could have earned some interest for the master with little risk. Probably the bank in the parable represents a safe investment with comparatively little risk.

19:24 The "bystanders" in the parable represent those who assist Jesus in carrying out His will, perhaps angels or other human servants. The unfaithful servant lost even what the master had given him. If the mina each servant received represents his life potential, this servant would lose that. The master gave it instead to the most faithful servant. This seems to mean that God's faithful servants will receive additional opportunities to glorify Him, in the next stage of their service, as well as authority over others. The next stage of these servants' service will be millennial service in the kingdom. It will be that for Christians as well.

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<sup>854</sup>Morris, p. 275.

<sup>855</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 61.

<sup>856</sup>See Helmut Thielicke, *The Waiting Father*, pp. 143-45.

<sup>857</sup>Morris, p. 275.

"In the Christian life we do not stand still. We use our gifts and make progress or we lose what we have."<sup>858</sup>

19:25-26 This arrangement appeared unjust to the bystanders. They probably thought the unfaithful servant's mina should have gone to a servant with a smaller reward. They were looking at what was best for the servants. However, the master was operating on the principle that faithfulness with little indicates faithfulness in much. Therefore, it was to his advantage to give the unfaithful servant's mina to the most faithful servant, because he would make the best use of it. The master expressed this truth proverbially (v. 26; 13:12). He was looking at what was best for himself. Obviously, what is best for God is more important than what is best for His servants. Still, the master's action was also fair to his servants, since the servant who glorified the master most received the greatest reward.

"The greatest compliment we can pay a man is to give him ever greater, and ever harder tasks to do."<sup>859</sup>

Zaccheus, who was listening to this parable, had just promised to give half of his possessions to the poor, and to reimburse anyone he had defrauded four-fold (v. 8). Jesus' teaching here would have encouraged him to follow through on his commitment. He would have a great reward, much treasure in heaven, if he so served the Master faithfully.

19:27 The master now dealt with a different group of people. These were the "enemies" who opposed his rule over them (v. 14), not his servants. They suffered a fate that was typical for such rebels in the ancient world. They correspond to unbelievers in Jesus. They would not only lose a reward, but their very lives. Physical death in the parable represents spiritual death in reality.<sup>860</sup> This judgment will come after Jesus returns and rewards believers at the Second Coming. He will then also "slay" His enemies (cf. John 5:22; Acts 17:31).

"In Acts 3:13-15 the people of Jerusalem are accused not only of killing Jesus but also of denying him. This repudiation is emphasized in the story of the throne claimant [vv. 14, 27], an addition to the parable of the pounds found only in Luke."<sup>861</sup>

The teaching of the parable is quite clear. Jesus was not going to begin His reign as Messiah immediately. He was going away and would return later to reign. During His absence His servants, believing disciples, need to invest what God has given them for His

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<sup>858</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>859</sup>Barclay, p. 247.

<sup>860</sup>See Pagenkemper, pp. 194-98.

<sup>861</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:161.

glory. He will reward them in proportion to what they have produced for Him. This parable teaches that everyone is accountable to God, and everyone will receive what he or she deserves from the King. It provided a warning for the unbelievers in Jesus' audience, as well as believers, in view of the postponement of the kingdom.

This parable clarifies that, while salvation and entrance into the kingdom come by faith in Jesus, rewards for service rest on the believer's works. Both salvation and rewards come as a result of God's grace. Christians have consistently confused teaching about salvation and rewards. Salvation does not depend on working for God, but resting in what Jesus Christ has done. Rewards do not depend on resting in what Jesus Christ has done, but on working for God. It is a misunderstanding of Scriptural revelation to conclude that, because God has saved us by His grace, we need do nothing but lie back and wait for heaven. Such behavior constitutes irresponsible stewardship that Jesus Christ will punish by withholding a reward. In view of what lies ahead for us, we need to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that [our] labor (toil) is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

"We are all accountable to God for how we conduct our journey through his world. One day he will render judgment. This concept is not popular in some circles today, but it is a biblical concept."<sup>862</sup>

The parable of the *talents* (Matt. 25:14-30) teaches us that God gives everyone a *different amount* to invest for His glory. Some people have more intelligence, or talent, or money than others. The parable of the *minas* teaches that God gives all His servants the *same opportunity* to invest for His glory. Everyone has only one life. Both believers and unbelievers play a part in both parables. Both parables advocate belief in Jesus, faithfulness, and preparedness, and they both show that God will deal with all people justly, graciously, and generously.

Many amillennial and postmillennial interpreters view this parable as prefiguring the fall of Jerusalem and its attending massacres.<sup>863</sup> Posttribulationists usually view it similarly to pretribulationists.

This parable ends the long part of Luke's Gospel that deals with Jesus' ministry as He traveled to Jerusalem from Galilee (9:51—19:27). Luke's narrative highlighted Jesus' lessons to the multitudes and the disciples in view of His impending passion. This parable also concludes the section dealing with the recipients of salvation, stressing their responsibility (18:9—19:27).

## **VI. JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM 19:28—21:38**

Luke's account of Jesus' passion highlights Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and His teaching there before His arrest.

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<sup>862</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 488.

<sup>863</sup>E.g., Luce, p. 297.

**A. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY 19:28-40 (CF. MATT. 21:1-9; MARK 11:1-10; JOHN 12:12-19)**

Luke did not record Jesus' actual entrance into the city of Jerusalem. He focused on Jesus' approach to Jerusalem and His lamentation over it (vv. 41-44). This presentation has the effect of eliminating the triumphant spirit of Jesus' coming and replacing it with sadness over Jesus' rejection.

Until now, Jesus typically discouraged people from proclaiming that He was the Messiah. Now He not only allowed people to identify Him as such but encouraged them to do so. The time of His official presentation to Israel as her Messiah had come.

"Everything He did over the course of these days was designed to call attention to the fact that He is the Messiah."<sup>864</sup>

- 19:28            This is another of Luke's geographical markers that note Jesus' progress toward His goal: "Jerusalem." He traveled west from Jericho, "up" the Judean wilderness, and southwest toward Bethany. He walked in front of His followers leading them to the Cross.
- 19:29-30        Luke located what happened for his readers' benefit. Probably Mark and Luke mentioned "Bethany" because it was a better-known town than "Bethphage," though Bethany was slightly farther east.<sup>865</sup> Bethphage was "the village opposite" or "ahead" (Matt. 21:1). The mention of Mt. "Olivet" (lit. olive orchard) recalls the prophecy of Messiah's coming there (Zech. 14:4). The preparations to enter Jerusalem riding on "a colt," the foal of a donkey, were to fulfill Zechariah 9:9-10. The disciples were to borrow or rent this animal for Jesus to ride on. Evidently such animals were available to assist travelers.<sup>866</sup> However, this colt was "tied" up (cf. Gen. 49:11), and no one had ridden it previously, or even "sat on" it (cf. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; 1 Sam. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:3). When a royal or sacred person rode on such an animal, its owners did not normally put it to customary use from then on.<sup>867</sup>
- 19:31            The term "Lord" probably simply refers to Jesus as the person whom the owner knew needed the colt, but at the same time, Jesus was the true Owner of it—since He owns everything. Thus Luke's words, as well as Matthew's and Mark's, conveyed Jesus' sovereign authority to his readers. "The Lord has need of it" seems to have been a password.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>864</sup>Martin, p. 253.

<sup>865</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 712.

<sup>866</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: The Palm Sunday Colt," *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971):244.

<sup>867</sup>Ibid., pp. 248-49.

<sup>868</sup>Morris, p. 278.

- 19:32-34 This record shows that things turned out "just as" Jesus had led the disciples to believe they would. This would have strengthened the disciples' confidence in Jesus as they entered Jerusalem, and it helps the reader appreciate the reliability of all that Jesus predicted. Perhaps Jesus had previously arranged for the use of the colt. Alternatively, He may have been speaking as a prophet.<sup>869</sup> The evangelists told the story to underscore Jesus' knowledge of things to come.
- 19:35-36 Other disciples "put" Jesus on the colt, and its mother also accompanied it (Matt. 21:7). The disciples honored Jesus by using their outer garments to make a saddle for Him (cf. 1 Kings 1:33). The people who laid their garments down for the colt to walk on were the many people who accompanied Jesus (Matt. 21:8; Mark 11:7). However, Luke stressed the disciples' part in this act of homage (cf. 2 Kings 9:13). Luke simplified the scene by omitting reference to the "branches" that other people laid in the road before the colt (Matt. 21:38; Mark 11:8).
- 19:37 Luke alone specified that Jesus descended from "the Mount of Olives" toward Jerusalem. He may have done so to associate Jesus with the prophecy of Messiah standing on that mountain (Zech. 14:4). However, this was not a fulfillment of that prophecy. The fulfillment will come at the Second Coming. Jesus had predicted His entrance into Jerusalem (13:35). Perhaps Luke pictured Jesus descending toward Jerusalem to set the stage for His weeping over the city (vv. 42-44).
- Luke continued to focus the readers' attention on the disciples' role, whereas the other evangelists included the whole crowd. Obviously Luke wanted us to appreciate the part the disciples played in Jesus' glorification here (cf. 2:13, 20; 19:37; Acts 2:47; 3:8-9). Perhaps he viewed it as a preview of our participation in His Second Coming. He alone noted the disciples' reference to having observed Jesus' "miracles" (Gr. *dynameon*, evidences of spiritual power).
- "In analogous scenes, the person who enters the city does not do so in order to claim kingship; rather, entry presupposes an already achieved victory."<sup>870</sup>
- 19:38 Luke omitted "Hosanna" from the disciples' praise. His Greek readers probably would not have understood it. The repetition of Psalm 118:26 from 13:35 points to one fulfillment of that messianic prophecy here. There will be another fulfillment at the Second Coming. Luke noted that the "King," rather than *the kingdom* (Mark 11:10), was the focus of the disciples' praise. The kingdom was not yet to appear (v. 11), but the King was at hand.

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<sup>869</sup>Green, p. 685.

<sup>870</sup>Ibid., p. 683. For "analogous scenes," see David R. Catchpole, "The 'Triumphal' Entry," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, pp. 319-21.

The words "peace in heaven and glory in the highest" recall 2:14, where the angels expressed similar words in praise to God for providing a Savior. However, at that event they thanked Him for peace "on earth," not peace "in heaven." Probably the disciples were honoring God as the *author* of "peace," as much as He is the *source* of "glory in the highest" (i.e., in heaven).

- 19:39 "Some of the Pharisees" did not like the disciples using messianic terminology for Jesus, thereby suggesting that He fulfilled messianic prophecy (cf. Matt. 21:14-16). They asked Jesus to silence ("rebuke") them. Obviously they thought He would agree that the disciples were going too far. This verse occurs only in this Gospel. It provides a background for Jesus' strong statement in the next verse.

"The story strongly emphasizes the tension between the scribes-Pharisees and Jesus. Study of the references to scribes and Pharisees in Luke up through 19:39-40 (where Pharisees last appear in the gospel, although scribes will continue to play a role) shows that these groups are mentioned almost entirely in pronouncement stories or similar scenes in which they interact with Jesus by objecting, posing a testing inquiry, or taking a position which Jesus corrects. The only exceptions are the statements about Pharisees and scribes in 7:30, 9:22, and 12:1."<sup>871</sup>

- 19:40 However, Jesus refused to silence the disciples. They spoke the truth. The proverbial figure of stones "crying out" pictures the impossible happening. The figure (personification) stresses the appropriateness of the disciples crying out. If the disciples kept "silent," "the stones" would be forced to declare who Jesus was instead of them. This clear messianic claim is unique to Luke. It shows the blatant rejection of Israel's leaders in the face of indisputable evidence that Jesus was the Messiah.

"All history had pointed toward this single, spectacular event when the Messiah publicly presented Himself to the nation, and God desired that this fact be acknowledged."<sup>872</sup>

"It is a breath-taking thing to think of a man with a price upon his head, an outlaw, deliberately riding into a city in such a way that every eye was fixed upon him. It is impossible to exaggerate the sheer courage of Jesus."<sup>873</sup>

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<sup>871</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:170.

<sup>872</sup>Martin, p. 253.

<sup>873</sup>Barclay, p. 249.

The Triumphal Entry is only the second incident in Jesus' ministry that all four evangelists recorded, the first being the feeding of the 5,000. This indicates its great importance in God's messianic program.

## **B. THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM 19:41-48**

This is a transitional section that bridges Jesus' approach to the city and His teaching in it. Luke first recorded Jesus weeping over the city from outside its walls because He knew what lay before its people. Then the writer wrote of Jesus cleansing the temple and teaching there.

### **1. Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem 19:41-44**

This material occurs in no other Gospel. The destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus predicted here was an important event for Luke. It showed God's judgment on Israel for rejecting His Son, and provided evidence that God had turned from working with the Jews primarily, and was now working with Gentiles equally. It constitutes an argument for the distinctively new dispensation that resulted from the Jews' rejection of their Messiah. It also gives a reason for the Christian mission on which Jesus later sent His disciples. As both God and man, Jesus wept over the judgment that was coming on the people of Jerusalem, reflecting God's sorrow over their rejection of His provision of salvation.

- 19:41 Luke continued to describe Jesus as approaching Jerusalem, His city of destiny. Jesus "saw the city" in the light of its rejection of His gracious offer of salvation. He foresaw its later judgment being poured out for their having rejected His peaceful visit. This is the only place in the Gospels, beside John 11:35, where we read that Jesus "wept" (wailed). His compassion is something Luke pointed out frequently. The fate of sinners who reject God's grace broke Jesus' heart. Jeremiah also wept over the fate of Jerusalem (Jer. 8:18-22; 15:5; Lam.; cf. 2 Kings 8:11-12).
- 19:42 Jesus meant that if the people of Jerusalem had only "known" then, that very "day" (cf. 4:21; 19:5, 9), what "things" would result in "peace" for them, they could experience peace. *Only* acceptance of Him and the inauguration of the kingdom could bring peace (i.e., salvation) to the "City of Peace," Jerusalem. However, they did not realize the consequences of their decision against Him. God had withheld that insight from them because they were bent on rejecting Jesus (11:49-51; 13:34).
- 19:43-44 The "enemies" in view proved to be the Roman soldiers, under Titus, who besieged Jerusalem as Jesus described, breached its walls, and finally leveled it in A.D. 70 (cf. 21:20-24). The reason for its destruction was its failure to recognize Messiah's visit, and accept His offer of salvation. Consequently His visit would result in judgment.

"Throughout Luke-Acts, 'Jerusalem' functions above all as a cipher for its role as a cultural center . . . , so mention of

the city relates primarily to the temple system and the leadership that draws its legitimacy from the temple."<sup>874</sup>

### **2. Jesus' cleansing of the temple 19:45-46 (cf. Matt. 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17)**

Judgment began when Jesus threw the merchants out of the temple courtyard. Jesus did this twice: once at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-22), and a second time here at the end. Luke described the "temple" as a place ("house") "of prayer." Jesus purified it by these actions, quoting from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Luke's interest in this incident, which he related briefly, was primarily as the introduction to Jesus' teaching that followed. It also explains the religious leaders' great antagonism toward Jesus (v. 47).

Perhaps Luke omitted Jesus calling the temple a "house of prayer *for the Gentiles*" because he thought this might confuse his Gentile readers. The temple had not become a house of prayer for the Gentiles. Was Jesus therefore wrong? The explanation that Luke did not want to digress to explain was that it will become such in the millennial kingdom. Another explanation follows:

"In the Lukan vision, Gentiles would not come to the temple to find Yahweh; rather, the Lord goes out, through his witnesses, to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 1:8)."<sup>875</sup>

Some interpreters have identified this incident as the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1, but none of the evangelists connected the event with that prophecy. Malachi 3:1 is a prediction of Jesus' coming to the Tribulation temple at His Second Coming (cf. Zech. 14:21).

### **3. A synopsis of Jesus' teaching in the temple 19:47-48 (cf. Mark 11:18)**

Luke stressed the rejection and hostility of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus as He taught "daily in the temple" courtyards. The common people, however, were very receptive to His instruction. This contrast between popular acceptance and official opposition has characterized Luke's narrative. The writer evidently included it to show his readers that average people with no vested interests at stake have always been open to the gospel (cf. 1:68, 77; 2:10, 31-32).

This paragraph is also introductory to what follows. It introduces Jesus' teaching ministry to His disciples in Jerusalem, as 4:14-15 introduced His ministry in Galilee.

"Luke organizes his account of Jesus' daily teaching in the temple into two subsections: 19:47—21:4, which emphasizes the conflict and antagonism between Jesus and segments of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem; and 21:5-38, which presents Jesus' vision of the unfolding future of turmoil,

<sup>874</sup>Green, p. 690.

<sup>875</sup>Ibid., p. 694.

persecution, and acts of judgment, culminating in the coming of the Son of Man and the establishment of the kingdom of God."<sup>876</sup>

### **C. JESUS' TEACHINGS IN THE TEMPLE 20:1—21:4**

Luke presented Jesus' teachings in the temple as beginning with opposition from the religious leaders and leading on to Jesus' condemnation of them. He evidently wanted to highlight the reasons for God's passing over Israel to deal with Gentiles equally in the present era. All of what follows in this section happened on Wednesday of "passion week."

#### **1. The controversy over authority 20:1-8 (cf. Matt. 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33)**

Jesus' authority was crucial not only for the Jewish leaders, who opposed Him, but for Luke's readers. This passage established Jesus' authority beyond reasonable doubt.

20:1-2 Luke's reference to Jesus "preaching the gospel," as well as the question of His "authority" to do so, preview the experiences of Peter and Paul (cf. Acts 4:7). Representative individuals from the "chief priests," "scribes" or lawyers, and "elders," made up the Sanhedrin. Thus their question constituted an official inquiry. The critics' first question dealt with who Jesus claimed to be, and the second one with whom He represented: Himself, or some group.

"Jesus had upset the normal 'religious' atmosphere of the temple, which led the religious leaders to question His authority."<sup>877</sup>

20:3-6 Jesus' reply with a counter-question was common in rabbinic discussions.<sup>878</sup> He used "heaven" as a synonym for "God." Luke recorded many instances of this practice. The Jewish leaders had opposed John the Baptist, though the people followed him. Luke alone mentioned the leaders' fear of stoning by "the people." Stoning was the penalty for prophesying falsely (Deut. 13:1-11). Here the leaders feared that they might suffer the same fate as the false prophets for denying the legitimacy of a true Prophet (Jesus). Luke therefore hinted that the people who listened to Jesus were the faithful Israelites, and that their leaders who rejected Him were worthy of stoning.

20:7-8 Luke recorded the leaders' confession "that they did not know" from where John received his authority. This was, of course, a deliberate evasion of Jesus' question. However, their answer condemned them

<sup>876</sup>John Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 939.

<sup>877</sup>Martin, p. 254.

<sup>878</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 725.

because as Israel's leaders, they were responsible to evaluate the claims of professing prophets. Jesus used their refusal to answer His question as a reason not to answer theirs, but the implication was clear to everyone. He claimed the same authority as John, namely: God. There was ample evidence of divine authority in Jesus' ministry, even though the critics refused to accept it.

**2. The parable of the wicked tenant farmers 20:9-19 (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12)**

This parable taught that Israel's religious leaders who had authority were mismanaging their authority. It also affirmed Jesus' authority, not just as a prophet, but as God's Son. The leaders had expressed fear of death (v. 6). Jesus now revealed that He would die but would experience divine vindication. The parable contains further teaching on the subject of proper stewardship as well (cf. 19:11-27).

20:9-12 Jesus directed His teaching to the people who generally responded positively to His instruction. A positive response to revelation resulted in more insight. Those in the crowd who did not believe in Jesus would have found this teaching less illuminating.

The owner of the vineyard in the parable represents God, the "vineyard" is Israel (cf. Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7), and the tenant farmers ("vine-growers") are Israel's religious leaders. The "harvest" stands for the inauguration of the kingdom, and the servants ("slaves") represent the prophets. The "produce of the vineyard" symbolizes the fruits of righteousness that God hoped to find in His people. Luke simplified this story, as compared with Matthew and Mark's versions, probably to emphasize the main points and to avoid distraction from too much detail.

20:13-14 Luke cast the owner's thought in the form of a soliloquy, which he liked to do (cf. 16:3-4; 18:4-5). This literary device adds pathos to the story. The term "beloved" (Gr. *agepeton*) son identifies the owner's son as unique from his viewpoint, but it also identified him as God's Son to perceptive listeners and to Luke's readers (cf. 3:22). Evidently the tenants believed they could conceal the murder, and that the owner would turn the vineyard over to them, himself having no other heir. This would have been very bad stewardship of what belonged to the owner.

"Tenants were known to claim possession of land they had worked for absentee landlords (Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 35b, 40b). In a day when title was sometimes uncertain, anyone who had had the use of land for three years was presumed to own it in the absence of an alternative claim (Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 3:1)."<sup>879</sup>

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<sup>879</sup>Morris, p. 285.

- 20:15 Matthew and Luke have the tenants casting the son out of the vineyard, and then killing him, whereas Mark has them doing these things in the reverse order. Probably they removed him from the vineyard, killed him, and then cast his corpse farther from the vineyard. The order of Matthew and Luke makes the killing the climax, and Mark's point seems to be the insults that the son suffered.
- 20:16 Only Luke recorded the verbal response of the people to the vineyard owner's action: "May it never be" (Gr. *me genoito*, cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31, et al.). This was a strong statement expressing firm rejection. They understood that Jesus was predicting that God would condemn Israel's leaders and turn the nation over to other people, probably Gentiles and specifically the Romans. They foresaw the end of Judaism as they knew it, and this prospect upset them.
- 20:17 By looking at His hearers, Jesus captivated their attention for a very important statement. Jesus' response corrected the crowd's resistance to the idea that God would judge Israel's present leaders, and would allow Israel to fall under other, presumably Gentile, leadership. He now changed the figure from a vineyard to a building. Luke recorded Him quoting only Psalm 118:22, not verse 23, which the other evangelists included (cf. 19:38; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7). This has the effect of highlighting the *stone*, namely, Jesus, without reference to God.
- An apparently insignificant stone that builders discarded as being unfit would become the most important stone of all. Jesus would become the most important feature in what God was building. Luke's original readers would have understood this as a reference to Jesus being the Head of the church. The statement was a further indictment against the current builders: Israel's leaders.
- 20:18 Jesus next referred to other Old Testament passages that also referred to a stone (Dan. 2:34, 44-45; cf. Isa. 8:14-15). They taught that a capstone would be God's agent of judgment. Those who opposed the Capstone would only destroy themselves, and it would crush those on whom it fell. The stone in Daniel 2 represents a kingdom. In the exact same way, Jesus, as the *King* of the kingdom of God, will serve as God's agent of judgment in the future. However, even at that time, Jesus was the Stone that would bring judgment on God's enemies.
- 20:19 The religious leaders "understood" Jesus' meaning and wanted to silence Him, but decided not to do anything publicly then, because so many of "the people" ("whom they feared") supported Jesus (cf. 19:47-48; 22:2).

