

# 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. 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>1</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>2</sup> Church tradition identified Antioch of Syria as Luke's hometown, but this is has not been validated.

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The main doctrines of systematic theology that Luke stressed were Christology, soteriology (especially redemption), pneumatology, angelology, and eschatology. 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>3</sup>

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

<sup>2</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>3</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.

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 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>4</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. 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>5</sup>

This is the longest book in the New Testament. Together with Acts it comprises about 27 percent of the Greek New Testament. Furthermore Luke wrote more verses in the New Testament than anyone else: 2157 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>6</sup> Luke is the longest book in the New Testament, Matthew is second, and Acts is third, but only slightly shorter than Matthew.

## **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 zeal to convince his readers of the reliability of the facts that he recorded so they would believe in Jesus and become Christians. This concern is also clear in Acts.<sup>7</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>8</sup> They

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<sup>4</sup>Idem, *Luke*, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>John A. Martin, "Luke," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>See I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*.

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

wrote to convince their readers of something, and they used history to do that. Notwithstanding historical accuracy was important to them.<sup>9</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>10</sup>

### ORIGINAL AUDIENCE

Evidently Theophilus was a real person.<sup>11</sup> His name is Greek and means "friend 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. 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>12</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>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>See A. W. Mosley, "Historical Reporting in the Ancient World," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-66):10-26.

<sup>10</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.

<sup>11</sup>See my comment on 1:3.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, p. 187.

<sup>13</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>14</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 readers 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>15</sup> Chiasms were both Jewish and Greek literary devices 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>16</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 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>17</sup>

## **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

<sup>14</sup>See Henry J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke*.

<sup>15</sup>See Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*.

<sup>16</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>17</sup>E.g., Mark L. Bailey, in *The New Testament Explorer*, p. 102. For additional introductory information, see Earle E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*.

- 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

## 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>18</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>19</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 other uninspired accounts 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, the gospel message. These people were the apostles and other eyewitnesses, such as Jesus' mother (cf. Acts 10:39-42). Luke used the Greek word *logos*, "word," often in his Gospel, especially in the sections that are unique to it.<sup>20</sup> Paul also claimed to communicate faithfully what others had "handed down" to him (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3).<sup>21</sup> This verse is a claim to careful research using reliable sources of information.

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<sup>18</sup>Liefeld, p. 821.

<sup>19</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.

<sup>20</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>21</sup>See Oscar Cullmann, *The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology*, pp. 59-75.

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.

"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. 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 "friend of God." This fact has led to some speculation about whether "Theophilus" was really a substitute for the real name of Luke's addressee. Perhaps Luke wrote generally to all friends 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>22</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>23</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. The only repeated statement occurs in Luke 2:39 and Matthew 2:23. Other unique features are the way Luke alternated the

<sup>22</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.

<sup>23</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.

reader's attention between John and Jesus, and the joy that several individuals expressed (1:46-55, 68-79; 2:14, 29-32).<sup>24</sup>

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. He also featured Jerusalem and the temple, which provide added connections to the Old Testament.

The alternation between John and Jesus compares and contrasts them (cf. 1 Sam. 1—3).<sup>25</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>26</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>
Introduction of the parents	1:5-7	1:26-27
Appearance of an angel	1:8-23	1:28-30
Giving of a sign	1:18-20	1:34-38
Pregnancy of a childless woman	1:24-25	1:42

<sup>24</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>25</sup>See G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, pp. 55-56.

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

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**

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 A.D. 4.

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 was a fulfillment of a prophecy that God would send a forerunner before Israel's Messiah. The etymological derivation of Elizabeth's name is unclear, but possibly it means "God's covenant."<sup>27</sup> 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. 23—24).

"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>28</sup>

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 following the restoration as best they could. In Zechariah's day, each division served for one week twice a year plus during the major festivals.<sup>29</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).

<sup>27</sup>Bailey, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup>J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 198-207.

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>30</sup>

1:7 Elizabeth's condition was identical to Sarah's (Gen. 17:16-17; cf. 1 Sam. 1:5-11). 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>31</sup> Therefore this statement prepares the reader for a miracle.

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

1:8-9 Zechariah was serving God faithfully by discharging some temple function as a member of his priestly division. 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>32</sup> 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).

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 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 are as 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>33</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 duty of presenting incense on the altar and then prostrating himself in prayer.<sup>34</sup> Obviously God took the initiative at the time He chose to reveal what He

<sup>30</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 55.

<sup>31</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup>Mishnah, *Tamid* 5:2; Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, 2:284-97.

<sup>33</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>34</sup>Mishnah *Tamid* 6:3.

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).

Zechariah's reaction was violent 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 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 that 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 John was the answer. God named John indicating His sovereign authority (cf. v. 31). John's name means, "Yahweh is [or has been] gracious."

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. 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>35</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>36</sup>

The connection 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. His ascetic lifestyle was similar to that of many prophets, particularly Elijah (v. 17; 2 Kings 1:8; Matt. 3:4).

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<sup>35</sup>Martin, p. 204.

<sup>36</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 98.

"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>37</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 Yahweh after Ahab and Jezebel had pushed Israel's apostasy farther 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).

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 meaning of the Malachi quotation is probably that when restoration comes there will be human reconciliation and love rather than estrangement and selfishness.<sup>38</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 word 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

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<sup>37</sup>Idem, *Luke*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>38</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 60.



the angel's announcement and given God thanks for it. Instead he asked for some verification of the promise, probably a sign (cf. 11:29). The angel gave him a sign, but it cost Zechariah inconvenience and embarrassment for nine months (cf. vv. 34, 45). Probably 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 (lit. man 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 and only wanted confirmation (cf. Judg. 6:36-40). He was not asking for a sign so he could believe.

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

- 1:21-22 Zechariah's delay in the temple and then his inability to speak impressed the worshippers that something supernatural had occurred. Normally he would have pronounced the Aaronic blessing over them (Num. 6:24-26).<sup>39</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. 30:23; 1 Sam. 2:1-10; Ps. 113:9).

". . . 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>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup>Mishnah *Yoma* 5:1; *ibid.* *Tamid* 7:2.

<sup>40</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 50.