"The attitude of the leaders to Jesus is exposed as an unwillingness to be accountable to God."<sup>880</sup>

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<sup>880</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 950.

### **3. The question of tribute to Caesar 20:20-26 (cf. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17)**

Luke showed how the religious leaders' antagonism was intensifying against Jesus. This was another attempt to discredit Him (cf. vv. 1-8). Luke may have included it also because it shows that Jesus did not teach hostility toward the state. The early Christians, like Jesus, suffered because of false accusations that they opposed their government, but this was generally untrue.

20:20 Luke revealed the motives of Israel's leaders on this occasion more clearly than the other evangelists did. They watched for and made opportunities to trap Jesus. The Greek word *egkathetos*, translated "spy," means one hired to lie in wait. A private detective or secret agent might be closer to the ancient equivalent than a military spy. These "spies" feigned "righteous" behavior, though their real purpose was to get Jesus to say something for which they might accuse Him before Pilate, the Roman governor. Later they resorted to telling Pilate that Jesus taught the people not to pay their taxes (23:2), but that was a lie.

20:21-22 The spies' preamble was both flattering and devious (cf. Acts 24:2-3). They claimed to accept Jesus' teaching and to desire a clarification of a point of law. Probably they hoped that their preamble would give Jesus a feeling of self-confidence that would lead to a foolish answer. They wanted to know if Jesus believed that the Mosaic Law required the Jews to "pay taxes" (Gr. *phoros*, a general word for tribute) to the occupying Romans. They thought that if Jesus said "yes," He would alienate the common people, especially the Zealots, who objected strongly to paying. If Jesus said "no," He would incur the wrath of Rome, and the Sanhedrin could tell Pilate that He taught the people not to pay their taxes.

20:23-25 Jesus perceived the malicious intentions of His questioners, rather than falling before their flattery. He proceeded to lead them into a trap of His own. He used an object lesson to reinforce and clarify His answer, rather than sidestepping the controversial question. He answered by appealing to principle.

The Roman "denarius" bore the image of "Caesar," probably that of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) at this time.<sup>881</sup> The image suggested that the money ultimately belonged to him and the government that he headed and represented. He had issued it, though, of course, in another sense it belonged to the person who currently possessed it. The fact that the Jews used Roman money depicted that Rome ruled over them. This rule involved providing services *for* them, as well as extracting payment for those services *from* them. Therefore the demand for taxes was legitimate.

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<sup>881</sup>Green, p. 715.

Jesus added that His questioners, and all people who bear the image of "God," should likewise give Him what is His due, namely: their worship and service (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Roman coins also bore inscriptions claiming that the emperor was divine.<sup>882</sup> Jesus repudiated that idea, by referring to "God" as the Person to whom people owed their primary allegiance.

Jesus was not setting up two parallel and separate realms in which He wanted people to live, namely: the political and the spiritual. Rather, He was showing that paying earthly rulers what is their due is only a logical extension of paying the heavenly Ruler what is His due. The earthly, political sphere, lies within the larger, spiritual sphere. When political and spiritual responsibilities conflict, we must give precedence to our greater spiritual responsibility (cf. Acts 5:29).

"Jesus is not a political revolutionary who rails against Rome, nor is he an ardent nationalist. . . .

"This text is the closest to a political statement Jesus makes. . . . In many ways Jesus' handling of this question shows that he is not interested in the political agenda of changing Rome. He is not a zealot. He is more interested that Israel be a people who honor the God they claim to know than being concerned with their relationship to Rome."<sup>883</sup>

20:26 Jesus' answer in verse 25 has become so commonplace to us, that we fail to appreciate the impact it must have had on those who heard it for the first time. Jesus' critics could not criticize either His logic or His statement. Wisely they kept quiet (cf. 14:6; 20:40), a fact that only Luke noted. Luke also drew attention to their failure to "catch" (NIV "trap," Gr. *epilambanomai*) Jesus, which he earlier identified as their purpose (v. 20).

This teaching would have been helpful to Luke's original readers who, as all Christians do, had responsibilities to pagan political authorities as well as to God.

#### **4. The problem of the resurrection 20:27-40 (cf. Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27)**

This incident was also relevant for Luke's original Greek readers. The question of the resurrection of the body was important in Greek philosophy (cf. 1 Cor. 15). Luke used this incident in his narrative to bring Jesus' confrontations with His critics in the temple courtyard to a climax.

<sup>882</sup>See *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Coins," by Gleason L. Archer, 1:902-11.

<sup>883</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 512.

20:27 Luke had not identified the party affiliations of Jesus' former critics as Matthew and Mark did. These Jewish parties would not have been of much interest to his original readers. However, here he identified the "Sadducees" by name. He needed to do this because of their denial of the "resurrection"—the central problem that they brought to Jesus. Most Greeks also denied the resurrection of the body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12). Much of Greek psychology viewed the body as the temporary prison of the soul, which was immortal.

Jesus had taught much about the future, and had implied that He believed in the resurrection of the body (e.g., 19:11-28). The Sadducees opposed the Pharisees on many points, because they believed the Pharisees had departed too far from the teachings of the Old Testament. In one sense the Sadducees were liberal in their theology, since they denied much that is supernatural (e.g., the resurrection, angels, and spirits; Acts 23:8). On the other hand they were quite conservative, in that they based their views on a strict interpretation of Old Testament teachings—and rejected the oral traditions.

20:28 The Sadducees' commitment to the Old Testament was evident in their approach to Jesus. They began by quoting Deuteronomy 25:5 (cf. Gen. 38:8). The practice in question was levirate marriage.<sup>884</sup>

20:29-33 Jesus' critics posed a possible but far-fetched case of levirate marriage. Their obvious purpose was to show that belief in the resurrection of the body was ludicrous and that Jesus was wrong to advocate it. However, they made the unwarranted assumption that life in a resurrected body would involve sexual relations as we know them now. The problem with the hypothetical question was that none of the woman's "seven" husbands had fathered a child by her. Consequently none of them had any special claim on her as his wife.

20:34-36 Jesus contrasted the present age with the kingdom age. People resurrected to live in the kingdom, "sons" (or products) "of the resurrection" (v. 36), will not "marry" (as men do) or be "given in marriage" (as women are). They will be immortal, as "the angels."

Like the angels, they will also be "sons of God," a common designation for the angels in the Old Testament (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; et al.). This title stresses the God-like characteristic of the angels and the resurrected saints that is in view, namely: their immortality. Even though believers are already "sons of God," they will become *sons of God* in a fuller sense through resurrection. Similarly, Jesus was always God's Son in the administrative structure of the Trinity, but He became the Son of God in a fuller sense by resurrection (Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33).

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<sup>884</sup>See Millar Burrows, "Levirate Marriage in Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 59 (1940):23-33; idem, "The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 59 (1940):445-54.

God considers these people "worthy to attain" to the resurrection of believers because of their faith, not because of any personal merit of their own (cf. Acts 5:41).

There will be people living in the kingdom who have not yet died and experienced resurrection. Jesus was not speaking about them, only about "sons of the resurrection," namely, those who had died and experienced resurrection (cf. Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:50-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-17).

This explanation was important for Hellenistic readers. The Greeks believed that especially worthy mortals became gods, but this is not what Jesus taught. Rather, He was saying that worthy *mortals*, who are *already* sons of God, will become *immortal* and incapable of reproducing following their resurrection.

20:37-38 Jesus also corrected the Sadducees by affirming that "the dead are raised" (resurrected). There is not just continuing conscious existence after death, as many Greeks believed. To prove His point, Jesus cited a verse from the Pentateuch, which His critics respected greatly (Exod. 3:6; cf. Acts 7:32). However, the Sadducees had misinterpreted what Moses had written about God's relationship to the patriarchs.

His point was that "Moses" spoke of God as *presently* being "the God of Abraham, . . . Isaac, . . . and Jacob"—all of whom had died. He inferred from this that God could only be their God—then—if they would rise from the dead eventually. God will raise all people eventually. "All live to Him" in that sense. Therefore "to Him all are alive" (NIV). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose souls are presently alive, will experience bodily resurrection at the Second Coming, and will live in the kingdom as "sons of the resurrection" (v. 36).

20:39 Luke is the only evangelist who recorded the verbal reaction of certain "scribes," presumably Pharisees. They agreed with Jesus about the resurrection and disagreed with the Sadducees. Their comment confirmed the truthfulness of Jesus' teaching about the resurrection, and affirmed Him to be reliable.

20:40 Luke omitted the discussion about the greatest commandment that followed (Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34). He had recorded a similar conversation earlier in his Gospel (10:25-28), and may have wanted to avoid repetition. He skipped ahead to the end of Jesus' teaching in the temple that day, and wrote that Jesus' answer ended the attempts to trap Him in His words ("they did not . . . question Him any longer about anything").

**5. Jesus' question about David's son 20:41-44 (cf. Matt. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37)**

Jesus' questioners having fallen silent, He now took the offensive and asked them a question. Its purpose was to clarify the identity of the Messiah.

20:41 Jesus addressed the religious leaders who had been questioning Him. Matthew has Jesus directing the question to the Pharisees (Matt. 22:41). Mark has Him asking the leaders in general how the scribes could say that Messiah was "David's son" (Mark 12:35). Luke has Jesus alluding, even more generally, to those who taught that Messiah was "David's son." Luke's wording focuses on the question more directly, by playing down the identity of the teachers. The "people" listening to the discussion were the crowds ("all the people") whom Jesus addressed, not just His critics (v. 45). The question itself was: "In what sense could Israel's teachers say that Messiah would be David's son?"

"People who used the title 'Son of David' (18:38, 39; Mt. 21:9) clearly envisaged the Messiah as someone who would defeat all Israel's foes and bring in a new kingdom of David. They thought of David's son as similar to David in being, outlook and achievement. There are not wanting Jewish writings of the period which speak of the Son of David in terms of a narrow nationalism that looked for Israel's triumph over all its foes (*e.g.* the *Psalms of Solomon*). Jesus means us to see that the Messiah was not David's son in that petty sense. He was *Lord*, Lord of men's hearts and lives. To call Him *Lord* meaningfully is to see Him as greater by far than merely another David."<sup>885</sup>

20:42-43 Jesus' point was that Messiah had to be *God* as well as a descendant of David. He quoted Psalm 110:1, to show that this messianic psalm presented David as addressing Messiah seated at Yahweh's "right hand," a position that only God could occupy. The early church's use of Psalm 110 shows that the Jews regarded it as messianic (cf. Acts 2:34; 7:56; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 5:6; 7:17, 21; 8:1; 10:12-13; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21). It is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. Further, the title "Lord," as David used it the second time (Heb. *adonay*), was a title of deity in the Old Testament. The psalm also spoke of Messiah coming from heaven to reign on the earth, another indication of His deity. In Acts 2:34-35, Peter explained that this verse taught Jesus' exaltation following His resurrection.

20:44 Jesus suggested the logical conclusion by framing it as a question. Messiah must be both divine and a descendant of David (cf. Rom 1:3-4). No synoptic writer recorded an answer. Apparently no one offered one.

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<sup>885</sup>Morris, p. 293.

The conclusion was obvious but unacceptable to the religious leaders. They did not want to admit that Messiah was God. If they admitted this, they (being the leaders in charge) would be forced to prove that Jesus was not God, since He claimed to be Messiah. They did not want to do that, because of popular support for Jesus' messiahship, and because they would have had to submit to Him.

"This title of 'Lord' was a more important title than Messiah, for it pictured Jesus' total authority and His ability and right to serve as an equal with God the Father."<sup>886</sup>

**6. Jesus' condemnation of the scribes 20:45-47 (cf. Matt. 23:1-39; Mark 12:38-40)**

Luke and Mark both recorded only a synopsis of Jesus' warning to the multitudes and His disciples—that Matthew narrated in detail. Perhaps Luke did so because he had already included Jesus' lengthy criticisms of the scribes in 11:37-54. Whereas the preceding verses criticized the teachers' doctrine (vv. 41-44), these verses condemned their practice. Immorality often accompanies heterodoxy. Jesus attacked their attitudes particularly. These words constituted Jesus' final break with Israel's religious leaders.

Jesus primarily warned His disciples and secondarily the crowds (Gr. *laos*) listening in—contrasted with the religious leaders—to avoid three characteristics of the lawyers: their pride, greed, and hypocrisy. Four of their common actions indicated their pride (v. 46). They desired personal admiration, respect, prominence, and honor. The learned teachers wore "long robes" (Gr. *stole*) in Israel.<sup>887</sup>

"The four phrases used in 20:46 to characterize the teachers of the law are all ways of indicating claims to advanced social position through nonverbal behavior. Each illuminates the attempt of the teachers of the law to lay claim to exalted social status."<sup>888</sup>

They greedily took money from widows ("devoured widows' houses"), who needed it more than they did, apparently violating the trust of these dependent women.<sup>889</sup> This may have included abusing the hospitality of widows who had little money.<sup>890</sup> Their "long prayers" presented the appearance of great piety, but they were offering them only to give people that impression.

The "condemnation" that they would receive, at the great white throne judgment, would be "greater" than what other unbelievers would receive, who had not been guilty of those sins. Greater privilege means greater responsibility (cf. James 3:1).

<sup>886</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 104.

<sup>887</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "stole," by U. Wilckens, 7:690-91.

<sup>888</sup>Green, p. 726.

<sup>889</sup>See J. D. M. Derrett, "Eating up the Houses of Widows: Jesus's Comment on Lawyers?" *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972):1-9.

<sup>890</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, p. 114. Cf. Morris, p. 294.

This day of teaching in the temple had begun with the religious leaders questioning Jesus' authority (vv. 1-2). Jesus now concluded His public teaching in the temple courtyard with an authoritative evaluation of those who sought to evaluate Him. He was their Judge, not the other way around.

### **7. Jesus' commendation of a widow 21:1-4 (cf. Mark 12:41-44)**

The connecting link in Luke's narrative is the mention of a widow (cf. 20:47). The contrast is between the false piety of the rich lawyers and the genuine piety of one poor woman. This is another lesson for Luke's readers on how one's faith should influence his or her attitude toward money. Jesus presented the real issue as being how much one keeps for himself or herself, rather than how much one gives away.

"We tend to appreciate the amount of a gift, not necessarily the sacrifice that went into the giving."<sup>891</sup>

Jesus observed "rich" people depositing "their gifts" in the temple offering receptacles.

"To be rich in ancient societies made one automatically part of the leadership classes, and so Jesus, in the last of the present series of critical engagement with segments of the leadership classes (from 19:47), now turns his gaze upon the rich."<sup>892</sup>

The "treasury" was a section of the court of the women in the temple complex. The court of the women obtained its name because women were not permitted to proceed farther, not because only women used it; both men and women used it.

"This court covered a space upwards of 200 feet square. All around ran a simple colonnade, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed. These thirteen chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, shaped like trumpets, whence their name. Their specific objects were carefully marked on them. Nine were for the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers; the other four for strictly voluntary gifts. . . . We can also understand how, from the peculiar and known destination of each of these thirteen 'trumpets,' the Lord could distinguish the contributions of the rich who cast in 'of their abundance' from that of the poor widow who of her 'penury' had given 'all the living' that she had."<sup>893</sup>

Each "trumpet" bore a sign designating the particular unique monetary offering that the Israelite should deposit in it. When Jesus spotted "a poor widow" making a contribution, He drew His disciples' attention to her (cf. 20:45; Mark 12:43). He prefaced His remark with His standard attention-getter. It was apparently evident to everyone that the woman

<sup>891</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 527.

<sup>892</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 980.

<sup>893</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 48-49.

was destitute. Her sacrificial gift demonstrated the depth of her love for God, and her trust that God would provide for her (cf. 1 Kings 17:8-16). The "two small copper coins" (Gr. *lepta*, lit. "the thin one") that she donated were together worth only about one sixty-fourth of a denarius, the day's wage of a workingman in Palestine.

"The amount she gives would not buy a quarter of an hour of a day laborer's time."<sup>894</sup>

The *lepta* is the only Jewish coin mentioned in the New Testament. Some scholars believe there is evidence that the priests announced the amount of each person's gift publicly as he or she gave it, but this is debatable.<sup>895</sup>

"If the leaders of Jewish religion treated such pious people in the way criticized by Jesus in 20:47, it followed that the system was ripe for judgment. It is no accident that the prophecy of the destruction of the temple follows: the priests were no better than the scribes in their attitude to wealth (20:45f.)."<sup>896</sup>

Another explanation of the reason for Luke's use of this incident follows: The point is not to contrast the wealth of the religious leaders with the poverty of the widow, and the attitude of the leaders with that of the widow, but to lament "the travesty of a religious system that has as its effect the devouring of this widow's livelihood."<sup>897</sup> This view has not found as popular acceptance as the previous one.

#### **D. JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE 21:5-36**

The emphasis in Luke's version of this important discourse concerning the future, the Olivet Discourse, is a warning and an encouragement to *persevere*. Jesus gave this teaching so His disciples would be ready for the coming of the kingdom (cf. vv. 34-36). Luke had already reported much teaching about the future (12:35-48; 17:20-37). However, some lessons bore repetition, such as the place of signs in signaling the end, and the importance of faithful perseverance. There is also new revelation. Particularly, the chronological relationship between the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem and Jesus' return was not clear before. Jesus now clarified that these events would not occur together, but some time would elapse between them.

"Keep in mind that this was a message given to Jews by a Jew about the future of the Jewish nation. Though there are definite applications to God's people today, the emphasis is on Jerusalem, the Jews, and the temple. Our Lord was not discussing His coming for the church, for that can occur at any time and no signs need precede it (1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). 'For the Jews require a sign' (1 Cor. 1:22); the church looks for a Saviour (Phil. 3:20-21)."<sup>898</sup>

<sup>894</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 980.

<sup>895</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 751.

<sup>896</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 752.

<sup>897</sup>Green, p. 728.

<sup>898</sup>Wiersbe, 1:260.

**1. The setting and the warning about being misled 21:5-9 (cf. Matt. 24:1-6; Mark 13:1-6)**

21:5 Luke did not mention that Jesus gave this teaching on Mt. Olivet, exclusively to His disciples (Matt. 24:1-4; Mark 13:1-5). His omission of these facts created continuity in his narrative, and connected this discourse with Jesus' preceding teaching in the temple that He gave on the same day. It also has the effect of making this discourse the climax of that teaching, and suggests that it had value for all the people.

"This [apparently] double audience is appropriate to the eschatological discourse because, while much of it is directly relevant to the disciple, it deals once again with the fate of Jerusalem, a topic of special importance for the people who are listening."<sup>899</sup>

Luke substituted a description of the comments of others, as Matthew did, for direct quotations from them, which Mark narrated. He also mentioned that the temple's adornments (of "beautiful stones and votive gifts") impressed the onlookers. Matthew and Mark wrote that the temple stones and complex of buildings impressed them.

21:6 Luke's record of Jesus' reply is almost identical to what the other evangelists recorded. Jesus predicted the complete destruction of the temple (cf. 19:44; Mark 14:58; John 2:19; Acts 6:14). His following explanation shows that He was speaking in the other Gospels' passages of a destruction in the Tribulation primarily.

21:7 Jesus' hearers—specifically Peter, James, John, and Andrew (Mark 13:3)—then asked Him "when" the destruction would take place, and "what sign" would precede it. They did not ask for a sign because they disbelieved Jesus, but because they wanted a warning of the disaster. "Sign" here has less the sense of "proof" (cf. 1:18; 11:29) than of "portent" or even "omen."<sup>900</sup> The destruction of the temple would constitute the end of Judaism as they knew it. When the Babylonians destroyed the first temple in 586 B.C., the result was dispersion and disaster for the Jews. Now Jesus announced that another similar catastrophe was coming. They associated this with the Lord's return and the end of the present age, the present age being the age before the messianic kingdom (cf. Matt. 24:2-3).

Significantly, Luke did not record the other questions they asked Him: about the sign of His coming, and of the end of the age (Matt. 24:3). Matthew and Mark concentrated on Jesus' answer to the question about Jesus' return, but Luke dealt mainly with His answer to the question about the temple's destruction. The destruction of the temple and Jesus' return would not coincide chronologically.

<sup>899</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:162.

<sup>900</sup>Green, p. 734.

The disciples' questions		Jesus' answers
"When will these things be?" (Matt. 24:3; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7)	The time of the destruction of the temple	Luke 21:8-28
"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3) "What will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:4) "What will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" (Luke 21:7)	The sign that would signal Jesus' coming and the end of the age	Matt. 24:4-31; Mark 13:5-27

21:8-9 Jesus proceeded immediately to warn His hearers about being "misled" about the time of the temple's destruction. There would be false messiahs who would appear and predict the imminent destruction of the temple (cf. Acts 5:36; 21:38). They should not assume that "wars and disturbances" were signs of the coming destruction, either. Those things would happen, but their occurrence would not signal the immediate destruction of the temple.

**2. The need for faithful perseverance 21:10-19 (cf. Matt. 24:7-10; Mark 13:8-13)**

21:10-11 Luke's interruption of Jesus' teaching suggests a break of some kind in His thought. It seems clear from what follows, in verse 11 especially, that Jesus now broadened His perspective—from the wars that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem—to include later wars. He was referring specifically to the wars that would precede His return to the earth. The disciples may not have understood this difference when Jesus spoke these words, but by the time Luke wrote his Gospel, the difference had become clearer. Later revelation gives us much more information about the wars, earthquakes, plagues, famines, terrors, and great heavenly signs that will precede the Second Coming (Rev. 6—18). The Old Testament prophets had predicted this time of turmoil on the earth, namely: the Tribulation (cf. Isa. 13:10, 13; 34:4; Jer. 30:4-7; Ezek. 14:21; 32:7-8; Dan. 9:26-27; Amos 8:9; Hag. 2:6; et al.). However, Jesus' hearers did not know when it would come.

21:12-15 Before the calamities of the Tribulation, Jesus' disciples would experience persecution from their enemies, referred to generally here as "they." Jesus proceeded to describe what His disciples could expect—from the time He spoke until His return. He warned them about what to expect so they would not yield to persecution.

They would undergo examinations from hostile Jews in synagogues (cf. Matt. 10:17; Mark 13:9), and they would experience confinement in prisons. Gentiles also would arrest them, and bring them "before kings and

governors," because of their allegiance to Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:18; Mark 13:9). Nevertheless these situations would provide opportunities for witness. The disciples should not fret about their verbal defense ahead of time, but should rely on Jesus' promise to provide them with the "utterance" (lit. mouth) or words (cf. Exod. 4:11, 15; Ezek. 29:21) and the "wisdom" they would need at the right time (cf. 12:11-12; Matt. 10:19-20; Mark 13:11). This would come to them through the Holy Spirit's ministry to them (Mark 13:11). They would discover that their witness would be very powerful (irresistible and irrefutable). We have examples of this happening in the early church (e.g., Acts 4:14; 6:10; 8:3; 12:4; 21:11; 22:4; 27:1; 28:17) and throughout church history. It will continue through the Tribulation.

"It is the preparation for the speech of defence [*sic*] (apology) that Jesus here forbids, not the preparation of a sermon."<sup>901</sup>

- 21:16-17 They would also experience betrayal by close "relatives" and "friends" (cf. Mark 13:12). "Some" of them would die for their testimonies. Hatred would proliferate against many more disciples than how many would die (cf. Mark 13:13).
- 21:18 Jesus promised that He would keep them safe. This probably means that no harm would befall them without the Father's permission (v. 16; cf. Acts 27:34).<sup>902</sup> Some interpreters believe it refers to their spiritual safety.<sup>903</sup> However, physical safety seems to be in view throughout the passage.
- 21:19 By persevering faithfully when persecuted, they would preserve their "lives" (Gr. *ktesesthe tas psychas hymon*). That is, they would not die before it was God's will for them to die (v. 18). Some interpreters believe that this verse simply restates in different terms the principle that those who endure to the end will experience salvation (Matt. 24:13; Mark 13:13).<sup>904</sup> Matthew and Mark recorded a principle for disciples living just before the Lord's return. Those who remained faithful to the end of the Tribulation would enter the kingdom without dying (Matt. 24:13; Mark 13:13). However, the differences in terminology in Luke argue for a different meaning here. This verse seems to be an additional promise. It cannot mean that martyrs can earn justification by remaining faithful rather than apostatizing, since justification comes by faith, not works (cf. Rom. 2:7). It quite possibly means that perseverance will earn an eternal reward (cf. v. 36; Rev. 2:10).

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<sup>901</sup>Robertson, 2:258.

<sup>902</sup>Geldenhuys, p. 527; Morris, p. 298; Lenski, p. 1017.

<sup>903</sup>E.g., Plummer, p. 480; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 769; Robertson, 2:259; H. A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Gospel of Luke*, 2:619; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1021; and G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 237.

<sup>904</sup>E.g., Martin, p. 257.

### **3. The judgment coming on Jerusalem 21:20-24**

Jesus now returned to the subject of when the temple would suffer destruction (v. 7). The similar passages in Matthew and Mark are sufficiently different to alert the reader to the fact that they deal with a different incident from what Luke described (Matt. 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20). Even some commentators who believe that Luke depended heavily on Mark for his material admit this difference.<sup>905</sup>

21:20           The sign that Jerusalem's destruction was imminent would be the presence of besieging "armies" (cf. v. 7). This happened when Titus encircled the city with troops and put it under siege beginning in A.D. 68.

21:21-22       "Then" the Jews should get away from the city. Those in it should "leave," those outside it should "not enter" it (while it would be under siege), and those living in the surrounding area ("Judea" and "the country") should move farther from it. This is the very opposite of what people would normally do; they would flee *into* the city for refuge. God's "vengeance" on the city would descend shortly, in fulfillment of prophecy (Dan. 9:26). The city was doomed.

Earlier Luke recorded Jesus' teaching about the destruction that would come on Palestine just before His return (17:22-37). Matthew and Mark wrote that Jesus also gave that teaching in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20). However, though that teaching is similar, it is different from what Jesus announced here. Here He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem that happened in A.D. 70.

"In fact, when the Romans were beginning to invest [*sic*] Jerusalem, the local Christians mostly fled to Pella, one of the cities of Decapolis and situated in trans-Jordan, south of the sea of Galilee (Eusebius says they went in response to 'an oracle given by revelation', which may mean Jesus' words or a later injunction of a similar kind from a Christian prophet; see *Historia Ecclesiastica* III. v. 3)."<sup>906</sup>

21:23-24       The "great distress" of "pregnant" women and "nursing" mothers represents the trouble that all people in and around Jerusalem would face. God's "wrath," and the "wrath" of Israel's enemy, would also be great. Some of the Jews would die in battle, and others would become captives and have to leave Palestine. "Gentiles" would dominate (trample "under foot") "Jerusalem" itself. This would last until the end of "the times of the Gentiles." This is a phrase that describes the period during which Gentiles, rather than Jews, would control the fate of Jerusalem (Dan. 2; 7). It began when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, in 586 B.C., and will

<sup>905</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 770-71.

<sup>906</sup>Morris, pp. 298-99.

continue until Jesus Christ returns at the Second Coming (cf. Dan. 2:34-35, 45; Rom. 11:25). Throughout this entire long period of history, including the present, Gentiles have controlled the fate of Jerusalem.<sup>907</sup> Luke's reference to "the times of the Gentiles" is consistent with his interest in Gentiles.

The fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 did not fulfill this prophecy completely, because Jesus said that the times of the Gentiles would end (21:24). Gentiles continued to control Israel's fate after A.D. 70 and still do today. Also, celestial phenomena and the return of Jesus were to take place at the end (21:25-28), but these things did not happen in A.D. 70.

Again, careful comparison with the similar passages in Matthew and Mark reveals that they were recording Jesus' prediction of the attack on Jerusalem just before His return (cf. Zech. 14:1-2). Luke recorded His prediction of Jerusalem's destruction that happened in A.D. 70. According to Josephus, 1,100,000 Jews perished in the destruction of Jerusalem then, and 97,000 were taken captive.<sup>908</sup> This seems to be an exaggeration, but the number must have been very large.<sup>909</sup>

Acts 3:19 records Peter's invitation to the Jews to repent, and to return to a proper relationship to God, with the result that "times of refreshing" might come from the Lord's presence. This is probably a reference to the inauguration of the messianic kingdom (cf. Zech. 12:10-14). If the Jewish nation as a whole had believed in Jesus then, how could Jesus' predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem have taken place? Probably the Romans would have invaded Jerusalem sooner than they did, the Rapture would have happened (John 14:1-3), the seven-year Tribulation would have followed, and Jesus would have returned to set up His kingdom. All of this could have happened within about 10 years from the time Peter extended his invitation.

#### **4. The second coming of the Son of Man 21:25-28 (cf. Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27)**

Luke omitted Jesus' warning about false prophets that Matthew and Mark recorded (Matt. 24:23-28; Mark 13:21-23). Perhaps he did this because he had included similar warnings in his account of Jesus' earlier teachings (17:21-23; 21:8). Clearly Jesus was now speaking again of events that would precede His return to the earth (v. 27).

"Jesus is pointing to signs that will precede His coming and teaching His followers not to be discouraged."<sup>910</sup>

<sup>907</sup>See Pentecost, *The Words . . .*, p. 399; John F. Walvoord, "The Times of the Gentiles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125:497 (January-March 1968):3-9.

<sup>908</sup>Josephus, *The Wars . . .*, 6:9:3.

<sup>909</sup>Robertson, 2:260.

<sup>910</sup>Morris, p. 300.

- 21:25-26 Tribulation conditions at the end of the times of the Gentiles are again in view (cf. vv. 10-11; Rev. 6—18). The scope of these crises is global, not just in Judea (cf. vv. 20-21). Probably we should understand the "roaring of the sea" literally, since Jesus also mentioned "waves." Evidently the disturbances in "the heavens" will affect the tides and waves, causing great insecurity. Global catastrophes will portend even greater trouble to come for those living on the earth in the Tribulation, and they will fear greatly. The universe will appear to be about to break up.
- 21:27 When conditions are at their worst, people living on the earth then "will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Dan. 7:13; cf. Luke 9:36; 2 Pet. 1:16-17). He will come to set up the messianic kingdom and to reign on the earth for 1,000 years (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 20:1-6). The cloud may be the Shekinah (cf. Acts 1:9-11).
- 21:28 These calamities should have the result that believers living then will realize that the Second Coming is very "near." Consequently they should prepare to meet the Lord. The approach of their "redemption" refers to the approach of the final stage of their redemption, namely, their entering the safety of the kingdom (cf. Ps. 111:9; Isa. 63:4; Dan. 4:34). When Jesus returns, He will remove believers from the Tribulation by ending it. This verse contains encouragement for believers. "Lifting up the head" is symbolic of hope and rejoicing (cf. Judg. 8:28; Job 10:15; Ps. 24:7; 83:3). Again, Jesus counseled doing the opposite of what was normal; normally people would hunker down and cover their heads in such conditions.

**5. The certainty of these events 21:29-33 (cf. Matt. 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31)**

Jesus told the parable of the fig tree to illustrate the certainty of what He had prophesied. He then gave other assurances of fulfillment. Luke omitted Jesus' statement that no one would know the day or hour when He would return (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32). He may have felt that this would weaken the force of these predictions, and he recorded a similar statement later (Acts 1:7). He also omitted Jesus' reference to the sign of Noah, and the parables of the one taken and the other left behind (Matt. 24:37-41). Luke had recorded this teaching earlier when Jesus gave it in another context (17:26-27, 34-35).

"Jesus moves from prophetic discourse to pastoral exhortation concerning faithful life in light of the events he has anticipated."<sup>911</sup>

- 21:29-31 This parable illustrates the truth that the kingdom's appearing will follow the signs that Jesus just identified (vv. 10-11, 25-26). It will follow as certainly as "summer" follows the budding of "trees" in the spring. Jesus here connected the beginning of "the kingdom" with His return to the earth (v. 27).

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<sup>911</sup>Green, p. 741.

"If the kingdom had already come, why did Jesus prophesy the future Tribulation in Luke 21:31 and say in connection with that series of events, 'When you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near'? The implication is clear: This kingdom is not near now. It was near (in the sense that Jesus personally offered it to Israel), but then it ceased being near [when the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah]. Then in the future Tribulation the millennial kingdom will again be near."<sup>912</sup>

Luke is the only recorder of this teaching who included the phrase "and all the trees." The "fig tree" was a symbol of Israel. The budding of the fig tree could therefore be a figurative reference to Israel's revival (cf. Isa. 27:12-13; Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27). Similarly, the budding of "all the trees" may refer to the revival of other Gentile nations. Luke may have included this phrase to help his Gentile readers understand that Jesus' words deserved a literal, as well as a symbolic, interpretation here.

21:32 This verse begins Jesus' final word confirming the certainty of His prophecy. He introduced it with the solemn "Truly I say to you" or "I tell you the truth."

There are several ways that "this generation" has been interpreted: (1) It may refer to unbelievers generally, without reference to any particular time at which they live.<sup>913</sup> (2) "This generation" may refer to the unbelieving Jews who were alive when Jesus spoke, as it usually does in the Gospels (cf. 3:7; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32, 50-51; 17:25; Mark 11:14; Acts 2:40). Jesus may have meant that that generation would not disappear until the fulfillment of all that He had predicted had begun. (3) The best interpretation is that "this generation" refers to the generation referred to in verse 25, which will, in the distant future, see the beginning of the end in the cosmic signs.<sup>914</sup>

The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the fulfillment of what Jesus had predicted in this discourse. Obviously all the things that He predicted here did not happen within the lifetime of His hearers. He evidently regarded the beginning of fulfillment as a guarantee of complete fulfillment. This was a common Semitic viewpoint. The Semites regarded a part of the whole as the whole (cf. Deut. 26:5-10; 1 Kings 13:32; Jer. 31:5; 2 Sam. 5:6-10; Rev. 14:1; 22:1; Rom. 15:19-24). The name that some scholars have given this viewpoint is "representative

<sup>912</sup>Stanley D. Toussaint and Jay A. Quine, "No, Not Yet: The Contingency of God's Promised Kingdom," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164:654 (April-June 2007):138.

<sup>913</sup>Green, p. 742.

<sup>914</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 538-39, M. Bailey, pp. 146-47, and Wiersbe, 1:263. For a discussion of other interpretations, see my note on Matthew 24:34; Maddox, pp. 111-15; and Morris, pp. 300-1.

universalism."<sup>915</sup> It is difficult to tell in this discourse when Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and when He was talking about the Second Coming.<sup>916</sup>

21:33 "Heaven and earth" is a merism for the universe. Jesus meant that the universe would someday end (cf. Rev. 21:1), but His Word would "not" (or "never") end (cf. 16:17; Ps. 102:25-27; 119:160; Isa. 40:6-8; 51:6; Matt. 5:18). This is a strong way of affirming the certainty of what He had just predicted. It also implied that Jesus had divine authority.

**6. The concluding exhortation to watchfulness 21:34-36 (cf. Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:33-37)**

Luke concluded his account of the Olivet Discourse with Jesus' exhortation to remain ready for what He had predicted. Jesus' words presupposed an interval before His coming, but He allowed that His coming might occur in the lifetime of His hearers. Nothing that He said precluded the passing of millennia before His coming.

21:34-35 "That day" is the day of His return, not the destruction of Jerusalem, since it would "come on all" earth-dwellers (v. 35). Jesus did not want His disciples to be unprepared for His return. He did not want them to be so self-indulgent and selfish that they disregarded His return. In that case, it might catch them "like a trap." Even though believers should be able to anticipate the Lord's return by the signs that precede it (vv. 10-11, 25-26), they may become so entangled in the affairs ("worries") "of life" that they lose sight of it.

21:36 "Praying" brings spiritual "strength" to maintain alertness. It enables disciples to withstand the temptation to depart from God's will, and consequently "stand before the Son of Man," when He returns, without shame. Faithful perseverance in the midst of persecution is in view (cf. v. 19).

The people who first heard Jesus give this exhortation needed to trust in Him, and commit themselves to remaining true to Him, since hard times lay ahead of them. This was especially true of Jesus' disciples. If the Tribulation had begun shortly after Jesus' ascension, some of them who became Christians after the Rapture would have been in it and would have anticipated His return in just seven years. After the church began on the day of Pentecost, believers could have been raptured at any moment. After the Rapture, the people who became believers could anticipate the Lord returning at the end of the Tribulation, and they would need to be ready.

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<sup>915</sup>See A. J. Mattill Jr., "Representative Universalism and the Conquest of Canaan," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35:1 (1967):8-17.

<sup>916</sup>Robertson, 2:261.

Luke's original readers evidently lived after Pentecost and before the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>917</sup> Most of them lived to witness the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction of Jerusalem's destruction. This event would have encouraged them to believe His teaching about His return and to prepare for it. They could have met the Lord any time if the Rapture had occurred during their lifetime.

As history has unfolded, we have recognized that the Second Coming is still future. Before that happens, the Tribulation must occur, and before that, the Rapture. The New Testament apostles voiced many of the same warnings urging watchfulness in view of the Rapture, that Jesus gave in view of His Second Coming (e.g., Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:4-11, 17; et al.). After the Rapture, people who become Christians will need to remain vigilant ("on the alert"), because they will go through intense persecution in the Tribulation. For them, the Second Coming will be only a few years away.

Jesus' exhortation to be watchful is therefore applicable to all disciples, regardless of when they may live before His Second Coming. Vigilance is essential because the Lord's return is imminent (i.e., impending, overhanging), regardless of when we live.

In all the accounts of the Olivet Discourse, it is clear that Jesus was giving more revelation concerning events leading up to His *Second Coming*. He was not describing what would happen before the Rapture of the church occurs. He was expounding Old Testament revelation concerning Israel's future (in Daniel and Zechariah), not the future of the church. Many people have mistakenly interpreted the Olivet Discourse as containing revelation concerning the end of the *Church Age*. Really it gives information about the end of the *Inter-advent Age*.

The church is not in view in the Olivet Discourse. Posttribulationists have confused many Christians at this point. Posttribulationists believe the Rapture and the Second Coming will occur simultaneously. Pretribulationists believe the seven-year Tribulation separates the two comings: the Lord's coming *for* the church (the Rapture) and His coming *with* the church (the Second Coming).

#### **E. A SUMMARY OF JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM 21:37-38**

This summary is unique to Luke's Gospel. The writer included it to round off this phase of Jesus' ministry. During the Passion Week, Jesus spent His days "teaching in the temple" area, probably Tuesday through Thursday. He must have presented Himself as the God-man and called on His hearers to believe on Him. At night He would go out to Mt. Olivet, probably with the Twelve, to pray and sleep. He may have stayed with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in their Bethany home, which stood on "the mount" (cf. Matt. 21:17). Possibly He slept out of doors, perhaps in the garden of Gethsemane. There were multitudes of pilgrims in Jerusalem at Passover time, and many of them slept in the open air. Normally, the population of Jerusalem was between 200,000 and 250,000, but during Passover, it rose to between 2 and 3 million.<sup>918</sup>

<sup>917</sup>See my introductory comments on the date of composition.

<sup>918</sup>Josephus, *The Wars . . .*, 2:14:3; Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 1:116; idem, *The Temple*, p. 31, f. 1.

". . . taking into account this extraordinary influx, the Rabbis distinctly state, that during the feasts—except on the first night—the people might camp outside Jerusalem, but within the limits of a sabbath-day's journey. This . . . also explains how, on such occasions, our Lord so often retired to the Mount of Olives."<sup>919</sup>

Again Luke mentioned the eagerness of "all the people" in general (Gr. *laos*) to hear Him (cf. 4:14-15, 22, 32, 37, 42; 5:19, 26, 29). Their response contrasted with that of the crowds (Gr. *ochloi*), who pressed Jesus to receive something from Him, and the nation's leaders, who listened to Him only to do Him harm. Perhaps Luke noted the people's eager responsiveness to the gospel to encourage his readers in their evangelism.

## **VII. JESUS' PASSION, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION CHS. 22—24**

Luke's unique rendition of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus has several important characteristics. It contains more of Jesus' farewell comments to the disciples at the Last Supper compared with the other synoptic accounts. Luke's literary model in verses 1-38 was evidently the farewell discourse.<sup>920</sup> It also clarifies some of the events surrounding Jesus' trials. It provides additional details of the crucifixion, and it includes other post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Generally Luke pictured Jesus as a righteous man suffering unjustly though pursuing the path that His Father, the Old Testament prophets, and He had foreordained and foretold. Though this is the concluding section of this Gospel, Luke left an ending to which he could later attach the Book of Acts smoothly.

### **A. THE PLOT TO ARREST JESUS 22:1-6**

This significant plot is the core around which several other incidents cluster.

#### **1. The leaders' desire 22:1-2 (cf. Matt. 26:1-5; Mark 14:1-2)**

The leaders of Israel had already decided to do away with Jesus ("put Him to death"). His presence in Jerusalem for the "Passover" season gave them a chance to arrest Him, and to put Him on trial before Pilate and Herod Antipas. Both of these rulers were in Jerusalem for the occasion.

Luke mentioned the seven-day "Feast of Unleavened Bread" as the better known of the two feasts, whereas Matthew and Mark both featured the Passover in their accounts. Greek readers may have known of this feast more commonly as the Feast of Unleavened Bread than as Passover.

The Jewish religious leaders took the initiative against Jesus, but the common people did not share their antagonism. The "chief priests" were mainly political leaders who owed their jobs to Rome. The situation also required the legal expertise of the "scribes" or

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<sup>919</sup>Ibid.

<sup>920</sup>Green, p. 771.

lawyers. The Jewish leaders could not discover a way to arrest Jesus without causing a riot—until Judas came forward with his plan.

### **2. Judas' offer 22:3-6 (cf. Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11)**

Luke omitted the story of Jesus' anointing in Bethany (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:2-8). He had already narrated a similar event that happened on another occasion (7:36-50). With this omission, Luke allowed the story of the plot to arrest Jesus to flow more smoothly.

22:3-4 Only Luke and John mentioned Satan's entering into Judas now (cf. John 13:2). Perhaps Luke wanted to clarify that Jesus' death was due to more than just human scheming (cf. Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 2:8). It was part of a cosmic plan to destroy the God-man (cf. 4:1-12). Ironically, Satan's participation in Jesus' arrest led to his own downfall (cf. Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). Luke also clarified Judas' identity ("Iscariot") for his readers (cf. 6:16), and noted Judas' contact with the Jewish "officers" of the temple guards. It was probably these temple officers, along with Roman soldiers, who arrested Jesus (cf. John 18:3). Perhaps Judas went to them because he originally anticipated Jesus being arrested in the temple area.

22:5-6 Judas was as hypocritical as the religious leaders. He, too, sought to avoid arousing the people. The theme of "joy" in Luke now crops up again, but this time it is an evil thrill in Jesus' enemies at the prospect of His fall.

### **B. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE PASSOVER 22:7-13 (CF. MATT. 26:17-19; MARK 14:12-16)**

Luke recorded more details of these preparations than the other synoptic evangelists. Against the backdrop of a plot to arrest Him, Jesus comes across as the One who is in control and is quietly directing the events leading to the Cross (cf. 19:29-35).

22:7 The Jews slew their Passover lamb on the fourteenth of Nisan and ate it after sundown. Sundown began the fifteenth. The fourteenth would have been Thursday until sundown. This verse marks the transition to Thursday from Wednesday, the day on which Jesus had His controversy with the leaders in the temple and gave the Olivet Discourse. This is another of Luke's benchmarks that signals Jesus' relentless movement toward the Cross.

Luke evidently referred to this day as "the day of unleavened bread," because it was the *first day* of the combined feasts of "Passover" and "Unleavened Bread." The Jews referred to the whole period as the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" sometimes, and as "the Passover" or "the Feast" sometimes (cf. 2:42; 22:1; Acts 12:3-4). Another possibility is that this was the day on which they removed all leaven from their homes in preparation for the Passover.<sup>921</sup>

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<sup>921</sup>Morris, p. 304.

22:8-9 Only Luke recorded the names of the disciples whom Jesus sent to "prepare" for "the Passover" meal. "Peter and John," of course, later became Jesus' chief servants as leaders of the Christians in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 3:1-2; 8:14). This detail links the Gospel and Acts. Luke also featured Jesus' initiation of plans to observe the Passover. These plans were confidential to avoid premature arrest.

22:10-12 It was unusual for men to carry pitchers of water.<sup>922</sup> Usually women did this task, whereas men carried water in leather skins.<sup>923</sup> This appears to have been a prearranged signal that was part of Jesus' plan to avoid an early arrest. Judas would not have known where the "upper room" was, since Jesus revealed its location only to Peter and John, as Luke recorded. The title "Teacher" (Gr. *didaskalos*) was one that Jesus' disciples used to describe Him (cf. 6:40). Evidently the owner of the upper room was a disciple.

The Upper Room probably stood on the flat roof of a typical Palestinian house and served as an extra room. It would have been accessible by an external stairway. The owner would have at least furnished it with cushions for reclining on.<sup>924</sup> According to tradition, the Upper Room was located on Mt. Zion, just to the north and east of the Hinnom Valley, and west of the City of David.<sup>925</sup>

22:13 This verse underlines Jesus' prophetic foresight sovereign control. It also sets the stage for what follows.

### **C. EVENTS IN THE UPPER ROOM 22:14-38**

Luke included more information about what Jesus said and did on this occasion than Matthew or Mark did. John's account is the fullest of all (John 13—17).

#### **1. The Passover meal 22:14-18**

Luke introduced this meal, then narrated Jesus' words of welcome to His disciples and His drinking of the cup.

#### **The writer's introduction to these events 22:14 (cf. Matt. 26:20; Mark 14:17)**

Luke continued to imply Jesus' authority in his account of the events that these verses introduce. "The hour" in view is the hour (time) at which Jesus had determined to eat the Passover meal with His disciples. Luke probably called the Twelve "apostles," here, because what took place in the Upper Room was foundational for the church, and the apostles were its leaders (Eph. 2:20).