## **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>41</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 connect this incident directly with what precedes (v. 24). 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>42</sup> Gabriel now visited a small town in Galilee contrasted with the big city of Jerusalem in Judea where he had met Zechariah.<sup>43</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>44</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>45</sup> The Greek word *parthenos* ("virgin") refers to a young, unmarried girl and implies virginity.<sup>46</sup> It clearly means virgin here (cf. v. 34).<sup>47</sup> Betrothal often took place shortly after puberty.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Liefeld, p. 829.

<sup>42</sup>See the map "Places Mentioned in Luke's Gospel" at the end of these notes.

<sup>43</sup>See P. Winter, "'Nazareth' and 'Jerusalem' in Luke chs. 1 and 2," *New Testament Studies* 3 (1956-57):136-42.

<sup>44</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>45</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 65.

<sup>46</sup>J. Massingbyrde Ford, "The Meaning of 'Virgin,'" *New Testament Studies* 12:3 (1966):293-99.

<sup>47</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>48</sup>Liefeld, p. 830.

Consequently Mary may have been a young teenager at this time. During betrothal a man and a woman were considered husband and wife even though they lived apart and did not have sexual relations.<sup>49</sup> 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' 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.

## **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>50</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 greeting that troubled 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 her (cf. Gen. 6:8; 1 John 4:17-18). Gabriel had come to announce a blessing, not punishment.
- 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. 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 that came from "Joshua" (lit. Yahweh saves [or 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.
- 1:32-33       Like John, Jesus would be great (v. 15). However, He would be the Son of God, a clear statement of His deity (Ps. 2:7-9; 89:26-29; cf. v. 35). The

<sup>49</sup>Jeremias, pp. 364-67.

<sup>50</sup>See Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 65, for further discussion.

"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>51</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>52</sup>

Jesus would also be the long expected Messiah (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>53</sup>

"Today, Jesus is enthroned in heaven (Acts 2:29-36), but it is not on *David's* throne."<sup>54</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>55</sup> Evidently Mary assumed that Gabriel meant she would conceive before she and Joseph consummated their marriage.<sup>56</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 Mary's supernatural act of service possible (cf. vv. 41, 67, 80; 2:25-27). He would overshadow Mary with His personal presence. Beyond this Gabriel was not specific.

"This delicate expression rules out crude ideas of a 'mating' of the Holy Spirit with Mary."<sup>57</sup>

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

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>52</sup>Martin, p. 205.

<sup>53</sup>See J. Dwight Pentecost, "The Biblical Covenants and the Birth Narratives," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, pp. 263-67.

<sup>54</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:172.

<sup>55</sup>Brown, *The Birth . . .*, p. 289.

<sup>56</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>57</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.

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 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). 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 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 2:5). In this she was only human.

"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>58</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.

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<sup>58</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 60.

- 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. The Holy Spirit also came upon Elizabeth then enabling her to greet Mary as the mother of Messiah. The Spirit evidently gave her intuitive or revelatory understanding of Mary's role. She uttered her benedictions loudly in joyful praise to God and because of the Spirit's impelling. "Blessed" means specially privileged because of God's favor. She evidently meant that Mary was the most blessed among women. She 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>59</sup>

"The use of *kurios* in narrative to refer to Jesus is distinctive of Luke."<sup>60</sup>

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.

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<sup>59</sup>Gaston, p. 76.

<sup>60</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 81.

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 connections 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>61</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).

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" (Ps. 24:5; 25:5; Mic. 7:7; Hab. 3:18).

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<sup>61</sup>Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, pp. 30-31.

"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>62</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 considered her lowly social and personal position her humble estate. 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).
- 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>63</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>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Liefeld, p. 836.

<sup>63</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 159. See his summary on pp. 159-60.

<sup>64</sup>Morris, p. 77.



1:54 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>65</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 people married.

### **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.

#### **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>66</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>67</sup> Perhaps this custom influenced Zechariah and Elizabeth to name John at his circumcision.

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, "John is his name." God had named John before his conception. Apparently the neighbors expressed astonishment because no other family member had that name.

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<sup>65</sup>Tannehill, 1:29.

<sup>66</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 88.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

"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>68</sup>

1:64-66 God rewarded Zechariah's obedience by removing his temporary disability. His first words were praise of God (cf. Acts 2:4, 11). 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 (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>69</sup> Its style and content are similar to Mary's Magnificat.

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>70</sup>

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

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<sup>68</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 78, 81.

<sup>69</sup>Plummer, p. 39.

<sup>70</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 are all those who spoke of the coming Messiah.
- 1:71-73 God's redeeming work would involve salvation, mercy, and covenant fulfillment. Messiah's salvation would be 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 that 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 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>71</sup> It is difficult to say if Zechariah used "Lord" here only in the sense of Messiah or also in the sense of God. 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

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<sup>71</sup>See Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 42-45.

pleased about John, and in this part of his song he prophesies the child's future."<sup>72</sup>

1:78-79 God's loving compassion motivated Him to give salvation. 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>73</sup> Verse 79 continues the first allusion (cf. Isa. 9:1-2; 59:9).

"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>74</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>75</sup> There is no way to prove or to disprove this theory presently. The factors in its favor are their 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>76</sup> Probably John was not an Essene but simply a prophet who went into the deserts to commune with God to be free of the distractions of ordinary life.<sup>77</sup>

Thus 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.

### **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.

<sup>72</sup>Morris, p. 80.

<sup>73</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>74</sup>Tannehill, 1:19.

<sup>75</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.

<sup>76</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 96.

<sup>77</sup>John C. Hutchinson, "Was John the Baptist an Essene from Qumran?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159:634 (April-June 2002):187-200.

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>78</sup> The purpose of a Roman census was to provide statistical data so the government could levy taxes.<sup>79</sup> "All the inhabited earth" (NASB) means throughout "the entire Roman world" (NIV) or empire. This was evidently 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>80</sup>

Quirinius served as governor of the Roman province of Syria twice (3-2 B.C. and A.D. 6-7).<sup>81</sup> However, Herod the Great was still alive when Augustus issued his decree (Matt. 2), and Herod died in 4 B.C.<sup>82</sup> This incongruity has cast doubt on Luke's reliability as a historian.<sup>83</sup> There is evidence that Augustus issued the type of decree that Luke described in A.D. 6 (cf. Acts 5:37).<sup>84</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>85</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. *prōte*) means "prior" or "former" here (cf. John 15:18).<sup>86</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). 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>87</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, p. 12.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>80</sup>A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 168.