<sup>922</sup>Barclay, p. 276.

<sup>923</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 791; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1025.

<sup>924</sup>Jeremias, *The Eucharistic . . .*, p. 48, footnote 1.

<sup>925</sup>See the diagram "Jerusalem in New Testament Times" at the end of these notes.

### Jesus' words of welcome 22:15-16

These verses record Jesus' introduction to what followed, and are similar to the welcoming words of a host before his guests begin their meal. This is the seventh of nine meal scenes that Luke recorded in his Gospel (cf. 5:29-32; 7:36-50; 9:12-17; 10:38-42; 11:37-54; 14:1-24; 22:14-20; 24:28-32; 24:36-42).

22:15 Jesus' great desire (Gr. *epithymia epethymesa*, lit. "with desire I have desired") to eat this meal with the Twelve was due to the teaching that He would give them. It also arose from the fact that this would be His last fellowship meal with them. It was also the last "Passover" to be celebrated under the old Mosaic Covenant.

"With a Sacrament did Jesus begin His Ministry: it was that of separation and consecration in Baptism. With a second Sacrament did He close His Ministry: it was that of gathering together and fellowship in the Lord's Supper."<sup>926</sup>

22:16 Jesus announced that He would "never again eat" (a strong negative statement in Greek: *ou me phago*) another Passover meal until what the Passover anticipated, namely, His own sacrificial death, had transpired (cf. 9:31).

"When His kingdom would arrive, the Passover would be fulfilled for God would have brought His people safely into their rest."<sup>927</sup>

He would eat with them "again" next in "the kingdom," specifically at the messianic banquet at the beginning of the kingdom. This announcement probably contributed to the apostles' expectation that the kingdom would begin very soon (cf. Acts 1:6).

### The drinking of the cup 22:17-18

There were four times that participants in the Passover meal drank together, commonly referred to as "four cups." The Passover opened with a prayer of thanksgiving, followed by the drinking of the first cup. Then the celebrants ate the bitter herbs and sang Psalms 113—114. Next they drank the second cup and began eating the lamb and unleavened bread. Then they drank the third cup and sang Psalms 115—118. Finally they would drink the fourth cup. The "cup" in view in this verse may have been the *first* of the four.<sup>928</sup> If it was, Jesus evidently did not participate in the drinking of the following three cups (v. 18).<sup>929</sup>

<sup>926</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:491.

<sup>927</sup>Martin, p. 259.

<sup>928</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1056.

<sup>929</sup>Jeremias, *The Eucharistic . . .*, pp. 211-12.

The other Gospel writers did not refer to the first cup, so this may have been the *third* cup, the so-called "cup of redemption." This view assumes that Jesus participated in the drinking of the *first* and *second* cups, which would have been normal. "From now on" or "again" (v. 18) could mean either "after this cup" or "after this Passover." I favor the view that Jesus was referring to the "cup," not the Passover, and that this was the *third* cup. Luke rearranged the order of events in the upper room considerably, as comparison with the other Gospels seems to indicate. Matthew and Mark have Jesus saying what Luke recorded in these verses—just after what Luke recorded in verse 20.

Jesus continued to lead by giving thanks to God and then encouraging the apostles to partake. His action was similar to making a toast. However, His announcement that He would not drink the fruit of the vine again, until He did so with His guests in the kingdom, was not customary. It reinforced His previous statement that the kingdom would come. Jesus was punctuating the certainty of the kingdom's coming. This was necessary since His impending arrest and death would cause the apostles to question whether it would come.

**2. The institution of the Lord's Supper 22:19-20 (cf. Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)**

Luke's account points out Jesus' linking of His *self-giving* with the "bread," and His giving Himself for the "disciples" specifically, instead of for the "many" generally (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; cf. Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-40). According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus announced that He would not drink the fruit of the vine until He did so in the kingdom—after instituting the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25). Perhaps Jesus repeated this announcement then. If so, this would have been Jesus' third reference to the coming kingdom (cf. vv. 16, 18). On the other hand, Luke probably rearranged the order of events, and recorded Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper after His promise not to drink again.

Luke's account is more similar to Paul's, in 1 Corinthians 11, than it is to Matthew's or Mark's. This seems to be one indication that Paul influenced Luke as he wrote his Gospel, as well as Acts. Alternatively, Luke may have influenced Paul.

Jesus invested the common elements of unleavened bread and diluted wine with new significance. The "bread" represented His "body" given sacrificially for His disciples. The disciples were to eat it, as He did, symbolizing their appropriation of Him and their consequent union with Him. The "cup," representing what was in it, symbolized the ratification of the "New Covenant" with Jesus' "blood" (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Exod. 24:8).<sup>930</sup>

". . . Jesus meant that the new covenant would take effect through that which the contents of the cup signified, namely, his sacrificial death."<sup>931</sup>

<sup>930</sup>See Rodney J. Decker, "The Church's Relationship to the New Covenant," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:607 (July-September 1995):290-305; 608 (October-December 1995):431-56.

<sup>931</sup>Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, p. 126. Cf. Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 806.

Much of the New Testament is an exposition of the significance of Jesus' sacrificial death, which He referred to so cogently here. Luke emphasized that Jesus gave His body and poured out His blood "for you." However, "in remembrance of Me" encouraged the disciples to focus on the Person of Jesus Christ, and not just the benefits of His death for them.<sup>932</sup> Jesus *commanded* His disciples to remember Him. This is not optional for us (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24-26).

### **3. Jesus' announcement of His betrayal 22:21-23 (cf. Matt. 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; John 13:21-30)**

Luke placed Jesus' announcement of His betrayal after the institution of the Lord's Supper, whereas Matthew and Mark located it before that event in their Gospels. The effect of Luke's placement is that the betrayal appears especially heinous in view of Jesus' self-sacrifice for His disciples. The connecting link is the reference to Jesus' death.

22:21 Jesus shocked His disciples with the announcement that "one of" them would "betray" Him. The reference to his "hand" being on (or at, Gr. *epi*) the table with Jesus' own hand highlights their close relationship and the irony of the betrayal.

22:22 Jesus then affirmed again that He was "going" (to die), and thereby fulfill God's plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 1:4). Luke used a strong word (Gr. *horismemon*, "determined" or "decreed") to stress God's sovereignty in these affairs. The title "Son of Man" helped the disciples appreciate that this was part of God's will for the Messiah who would reign. Jesus pronounced "woe" on the betrayer, as He had on the religious leaders and on Jerusalem, for rejecting Him. There is a play on the word "man" (Gr. *anthropos*). The worst of men would betray the best of men. Note also the reference to both divine sovereignty and human responsibility in this verse (cf. Acts 2:23).

22:23 Luke is the only evangelist who recorded this conversation. It reveals the disciples' concern and the extent of Judas' hypocrisy. Judas still had an opportunity to repent, but he did not. It was especially despicable for Judas to share a meal with Jesus, which implied mutual commitment, and then betray Him.

### **4. Teaching about the disciples' service 22:24-30**

Again Luke apparently rearranged the chronological order of events in the upper room to make certain points.

#### **The disciples' concern for their greatness 22:24-27**

Following Jesus' announcement of His self-sacrifice and the announcement of His betrayal, the disciples' argument over "which" of them was the "greatest" appears

<sup>932</sup>See Eugene H. Merrill, "Remembering: A Central Theme in Biblical Worship," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:1 (March 2000):27-36.

thoroughly inappropriate (cf. Matt. 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45). Jesus used the situation as an opportunity to teach them the importance of humility again (cf. 9:46-48). Luke's recording of the lesson again illustrates its vital importance for all disciples.

22:24-25 Jesus' point was quite clear. He did not measure greatness as the world does. In the world, "authority over" other people constitutes greatness, but in Jesus' kingdom, serving others does. Pagan rulers have two objectionable characteristics at least. First, they "lord it over" or tyrannize others (cf. 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:3). Second, they take titles to themselves that indicate their superiority over others, such as "benefactor" (cf. Matt. 23:7). Actually Jesus is the only true Benefactor (Gr. *euergete*, cf. Acts 10:38).

"Private benefaction was the primary means by which the wealthy were legitimated as those most deserving of public office and prestige in the community."<sup>933</sup>

22:26 Typically the younger serve the older, and the servants serve the leaders. The aged enjoyed great veneration in the ancient Near East. However, with disciples, *all* must "serve" regardless of age or responsibility (cf. Acts 5:6; 1 Tim. 5:1; Titus 2:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Luke's selection of terminology ("is greatest," "youngest," "leader," and "servant," lit. deacon) in this pericope suggests that he may have had church leaders especially in mind.<sup>934</sup>

22:27 In the ancient Near East, the person waited on at dinner had a higher social position than the waiter who served him or her. The waiter was often a slave. Jesus had behaved as a servant (Gr. *diakonon*, one who serves in a lowly way) by serving others, even His disciples (cf. John 13:12-17). They should do likewise. If serving was not below their Master, it should not be below His servants. They should seek opportunities for service rather than status, and they should emulate their Lord rather than pagans.

This lesson is vital for all disciples. Luke's Gentile readers would have been in need of it, since they lived in a culture in which pagan values dominated life, as we do.

### **The future role of the Twelve 22:28-30**

Jesus balanced the need for humility and service with a promise of future reward. Though the Twelve are in view, the implication of reward for other faithful disciples is strong. Jesus evidently repeated this promise in different language from an earlier incident (Matt. 19:28).

22:28 The basis of the reward is essentially faithfulness to Jesus (cf. Matt. 19:28). This is always the basis for believers' rewards, works being the consequence of faithfulness. Here, the manifestation of faithfulness was

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<sup>933</sup>Green, p. 768.

<sup>934</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 813.

standing by Jesus in His past "trials" (Gr. *pairasmos*, i.e., dangers, troubles; cf. Acts 20:19). Satan was behind these difficulties.

22:29-30 The "Father" had delegated authority to the Son to *rule* in the "kingdom." Likewise, the Son delegated authority to the Twelve to *rule under Him* in the kingdom (cf. John 20:21; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). They would enjoy "table" fellowship with Jesus then, as well as the privilege of having authority over "the twelve tribes of Israel" then (cf. Dan. 7:9; Rev. 7:1-8). This is another reference to the messianic banquet (cf. 13:28-30; 14:15; 22:16).

"Luke, by the way he has structured his two-volume work and by the insertion of material peculiar to him, displays an unmistakable interest in the question of the national restoration of Israel. . . .

"Luke's manner of representing the nationalistic hopes of the Jewish people implies that he himself believed that there would be a future, national restoration. If Luke really believed that there would not be a restoration, he has certainly gone out of his way to give the contrary impression."<sup>935</sup>

Jesus spoke of "twelve" disciples, even though Judas would disqualify himself. This was gracious of Jesus, and implied that there was still time for Judas to repent. Evidently, since he did not repent, Matthias would take his place in the kingdom (Acts 1:26). It is interesting that the choice of Matthias took place in an *upper room*, perhaps the same one as this one (Acts 1:13).

Upcoming events would test the faithfulness of the Eleven soon (cf. vv. 31-34). This promise doubtless encouraged them to stand by Jesus in His future trials, though they would fail Him. The theme of testing and faithfulness is quite prominent in Luke.<sup>936</sup>

#### **5. Jesus' announcement of Peter's denial 22:31-34 (cf. Matt. 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; John 13:36-38)**

Luke placed this event next, probably because of its logical connection with Jesus' preceding comment about the disciples remaining faithful to Him during His past trials. Their faithfulness would not continue unbroken. However, Luke did not record Jesus' announcement that all the disciples would desert Him (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27). Perhaps he did not do so because it presents a negative picture of disciples generally. They all proved unfaithful, but only temporarily. Luke wanted to encourage his disciple readers, not discourage them.

<sup>935</sup>Larry R. Helyer, "Luke and the Restoration of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36:3 (September 1993):328-29.

<sup>936</sup>See S. Brown, *Apostasy and . . .*

"Viewed in its primal elements (not in its development), Peter's character was, among the disciples, the likeliest to that of Judas."<sup>937</sup>

22:31 Jesus apparently put Peter's testing, which Jesus knew was coming in view of His own arrest and trials, in a cosmic setting because "Satan" was ultimately responsible.<sup>938</sup> Jesus viewed what would happen to Peter similarly to what had happened to Job (Job 1:6-7). "Sifting as wheat" pictures Satan's attempt to separate Peter's faithfulness to Jesus from him (cf. Job 1—2). The Greek word translated "you" (*hymas*) is in the plural, indicating that Simon was not the only disciple whom Satan desired to sift. Probably Jesus used the name "Simon," Peter's given Jewish name, because it pictured Peter in his natural state, not as Peter "the Rock." He probably repeated it in *pathos* (sadly), anticipating the sad consequence of Satan's testing.

22:32 Jesus had already counterattacked Satan by praying to God for Peter (singular "you," *sou*), and presumably for all the other disciples (cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

"Notice that the Master did not ask that His servant might be freed from trouble. The undergoing of difficulty and hardship is an integral part of the Christian way."<sup>939</sup>

Jesus described Peter's "faith" as being stretched to its limit. He was confident that Peter would survive this attack with God's help. His confidence indicates the superior power of Jesus over Satan in spiritual warfare. When he did turn back (Gr. *epistrepho*) to Jesus, Peter would need to help his brother disciples ("brothers")—whose faith Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trials, crucifixion, death, and burial would challenge (cf. John 21:15-17; 1 Thess. 3:2, 13; 1 Pet. 5:10; et al.). Jesus implied that Peter would turn away from Him *temporarily* ("when you have turned back"). When Peter objected to this assumption, which he considered insulting (v. 33), Jesus said frankly that Peter would *deny* Him (v. 34). Evidently Jesus singled Peter out from the other disciples, all of whom needed God's help in withstanding temptation, because of his leading role. He would be able to help the other disciples recover (cf. Acts 1:15; et al.).

Peter had a responsibility even though Jesus prayed for him. Prayer and action are not mutually contradictory, but complementary.

22:33-34 Peter's commitment to Jesus was admirable. Luke alone recorded that Peter promised to die with Jesus, and he made no reference to the other disciples. (This is the first time that one of the disciples perceived and or

<sup>937</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:536.

<sup>938</sup>See Page, pp. 456-57.

<sup>939</sup>Morris, p. 309.

acknowledged that Jesus was about to die.) Nonetheless, Peter overestimated his own ability to remain faithful when persecuted. Luke is also the only evangelist who mentioned that Jesus told Peter that he would deny *that he even knew* Jesus. Perhaps this was a particular temptation for Theophilus and Luke's original Greek readers. "Rocky" would hardly behave as a rock. His overconfidence should be a warning to every disciple.

### **6. The opposition to come 22:35-38**

This last part of Jesus' conversation with His disciples in the upper room is unique to Luke. It continues the theme of Jesus' rejection, leading to His death, and what the disciples could expect in view of that rejection.

22:35 Jesus reminded the disciples that when He had "sent" them "out" on two previous missions, they had lacked nothing that they needed (cf. 9:1-3; 10:1-3). In view of Peter's failure that Jesus had just revealed, it seems that Jesus intended this question to remind the disciples to trust in Him, in the upcoming crisis, rather than in themselves.

22:36 Previously they had not equipped themselves for their ministry, but had trusted other people to provide for them. However, they were not to trust in other people now. They were to fortify themselves for the conflict that lay ahead shortly, namely: Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Probably Jesus used the money-belt, bag, and sword metaphorically—rather than literally—to symbolize the disciples' personal resources. Apparently Jesus wanted His disciples to arm themselves with personal preparedness—including dependence on God and His Word—for the impending crisis. He was calling on them to be ready for hardship and self-sacrifice.<sup>940</sup>

Some commentators took Jesus' command literally.<sup>941</sup> The "money-belt" and "bag" may indicate that they should provide for their own subsistence, since no one else would. However, this was not the case in the early days of the church or even during Jesus' passion. There were still other believers who looked out for one another (e.g., Acts 1:3, 15; 2:44-47). Some take the command to sell one's outer garment to purchase a sword literally as well.

"The sword is thought of as part of the equipment required for the self-sufficiency of any traveller in the Roman world. Nothing more than protection of one's person is in view."<sup>942</sup>

<sup>940</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 825; Creed, p. 270; Luce, pp. 335-36; et al.

<sup>941</sup>E.g., Plummer, p. 505; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1029-30; and Easton, p. 329.

<sup>942</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1076.

However, Jesus later rebuked Peter for using a sword to defend himself (Matt. 26:52). Furthermore, Jesus never taught His disciples to arm themselves in order to defend themselves, much less take active aggression against those who might oppose them (cf. 6:35-36; 22:52; et al.).

22:37 Jesus quoted Isaiah 53:12 to help His disciples realize that others would, or already did, regard Him as a criminal. Therefore it would be very difficult for His disciples. They would face intense opposition, as Peter experienced in the high priest's courtyard. Jesus did not want them to underestimate the strength of the opposition they would face, so that they would depend on God alone, and not on themselves, to help them remain faithful.

"At this point Christ emphatically applies to Himself a portion of Isa. 53. Therefore, to deny that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah predicts Christ's passion is to contradict the Savior's own interpretation of the prophecy."<sup>943</sup>

22:38 The disciples evidently had taken Jesus' words about buying swords literally. They produced "two" that they had already acquired. They had understood Jesus' earlier warnings about what lay ahead of Him in Jerusalem, and had armed themselves to this extent to protect Jesus (and themselves). This was not Jesus' intention.

Some interpret "It (or That) is enough" as meaning two swords would be adequate in view of the coming conflict. This does not seem to be what Jesus meant, since He later rebuked Peter for using even one sword to defend Him (vv. 49-51; cf. Matt. 26:52). Furthermore, two swords would not be enough to defend Jesus against arrest. Others interpret Jesus as having meant that the possession of two swords was enough to identify Jesus and the disciples as criminals, and so fulfill Isaiah 53:12.<sup>944</sup> However, it was not the possession of swords that identified Jesus as a criminal, but the false charges that He had claimed to be a king opposed to Caesar. Probably Jesus meant that He wished to pursue the discussion no further.<sup>945</sup> The disciples had misunderstood Him. They would only learn what He meant later, as they would learn the meaning of many other things that He had taught them, that they had failed to perceive. This expression occurs often in the Old Testament in this sense (cf. Gen. 45:28; Exod. 9:28; Deut. 3:26; 1 Kings 19:4; 1 Chron. 21:15).

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<sup>943</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1116.

<sup>944</sup>Danker, p. 225; P. S. Minear, "A Note on Luke xxii. 36," *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964):128-34; and Martin, p. 260.

<sup>945</sup>Manson, p. 342; Morris, p. 310; Robertson, 2:271; M. Bailey, p. 148; Green, p. 775; et al.

"Every preacher and teacher understands this mood, not of impatience, but of closing the subject for the present."<sup>946</sup>

Luke probably included this part of Jesus' conversation with His disciples, because it is a sober warning to all disciples of our need for personal spiritual preparation. We all face essentially what the Eleven did. We must not rely on physical defenses in spiritual warfare, but make responsible preparations by arming ourselves with the resources that only God can provide (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). Very soon, the disciples would be sleeping in Gethsemane when they should have been praying (vv. 40, 46). Similarly, we often fail to ask God to help us, and instead rely on our own resources.

#### **D. THE ARREST OF JESUS 22:39-53**

This section in Luke's Gospel consists of two incidents: Jesus' preparation for His arrest and crucifixion, and the arrest itself. The subject of the whole section is proper preparation for persecution.

##### **1. Jesus' preparation in Gethsemane 22:39-46 (cf. Matt. 26:30, 36-46; Mark 14:26, 32-42; John 18:1)**

Luke organized his narrative so Jesus' praying in the garden follows immediately His instructions to the disciples about their preparing for the crisis to come. The present pericope shows Jesus' proper approach to it, and the disciples' improper approach. The next pericope reveals the consequences of their actions.

". . . Jesus' struggle on the Mount of Olives is presented by Luke as the watershed in the passion narrative, the critical point at which faithfulness to the divine will is embraced definitively in the strenuousness of prayer."<sup>947</sup>

22:39-40 Luke earlier revealed that during this week, Jesus had been spending His nights on the "Mount of Olives" (21:37). It was apparently to this "custom" that the writer referred here. Judas would have expected Jesus to go there, and Jesus did not try to elude Judas. Jesus' control over His own destiny is again evident in His leading the disciples out of the city to the mount. Luke did not identify "the place" where Jesus prayed as "Gethsemane" (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32), perhaps because he did not want to detract from the action in the pericope.

Jesus focused the disciples' attention on their need for God's protection from "temptation" (Gr. *peirasmon*), and instructed them to "pray" for it (cf. 11:4). Only Luke wrote that He told them to pray specifically for this, and only Luke mentioned that Jesus gave this command to *all* the "disciples." The effect is that the reader sees all the disciples as needing to pray because of the danger of failing.

<sup>946</sup>Robertson, 2:271.

<sup>947</sup>Green, p. 777.

22:41-42 Luke presented Jesus praying as any disciple could pray (cf. Rom. 11:4; 14:11; Eph. 3:14; Phil. 2:10). His posture reflects His submissive attitude: "He knelt down." Luke did not record that Jesus lay prostrate during part of His prayer vigil (cf. Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35).

"He kneels to pray: in Acts kneeling is identified as the prayer posture only on occasions where the context suggests that a particular intensity of prayer might be appropriate."<sup>948</sup>

The prayer itself reveals complete dependence on the Father's *will*. Jesus asked for removal of the "cup," the symbol of His sufferings consequent to God's judgment on sin (cf. Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). He requested it only if it was possible, i.e., if the Father was "willing" (Gr. *ei boulei*). In any case, He submitted to His Father's will above all. Throughout his Gospel, Luke made frequent references to Jesus' conscious fulfillment of God's purposes.

The submissiveness of Jesus' prayer is a model for all disciples. When we do not know God's will specifically, we can voice our request, but we should always submit our preferences to God's will. Luke pictured Jesus as a real man, not a demigod.

"The effect of the saying is that Jesus, facing the temptation to avoid the path of suffering appointed by God, nevertheless accepts the will of God despite his own desire that it might be otherwise. He does not seek to disobey the will of God, but longs that God's will might be different. But even this is to be regarded as temptation, and it is overcome by Jesus."<sup>949</sup>

22:43-44 Only Luke mentioned the "angel" who strengthened Jesus (cf. 9:26; 12:8-9; 15:10; 16:22; Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13). Probably he did this to help his readers realize the supernatural strength that praying brings (cf. 1 Kings 19:5-6; Dan. 10:17-18). However, the angel's presence did not remove the "agony" that Jesus felt as He prayed. The implication may be that the angel's help enabled Jesus to pray more intensely, and so to resist temptation more effectively. Jesus' fervency, like His posture, reflected His feelings, this time His horror at the prospect of the Cross. God does not always spare us trials, but He provides strength to face them.<sup>950</sup>

"His going into Death was His final conflict with Satan for man, and on his behalf. By submitting to it He took away

<sup>948</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1085.

<sup>949</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 831.

<sup>950</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 568.

the power of Death; He disarmed Death by burying his shaft in His own Heart."<sup>951</sup>

In what sense was Jesus' "sweat" similar to "drops of blood"? Perhaps it was so profuse that it resembled blood flowing from a wound.<sup>952</sup> Perhaps there is an allusion to this suffering being the fulfillment of God's judgment on Adam, when He said that Adam would live by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19).<sup>953</sup> Luke may have been creating a rhetorical expression, namely, "tears of blood".<sup>954</sup> Perhaps Jesus' sweat was red because blood exuded through the pores of His skin.<sup>955</sup> Probably Luke made a symbolic connection with "blood," because Jesus' sweat was the result of His great sufferings, just as bleeding is often the result of intense suffering. The point then is that Jesus was sweating profusely, and His sweat was the result of His suffering in anticipation of the Cross.

22:45-46 Instead of praying, the disciples were "sleeping." Luke noted that they slept "from sorrow." Evidently their great or heavy "sorrow" (Gr. *lupe*, grief) at the prospect of Jesus' impending death had worn them out. The NEB translation "worn out by grief" is helpful. They were probably emotionally exhausted.<sup>956</sup> Depression often results in weariness.

Jesus' question had the force of "How can you sleep at a time like this?" They needed to "pray" so they would not "enter into temptation," much less fall before it. Spiritual preparation, before testing, is more effective than finally calling for rescue in the thick of the trial (cf. Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4). Jesus showed concern for the welfare of His disciples, even when His own needs were the greatest. Luke omitted the three trips Jesus made to the sleeping disciples that Matthew and Mark recorded (Matt. 26:42-45; Mark 14:39-41). The effect is more emphasis on Jesus' praying and less on the disciples' failing.

## **2. Judas' betrayal 22:47-53 (cf. Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; John 18:2-12)**

22:47-48 All the synoptic evangelists noted the close connection between Jesus' praying and the arrival of the soldiers. It was very important that Jesus pray. Judas preceded the arresting mob (Gr. *ochlos*, crowd) as Jesus had preceded His disciples, namely, as their leader (v. 39). Luke highlighted Judas' hypocrisy in betraying Jesus "with a kiss," the sign of friendship (cf. Gen. 27:26-27; 2 Sam. 15:5; 20:9; Prov. 7:13; 27:6), plus the fact that

<sup>951</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:539.

<sup>952</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1032.

<sup>953</sup>Martin, p. 260.

<sup>954</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 832.

<sup>955</sup>Plummer, pp. 510-11.

<sup>956</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1085.

Jesus knew Judas' purpose. Disciples of rabbis often greeted their teachers with a kiss on the hand.<sup>957</sup> Luke described Judas as "one called Judas," a way of keeping him at a distance while viewing him. "Son of Man" points to Jesus' identity as the divine ruler whom God had sent. The word order in the Greek text that indicates emphasis is "kiss," "Son of Man," and "betraying."

22:49-50 The disciples asked Jesus if they should "strike with" their swords (v. 38). Their question was not so much a request for permission, as an announcement of the action they intended to take. Jesus had earlier expressed His submission to the Father's will in prayer (vv. 41-44). The disciples had failed to pray, and acted out their opposition to Jesus' will here. Luke did not identify the assailant as Peter (John 18:10), probably to keep the emphasis on his act rather than his identity. Interestingly Luke identified Judas clearly, but he did not identify Peter. Perhaps this magnifies the seriousness of Judas' sin while playing down Peter's failure. Doctor Luke and John noted that it was the "right ear" that Peter severed.

"All the accounts use the diminutive form of the word ear, which is different from the usual word. It is the word that in the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Deuteronomy 15:17 means 'the lobe of the ear.' Apparently, Peter only nicked Malchus's ear and cut off the lobe. And that is what Christ touched in order to restore it."<sup>958</sup>

"We are probably to understand that the slave of the high priest was his personal representative and, therefore, the leader of the arresting party."<sup>959</sup>

Quite possibly Peter had swung to split the servant's head open and had missed. The sword (Gr. *machaira*) was small, curved, and commonly used for self-defense.

In Matthew and Mark, Peter's attack follows Jesus' arrest, but in Luke it precedes it. Probably the soldiers took hold of Jesus, then Peter flew into action, then Jesus restored the servant's ear, and then the soldiers led Jesus away.

"Peter had been sleeping when he should have been praying, talking when he should have been listening, and boasting when he should have been fearing. Now he was fighting when he should have been surrendering."<sup>960</sup>

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<sup>957</sup>E. F. F. Bishop, *Jesus of Palestine: The Local Background to the Gospel Documents*, p. 246.

<sup>958</sup>Ryrie, p. 180.

<sup>959</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1090.

<sup>960</sup>Wiersbe, 1:270.

22:51 Jesus rebuked Peter's aggressive defensive measure. This is more probable than the notion that He spoke to the soldiers and requested permission to heal the servant.<sup>961</sup> Another improbable interpretation is that Jesus meant that the disciples should let the soldiers have their way with Him.<sup>962</sup> Jesus then reversed the damage done by healing the servant. He did what He had previously told the disciples to do, namely: do good to your enemies rather than evil. Again Luke noted Jesus' compassion—even for those who sought to kill Him! Jesus did not rely on the sword, nor did He base His kingdom on the use of physical force.

22:52-53 By mentioning the representatives of the various groups—religious, military, and political—that had come to arrest Jesus, Luke highlighted the absurdity of their action, which Jesus identified. These were all leaders of the Jews, not common Israelites. They had come prepared for a fight, but Jesus assured them that He would not give them one. If they wanted to arrest Him, it would have been easier to do so "in the temple" in daylight. They did not do the deed then, of course, because they feared the people (19:48; 20:19; 22:2). By coming when and as they did, they only made the hypocrisy of their action more obvious.

"Hour" designates a time of destiny or opportunity. The "power (Gr. *exousia*, "reigns" NIV, cf. 4:6; 23:7) of darkness" is the authority of Satan that God gave him for that time. Coming after dark symbolized the power of darkness that was active behind their action.

"Each of us must decide whether we will go through life *pretending*, like Judas; or *fighting*, like Peter; or *yielding to God's perfect will*, like Jesus."<sup>963</sup>

### **E. THE TRIALS OF JESUS 22:54—23:25**

The following table identifies the aspects of Jesus' two trials that each evangelist recorded.

<b>JESUS' RELIGIOUS TRIAL</b>				
	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
Before Annas				18:12-14, 19-24
Before Caiaphas	26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54, 63-65	
Before the Sanhedrin	27:1	15:1	22:66-71	

<sup>961</sup>Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:649.

<sup>962</sup>Creed, p. 274; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 837; and Morris, p. 313.

<sup>963</sup>Wiersbe, 1:270.

<b>JESUS' CIVIL TRIAL</b>				
Before Pilate	27:2, 11-14	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
Before Herod Antipas			23:6-12	
Before Pilate	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:39—19:16

Luke recorded more about Jesus' trials than the other Synoptic writers. He probably did so because he wanted to highlight the humanity and innocence of Jesus (cf. 23:4, 14, 15, 22, 41, 47).

**1. Peter's denial of Jesus 22:54-62 (cf. Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; John 18:15-18, 25-27)**

Luke placed Peter's denial ahead of Jesus' trial before Caiaphas, whereas Matthew and Mark intertwined these events. The effect in Luke is to focus the reader's attention on Peter's behavior immediately after Jesus' prediction of his denial. Luke wanted his readers to see how Peter fell into temptation because he failed to pray. Luke stressed the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial (vv. 31-34), Jesus' continuing concern for Peter (v. 61), and Peter's weakness in contrast to Jesus' strength. After Peter's denial, Luke moved on to Jesus' trials and concentrated on Him.

22:54            This verse introduces Jesus' trials and Peter's denial. Even though Peter followed Jesus "at a distance," he at least followed Him. The only other disciple to do so was evidently John (John 18:15-16). Apparently this "house" or palace was the dwelling in which both Annas and Caiaphas resided (cf. Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65).

22:55-57        Luke's account is essentially the same as Matthew's and Mark's. Peter evidently joined the circle of people seated around the "fire." He first "denied" acquaintance with Jesus to a "servant-girl."

"Peter's response is called a denial. The word 'deny' (*arneomai*, v. 57) is used in the NT as the polar opposite of the word 'confess' (*homologeō*). We are to confess (i.e., acknowledge) Christ but deny ourselves (i.e., disown our private interests for the sake of Christ; cf. comment on 9:23). Peter here does the reverse. He denies Christ in order to serve his own interests."<sup>964</sup>

22:58            The absence of Jesus' name in this whole incident presents a picture in which Jesus was so much the center of everyone's attention that no one needed to call Him by name. This helps us appreciate the pressure Peter was under.

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<sup>964</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1035.

The person who accused Peter next was another servant-girl, though Luke did not identify her (cf. Mark 14:69). Evidently a man joined her in accusing Peter, since Luke wrote that Peter addressed him as "a man" when he uttered his denial: "Man, I am not!" Matthew and Mark did not say that Peter responded to the maid. Perhaps Luke wanted to stress the pressure that was on Peter from male critics.

22:59-60 Luke's singular reference to "an hour" passing reflects his interest in the passing of time. The third accusation—this one spoken with conviction—came from "another man," a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off (John 18:26). Peter's identity as a Galilean would have been obvious from his accent and or his clothing.<sup>965</sup> Luke omitted the oaths that Peter added to this denial (Matt. 26:74; Mark 14:71). He also wrote that Peter denied knowledge of what the accuser meant, apparently in addition to denying that he knew Jesus (Matt. 26:74; Mark 14:71). "Immediately" the "rooster crowed," as Jesus had predicted (v. 34).

22:61-62 Luke had not told his readers that Jesus was anywhere near Peter. Perhaps Jesus was visible through a window, or His guards may have been leading Him past a place where He could see Peter. Luke's unique reference to His turning and looking at Peter adds to the shock effect of the moment. The word that Luke used to describe Jesus' looking usually means: to look with interest, love, or concern (Gr. *emblepo*). Peter suddenly "remembered" what Jesus had predicted earlier that evening (v. 34) and, undoubtedly, his profession of loyalty to Jesus (v. 33). The realization of his unfaithfulness in this light, along with Jesus' teaching on the importance of faithfulness, caused Peter to leave the courtyard and to weep tears of bitter remorse.

Luke's account of this outstanding disciple's tragic failure brings out the importance of adequate spiritual preparation for times of testing. Like the other evangelists, Luke included this incident because of its timeless importance for all of Jesus' followers.

## **2. The mockery of the soldiers 22:63-65 (cf. Matt. 26:67-68; Mark 14:65)**

Evidently this mockery happened during Peter's denial and at the end of Jesus' hearing before Caiaphas. Luke probably placed it here in his narrative as a transition, to contrast Peter's attempts to avoid suffering with the sufferings of Jesus. It introduces Luke's account of Jesus' trials. Luke's is the longest of the synoptic accounts. It presents Jesus as a real man, suffering unjustly at the hands of His accusers.

The men "holding Jesus in custody" were the religious leaders (v. 52; cf. Matt. 26:66-67; Mark 14:64-65). Luke presented Jesus as a prophet. He probably included this incident to show that Jesus' "failure" (refusal) to prophesy was not due to inability, but to His

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<sup>965</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1097.

determination to lay down His life as a sacrifice. Jesus' passive acceptance of all this foul treatment shows the same thing.<sup>966</sup>

### **3. Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin 22:66-71 (cf. Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1a)**

Luke is the only Gospel writer who gave us an account of what happened at this official meeting of the Sanhedrin. It followed informal questionings late at night by Annas and Caiaphas. This meeting took place very early on Friday morning, April 3, A.D. 33.<sup>967</sup>

"Fundamentally, the issue at stake is the same as has pervaded the presentation of the Jewish leadership in the Third Gospel. Who interprets the will of God correctly? Who legitimately exercises the authority of God? Who will rule the people of God?"<sup>968</sup>

22:66 The Sanhedrin, also known as the "Council of elders," was Israel's supreme court. It could only conduct cases involving potential capital punishment during daylight hours.<sup>969</sup> This seems to be the reason for the time of this meeting—why it was not held earlier, during the night. Evidently the Sanhedrin members wanted to send Jesus on to Pilate for trial as early as they "lawfully" could. The Sanhedrin normally met in a building not far to the west of the western wall of the temple.<sup>970</sup> But archaeologists have not yet been able to determine exactly where.

"This trial violated various Jewish legal rules given in later sources: meeting on the morning of a feast; meeting at Caiaphas's home; trying a defendant without defense; and reaching the verdict in one day instead of the two days that were required for capital cases."<sup>971</sup>

22:67-68 The Sanhedrin asked Jesus if He was claiming to be the Messiah (cf. 4:3, 9).

"Given the preceding conflict in Luke's story, there can be no question at this hearing of determining the guilt or innocence of Jesus. This hearing was a continuation of the efforts of the Jewish leadership to do away with Jesus. The question was, What could they take to Pilate?"<sup>972</sup>

<sup>966</sup>See D. L. Miller, "empaizein: Playing the Mock Game (Luke 22:63-64)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971):309-13; and Laurina L. Berg, "The Illegality of Jesus' Religious and Civil Trials," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161:643 (July-September 2004):330-42.

<sup>967</sup>Hoehner, p. 143.

<sup>968</sup>Green, p. 793.

<sup>969</sup>Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4:1.

<sup>970</sup>Josephus, *The Wars* . . . , 5:4:2; 6:6:3.

<sup>971</sup>*The Nelson* . . . , p. 1746.

<sup>972</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1112.

Jesus replied that His accusers would "not believe" Him if He told them, nor would they "answer" Him if He questioned them. Jesus and the religious leaders had formerly come to an impasse in their discussions (cf. 20:1-8, 26, 40). Jesus' point was that claiming or not claiming to be the Messiah would be pointless, since His accusers would believe what they wanted to believe, regardless of what He said. Furthermore they had a different idea than He did of what the Messiah would do. They were really talking about two different types of individuals when they discussed "the Messiah."

- 22:69-70 Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah here, but He did claim to be the "Son of Man." He alluded to the discussion He had had with some of His accusers on Wednesday (20:41-44). Then, less than two days before, Jesus had questioned them about the identity of "David's Son" in Psalm 110:1. He had showed from Scripture that David's Son, the Messiah, was divine. Now Jesus referred to the same verse again, and asserted that the "Son of Man" would sit at God's "right hand" from then on. This was a claim of unique association with God that constituted blasphemy (for anyone else).<sup>973</sup> It also denoted that Messiah would not reign immediately. The title "Son of Man" connected the divine Messiah with a future coming to the earth to reign (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus was implying that Messiah (i.e., He Himself) would return to heaven, and then return later to reign on the earth (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31). He seemed to the Sanhedrin to be claiming that *He was the Son of God*, and Jesus admitted that He *was* claiming that (cf. 9:20-22). He said, "You say" (Gr. *Humeis legete*), which was an idiom for "Yes."<sup>974</sup>
- 22:71 The Sanhedrin recognized Jesus' statement to be an unequivocal claim to be the Son of God. This was equal to a claim to being God. Consequently it appeared to them to be blasphemous. They now had sufficient grounds to demand the death sentence from Pilate.

Luke's record bears out the identity of Jesus as Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God, but also shows forth His fearless testimony to His own identity—regardless of the certain consequences. Thus the writer clarified who Jesus was, and presented His testifying before hostile authorities as a model for disciples to follow.

#### **4. Jesus' first appearance before Pilate 23:1-7 (cf. Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; John 18:28-38)**

Jesus' trial now moved from its Jewish phase into its Roman phase.<sup>975</sup> It did not take long for Pilate to determine that Jesus was innocent of any crime worthy of death. At the same

<sup>973</sup>See Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus*, pp. 30-183.

<sup>974</sup>Robertson, 2:277.

<sup>975</sup>See R. Larry Overstreet, "Roman Law and the Trial of Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135:540 (October-December 1978):323-32.

time, the record bears out how difficult it was for him to convict an innocent man. Pilate normally resided in the provincial capital at Caesarea. He was presently in Jerusalem because of the Passover season, which drew huge crowds and possible civil unrest to the city.

23:1-2 The "whole body" in view is the Sanhedrin. Luke alone recorded their specific charges against Jesus. They accused Him of leading the Jews away from their duty to Rome (cf. Exod. 5:4; 1 Kings 18:17; Acts 13:6-8; 17:5-9). Implicit in this charge was the accusation that Jesus was a false prophet. This was untrue. It was not Jesus who was leading the people astray, but rather the Jewish leaders who were stirring up the people.<sup>976</sup> This was untrue. Second, they charged Him with teaching the Jews not to "pay taxes." This was also untrue (cf. 20:25). Third, they accused Him of claiming to be "a king," namely: the Jewish Messiah or "Christ." This charge was true (cf. 22:69-70), and it was the only issue about which Pilate showed concern.

23:3-4 It may seem strange that, having secured a confession from Jesus that He was the "King of the Jews," Pilate would declare Him innocent. The explanation is that Luke did not record the conversation that took place between verses 3 and 4 (cf. John 18:35-38). In that conversation, Pilate learned that Jesus did not claim to be a king in the ordinary sense. He concluded that Jesus posed no threat to the political stability of Roman interests in Palestine. Only Luke recorded Pilate's official verdict that he gave to the Sanhedrin (cf. John 18:38; 19:4, 6). Perhaps Luke chose not to record what John did because, for his readers, the claim to be King of the Jews was ludicrous; it would have been obvious to Greeks that Jesus posed no threat to Rome.

In Acts, as well as in Luke, our writer recorded the innocent verdicts of government officials when passing judgment on Christian leaders (e.g., Acts 18:12-17; 19:35-41; 25:23-27; 26:30-32). He obviously wanted to assure his readers that Christianity was not seeking to overthrow the Roman Empire, and that it was not hostile to Roman civil authority.

23:5-7 The continuing protestations of the Sanhedrin members led Pilate to send Jesus "to Herod" for examination. He probably did this to placate the Jewish leaders, and to satisfy himself that he had not overlooked something in Jesus' case that might merit punishment. Perhaps Herod Antipas had evidence of Jesus' alleged insurrectionist activity in Galilee. Herod had a longer and more thorough acquaintance with Jewish affairs than Pilate did, and he was Semitic. Herod was evidently in Jerusalem for the same reasons Pilate was. Pilate's intention was evidently not to pass Jesus off to Herod, and thus relieve himself of his own responsibility, but to secure Herod's counsel in Jesus' case (cf. vv. 7, 11). Herod's jurisdiction

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<sup>976</sup>Green, p. 802.

was Galilee, and the Jewish leaders claimed that Jesus had stirred "up the people, teaching all over Judea [i.e., Jewish Palestine, cf. 4:44], starting from Galilee."

### **5. Jesus' appearance before Herod 23:8-12**

Luke alone recorded this aspect of Jesus' Roman trial. He probably did so because Herod Antipas found no basis for condemning Jesus, either. Thus Luke cited two official witnesses to Jesus' innocence for his readers' benefit (cf. Deut. 19:15). Two witnesses would have constituted a powerful apologetic defense of Jesus' innocence with Greeks.

23:8-9 Luke had previously mentioned Herod's interest in seeing Jesus (9:9). He clarified here that his interest in Jesus was only as a miracle worker. He had no interest in talking with Him about spiritual matters. It was evidently regarding His miracles that Herod questioned Jesus here. Jesus did not respond, apparently because Herod had rejected the *implication* of His miracles, namely: that Jesus had come from God with a message for humankind. Herod had made his feelings toward prophets clear by decapitating John the Baptist. Jesus had nothing to say to someone such as this.

"Jesus' *exousia* [authority] also manifests itself in the political realm. This is most evident in Luke, which alone of the gospels records two rebuffs of Herod Antipas, Jesus' political sovereign in Galilee (Luke 13:31-32; 23:6-12)."<sup>977</sup>

"For Greco-Roman readers, Jesus' behavior may have been seen as an expression of admirable self-control, perhaps even nobility; for readers of the LXX, his silence is reminiscent of the Servant of Yahweh with whom he is thus identified (Isa 53:7)."<sup>978</sup>

23:10-12 The accusations by the Jewish leaders (cf. 22:66), plus the insult that Herod must have felt at being rebuffed, resulted in more contempt and mocking for Jesus (cf. Isa. 53:7). This mistreatment revealed Herod's true attitude toward Jesus.

Herod put an elegant (Gr. *lampros*, cf. Acts 10:30; James 2:2-3; Rev. 15:6; 19:8) "robe" over Jesus that implied His royalty, but he "sent Him back to Pilate" as a king in bondage to Rome. This may or may not have been the same robe that Pilate's soldiers later placed over Jesus after beating Him (Matt. 27:28; Mark 15:17; John 19:2). Perhaps it was this touch especially that united Pilate and Herod. They were two rogues who could at least

<sup>977</sup>James R. Edwards, "The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:2 (June 1994):217-33

<sup>978</sup>Green, p. 805.

agree to humiliate a pretender to the Jewish throne (cf. Acts 4:25-28). Luke did not record any judicial opinion that Herod may have sent back for Pilate here, but the implication is obvious that he viewed Jesus as a harmless phony. Pilate later announced Herod's verdict to the people (v. 15).

**6. Jesus' second appearance before Pilate 23:13-25 (cf. Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; John 18:39—19:16)**

The overall impression that Luke presented with this part of his narrative is that Jesus' condemnation was a terrible travesty of justice. Pilate condemned an innocent man. This decision comes across as especially heinous, since he also acquitted a guilty man (Barabbas). The strong resolve of the Jewish leaders overcame the weak will of the Roman official.

23:13-14 Pilate announced his verdict that he made after receiving Herod's opinion. Pilate had "found" Jesus innocent of the charge of insurrection. He used standard legal terminology (cf. Acts 23:9; 26:31-32). He doubtless intended to put the matter to rest.

Luke's reference to "the people" (Gr. *laos*, v. 13) is significant. Throughout his Gospel, Luke referred to the people (*laos*) as distinct from the crowds (*ochlos*). The former word describes people who did not oppose Jesus as their leaders did (cf. vv. 27, 35; 24:19; Acts 2:47). Many people from this group believed on Jesus. The crowds, on the other hand, sought Jesus for what they could get out of Him. In these verses, the people who were sympathetic—or at least neutral—toward Jesus, heard Pilate's verdict along with the antagonistic Sanhedrin members.<sup>979</sup>

23:15 Pilate also announced that Herod's verdict agreed with his own. Herod was a recognized authority on Jewish affairs, whom Pilate's hearers probably respected more than they did Pilate, since Herod was Semitic. Both men agreed that Jesus had done "nothing deserving death."