<sup>81</sup>Hoehner, p. 22.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</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>84</sup>Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:2:1.

<sup>85</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>86</sup>Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>87</sup>Hoehner, pp. 11-25.

Customarily people returned to their own hometowns to register for these censuses.<sup>88</sup>

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 since she was pregnant. Apparently the Romans required that every adult appear to make a proper assessment of his property.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps Joseph also did this to remove Mary from local gossip and emotional stress in Nazareth.<sup>90</sup> Moreover 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>91</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 does not require nor rule out this reading. They may have been there for some time before Mary went into labor.

2:6-7 Normally mothers wrapped their newborn babies in wide strips of cloth to keep them warm (cf. Ezek. 16:4).<sup>92</sup> Traditionally Christians have believed that the manger or feeding trough in which Mary laid the baby Jesus was in a cave.<sup>93</sup> However most homes in Israel had two parts, one for the family and another for the household animals. It is possible that this was the location of the manger. 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).

The 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.

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>90</sup>Liefeld, p. 844.

<sup>91</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 105.

<sup>92</sup>Liefeld, p. 846.

<sup>93</sup>Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, 78:4; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1:15.

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>94</sup> Probably Jesus was born in the winter of 5-4 B.C.<sup>95</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>96</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>97</sup> Thus God first sent the gospel to the lowly. Luke had a 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 capable of verification.<sup>98</sup> They would have been out in the fields with their sheep at night if the winter weather was mild, as it apparently was.
- 2:9           A single angel appeared to the shepherds first. 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 appearance of the angel and 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.

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<sup>94</sup>Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4:23:3. See also Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 248.

<sup>95</sup>Hoehner, pp. 11-27.

<sup>96</sup>Tannehill, 1:38.

<sup>97</sup>Liefeld, p. 845.

<sup>98</sup>See Morris, p. 84.

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 through 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>99</sup> However in Jesus' case, it was a cause for true joy. The unusual phrase "Christ the Lord" probably means "Messiah God."

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. The term "swaddling clothes" (AV) translates the Greek word *spargano* meaning "to swathe" or "wrap." The Jews also wrapped their dead in strips of cloth, 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 to act a long time 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 of angels (cf. 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron. 33:3, 5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5).

". . . when a child was born the local musicians congregated at the house to greet him with simple music."<sup>100</sup>

2:14 The angels' praise explained the benefits of Jesus' birth. They 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 on humankind of Jesus' coming 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 suggesting 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.

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<sup>99</sup>See Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 109.

<sup>100</sup>William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 17.



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.

"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>101</sup>

2:17-18 After the shepherds saw Jesus they spread the word as evangelists (i.e., reporters of good news). The response of those who heard their eyewitness testimony was amazement (Gr. *ethaumasan*), 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 was very significant, meaning "Yahweh is salvation [or Yahweh saves]." God specified it before His conception, as He had done for John. 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.

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

2:22-24 Under Mosaic Law, a woman became ritually unclean when she gave birth to a child (Lev. 12:2). 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 first-born 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>102</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. 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>103</sup> Jesus was a real human being.

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 was righteous and devout, one of the believing remnant in Israel who was looking for Messiah's appearing. The Spirit who is the Consoler was upon one who was waiting for the consolation of Israel (i.e., the Messiah).<sup>104</sup> Many readers have assumed that Simeon was an old man, but the text does not say that, though he may have been.

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

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<sup>102</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>103</sup>F. W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, p. 30.

<sup>104</sup>Liefeld, p. 849.

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 this was the greatest experience in his life. Simeon properly regarded God as his sovereign and himself as God's 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. For Israel, Messiah's coming spells glory (Isa. 45:25; 46:13).

If we only had Matthew and Mark's Gospels, we might wonder if there were any Jews except 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.

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. 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>105</sup>

As a 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. However, He would pay a price, namely, suffering the antagonism of those who would reject Him. This rejection would hurt Mary.

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<sup>105</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 122.

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. Anna's husband had died seven years after their marriage, and she had remained a widow since then 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). 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 Simeon and Anna (cf. 1:68).

"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>106</sup>

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

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. 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' wisdom 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

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<sup>106</sup>Tannehill, 1:39.

the uniqueness of the individual and his or her superiority over others. Yet Jesus was far more than precocious.

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.<sup>107</sup> Those who could not attend all three festivals tried to attend Passover at least. Customarily Jewish 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. 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>108</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>109</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, 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. 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>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "pascha," by J. Jeremias, 5:896-904.

<sup>108</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 99, n. 1. Cf. Fitzmyer, p. 440.

<sup>109</sup>Liefeld, p. 852.

<sup>110</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 100.

Jesus' understanding and His answers amazed (Gr. *existanto*) them all (cf. 4:32; 9:43). One suspects that some of these rabbis remembered this incident when Jesus later became a popular teacher Himself. Obviously Jesus already had unusual wisdom and insight into the Scriptures, which were the center of these discussions.<sup>111</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>112</sup>

Mary's question had the force of scolding, revealing an unwarranted but understandable attitude.<sup>113</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 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 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>114</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

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<sup>111</sup>See J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts*, p. 105.

<sup>112</sup>Liefeld, p. 852.

<sup>113</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.

<sup>114</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 100-1.

something Luke chose to explain. His purpose was to record Jesus' response to Mary and Joseph that expressed His awareness of His unique relationship to God and His duty to God.<sup>115</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>116</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>117</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 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 them believe that Jesus became a real man at the Incarnation.

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<sup>115</sup>See I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," *Interpretation* 21 (1967):87-103.

<sup>116</sup>Idem, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 128.

<sup>117</sup>See Bock, "A Theology . . .," pp. 94-95, for further discussion of it.

"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>118</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.

#### **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 place 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 to document the reliability of his Gospel.<sup>119</sup> Only the reference to Tiberius is necessary to date the beginning of John's ministry that 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 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. Present historical evidence does not enable scholars to date Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene, an area northeast of Damascus. Annas was Israel's high priest from A.D. 6 to 15 until the Roman authorities deposed him. However the Jews continued to regard him as the high priest, and he retained his title.<sup>120</sup> His son-in-law Caiaphas served as the official high priest from A.D. 18 to the spring of 37. Thus the general time frame when

<sup>118</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>119</sup>Compare Thucydides 2:2 for a similarly elaborate chronological synchronism.

<sup>120</sup>Jeremias, pp. 157-58.



John began his ministry was between A.D. 26 and the spring of 37. The specific date, the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, is harder to pinpoint, but it was probably A.D. 29.<sup>121</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.).

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. 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 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>122</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. 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>123</sup> Typically Luke quoted from the Septuagint. John's ministry consisted of preparing the Jews by getting them right with God so 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>124</sup>

In Luke, John is a "prototype of the Christian evangelist."<sup>125</sup>

"The section on John's ministry begins with a rather lengthy scriptural quotation and ends with an arrest that will lead to death. Jesus' ministry will begin and end in the same way."<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Hoehner, pp. 29-37.

<sup>122</sup>Tannehill, 1:48.

<sup>123</sup>Morris, p. 95.

<sup>124</sup>Tannehill, 1:47.

<sup>125</sup>Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, p. 27.

<sup>126</sup>Tannehill, 1:53.

## **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 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 him for baptism.<sup>127</sup> However, John sensed that their reason for coming to him was just their safety, not genuine repentance. Righteous behavior would demonstrate true repentance. Many of the Jews believed that Abraham's righteousness availed for his descendants.<sup>128</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>129</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 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).

"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 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>130</sup>

<sup>127</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 139.

<sup>128</sup>W. D. Davis, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 270-71.

<sup>129</sup>Plummer, p. 90.

<sup>130</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," pp. 129-30, 132.

- 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.
- 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). He 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.
- 3:14 Soldiers were able because of their position to threaten people with reprisal 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.
- 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 initiated 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). John's water baptism prefigured Jesus' baptism. John's reference to unquenchable fire implies eternal judgment. Jesus will be the stronger One who judges, not just God (cf. John 5:22).
- 3:18 John's preaching was also positive. He preached good news 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>131</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>132</sup> One writer argued that Luke took John out of the scene before introducing Jesus to minimize John's importance for the baptist sectarians of Luke's day (cf. Acts 19:1-7).<sup>133</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>134</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 John's boldness and the sickness of the society that he confronted. 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>135</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.

3:21 Evidently John baptized Jesus after he had baptized many other people. Luke may have wanted to imply by this that Jesus' baptism was the climax of John's ministry.<sup>136</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, a revelation from God followed. Luke had a special interest in Jesus' prayer life. It showed His conscious dependence on His Father as a human being.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., *Luke*, p. 117.

<sup>132</sup>C. Talbert, "The Lukan Presentation of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee," *Review and Expositor* 64 (1967):490.

<sup>133</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>134</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 148-49. Cf. H. Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, p. 22.

<sup>135</sup>Martin, p. 212.

<sup>136</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 150.

"Jesus' baptism, like that of the people, was a single event in time; but his praying continued for his lifetime."<sup>137</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 just a god who had visited humans.

"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>138</sup>

3:22 This was a theophany, God appearing in corporeal form. The dove is a biblical symbol of peace (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). Secondly it represented the peace that Jesus would impart to those who believed on Him.<sup>139</sup> Only Luke wrote that the Spirit came "in bodily form" thereby giving the theophany more substance. The voice from 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>140</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

<sup>137</sup>Liefeld, p. 859.

<sup>138</sup>Tannehill, 1:56-57.

<sup>139</sup>See L. E. Keck, "The Spirit and the Dove," *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-71):41-67.

<sup>140</sup>Morris, p. 100.

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>141</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 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>142</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. 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.

There are several other distinct differences between the two genealogies. 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>143</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>144</sup> Matthew mentioned several women in his genealogy, but Luke mentioned none. Finally Luke's list is considerably longer than Matthew's.

"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

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<sup>141</sup>Tannehill, 1:57.

<sup>142</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>143</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 160.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158; Machen, pp. 202-9, 229-32.

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>145</sup>

3:23 Luke probably mentioned the round number "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; 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>146</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.

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>147</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

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<sup>145</sup>Morris, p. 101.

<sup>146</sup>Hoehner, pp. 37-38.

<sup>147</sup>*The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, 1:7.

and forefathers.<sup>148</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 supposedly 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 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>149</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 include the name of a woman in such a list.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless Matthew mentioned four women in his genealogy, and Luke showed more interest in women than any of the other evangelists.<sup>151</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>152</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>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Machen, p. 209; *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962 ed., s.v. "Genealogy of Jesus Christ," by F. F. Bruce.

<sup>149</sup>Plummer, p. 103.

<sup>150</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>151</sup>See Tannehill, 1:132-39.

<sup>152</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 159. Cf. Morris, p. 101.

<sup>153</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).



The presence of Shealtiel and Zerubbabel in the lists of both Solomon 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>154</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.

#### **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 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). Jesus succeeded, in the wilderness no less, where Israel had failed.<sup>155</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.

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' fullness with the 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 nation.<sup>156</sup> Moses also went without food for 40 days in the wilderness

<sup>154</sup>See Plummer, p. 104.

<sup>155</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>156</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

(Deut. 9:9). Israel failed, but Jesus succeeded. God led Israel into the wilderness, and God's Spirit led Jesus there. 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>157</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>158</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 He was vulnerable since He was then 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).

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 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. 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).

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<sup>157</sup>Liefeld, p. 863.

<sup>158</sup>See Sydney H. T. Page, "Satan: God's Servant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:3 (September 2007):449-65.

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). Instead Jesus 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.

"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 (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>159</sup>

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.

#### **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).

##### **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.

##### **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 He was a model that all believers can and should copy. Luke continued to stress the Holy Spirit's ministry in Acts.

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<sup>159</sup>Wiersbe, 1:183.

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 symbolizes all Israel.<sup>160</sup> If so, this is another instance of metonymy. He may also have intended that it become a paradigm of the church's ministry as well as Jesus' ministry.<sup>161</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 that of 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.

4:16-17      Luke reminded his readers that Jesus had grown up in Nazareth where this incident took place. He also drew attention to Jesus' piety by noting His regular habit of attending synagogue services, probably to teach as well as to worship.