23:16 Pilate evidently punished Jesus, both because He had caused Pilate trouble, and as a concession to the Jewish leaders. This is clearer in the Greek text than in most English versions. "Punish" (Gr. *paideusas*) is probably a participle that modifies the main verb "release" (Gr. *apolyso*). Luke presented Pilate as wanting to give Jesus a light reprimand and then release Him. Pilates' preference for lighter punishment for Jesus, rather than even more severe treatment, is one of several indications in Luke's Gospel that the writer wanted his Gentile readers to view Christianity favorably. Luke's desire comes through at several places in Acts too. The scourging (Gr. *phragellosas*, Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15) that Jesus received before His crucifixion was much more severe than the whipping (Gr.

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<sup>979</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1040.

*paideusas*) that Pilate referred to here. Pilate had no idea of crucifying Jesus now.

"The suggestion that Jesus should be chastised before being released strikes us as curious. If He was innocent, He should have been released without further ado. But in Roman law a light beating was sometimes given together with a magisterial warning, so that an accused might take greater care for the future."<sup>980</sup>

23:17 Many ancient manuscripts do not contain verse 17. Probably scribes influenced by Matthew 27:15 and or Mark 15:6 added it to early copies of this Gospel.

"There are historical analogies from the period that stand in general favor of the historicity of the Passover pardon."<sup>981</sup>

23:18-19 Luke's version of the trial has the Jewish leaders *and people* (v. 13) rejecting what was just, and demanding the "release" of a man who was the antithesis of Jesus. Pilate had declared Jesus innocent of the charge of leading an insurrection, but Barabbas was guilty of that crime. Jesus had gone about healing and restoring people to life, but Barabbas had murdered them. This description shows the great guilt of the Jews in demanding Jesus' death (cf. Acts 2:22-23; 8:33; 21:36). The people allowed their leaders to influence them to demand a perversion of justice.

"They would rather be with a well-known sinner than with the One who could forgive their sins."<sup>982</sup>

23:20-23 Luke noted again (vv. 14, 16) that Pilate wanted "to release Jesus," but his appeal for reason only led to increased demands for Jesus' capital punishment (cf. Matt. 27:22; Mark 15:13). The Jews now called for Jesus' crucifixion, the worst of all possible punishments. A third appeal for reason only led to louder and stronger cries for Jesus' crucifixion. Finally, the "loud voices" of the crowd "began to prevail," and Pilate yielded to their frenzy. Pilate wanted to preserve peace, and his "position" (commission and rank in the Roman government), more than he wanted to promote justice. It was the will of the people, not Pilate, that led to Jesus' crucifixion. At this climax of chaos, what is it that emerges most clearly in the text?

"The innocence of Jesus could not be more firmly underlined."<sup>983</sup>

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<sup>980</sup>Morris, p. 322.

<sup>981</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1130.

<sup>982</sup>Martin, p. 262.

<sup>983</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 861.

"It is literally true that the Jews blackmailed Pilate into sentencing Jesus to death."<sup>984</sup>

23:24-25 Pilate capitulated totally to the "will" of the people. This was in perfect harmony with God's will (Acts 2:23), but Luke did not mention that here. Here he wanted his readers to see the human responsibility that resulted in Jesus' death, particularly the Jews' responsibility.

"Perhaps we should add that Luke is not being anti-Semitic, much less providing grounds for anti-Semitism in our own day. He is dealing with a specific group of people and maintaining that they brought about Jesus' death. It was not Pilate nor his Romans that called for Jesus' execution: it was the Jewish chief priests and their followers. . . . Luke is not indicting a race and neither should his readers."<sup>985</sup>

"Pilate was a complex character. He openly said that Jesus was innocent, yet he permitted Him to be beaten and condemned Him to die. He carefully questioned Jesus and even trembled at His answers, but the truth of the Word did not make a difference in his decisions. He wanted to be popular and not right; he was more concerned about reputation than he was character. If Herod had silenced the voice of God, then Pilate smothered the voice of God. He had his opportunity and wasted it."<sup>986</sup>

Luke was much kinder to Pilate than the other Gospel writers. He stressed Jesus' innocence more than Pilate's guilt. Perhaps he did this so his Greek readers would focus their attention more on Jesus than on Pilate. In Acts, also, Luke gave as positive a picture of Roman rulers as he realistically could. Evidently he did not want his writings to alienate the Gentiles and their rulers unnecessarily.

"The narrative in 23:13-25 places strong emphasis on the responsibility of both the leaders and the people for Jesus' death."<sup>987</sup>

#### **F. THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS 23:26-49**

Luke's account of the crucifixion includes a prophecy of the fate of Jerusalem (vv. 29-31), more emphasis on the men who experienced crucifixion with Jesus (vv. 39-43), and less reporting on the crowd that mocked Jesus. It climaxes with Jesus' final prayer of trust in His Father (v. 46), and the reactions of various people to His death (vv. 47-49).

"In this version of the story we may see an accent on the way in which Jesus died as a martyr, innocent of the charges against him, trusting to the

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<sup>984</sup>Barclay, p. 292.

<sup>985</sup>Morris, p. 324.

<sup>986</sup>Wiersbe, 1:274.

<sup>987</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:164.

end in God, and assured of his own place in paradise. The whole scene vindicates the claim that he is the Messiah of God."<sup>988</sup>

### **1. Events on the way to Golgotha 23:26-32**

Luke omitted reference to the Roman soldiers' mockery and flogging of Jesus (Matt. 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19). Perhaps he wanted to connect the Jews' call for Jesus' crucifixion and the crucifixion itself as closely as he could. This arrangement of the events has the effect of heightening the innocence of Jesus and the guilt of those who demanded His execution.

#### **The example of Simon of Cyrene 23:26 (cf. Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21)**

Luke probably chose to insert this apparently insignificant incident because it provides such a good example of an ideal disciple (cf. Mark 15:21; Rom. 16:13). Jesus had taught His disciples to forsake all, take up their cross, and follow Him (9:23; 14:27). That is precisely what "Simon" did. It involved laying aside his personal plans, becoming associated with Jesus publicly in His humiliation, and following in His steps as His servant. However, we wonder where was the other Simon, Simon Peter, who professed such devotion to Jesus?

"Cyrene" was the capital of the Roman province of Cyrenaica (Libya) in North Africa (cf. Acts 2:10; 6:9). Normally criminals condemned to crucifixion had to carry the large crossbeam of their own cross to their place of execution.<sup>989</sup> Apparently Jesus' severe beating had made it impossible for Him to carry *His* the whole way to Calvary.

#### **The fate of the guilty predicted 23:27-31**

Luke is the only evangelist who recorded this incident. He apparently did so because the fate of Jerusalem was one of his special interests. He had already recorded several warnings that Jesus had given to the people of Jerusalem (cf. 11:49-51; 13:1-5, 34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24). If, being innocent, Jesus experienced such a fate as crucifixion, what could the Jews who had rejected their Messiah anticipate?

23:27-28 Luke's interest in Jesus' concern for "women" surfaces again. They were mourning His fate, and were evidently sympathizers rather than mockers (cf. 7:32; 8:52; Zech. 12:10-14). Apparently they were residents of Jerusalem, rather than women from Galilee who had been ministering to Jesus, since Jesus addressed them as "daughters of Jerusalem." This is an Old Testament designation for the residents of Jerusalem that views them as typical Israelites (Mic. 4:8; Zeph. 3:14; et al.). He urged them to mourn their own fate, and the fate of their "children," more than His. They were weeping over the injustice of one man's death, but He was grieving over the coming destruction of an entire nation.

<sup>988</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 862.

<sup>989</sup>Creed, p. 285.

"In the Gospels there is no instance of a woman being hostile to Christ."<sup>990</sup>

- 23:29 Jewish women considered barrenness a misfortune and children a blessing (cf. Ps. 127:3). Jesus announced that in the future the opposite would be true. They would see their children suffer and wish they had never been born. The context was Jesus' quotation from Hosea 10:8, a passage describing Israel's idolatry and God's consequent judgment of her for it. Jesus was predicting God's judgment here.
- 23:30 Probably the people would call on the "mountains" and "hills" to "hide" them ("Cover us!") from God's wrath (cf. Hos. 10:8; Rev. 6:15-16). The Tribulation particularly is in view in the Hosea passage. Probably the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as well as the judgments on Jerusalem in the Tribulation, are in view here in Jesus' words. The destruction by the Romans would only be a foretaste of the worse judgment still future.
- 23:31 This was evidently a proverbial saying in Jesus' day.<sup>991</sup> The "green tree" stands for good conditions resulting from God's blessing, and the "dry" tree for bad conditions resulting from divine judgment. If God allowed innocent Jesus to perish in times of His blessing, "what" would "happen" to guilty Jerusalem when God judged her?

"Verse 31 is a proverbial phrase which could be used in many connections. Here it means, If they do this to one who is innocent, what will they some day do to those who are guilty and who deserve it?"<sup>992</sup>

"If the Romans condemned to death the one they admitted to be innocent, how would they deal in the future with those whom they found guilty?"<sup>993</sup>

Jesus' words constituted yet another call for repentance. There was still time for individuals—and the nation—to believe on Him and escape God's wrath, but barring repentance, God's severe judgment would certainly fall. Luke evidently recorded these words because of his interest in extending the call to salvation to his readers.

### **The criminals crucified with Jesus 23:32**

This verse constitutes a narrative bridge connecting Jesus' journey to the Cross with His crucifixion. One of its functions seems to be to introduce the "two criminals" who feature later in the story (vv. 33, 39-43). More importantly, it associates Jesus with guilty

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<sup>990</sup>Plummer, p. 528.

<sup>991</sup>Robertson, 2:284.

<sup>992</sup>Barclay, p. 296.

<sup>993</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

sinner.<sup>994</sup> This reference also adds to the humiliation of Jesus that Luke stressed. There are several indications that Luke wanted to point out Jesus' humiliation in the next section. This notation also indicates a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. 22:37; Isa. 53:12).

## **2. Jesus' death 23:33-49**

The parts of this section of Luke's Gospel that are unique are Jesus' prayer for His enemies (v. 34), the dialogue with the criminals (vv. 39-43), and Jesus' prayer of self-sacrifice to the Father (v. 46). Thus Luke presented Jesus as the forgiving Savior even in His death.

### **The mockery of Jesus' crucifixion 23:33-38 (cf. Matt. 27:33-43; Mark 15:22-32; John 19:18-24)**

23:33 Luke alone called the site of Jesus' crucifixion "the place called The Skull" (Gr. *kranion*), rather than referring to it by its Aramaic name, "Golgotha," and then translating it. This was undoubtedly an accommodation to his Gentile readers. The name of the place was obviously appropriate to the occasion.

"This name was probably taken from the fact that this was the place where people were killed in public execution rather than from the skull-like appearance on the side of the hill on which He was crucified."<sup>995</sup>

Nolland believed that the nails pierced Jesus' forearms, rather than his hands.<sup>996</sup> Jesus' central position among the three crucified men symbolized His centrality in the event and His proximity to all sinners.

23:34 In contrast to the hate and rejection expressed in crucifixion (cf. Ps. 22:6-8), Jesus manifested love and forgiveness for the soldiers who crucified Him. He prayed for them, basing His petition for mercy on their ignorance, even though at the same time they were stealing and gambling for His garments in fulfillment of prophecy (Ps. 22:18). Luke's inclusion of Jesus' prayer for His executioners harmonizes with his emphasis on Jesus offering grace and forgiveness to sinners (cf. 7:40-43; 19:10). If Jesus had had any sins of His own to confess, this would have been the time to do so. He did not, so He prayed for others who were sinners instead. Stephen followed Jesus' good example here when he later died at the hands of his persecutors (Acts 7:60). Luke may have wanted his readers to see Jesus' act as a good model for disciples.

23:35 The Jewish "people (Gr. *laos*) stood by, looking on," in fulfillment of prophecy (Ps. 22:7). Perhaps Luke wrote that "even the rulers were

<sup>994</sup>W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, p. 1027.

<sup>995</sup>M. Bailey, p. 150.

<sup>996</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1145.

sneering at" Jesus, because they of all the people should have been the most compassionate toward someone in Jesus' position (cf. Ps. 22:6-8). Instead they mocked His apparent impotence. They may have meant "saved" (Gr. *esosen*) in the sense of physical deliverance, or they may have meant it sarcastically, meaning that He *claimed* to save people spiritually. Both meanings could have been in their minds. The title "God's Chosen One" reflects what Jesus claimed that He was, and what the Father had acknowledged Jesus to be at the Transfiguration (9:35; cf. Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 2:4).

"Jesus crucified is the touchstone revealing what the world is: 'The people stood beholding' in stolid indifference; the rulers, who wanted religion but without a divine Christ crucified for their sins, mocked (Mt. 27:41); the brutal 'railed at him' (v. 39), i.e. reviled Him; the conscious sinner prayed (v. 42); and the covetous sat down before the cross and played their sordid game (Mt. 27:35-36). The cross is the judgment of this world (Jn. 12:31)."<sup>997</sup>

23:36-38 The Roman "soldiers" also taunted Jesus. Their offer of "sour wine" was a mock relief for His sufferings (Ps. 69:21; cf. Matt. 27:34). If they had wanted to relieve Him, they should have given Him something refreshing rather than revolting. Their words also expressed ridicule for Him, and for His inscribed title, that they had nailed above His head on Pilate's order (John 19:19-22).

### **The salvation of one criminal 23:39-43**

This is another incident that only Luke recorded. It reflects his interest in needy people receiving salvation from Jesus. This is such a dominant theme in Luke's Gospel that one commentator concluded that this incident is the core of Luke's crucifixion narrative.<sup>998</sup> The attitudes of the two criminals crucified with Jesus represent the two attitudes that lead to condemnation and salvation. The incident is also another testimony to Jesus' innocence, and it presents Him as the Savior even as He was dying.

23:39 The first "criminal" (robber, Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27) joined the mockery of others around the cross, by implying Jesus' inability to "save" Himself and His fellow sufferers. He was bitterly sarcastic of Jesus.<sup>999</sup> His verbal "abuse" constituted blasphemy (Gr. *eblasphemei*). Blasphemy is essentially impious irreverence and defamation. Obviously this man did *not* believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Luke may have intended this criminal's action as a warning to his readers not to do the same thing. Refusing to take Jesus' claims seriously constitutes blasphemy of Him.

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<sup>997</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

<sup>998</sup>Ellis, p. 267.

<sup>999</sup>Morris, p. 328.

"When the two malefactors were hanged beside the Lord, the one was no better than the other. . . . It is only the grace of God in the cross of Christ that can instantly transform a reviling sinner into an attitude of saving faith and confession. The repentant thief began to see (1) the justice of his own punishment (v. 41); (2) the sinless character of Christ (v. 41); (3) the Deity of Christ (v. 42); (4) a living Christ beyond the grave (v. 42); and (5) a kingdom beyond the cross, with Jesus as its coming King (v. 42)."<sup>1000</sup>

23:40-41 Matthew and Mark wrote that both criminals railed at Jesus (Matt. 27:44; Mark 15:32). Luke focused on the repentance of the second one. This man *did* believe that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 42). He therefore viewed the blasphemy of his compatriot as worthy of divine judgment on top of human condemnation. He admitted his own guilt (cf. 18:13-14) and did not try to excuse his acts. He went further and even defended Jesus' innocence.

23:42 His request that Jesus "remember" him was a call for salvation. He claimed nothing deserving of Jesus' mercy, but simply asked for grace in spite of his guilt. His appeal anticipated that Jesus would live (rise from the dead?), and that He would return, raise the righteous dead, and establish His kingdom on the earth. The man's view of Messiah was that He was divine, not just a present political deliverer. Evidently this man had heard Jesus' teachings about the kingdom.

". . . the second criminal is a perceptive person who contrasts sharply with the imperceptive people who are calling on Jesus to save himself. . . .

"The criminal is the last person who turns to Jesus for help during Jesus' ministry; he is also the one person who understands and accepts the path which Jesus must follow to fulfill God's purpose: through death to enthronement at God's right hand."<sup>1001</sup>

"Like other marginalized persons in the Third Gospel, the second criminal, this religious and social outsider, thus exercises astounding insight into the status and identity of Jesus."<sup>1002</sup>

23:43 The man received more from Jesus than he expected, as is always true in salvation. Jesus prefaced His solemn promise with a guarantee of its validity. The thief would not have to wait for the kingdom to be with

<sup>1000</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

<sup>1001</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:126, 127.

<sup>1002</sup>Green, p. 822.

Jesus. He would be with Him "in paradise"—the place of righteous departed spirits—that very day when they both died. The mockers had challenged Jesus to save them (v. 39), and now Jesus was doing just that for this thief.

"Paradise" and "Abraham's bosom" (16:22-26) are the same place. The word "paradise" has come into English from Greek, but originally came from Persian. It describes a beautiful garden or delightful park such as the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8). Symbolically it represents future bliss (cf. Isa. 51:3; Rev. 2:7). Essentially, the paradise that lies ahead for believers is *paradisiacal* because God is there (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4). Jesus presented fellowship with Himself as the best part of salvation, as it is.

". . . Jesus acts as the Messiah who has the kingly right to open the doors of paradise to those who come into fellowship with him."<sup>1003</sup>

"When a Persian king wished to do one of his subjects a very special honour he made him a companion of the garden, and he was chosen to walk in the garden with the king. It was more than immortality that Jesus promised the penitent thief. He promised him the honoured place of a companion of the garden in the courts of heaven."<sup>1004</sup>

When Jesus suffered on the cross, He experienced separation from the Father, which is spiritual death. Having died physically, His body went into the grave for parts of three days. His spirit went to "paradise," namely, into the Father's presence—where the spirits of the righteous dead abide until their reunion with their bodies at their resurrection. When Jesus arose, the Father reunited His spirit with His then immortal body.

The Apostles Creed says that when Jesus died, He descended into hell. This idea evidently originated because Jesus said that He would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth when He died (Matt. 12:40). The ancients viewed "Sheol" (the Old Testament term) and "Hades" (the New Testament term) as being in the heart of the earth, or at least as being under the surface of the earth. The formulators of the Apostles Creed apparently wanted to distinguish the temporary destiny of Jesus' spirit (i.e., His immaterial part) in the grave, from the temporary destiny of His body (i.e., His material part) in hell. There is no clear biblical statement that Jesus' spirit went to hell after His death. The passages sometimes cited to support this view, in addition to Matthew 12:40, include Acts 2:27 (cf. Ps. 16:8-11); Ephesians 4:7-10; and 1 Peter

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<sup>1003</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 873.

<sup>1004</sup>Barclay, pp. 299-300.

3:18-20, but I do not believe they *do* support it. On the contrary, Jesus here affirmed that His spirit would go to "paradise" (i.e., God's presence) when He died (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4).

"The point is that the Creed sets forth what Christ suffered in the sight of men, and then appositely speaks of that invisible and incomprehensible judgment which he underwent in the sight of God in order that we might know not only that Christ's body was given as the price of our redemption, but that he paid a greater and more excellent price in suffering in his soul the terrible torments of a condemned and forsaken man."<sup>1005</sup>

Note also that Jesus promised the thief that he would go to paradise simply because of his faith in Jesus. This is one of the clearest examples in Scripture that salvation is not a reward for meritorious works but is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). The thief did not have to do anything more to qualify for heaven. Indeed, he could *have done nothing more*. People who believe that some works are necessary for salvation usually explain this instance of salvation as an exception to the rule. However, it is consistent with the teaching of Scripture elsewhere that salvation comes to a person solely in response to believing faith in Jesus Christ.

"One thief was saved, so that none needs to despair; but only one, so that none may presume."<sup>1006</sup>

**Jesus' self-sacrifice to God 23:44-49 (cf. Matt. 27:45-56; Mark 15:33-41; John 19:28-30)**

Luke included three things in this heart of the death scene: He gave two evidences of God's displeasure with people for rejecting His Son; he recorded Jesus' prayer of trust in the Father; and he noted three immediate reactions to Jesus' death.

23:44-45 Luke arranged two unusual occurrences to show God's displeasure with humankind for rejecting His Son.<sup>1007</sup> The "sixth" and "ninth" hours were noon and 3:00 p.m., respectively. "The darkness" obscuring "the sun" represented judgment obscuring the beneficent light of God's countenance (cf. Isa. 5:30; 60:2; Joel 2:30-31; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:14-18; Luke 22:53; Acts 2:20; 2 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 6:12-17). Evidently this was a local rather than a universal phenomenon. It could not have been a solar eclipse, since Passover occurred at the full moon.

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<sup>1005</sup>Calvin, 2:16:10.

<sup>1006</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

<sup>1007</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 873-74.

Luke moved the tearing of the "temple veil" up in his narrative, whereas Matthew and Mark placed it after Jesus' death as a consequence of that event. This event symbolized the opening of the way into God's presence that Jesus' death effected in those Gospels. However, in Luke the reader sees it as a sign of God's wrath. Specifically it seems to represent God's judgment on Judaism for rejecting the Messiah. It was a portent of the judgment coming on Jerusalem that Jesus had predicted.

"Luke portrays the rending of the temple veil as a symbol of the destruction of the symbolic world surrounding and emanating from the temple, neutralizing the centrality of the temple in preparation for the centrifugal mission of Jesus' followers—not *to* Jerusalem, but *from* it, and to the 'end of the earth' (Acts 1:8)."<sup>1008</sup>

23:46 Luke next recorded Jesus' death and, just before it, Jesus' final prayer to His Father.

<b>Jesus' Words on the Cross</b>				
	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
"Father, forgive them."			23:34	
"Today you shall be with me in paradise."			23:43	
"Woman, behold your son," and "Behold, your mother."				19:26-27
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"	27:46	15:34		
"I thirst."				19:28
"It is finished."				19:30
"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."	27:50		23:46	

In this prayer, Jesus offered Himself to God as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Jesus voluntarily laid His life down; no one took it from Him (John 10:15-18; cf. John 15:13). His words were similar to those that many Jews used in prayer before they went to sleep at night (cf. Ps. 31:5).<sup>1009</sup> They expressed Jesus' trust in God as well as His commitment to Him.

<sup>1008</sup>Green, p. 826.

<sup>1009</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1045.

"How many thousands have pillowed their heads on them when going to rest! They were the last words of a Polycarp, a Bernard [of Clairvaux], Huss, Luther, and Melanchthon. And to us also they may be the fittest and the softest lullaby."<sup>1010</sup>

The strength with which Jesus cried out ("with a loud voice") showed His physical strength but, more important, the significance of His declaration. Jesus sovereignly controlled His circumstances to the end of His life.

"Jesus died with a shout of triumph on His lips. . . . He said it like a victor who has won his last engagement with the enemy, like one who has brought a tremendous task to its ultimate conclusion."<sup>1011</sup>

As God rested after six days of work on the creation (Gen. 2:1-3), so Jesus rested after six hours of work on the cross in which He made a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).<sup>1012</sup>

23:47-49 The "centurion" who was responsible for carrying out the crucifixion added his testimony to the others who recognized Jesus' innocence. His witness constituted praise of God because it harmonized with God's assessment of His Son.<sup>1013</sup> "Praising God" is a reaction to God's power and mercy that Luke often noted in this Gospel (2:20; et al.). The reaction of the general public (Gr. *ochloi*, a mixed group) was to smite "their breasts (chest)" with their hands in typical ancient Near Eastern fashion. This symbolized their grief at the tragedy of Jesus' crucifixion (cf. 18:13). Jesus' "acquaintances," including several females, stood "at a distance" watching. The reference to "these women" prepares one for the following events. The implication is that they, too, marveled at the tragedy but stood aloof (cf. Ps. 38:11).