"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>162</sup>

The synagogue ruler may have asked Jesus to read the Scriptures since Jesus was a popular teacher. Customarily Jewish teachers stood to read the Scriptures, out of respect for them, and then sat down to expound them.<sup>163</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 also be the bearer of good news (1:19; cf. Deut. 18:18; Isa. 40:9; 41:27;

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<sup>160</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 178.

<sup>161</sup>Bo Reicke, "Jesus in Nazareth — Lk 4, 14-30," in *Das Wort und die Wörter*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>162</sup>Wiersbe, 1:184.

<sup>163</sup>Martin, p. 214.

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 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>164</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 farther fulfillment of others.<sup>165</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 was the predicted Messiah and that the time for God's gracious deliverance had arrived.<sup>166</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, 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).

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.

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<sup>164</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>165</sup>J. Randall Price, "Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, pp. 159 and 160.

<sup>166</sup>See Daniel Doriani, "The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:3 (September 1994):333-50.

4:23 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). This has encouraged 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 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>167</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 people they would not accept the prophet whom He had sent to tell them of His grace.<sup>168</sup> Prophets were not welcome in their hometowns because home folks hardly ever fully trust one of their own who 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>169</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. God sent them there even though there were many needy people in Israel. Nevertheless Israel then 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 implication of these two illustrations was that God had sent Jesus to Gentiles as well as to Jews. The Nazarenes, therefore, should not expect 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>170</sup>

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<sup>167</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>168</sup>Liefeld, p. 869.

<sup>169</sup>Morris, p. 107.

<sup>170</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 138.

4:28-30 Jesus allowed the crowd to drive Him out of town and to the brow of the hillside 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.

This pattern of violent Jewish rejection continued and mounted through Jesus' ministry. It is significant that it began at the start of His ministry because of a revelation of God's desire to bless His people.

"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>171</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>172</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>173</sup>

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

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.

#### **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

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<sup>171</sup>Tannehill, 1:73.

<sup>172</sup>Morris, p. 108.

<sup>173</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 139.

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>174</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 (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.

- 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 terms "evil" and "unclean" interchangeably 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>175</sup> Possibly Luke specified that this was an unclean demon because the Greeks thought there were good and evil demons.<sup>176</sup>
- 4:34-35 "Ha!" translates an expression of "indignant surprise."<sup>177</sup> "What do we have to do with you" means something like, "Why this interference?"<sup>178</sup> The demon testified to Jesus' messianic and divine character. He was the "Holy One of God" in contrast to the unclean demon. 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 to keep 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 affected 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 the powerful word (Gr. *logos*, v. 32) of Jesus marked by authority (Gr. *exousia*) and power (Gr. *dynamis*)

<sup>174</sup>Idem, "A Theology . . .," p. 119.

<sup>175</sup>See *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Demon, Demonic, Demonology," by R. K. Harrison, 2:92-101.

<sup>176</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "daimon," by W. Foerster, 2:9.

<sup>177</sup>J. M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke. A Commentary on the Third Gospel*, p. 30.

<sup>178</sup>Danker, p. 61.



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, 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>179</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 esteem, to realize that Jesus honored them too.

Luke's emphasis in this healing was the miraculous element and 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 the sun 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

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<sup>179</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 148.

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>180</sup>

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. Moreover the testimony of demons might appear suspect to the people present since they 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 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.

"Along with 'preach,' these words constitute a programmatic statement of Jesus' mission and also of Luke's understanding of it."<sup>181</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)**

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). 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).

<sup>180</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 196.

<sup>181</sup>Leifeld, p. 874.

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 established the general program of Jesus' ministry.<sup>182</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 its northwest coast from which it received its 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). 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).

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 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 near disciples used of Jesus (8:24, 45; 9:33, 49), 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. *metochos*) probably refers to partners in business (cf. v. 10; Heb. 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8).

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

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., p. 876.

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. Nevertheless Peter expressed conviction of sin in Jesus' presence indicating that he realized that 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>183</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>184</sup>

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 in the sense of 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>185</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>186</sup> It is unlikely that they were able to finance their life as Jesus' disciples with this catch of fish, as one commentator suggested.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid., p. 877.

<sup>184</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 155.

<sup>185</sup>Bailey, p. 112.

<sup>186</sup>Morris, p. 114.

<sup>187</sup>Geldenhuis, p. 182.

"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>188</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 form of participation in Jesus' mission.

"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>189</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>190</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>191</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).

"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

<sup>188</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 206.

<sup>189</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 163.

<sup>190</sup>Liefeld, p. 879.

<sup>191</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 206.

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. 12:12), and garments infected with leprosy were fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:52)."<sup>192</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>193</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 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).
- "The most significant lesson from the cleansing of the leper story is that even outsiders can experience God's healing grace."<sup>194</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 Him even worse than they were already doing.
- 5:15-16 Luke omitted the fact that the man disobeyed Jesus (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.

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<sup>192</sup>Wiersbe, 1:186.

<sup>193</sup>G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>194</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 165.

". . . 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>195</sup>

Luke did not mention the fact that increased popularity hampered Jesus' activities (Mark 1:45). He also listed hearing Jesus before 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.

5:17            Again Luke stressed the priority of Jesus' teaching ministry. The Pharisees and scribes had come to hear what He was teaching. These men, first appearing in Luke here, 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 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 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 means religious leaders but does not imply that other religious leaders such as the Sadducees were absent.<sup>196</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>197</sup>

<sup>195</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 210.

<sup>196</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.

<sup>197</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.

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 friends in need to Him in prayer as well as in person.

". . . it is impossible to think that the man's sins were forgiven if he had no faith of his own."<sup>198</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.

"Miracle becomes a metaphor for salvation. All Jesus' miracles should be seen in this light."<sup>199</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>200</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>201</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

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<sup>198</sup>Morris, p. 117.

<sup>199</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 126.

<sup>200</sup>Idem, *Luke*, p. 158.

<sup>201</sup>Morris, p. 117.



another sense, of course, both claims were equally difficult because healing and forgiving required supernatural power.

- 5:24 Jesus did the apparently more difficult thing 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 demonstrate 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>202</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 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>203</sup>

A quest story is one in which someone approaches Jesus in quest of something very important to human wellbeing. Of the nine quest stories in the Synoptics, seven are in Luke, and four of these are unique to Luke.

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<sup>202</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 158.

<sup>203</sup>Tannehill, 1:118.

**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 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.

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 and his continuing life of discipleship. This decision undoubtedly involved making financial and career sacrifices.

5:29-30        The joy of Levi and his outcast guests contrasts with the grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes. The religious leaders objected to Jesus and His disciples' eating and drinking with these tax gatherers and sinners because of the 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.

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 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 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>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup>Ibid., 1:107.

**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.

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 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>205</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 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. 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

<sup>205</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "nestis," by J. Behm, 4:930.

two detrimental effects. It would damage 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.

"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>206</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.

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 way and the way that the Jewish leaders followed and promoted were unmixable. The religious leaders even refused to 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.

"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

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<sup>206</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 227.

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>207</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). His point was twofold, first that ceremonial traditions are secondary to human need.

What David did was contrary to the Mosaic Law (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 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 of who David was, namely, the Lord's anointed. He occupied a special place in Israel. God permitted him to violate the ceremonial law, but not the moral law, without condemnation. In this sense he was above the law. (This may explain why God allowed David to perform some normally priestly functions such as offering sacrifices without rebuke.) 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, for the welfare of His followers.

6:5 Jesus' second point was that the Son of Man (cf. 5:24), because of who He is, 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.

"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

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<sup>207</sup>Morris, pp. 121-22.

Sabbath,' one who is authorized to decide when Sabbath regulations must be set aside to fulfill a greater divine purpose."<sup>208</sup>

This incident elevates the readers' appreciation of Jesus' authority to new heights in Luke.

**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 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 to themselves but would not do good to others. They did permit life-saving measures, midwifery, and circumcision on the Sabbath.<sup>209</sup>

- 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 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>210</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.
- 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

<sup>208</sup>Tannehill, 1:174-75.

<sup>209</sup>Mishnah *Yoma* 8:6, and Mishnah *Shabbath* 18:3 and 19:2.

<sup>210</sup>Morris, p. 123.

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 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>211</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). 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 His relationship to His opponents (5:12—6:11). Next he 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>212</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>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup>Martin, p. 219.

<sup>212</sup>Ellis, p. 113.

<sup>213</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).

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). Only Luke mentioned that Jesus called the Twelve "apostles" (lit. sent ones). 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 only used it 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 now 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 names as those that Matthew and Mark have given us with some variation in the order. Only Luke mentioned that Judas Iscariot became a traitor.

	<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	



## **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. 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). The place where Jesus gave this sermon is the major problem in harmonizing the two accounts.<sup>214</sup>

Apparently Jesus went up into 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>215</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>216</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>217</sup> I believe the two sermons were really one.

Luke's emphasis in this section was on Jesus' widespread appeal and 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). Matthew's account contains 137 verses whereas Luke's has 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>218</sup>

<sup>214</sup>See J. Manek, "On the Mount - on the Plain (Mt. V. 1 - Lk. VI. 17)," *Novum Testamentum* 9 (1967):124-31.

<sup>215</sup>J. A. Findlay, "Luke," in *Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 1037.

<sup>216</sup>Martin, p. 219.

<sup>217</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 187.

<sup>218</sup>Idem, "A Theology . . .," p. 114.

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 there was only one sermon, and 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 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 mock the world's values by exalting what the world despises and rejecting what the world admires.<sup>219</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 condition of someone whom God has blessed with His special favor.<sup>220</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>221</sup>

Poor disciples are those who have given up what the world offers 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 (Matt. 5:3).

<sup>219</sup>Morris, p. 126.

<sup>220</sup>See *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "*makarios*," by F. Hauck and G. Bertram, 4:362-70.

<sup>221</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>222</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 to follow Jesus faithfully have Jesus' promise that they will enjoy the benefits of the new 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>223</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.

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.

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 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).

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<sup>222</sup>Morris, pp. 126, 127.

<sup>223</sup>Tannehill, 1:109.

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. It is an alternative expression to "God" that Luke and Jesus used frequently.

### **The Woes 6:24-26**

6:24 The woes contrast with the beatitudes 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 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>224</sup>

Disciples who choose present riches over identification with the Son of Man are pitiable because they can expect no greater riches in the future from His hand. 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).

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 find that everyone thinks that all they are doing is just fine need to examine their commitment to Jesus Christ. Unbelievers should disagree with and oppose to some extent those who follow God's will faithfully because they hold different values. Jesus' experience 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

<sup>224</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 255.

world (Matt. 6:19—7:12). Luke omitted Jesus' teaching on the relationship of true righteousness to the Father that included instruction about ostentation (Matt. 6:1), almsgiving (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). He passed over here 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 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.

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. *eulogeite*) 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.

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>225</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

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<sup>225</sup>Morris, p. 129.

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 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>226</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>227</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>228</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. Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. Furthermore do not retaliate when others attack you, give freely to those who ask of you, and treat others the way you would want them to treat you. This type of love marks a disciple off as distinctive (vv. 32-34) and is the type of love that God shows and enables the disciple to demonstrate (v. 35).

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. The

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<sup>226</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>227</sup>Liefeld, p. 893.

<sup>228</sup>Cf. Mishnah *Shabbath* 31a; and *Epistle of Aristeeas* 207.

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 mark disciples' attitudes and actions as it marks God's. 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 meant condemning other people specifically. 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.

"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>229</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 led 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 them. The disciples could be blind guides if they did not follow Jesus' instructions about loving (vv. 27-38).

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 the disciples would instruct in the truth that Jesus taught them would normally advance no farther than the

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<sup>229</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 267.

disciples. This was especially true before the widespread availability of books.<sup>230</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.

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 dealing with one's own failings first. 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.

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 our character is still sinful. We 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>231</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 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.

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<sup>230</sup>Morris, p. 133.

<sup>231</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 200.



### **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 really 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 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. Luke stressed the digging of a proper foundation. Perhaps he had Hellenistic houses with basements in mind.<sup>232</sup> The floodwaters represent the forces of enemies and temptations that seek 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>233</sup>

Throughout this sermon Jesus was not contrasting believers and unbelievers but disciples who followed Him and people 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

<sup>232</sup>J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 27, n. 9.

<sup>233</sup>Morris, p. 134.

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 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.

"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>234</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).

"His story is thus an example of the fact that God is willing to accept all men alike and that everyone who fears him and performs righteousness is acceptable to Him (Acts 10:34f.)."<sup>235</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.