These reactions confirm that Jesus did indeed die as a real man. He was not a demigod who merely appeared to die. Note also that Luke presented these witnesses in a receding order from the cross (v. 46). The effect is to lead the reader to step back from the cosmic epicenter of history gradually.

Luke highlighted Jesus' innocence in a number of ways that the other Gospel writers did not. He recorded that Pilate declared Him innocent four times (vv. 4, 14, 15, 22). He also noted Herod's testimony to Jesus' innocence (v. 15). He contrasted Jesus' innocence with Barabbas' guilt (v. 25). He recorded the thief's testimony to Jesus' innocence (v. 41). He

<sup>1010</sup>Edersheim, *The Life . . .*, 2:609-10.

<sup>1011</sup>Barclay, p. 301.

<sup>1012</sup>Wiersbe, 1:277.

<sup>1013</sup>See Vern S. Poythress, "Presuppositions and Harmonization: Luke 23:47 as a Test Case," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56:3 (September 2013):499-509.

also included the centurion's confession of Jesus' innocence (v. 47). Finally he noted the reaction of the crowd, which showed that many of them believed He was innocent (v. 48). Obviously Luke wanted to convince his readers that Jesus died as an "innocent" man, not as a guilty sinner.

"Here at the end of Jesus' life, we find reminiscences of the beginning (chs. 1—2), with Jewish faithfulness on full display."<sup>1014</sup>

**G. THE BURIAL OF JESUS 23:50-56 (CF. MATT. 27:57-66; MARK 15:42-47; JOHN 19:31-42)**

This pericope is primarily transitional, bridging the stories of Jesus' death and resurrection. It confirms the reality of Jesus' death. However, Luke included more information about "Joseph of Arimathea" (possibly Ramah, Ramathaim) than the other evangelists, revealing his desire to inform his readers that not all the Jewish leaders opposed Jesus.

23:50-52 Luke presented "Joseph" as "a member of the Council (Sanhedrin)" who was a believer in Jesus ("waiting for the kingdom"). Luke did not emphasize Joseph's wealth (Matt. 27:57), but his piety (cf. 2:25-38). Here is another indication that Jesus was innocent. Even one of the Sanhedrin members believed in Him. Evidently Joseph was absent when the Sanhedrin voted to condemn Jesus, since their vote was unanimous (22:70; Mark 14:64).

Not all of Israel's leaders opposed Jesus. This notation would have encouraged Luke's original readers to view Christianity favorably. It would also have helped them realize that it is possible to believe in Jesus, and yet be part of a group that rejects Him. Joseph's request for Jesus' "body" indicated his intention to give it a decent burial and so honor Jesus.<sup>1015</sup>

"As at his birth, so at his death, the best of Jewish piety shows itself sensitive to the possibility that in Jesus God was at work."<sup>1016</sup>

23:53-54 Joseph's careful and respectful treatment of Jesus' body reflected how he felt about Him (cf. Isa. 53:9). Luke dated his action as late Friday afternoon. The "preparation (Gr. *paraskeue*) day" was the day before "the Sabbath," which began at sundown on Friday. Luke's explanation is helpful for non-Jewish readers.

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<sup>1014</sup>Green, p. 829.

<sup>1015</sup>See Barclay, p. 303, for the legend that Joseph went to England with the Holy Grail.

<sup>1016</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1163.

23:55-56 This reference to "the women" anticipates the account of Jesus' resurrection. When they went to the tomb on Sunday morning, they did not go to the wrong one. They had previously been there and had seen Jesus' corpse in it ("how His body was laid"). They "prepared spices and perfumes" for their return visit on Sunday to honor Jesus further. Luke's reference to the passing of "the Sabbath" with no disciple activity—"they rested according to the commandment—confirms Jesus' prediction that He would be in the grave three days (18:33; cf. 24:7). It also shows that Jesus' followers observed the Sabbath as obedient Israelites (Exod. 20:10).

**H. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS 24:1-12 (CF. MATT. 28:1-8; MARK 16:1-8; JOHN 20:1-10)**

Luke's account of the events following Jesus' resurrection highlights the reality of that event and the reactions of the witnesses to it. All of these people felt depressed because of Jesus' death, but when they learned of His resurrection they became joyful and praised God. Thus the book concludes as it began: with joy and rejoicing because of a miracle involving the salvation of humankind (cf. chs. 1—2).

"Luke 24 and Acts 1, which partly overlap, bridge the important transition from the story of Jesus to the story of his witnesses. The narrator's concern to build a strong bridge, unifying the story rather than permitting it to disintegrate into two stories, is shown by the amount of material in these chapters which either reviews what has already happened or previews what is going to happen."<sup>1017</sup>

24:1 Saturday was a day of rest, but when Sunday came the women went into action.<sup>1018</sup> Luke dated their arrival at the tomb at "early [lit. deep] dawn." Dawn has obvious symbolic connotations. This "day" would signal the beginning of something entirely new—a new day in human history. They brought "spices and perfumes" (23:56) to anoint the body of Jesus. They were the first to learn of the resurrection because their devotion to Jesus moved them to follow up on His situation. Their example has challenged believers ever since to emulate their love for the Savior.

24:2-3 Luke focused more on the absence of Jesus' "body" than the moving of "the stone" that sealed the tomb. All four evangelists mentioned the removal of the stone, probably because of its apologetic value. It was not just the spirit of Jesus that had departed, but His body as well. Luke contrasted what the women found, "the stone rolled away," with what they did not find, "the body." The title "Lord Jesus" is new in Luke. It indicates the new status of the risen Christ. The early Christians used this title often (Acts 1:21; 4:33; 8:16).

<sup>1017</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:277.

<sup>1018</sup>See Zane C. Hodges, "The Women and the Empty Tomb," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123:492 (October-December 1966):301-9.

- 24:4-5a Only Luke mentioned that there were "two" angels. Probably God sent two to convince the women that Jesus really had arisen (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; cf. Luke 2:25-38; 24:48; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; et al.). They appeared to be "men," but they were angels (v. 23; Matt. 28:5), as their "dazzling" apparel (Gr. *astraptouse*, cf. 9:29; Matt. 28:3; Acts 1:10) undoubtedly indicated to the women. The women responded to these "men" as to divine messengers (cf. 1:12, 29; 2:9; 9:34).
- 24:5b-7 The angels' words stressed the fact that Jesus was *alive*. It was inappropriate to look for a "living" person in a tomb (cf. Acts 2:24). The angels then flatly declared that Jesus had "risen" from the dead, and they reminded the women of Jesus' prophecy that He would rise after three days (9:22, 43-45; 18:31-33). Luke had written that the meaning of Jesus' prediction was incomprehensible to the disciples when He gave it (18:34; cf. 24:16). However, now God's messenger clarified it. Note the recurrence of the divine necessity behind Jesus' death and resurrection in verse 7 indicated by the word "must" (Gr. *dei*, cf. 2:49; 4:43; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5, 22; 22:37; 24:25-27, 44-46; Acts 2:23-24).<sup>1019</sup>
- 24:8-9 The women now "remembered" the predictions they had heard but had not understood. The Resurrection had begun to clarify many things that Jesus had previously taught His disciples (cf. Acts 11:16). The women then "returned . . . to the Eleven" and the other disciples with their news. The angels had been witnesses of the Resurrection to the women, and now the women were witnesses ("reported all these things") to "all the rest" of the disciples. They in turn would be witnesses of it to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Luke probably wanted his readers to note this beginning of the Christian mission here.
- 24:10-11 Luke now introduced the identity of these female witnesses, whose names he evidently omitted earlier to focus attention on the Resurrection itself.

<b>WOMEN WHO VISITED THE TOMB EASTER MORNING</b>			
<b>Matthew 28:1</b>	<b>Mark 16:1</b>	<b>Luke 24:10</b>	<b>John 20:1</b>
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
The other Mary =	Mary the mother of James	Mary the mother of James	
	Salome		
		Joanna	
		others	

<sup>1019</sup>See Mark L. Bailey, "A Biblical Theology of Suffering in the Gospels," in *Why, O God? Suffering and Disability in the Bible and the Church*, pp. 163-65.

"Salome" (not mentioned here in Luke) was apparently the mother of Zebedee's sons (i.e., James and John, Matt. 27:56) and the sister of Jesus' mother (John 19:25). "Joanna" was the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and was one of Jesus' companions in Galilee (8:3).

The rest of the disciples "would not believe" that Jesus was alive (cf. vv. 12, 22-24). This is amazing—since Jesus had predicted His resurrection, and they had seen Him raise at least three people from the dead (cf. 7:11-17; 8:49-56; John 11:38-44)! However, their reluctance to believe is a strong argument for the Resurrection. They knew that Jesus had died and been placed in the tomb. They did not expect the Resurrection, so they would hardly have dreamed it up. Perhaps Luke called these disciples "apostles" because that is what Jesus intended them to be, namely: messengers sent with a message. They were not yet ready to go, however.

24:12 Some ancient manuscripts omit this verse, but the evidence is good that it was part of Luke's original Gospel. Luke reported that Peter "ran to the tomb" to check out the women's story. He did not mention the other disciple who accompanied Peter (John 20:6-7), probably because Luke regarded Peter as the leader of the disciples in his Gospel (cf. 5:1-11). He, too, found it empty of Jesus' body. Only the "linen" strips of cloth with which Joseph of Arimathea had wrapped Jesus' corpse remained.

Peter's reaction of returning "to his home" (i.e., lodging place) may indicate that he did not understand what had happened. If he had understood, he probably would have returned to the other disciples, assuming they were not all staying in the same house. Luke used the Greek word *thaumazon* ("marveling" or "wondering") to express his lack of comprehension. He neither yet believed nor disbelieved that Jesus had risen. "Peter" was Luke's second witness to the Resurrection following the women.

### **I. THE POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF JESUS 24:13-49**

Luke included two of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in his Gospel: the first one to two disciples, and the second one to many of the disciples. In both cases, the key to their enlightenment was the Hebrew Scriptures.

#### **1. The appearance to the disciples walking to Emmaus 24:13-35**

This is another of Luke's exquisite and unique stories. Various students of it have noted its similarity to the stories of the feeding of the 5,000 (9:10-17), the appearance in Jerusalem (vv. 36-49), and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Luke's purpose in recording the incident seems to have been to demonstrate the reality of the Resurrection and the identity of the risen Christ. It also unites many of Luke's major themes. Structurally, this section is palistropic, with the center of the chiasm falling on and emphasizing: "He was alive" (v. 23b).<sup>1020</sup>

<sup>1020</sup>See Green, p. 842, for the full diagram.

- 24:13-14 Luke described the two men as "two of them." The antecedent seems to be "the apostles" (v. 10). Luke used this word in its broad meaning rather than as a synonym for the Eleven (cf. v. 33; Acts 14:4, 14; et al.). These apostles were going somewhere, but they had no good news. The day in view was Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, the "Easter event."
- Luke had presented Jesus as heading toward Jerusalem and the Cross throughout his Gospel. Now he told of two disciples heading away from Jerusalem and the Cross. He probably intended his readers to see these people as representative disciples going out from Jerusalem to witness for Jesus (cf. Acts 1:8). Shortly after Luke recorded that Jesus set out resolutely for Jerusalem (9:51), he wrote that a man *approached* Him about discipleship (who went away sad). Now we see that Jesus "approached" two disheartened disciples as they were sadly leaving Jerusalem. They needed more training before they could represent Him effectively. "Emmaus" (lit. warm springs, or "warm bath"<sup>1021</sup>) was "about seven miles" west of Jerusalem, toward the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>1022</sup>
- 24:15-16 Luke pictured the scene like a drama or play. The two people were walking along, "discussing" Jesus' death and the reports of His resurrection (v. 10), but not knowing what to make of them, when "Jesus Himself" joined them. Some writers have seen this situation as parallel to Jesus' presence with His often non-perceptive disciples in the present age.<sup>1023</sup> Luke's implication was that these men's pre-conceptions, combined with Satanic blindness, not *God*, were preventing them "from recognizing" Jesus (cf. 9:45; 18:34). Evidently Jesus looked like the real man that He was, albeit now immortal, yet they could not recognize Him. The key to recognizing Jesus for who He was would be the illumination of God through the Scriptures.
- 24:17 Jesus' question apparently so shocked the two disciples that they stopped walking. It opened a wound in their hearts and renewed their sorrow. Cleopas' casual comment tells the reader that Jesus was the talk of Jerusalem. Everyone there, residents and pilgrims alike, knew about Him and what had happened to Him. Luke may have mentioned "Cleopas" by name because some of his readers knew him or knew about him. According to Christian tradition he was Jesus' uncle and Joseph's brother, and he became a leader of the Jerusalem church.<sup>1024</sup> He could have been the husband of "Mary, the wife of Clopas" (a variant spelling of the same name), who was present at Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:25). However, that may have been a different man. There was a tradition in the early Byzantine church that Luke was the second, unnamed disciple.<sup>1025</sup>

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<sup>1021</sup>Josephus, *The Wars* . . . , 4:1:3.

<sup>1022</sup>See the *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Emmaus," 1:525-26, for discussion of possible sites. Cf. Nolland, *Luke 18:35—24:53*, p. 1201.

<sup>1023</sup>E.g., Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1051.

<sup>1024</sup>Eusebius, 3:11; cf. Ellis, p. 894.

<sup>1025</sup>For defense of this view, see Wenham, pp. 29-32.

24:19-20 Jesus was baiting His companions, getting them to articulate what they knew and to reveal what was important to them. They viewed Jesus as "a mighty prophet" in the eyes "of God and all the people" (Gr. *laos*, the open-minded public, cf. Acts 18:10).

"This characterization, together with the assertion of full publicity amongst the people, contains pointed echoes of Luke's introductory summary of Jesus' ministry [in the power of the] Spirit (Lk. 4, 14; cp. Acts 10, 38)."<sup>1026</sup>

"The importance of the affirmation of the two disciples here in 24:19 must not in any way be underestimated. It is integral to Luke's theology and purpose."<sup>1027</sup>

They also laid the blame for Jesus' death on the religious leaders, another point Luke had been making throughout his Gospel. The "rulers" did not acknowledge Jesus as a prophet from God.

24:21 The travelers, in contrast to Israel's leaders, hoped that Jesus would prove to be their nation's deliverer (cf. 1:68; 2:30, 38; 21:28), namely, the Messiah—whom they evidently saw as a political liberator. Of course, Jesus *did* "redeem Israel" by His death on the cross, but they were speaking of physical deliverance from Rome and the establishment of the kingdom.

". . . even though they regard Jesus as a prophet, they have failed to take with appropriate seriousness his prophecies regarding his own suffering, death, and resurrection."<sup>1028</sup>

Their reference to "the third day since" Jesus' death ("these things happened"), implied that they had expected something important to happen by then. The fact that nothing had happened, from their standpoint, disappointed them.

Possibly these disciples were not yet believers. They appear not to have recognized that Jesus was much more than a prophet or a political messiah, being instead the divine Son of God.

"Observe that the verb is 'hoped,' not 'trusted' (as in KJV); there is a big difference between trusting Jesus as our Deliverer and Savior and hoping that he will prove to be our Deliverer and Savior."<sup>1029</sup>

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<sup>1026</sup>R. J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24*, p. 114.

<sup>1027</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1052.

<sup>1028</sup>Green, pp. 846-47.

<sup>1029</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1052.

However, another possibility is that they were believers who had simply become discouraged by Jesus' death (cf. John the Baptist, 7:19).

24:22-24 Even after hearing of the empty tomb, they were not aware of anything outstanding happening on the third day, since the report of "some women" in their group of disciples confused them. There was evidence of an empty tomb, but no evidence of Jesus (cf. v. 12). This shows that the Resurrection is all-important in the Christian faith. An empty tomb was just a strange puzzle that discouraged these disciples. Even hearing about the angelic visit had not lifted their spirits (cf. 1:22). Jesus' resurrection would prove to be something infinitely more significant.

24:25-26 A "fool" in the Old Testament is a person who does not allow the Scriptures to influence his or her thinking or behavior. These disciples ("foolish men") had failed to do that. They were also "slow of heart to believe" what they did know (or understand) that the former prophets and Jesus had revealed. They had overlooked the prophecies about the Messiah having "to suffer," preferring rather to focus only on those that predicted His glorification. Their error constitutes a warning for all subsequent disciples. All Scripture is profitable. We should not slight any part of it, but should strive for a comprehensive understanding of its teaching. If these disciples had understood and believed what the Old Testament and Jesus had revealed, they would not have felt depressed but would have been full of joy.

"Acceptance of what the prophets said should have led the disciples to believe the reports of the women at the tomb; one may believe in the resurrection on the evidence of others, although this does not mean that the Lord withholds personal evidence from those who need it."<sup>1030</sup>

"Failure of insight comes from failure to embrace the ways of God."<sup>1031</sup>

Luke highlighted Jesus' identification, as the risen Christ, by placing the word translated "He" (Him) in the emphatic position in the Greek text, in verses 24 and 25: "*Him* (Jesus) they did not see." He stressed again the divine necessity (Gr. *dei*) of Messiah's sufferings.

"This scene suggests that a meal with Jesus is an especially appropriate place for the revelation and recognition of Jesus as the (risen) Messiah, and that the feeding of the five thousand is understood by the narrator as a first experience of this revelation at a meal [cf. 9:16], resulting in Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Messiah."<sup>1032</sup>

<sup>1030</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 896.

<sup>1031</sup>Green, p. 848.

<sup>1032</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:219. Cf. Acts 1:4; 10:40-41.

24:27 Jesus gave these privileged disciples a unique short course in Old Testament Christology. He evidently pointed out the passages that spoke of Messiah's sufferings particularly, "beginning" in the Law ("Moses") and "all the Prophets" sections of the Hebrew Bible. What an exposition of the Scriptures this must have been! It is no wonder that they later commented that their "hearts were burning within" them as Jesus "explained" the "Scriptures" to them (v. 32).

"Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem able to do."<sup>1033</sup>

"Which texts does Jesus exegete for his companions? We are not told, but the implication with which Luke leaves us is that it does not matter. The pattern exemplified by Moses and the prophets is consummated in a Messiah who suffers. Likewise, all of the Scriptures have their fulfillment in a Messiah who suffers."<sup>1034</sup>

Jesus' method of bringing spiritual illumination to these disciples is a paradigm that the apostles followed in their preaching, as is clear from Acts. It centered on *explaining the meaning* of what God had revealed. This method is still essential for spiritual enlightenment (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:1-2).

24:28-29 Jesus did not force these disciples to believe or to entertain Him. He whetted their spiritual appetites and then left those decisions up to them. However, God's Spirit had been at work in their hearts, and they did not resist His working. Consequently they wanted to hear more. They "urged Him" to "stay with" them for further fellowship and illumination (cf. Gen. 18:3; 19:2). This was obviously more than just a gracious offer reflecting eastern hospitality. Jesus naturally accepted their invitation. He always gives more to those who receive and believe His words (cf. Rev. 3:20).

24:30-31 Jesus' praying over "the bread" and "breaking" it "opened" the spiritual "eyes" of Cleopas and his companion. They had not been in the upper room when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, so remembering that occasion is not what proved to be catalytic (cf. v. 21). Perhaps they had been present when Jesus fed the 5,000 (9:10-17; cf. 9:18-20), or the 4,000, or on some other occasion when Jesus had eaten with people. Luke recorded several such instances (cf. 5:29; 7:36; 9:16; 10:38-40; 14:1, 7, 12, 15-16). Perhaps they had only heard about those miracles.

"The description of the Emmaus meal is closer to the feeding of the multitude than to the Last Supper in some details."<sup>1035</sup>

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<sup>1033</sup>Robertson, 2:294.

<sup>1034</sup>Green, p. 848.

<sup>1035</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:289.

The fact that Jesus acted as the host shows that He was the most important Person present, which these disciples evidently sensed even before they recognized who He was. Jesus' role as host may have been a factor in their recognizing Him. The wounds in His hands may not have been, since Luke did not mention them.

Their recognition of Jesus for who He was is the climax of the story. Now they knew that the Man they hoped was the Messiah, who had to suffer and then experience glorification, had indeed risen from the dead. Luke said that "their eyes were opened" (passive voice, cf. v. 16). Someone did it for them. Clearly God gave them understanding (cf. Gen. 3:7).<sup>1036</sup> God is the One who reveals His Son to people by His Spirit. In both Luke and Acts, the "breaking of bread" has connections with instruction concerning Jesus' Person and mission.<sup>1037</sup>

After His resurrection, Jesus could appear and disappear at will (cf. v. 36). This is an attribute of His resurrection body. Jesus "vanished from their sight" at this point, because these disciples had become believers in and witnesses of His resurrection. He left them to carry out their duty as His witnesses. Perhaps Luke also included Jesus' remarkable disappearance to impress on his Greek readers that Jesus is supernatural, not just a real man.

24:32 Luke probably recorded this conversation to stress the supernatural power and convincing effect of "the Scriptures" on people when God empowers His Word (cf. Rom. 10:17). All disciples need to remember that the Bible is what God uses to solve life's mysteries. John Wesley also testified that he felt his heart "strangely warmed" at his conversion when he heard the Scriptures expounded.

24:33-34 Cleopas and his friend's eagerness to return to tell the other disciples that Jesus had appeared to them confirms the reality of His resurrection. They could not keep the good news to themselves. There were others back in "Jerusalem" that did not know it and needed to hear it. When they "returned," they discovered that "the Lord" had also "appeared to Simon" Peter. No New Testament writer described this appearance in detail (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5).

Thus Luke included a second testimony to the Resurrection. The women and Peter had witnessed the empty tomb, and now these two disciples and Peter bore witness to the Resurrection. "Simon" was Peter's normal Jewish name.

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<sup>1036</sup>See Dane C. Ortlund, "'And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew': An Inter-Canonical Note on Luke 24:31," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53:4 (December 2010):717-28.

<sup>1037</sup>Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses . . .*, p. 105. Cf. Luke 9:11, 23; 22:21-38; 24:13-32, 35; Acts 2:42; 20:7, 11.

24:35 These two witnesses then proceeded to tell others about their experiences with Jesus and who He is. They serve as models of what disciples of the risen Christ should do. The manner in which they came to recognize Him clearly made a life-changing impression on them. Perhaps the reason Luke mentioned again that the two disciples "recognized" Jesus "in the breaking of the bread," is because for Christians, that happens whenever they observe the Lord's Supper, though in a different sense.

## **2. The appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem 24:36-49**

Luke arranged his accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to give the impression that an ever-increasing audience learned of this great event. First, he recorded an announcement of it with no witnesses (vv. 1-12). Then he told of Jesus appearing to two disciples (vv. 13-35). Next he presented Jesus materializing in the presence of the Eleven minus Thomas (cf. Mark 16:14; John 20:24). Perhaps he meant this presentation to represent the ever-widening circle of witness that the disciples were to give in the world (cf. Acts 1:8). The arrangement does suggest this to the reader, especially since the third incident contains Luke's version of the Great Commission.

Luke's account apparently combines two post-resurrection appearances into one. The writer evidently conflated them to give Jesus' instructions to His disciples continuity. This section is the basis for Luke's apologetic for Jesus' bodily resurrection in Acts 1:3-4 and Peter's witness to Cornelius in Acts 10:40-43.

### **The proof of Jesus' bodily resurrection 24:36-43 (cf. Mark 16:14-18; John 20:19-23)**

The emphasis here is on the physical reality of Jesus' body after His resurrection, whereas in the previous pericope the focus was on His supernatural nature. The incident clarifies that the One who rose from the dead was indeed Jesus of Nazareth, a real man. This Gospel opened with alternating emphases on Jesus' humanity and deity (ch. 2), and it likewise closes with this balanced emphasis.

24:36 This incident followed the preceding one immediately. As Jesus had suddenly disappeared (v. 31), so He now suddenly appeared. The doors to the room were shut (John 20:19). Luke verified that it was indeed Jesus by writing: "He *Himself* stood in their midst."

Some translations include the disputed reading "And He said to them, Peace be with you" (e.g., NIV). A scribe who was familiar with John 20:19 may have included this sentence in a later copy of this Gospel. It has strong textual support in John but not in Luke.

24:37-38 Jesus' sudden and unexpected appearance "startled and frightened" the disciples (cf. 1:12). They apparently thought that Jesus was "a spirit" (Gr. *pneuma*, a person lacking corporeal existence), not an angel, since He looked like an apparition (a ghost; cf. v. 39; Acts 23:8-9). Jesus' questions

implied that they should have recognized that it was He. Since they had questions, and doubted the reality of His presence, it is unlikely that they projected their hope that He was alive, and they probably only imagined that He arose.

24:39 Anyone wishing to prove his real presence could offer his hands and feet for inspection, as Jesus did. However, the Roman soldiers had pierced Jesus' hands and feet with nails, so the wounds would have identified Him as Jesus (John 20:25-27). Jesus claimed, "It is I Myself" (Gr. *ego eimi autos*, cf. *ego eimi*, which John recorded Jesus saying frequently in his Gospel). He encouraged His followers to "touch" Him, as well as to look at Him, and to satisfy their senses that His body was real. His resurrected human body had "flesh and bones," which ghosts do not have. The phrase "flesh and blood" is a similar expression that also describes a physical body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:50).

24:40 This verse is probably authentic. It has questionable textual support and is similar to, but not identical to, John 20:20. However, the differences with John 20:20 and the textual support favor inclusion in our versions. Evidently Jesus offered the disciples "His hands," "His feet," and His side for them to examine as further proof that His body was real.

*Docetism* was a heresy in the early history of the church that denied that Jesus' body was genuinely human. These verses would have helped the early Christians combat this error. However, these statements are not the strongest proofs of Jesus' humanity, since everyone agrees that Jesus' resurrection body was different from His pre-resurrection body. Better proof consists of the evidences of Jesus' true humanity before His resurrection. Luke gave his original Greek readers many such proofs in this Gospel.

24:41-43 The disciples could no longer disbelieve because of lack of evidence. However, they "still" had trouble accepting ("could not believe") Jesus' resurrection because it seemed too good to be true. Luke's "joy" motif surfaces again here. Jesus gave them further proof by eating a piece of cooked ("broiled") "fish" that was available. We should not extrapolate from this that His resurrection body depended on physical food for nourishment (cf. Gen. 18:8; 19:3). Jesus' resurrection body was immortal (1 Cor. 15:35-49).

"Christianity is not founded on the dreams of men's disordered minds, or the visions of their fevered eyes, but on one who in actual historical fact faced and fought and conquered death and rose again."<sup>1038</sup>

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<sup>1038</sup>Barclay, p. 311.

Luke omitted Mark's reference to Jesus upbraiding the disciples on this occasion for their unbelief (Mark 16:14). This is typical of Luke, who usually did not discourage his disciple readers with references to Jesus criticizing His followers.

### **The mission of Jesus' disciples 24:44-49 (cf. Acts 1:3-8)**

All the Gospels contain instances of Jesus giving the Great Commission to His disciples, but evidently He did not just give it once. The contexts are different, suggesting that He repeated these instructions on at least four separate occasions. This fact obviously reflects the importance of this instruction. The charge that Luke recorded here—and in Acts 1:8—was apparently the last one that Jesus gave. The chronological order seems to have been John 20:21; Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20; and Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:8. This last one occurred just before Jesus' ascension into heaven.

24:44 Jesus reminded the disciples that He had previously taught them that He would fulfill everything "written about" the Messiah in the Old Testament. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms were the three major divisions of the Hebrew Bible in Jesus' day. Fulfillment was a divine necessity (Gr. *dei*).

24:45-46 Then He proceeded to open their understanding (cf. v. 31), showing them first how He had fulfilled Scripture so far (cf. v. 27). He explained how His sufferings and resurrection, the great psychological barriers to the Jews of Jesus' day, had "fulfilled" biblical prophecy. We have seen how the disciples failed to grasp these things as Jesus taught them before His passion. Luke again stressed the importance of Scripture in understanding God's program. As Jesus opened "the Scriptures," God "opened" the disciples' "minds."

24:47 Next Jesus proceeded to show them how the Old Testament also predicted that the gospel ("repentance for the forgiveness of sins") should go to everyone, "all the nations" or Gentiles, "beginning from Jerusalem" (e.g., Isa. 2:2-3; 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; Joel 2:28-29, 32; Mic. 4:1-2). This was also a teaching that the Jews of Jesus' day resisted strongly. The theme of Gentile evangelism is strong in Luke (Luke 10), and it carries over into Acts (Acts 10—11; 13—28).

Likewise Luke featured Jerusalem as Jesus' *city of destiny* throughout his Gospel. Now it was *destined* to become the hub from which the gospel would go out into all the world. Thus this verse is a kind of strait in which the main emphases in Luke converge and through which they pass to Acts. It is Luke's mission statement for the church.

24:48 Evangelism was a key motif in Luke's Gospel, and it, too, continues in Acts. The phrase "these things" evidently refers to the messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. The disciples were "witnesses" to the fact

that Messiah had come as predicted. The Scriptures predicted that the evangelization of the nations could only attain fulfillment if the disciples bore witness. We see again the blending of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in Jesus' commission to His disciples.

When God created man, He gave him a cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28). Essentially that was to rule over the earth. It involved the advancement of civilization. It has been the responsibility of every human being. When Jesus arose from the dead, He gave His disciples another mandate. Essentially this was to evangelize the world. This involves the advancement of Christianity. This is the responsibility of every Christian.

24:49 Having explained the disciples' responsibility, Jesus next announced what He would do. The "promise of My Father" refers to the *Holy Spirit* that God promised in the Old Testament to pour out on His people (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; cf. John 14:16-17). These Old Testament prophecies are of an outpouring of the Spirit in the millennial kingdom, as the contexts indicate, but a similar outpouring of the same Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5; 2:16). It was perhaps this promise of the Spirit's outpouring that led the disciples to view it as inaugurating the kingdom (Acts 1:6). Jesus corrected their misunderstanding (Acts 1:7).

Finally Jesus instructed the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until the Spirit "clothed" them (Acts 1:8). This was a common figure of the Spirit's enabling presence and power in the Old Testament (e.g., Num. 11:25, 29; Judg. 3:10; 14:19; 1 Sam. 11:6; et al.). This "power from the Most High" has been evident throughout this Gospel (e.g., 1:35; et al), and it is very evident in Acts as well.

"There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God."<sup>1039</sup>

". . . Jesus' words in Luke 24:46-49 not only provide a bridge to the early part of Acts but fit with a series of statements describing the missions of key characters, from the summary of John the Baptist's mission early in Luke to the summary of Paul's mission late in Acts."<sup>1040</sup>

". . . Luke not only presented Jesus as the fulfillment of the Isaianic Servant, but also worded his version of the commission to depict the disciples as those who were to take up the Servant's mission after Jesus' departure."<sup>1041</sup>

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<sup>1039</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>1040</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:298.

<sup>1041</sup>Thomas S. Moore, "The Lucan Great Commission and the Isaianic Servant," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:613 (January-March 1997):47.

**J. THE ASCENSION OF JESUS 24:50-53 (CF. MARK 16:19-20; ACTS 1:9-12)**

Jesus' ascension was already in view in 9:51. There Luke presented it as the ultimate goal of Jesus' first advent ministry. Jesus' ascension would have happened even if the Jews had accepted Him as their Messiah. Prophecies of His glorious return to the earth fill the Old Testament. We should not view Jesus' ascension as an afterthought, therefore. It was rather the culmination of Jesus' first advent. Luke is the only New Testament writer who described the Ascension, both in Luke and in Acts. Perhaps he did so to underscore the significance of the Resurrection.<sup>1042</sup>

"With the ascension the Gospel reaches its climax. What began in the temple concludes in the temple with praise to God, and the path of Jesus now reaches its goal. The programme has been established for the second volume of Luke's work in which the church will obey the command of the risen Jesus to take the gospel to all the nations."<sup>1043</sup>

"In Luke's mind the Ascension of Christ has two aspects: in the Gospel it is the end of the story of Jesus, in Acts it is the beginning of the story of the Church, which will go on until Christ comes again. Thus for Luke, as Barrett says, 'the end of the story of Jesus is the Church, and the story of Jesus is the beginning of the Church'.<sup>1044</sup>

24:50-51 Jesus continued to lead His disciples as their Lord. "Bethany" stood on Mt. Olivet just east of Jerusalem. As they were walking toward (Gr. *pros*) Bethany, Jesus stopped and prayed for God's "blessing" on them. Lifting up the hands in traditional fashion symbolized a priestly transference of blessing from heaven above to the recipients below (cf. 1:22, 42, 64, 68; 2:28, 34). Luke described Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:9-11) as a *parting*, not a permanent separation. Jesus' ascension is reminiscent of Elijah's (2 Kings 2:11; cf. Acts 1:2, 11). Thus Luke drew attention to Jesus' role as a prophet as well as a priest. He will return as King. Jesus' ascension took place 40 days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3).

24:52-53 Some manuscripts have the disciples worshipping Jesus. The textual support for this activity here is good. This is Luke's first reference to the disciples "worshipping" Jesus. The Resurrection and Jesus' subsequent instruction made His deity beyond doubt for them.

The disciples "returned" from the Mount of Olives "to Jerusalem," joyful ("full of joy") because they finally understood and accepted God's program for Messiah and for them (cf. 2:10). Jerusalem would shortly become the birthplace of Christianity. Their "continual praising God in the temple," the place of prayer, was undoubtedly for the gospel, the good

<sup>1042</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 116.

<sup>1043</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 908.

<sup>1044</sup>William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 26.

news that God has provided salvation for humankind through His Son (cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42). Peter preached his sermon on the day of Pentecost 10 days later (Acts 2:1).

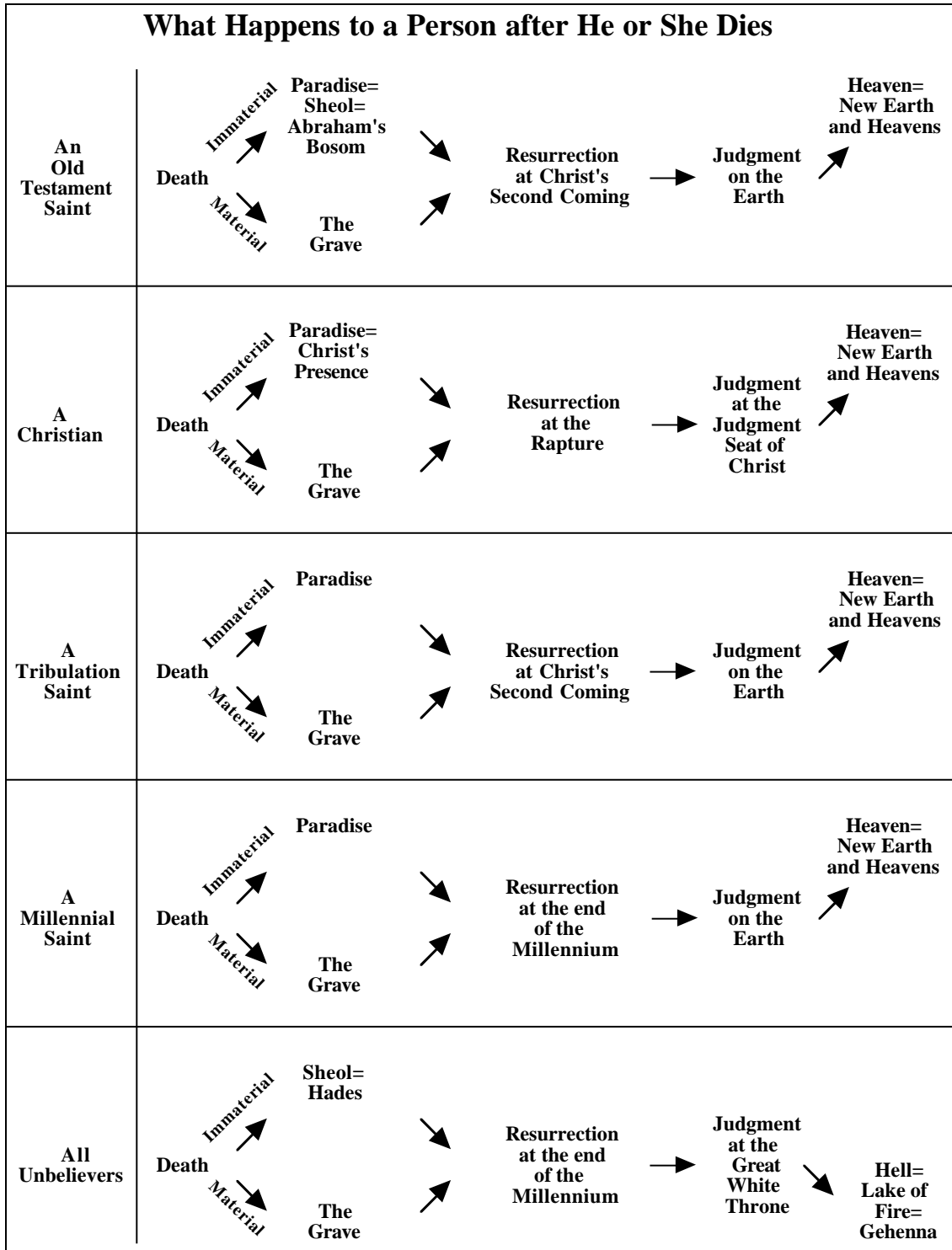
"The return at the end of Luke to the mood of joyful praise of God that filled the birth stories rounds off the story of Jesus; it also affirms that the joy felt by the devoted Jews who greeted the infant Jesus has been justified by later events, bringing the story to a happy resolution. The joy and praise filling the disciples following Jesus' appearance and departure will continue in the life of the early church, as Acts 2:46-47 indicates."<sup>1045</sup>

These original disciples set a good example for all of their subsequent fellow disciples. We, too, should worship, rejoice, and praise God as we eagerly await the fulfillment of all that He has promised.

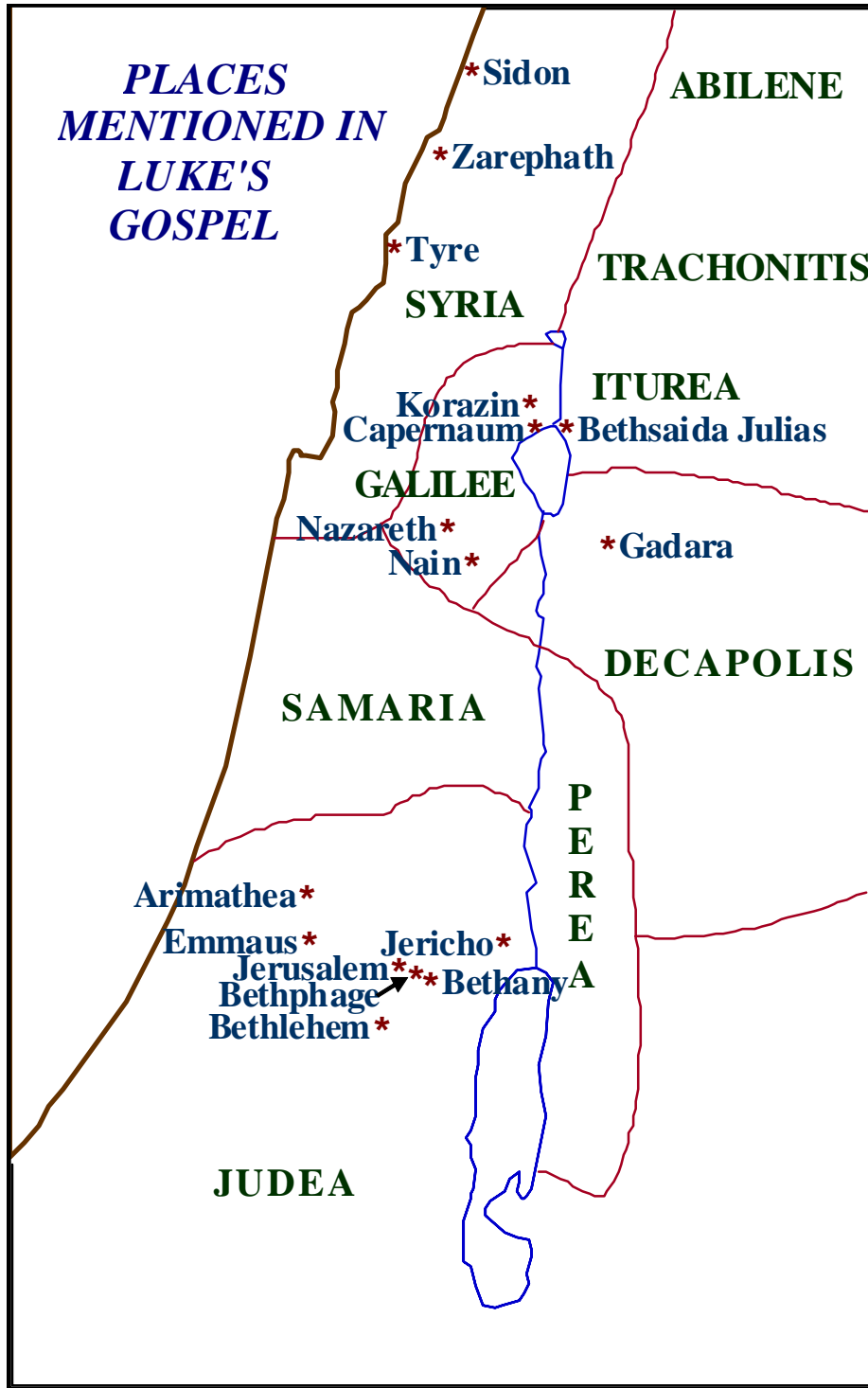
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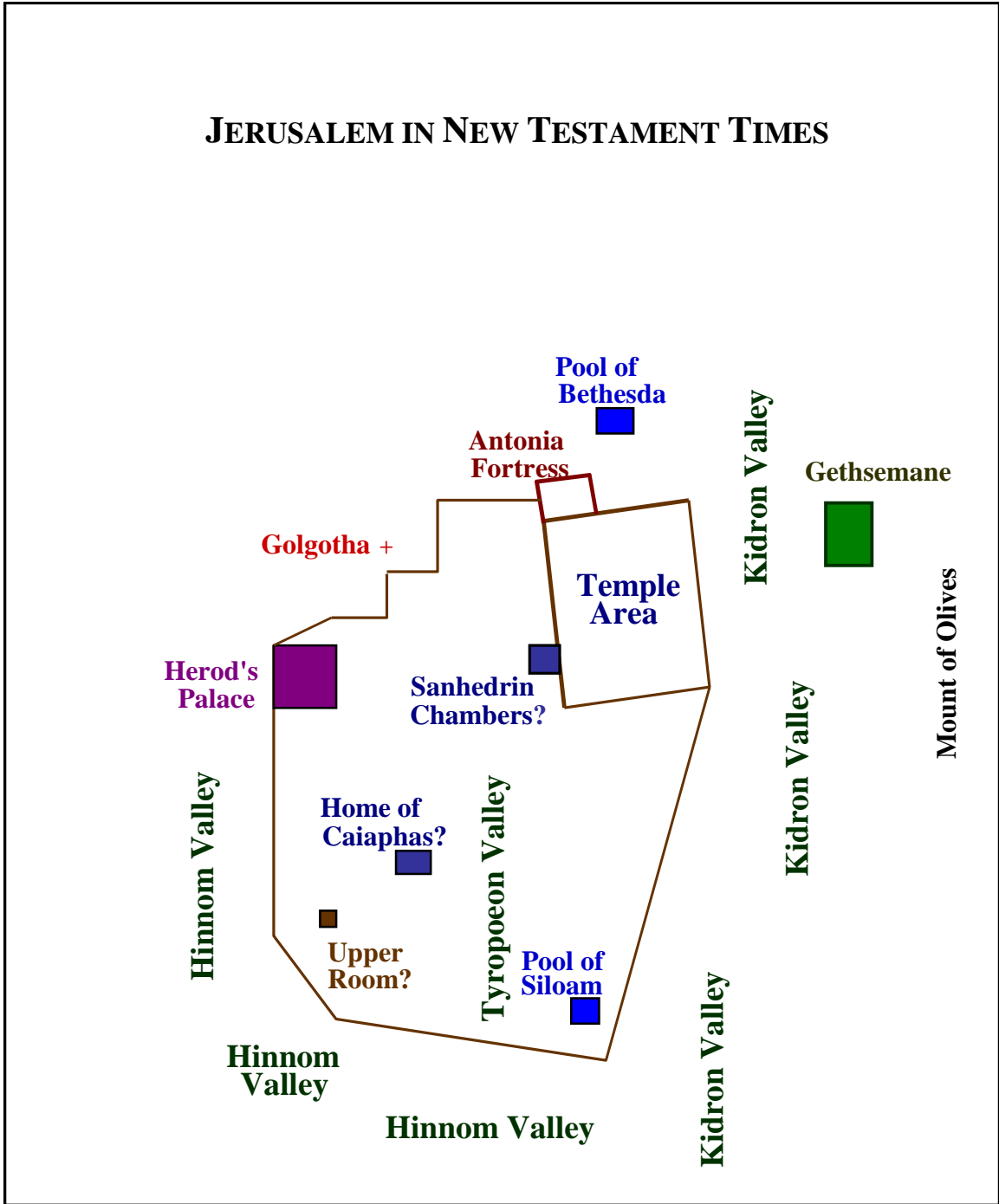
<sup>1045</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:301.

## Appendix



### End Maps





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