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

<sup>234</sup>Tannehill, 1:103.

<sup>235</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 277.

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).

7:2-3 These verses are unique to Luke's account. They give detail about the character of the centurion. 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 leaders to approach Jesus for him (cf. 1 Tim. 3:7). Normally the Jews did not like the Roman soldiers who occupied their towns. 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).

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 position could have enriched himself honestly.<sup>236</sup> Consequently the fact that he was so generous with the Jewish residents of Capernaum shows his selfless concern for their welfare. 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.

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 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. He even felt unworthy 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 bid sickness to come, to go, and to behave, as this soldier ordered his slaves. Jesus 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.

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<sup>236</sup>B. S. Easton, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, p. 95.

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 only two 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 of Jesus' previous ministry alone. Jesus rewarded his faith by healing his servant.

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. 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>237</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. 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. 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 Jezreel Valley. It was 6 miles south and a little east of Nazareth and is easily visible across the valley from Nazareth. The Hill of Moreh is 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 of the city gate to bury it outside the town, as was customary. 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.

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<sup>237</sup>See Zane C. Hodges, "The Centurion's Faith in Matthew and Luke," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121:484 (October-December 1964):321-32.

- 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 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 affect the miracle.
- 7:15 Luke probably wrote that the young man sat up and spoke to authenticate the resuscitation. Luke drew additional attention to the parallel incident when Elijah raised 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 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>238</sup>

In Acts the spread of the news about Jesus would go from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

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.

### **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

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<sup>238</sup>Tannehill, 1:85-86.

Messiah was 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 to stress that this was the issue at stake.

"Disappointment often calls us to a deeper, less self-focused walk with God."<sup>239</sup>

7:21-23 Luke recorded and Jesus listed several messianic works that He had done (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>240</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 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>241</sup>

### **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 a prophet but more than a prophet.

<sup>239</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 215. See also Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*.

<sup>240</sup>R. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, pp. 71-74.

<sup>241</sup>Wiersbe, 1:196-97.

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 in the messianic kingdom is superior to John because John only anticipated it.

"Being least in the kingdom is better than being the best anywhere else."<sup>242</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 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

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<sup>242</sup>Bailey, p. 117.



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 glutton and a drunkard as worthy of stoning (cf. Deut. 21:20). Furthermore Jesus associated with people whom the Jewish leaders regarded as apostates.

"People who want to avoid the truth about themselves can always find something in the preacher to criticize."<sup>243</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 accept 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. Here is a case in point of what Jesus had just described happening (v. 34). Jesus reached out to a sinner 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. 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>244</sup>

<sup>243</sup>Wiersbe, 1:197.

<sup>244</sup>Tannehill, 1:106.

- 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 appears to have been a critic rather than a disciple of His. Nevertheless Jesus accepted his invitation.
- 7:37 Social custom allowed needy people to visit such meals and to partake of some of the leftovers.<sup>245</sup> Moreover it was not unusual for people to drop in when a rabbi was visiting.<sup>246</sup> Luke gallantly omitted describing why the woman was a sinner, though the commentators love to guess. 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 that 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>247</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. *katēphilei*, the imperfect tense) Jesus' feet the woman was expressing her affection, respect, and submission (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1). Normally people anointed the heads of others, not their feet.
- 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.
- 7:40 Simon had no reason to expect Jesus' words to him to have anything to do with what Simon had been thinking. Simon had concluded that Jesus could not tell sinners from non-sinners. He would now learn that Jesus knew what was in his heart (cf. 5:22). Simon 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 was 10 times greater than the other. Jesus regarded love as the expression of gratitude.

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<sup>245</sup>Liefeld, p. 903.

<sup>246</sup>Martin, p. 224.

<sup>247</sup>Morris, pp. 146-47.

- 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. Moreover 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 Simon had failed to do for Jesus were courtesies that hosts frequently extended their guests. However Simon had not acted discourteously. He had just not performed any special acts of hospitality on Jesus.<sup>248</sup> The scented oil in view would have been olive oil that was 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 received 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. 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.
- 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." 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). Here he did not forgive the sins of the sinful woman but announced authoritatively that they stood 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.

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<sup>248</sup>A. E. Harvey, *The New English Bible: Companion to the New Testament*, p. 244.

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 at 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>249</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 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>250</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).

#### **1. The companions and supporters of Jesus 8:1-3**

Luke's account stresses 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 these were factors that directed Jesus in His ministry.

8:1 This verse is Luke's summary of Jesus' next preaching tour (cf. 4:44). Like the first summary statement, this one also states Jesus' ministry as consisting of itinerant preaching primarily. Luke noted the presence of the

<sup>249</sup>Tannehill, 1:178.

<sup>250</sup>Bailey, p. 117.

Twelve with Jesus to qualify them as reliable witnesses of His teaching, death, and resurrection.

8:2-3

Luke's mention of the women in this section prepares for 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.

". . . traveling around with a religious teacher conflicts strongly with traditional female roles in Jewish society.<sup>251</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 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>252</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. 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 was evidently Herod's manager or foreman, some high-ranking official in Herod's employ (cf. Matt. 20:8; Gal. 4:2).

<sup>251</sup>Footnote 55: B. Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, p. 117.

<sup>252</sup>Tannehill, 1:138.

"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>253</sup>

Susanna, 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 what Jesus 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>254</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>255</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 stressed 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. It is the soils on which the seed falls. Evidently in Jesus' day, at least in some situations, sowing preceded plowing.<sup>256</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.

<sup>253</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 317.

<sup>254</sup>Liefeld, p. 905.

<sup>255</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 228.

<sup>256</sup>Liefeld, p. 906; Fitzmyer, p. 703; Morris, p. 151.

Luke probably omitted the lesser harvests and mentioned the largest yield to encourage his disciples with the ultimate result of His and their work. Only Luke mentioned that people trampled the seed under foot (v. 5) perhaps to indicate 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.

8:13-14 In both of these cases 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 is how they responded to the word of God. Some of them may have been saved and others lost. Jesus did not say they lost their salvation. That is impossible (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). He said they turned away in unbelief.

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. He used a different Greek word here (8:13, *aphisteme*) but only because he preferred it, not because it has a different meaning.<sup>257</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 for 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 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 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 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>258</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.

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<sup>257</sup>See Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, p. 30-31.

<sup>258</sup>Liefeld, pp. 907-8.



"Jesus' emphasis here is not so much on whether a person perseveres but on the kind of person who does persevere."<sup>259</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 indicating its significance. Disciples should not suppose that because God had kept the truth that Jesus had revealed to them secret He wanted it to remain hidden. He wanted it declared publicly now.
- 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 what truth they thought they had from them.

### **4. The true family of Jesus 8:19-21 (cf. Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35)**

Apparently Luke moved this teaching 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).

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<sup>259</sup>Ibid., p. 908.

Obedience brings the believer into intimate relationship with Jesus. This saying would have helped Luke's original readers understand that Jewish blood did not bring believers into 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)**

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 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 people had called on God for salvation in similar situations.

8:22-23 Evidently Jesus mentioned crossing the lake to His disciples 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 mentioned 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 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). The disciples should have trusted in Jesus' word.

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>260</sup>

Experiencing deliverance in such situations should expand our appreciation for Jesus.

**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 final 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>261</sup> This incident apparently happened somewhere near both towns on the southeast coast of the lake. A third town with a similar name, Gersa, was probably the same as Jarash, farther to the south and east.<sup>262</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 God (cf. 1:32; Gen. 14:18-22; Num. 24:16; Isa. 14:14; Dan. 3:26; 4:2). 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).

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<sup>260</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 237-38.

<sup>261</sup>Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament*, p. 62.

<sup>262</sup>Bailey, p. 119.

- 8:30-31 Jesus was probably asking the name of the demon who indwelt the man for His disciples' benefit. "Legion" was not a proper name but the name of a Roman military unit that consisted of about 6,000 soldiers. The 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 (cf. Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:1-3; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3). The Jews thought of it as a watery 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. Instead He 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).
- 8:34-37 The latter condition of the man contrasts with his former state. He now sat at Jesus' feet as a disciple. The power that Jesus possessed to affect such a transformation terrified the people. Luke's use of the Greek *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. Thus Luke showed his reader disciples that this is a reaction they could expect.
- "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>263</sup>
- 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). The man more than obeyed Jesus. He is, therefore, a good model for Gentile converts to emulate.

"The story is a paradigm of what conversion involves: the responsibility to evangelize."<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup>Morris, p. 157.

<sup>264</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 341.

### **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 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 shows that some influential Jewish leaders had believed on Him. 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 become a young lady of marriageable age.<sup>265</sup> She was apparently going to die just as she was about to begin to live as an adult, a further tragedy.

#### **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 is unknown and unimportant. This condition resulted in her discomfort, inconvenience, ritual uncleanness, and embarrassment. Some commentators believe that Luke's omission of the fact that she had spent all her money on doctors who could not cure here 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 one could heal the woman for 12 years, but Jesus 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 5:14; 19:11-12). Even though her knowledge was imperfect she believed that Jesus could heal her, and Jesus honored that faith.

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<sup>265</sup>Liefeld, p. 916.

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 someone with faith drew on His power without His conscious selection of her. Evidently God healed the woman through Jesus without Jesus' awareness. Likewise God sometimes brings blessing to others through His children without those believers being aware of it. Jesus meant that God's power had gone from Him to another person, but not that He consequently felt 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 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 know what had happened."<sup>266</sup>

8:47-48 The woman's embarrassment was undoubtedly due to her illness and to her presumption in mingling with a crowd even though she was 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 after a private deliverance as a good example for his readers to follow (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). Jesus then corrected a possible misunderstanding that her healing had 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).

#### **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. . . .

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<sup>266</sup>Morris, pp. 160-61.

"We often struggle to understand God's timing. In fact, much of faith is related to accepting God's timing for events."<sup>267</sup>

8:51-53 Jairus' faith is evident in his continuing on with Jesus and allowing Him to enter his house. Perhaps Jesus only allowed 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 when she "awoke."<sup>268</sup> More significantly His command to keep this incident quiet 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. Obviously she 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). He evidently extended His hand to offer her assistance in sitting up rather than 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>269</sup>

This double miracle brings this section on Jesus' mighty works to a climax. The point Luke was stressing 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

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<sup>267</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 248, 249.

<sup>268</sup>Morris, p. 161.

<sup>269</sup>Wiersbe, 1:204.

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, but it also requires a patient waiting on the Lord, for the Father does know best."<sup>270</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 this time the Twelve appear 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. 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. 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). The parallel Gospel accounts refer only to authority. In both his Gospel and in Acts, Luke stressed the validation of gospel preaching with signs and 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

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<sup>270</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 250.



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. They were not to take a walking staff (Gr. *hrabdos*) used on a long journey by foot (cf. Matt. 10:10). Mark 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>271</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 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.

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 as He had done preaching and healing (cf. Acts).

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<sup>271</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 354.

**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. 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 he 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 appears 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). It was perhaps the most forceful demonstration of Jesus' deity to the disciples. 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. Jesus' compassion for the people also contrasts with the disciples' unconcern.

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 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>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup>Wiersbe, 1:205.

- 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 came to Him.
- 9:12-13 Jesus undoubtedly used this suggestion as a teaching device to face 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 leftovers. 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'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 tied the questions of 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. He 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 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. This is how Moslems view Jesus today. Rather he 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 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 stress 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 rise from the dead was, therefore, not due to its actual impossibility but to its improbability 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 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>273</sup> Carrying one's own cross therefore implied bearing the reproach and burden associated with one's chosen way of life. To do this daily 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 and bear the consequences of their choice that 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).
- 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 follow Him faithfully. Moreover it involves giving up oneself 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 or 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 . . ."274
- "What is gained in Christ far outweighs all that is lost for Christ."275
- 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 God in which three disciples saw Jesus in the glorified state that will be

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<sup>273</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 373.

<sup>274</sup>Martin, pp. 229-230.

<sup>275</sup>Bailey, p. 121.

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. Still 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 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. 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.

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 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 to set it off in some special

symbolic way as similar to Mt. Sinai and or Mt. Olivet (cf. Mt. Olympus).<sup>276</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>277</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>278</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 prayer can have on people. It transforms them 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>279</sup> The three disciples evidently saw Jesus as He will appear in His glorified state at His second coming.

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). 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. 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.

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<sup>276</sup>Liefeld, p. 926.

<sup>277</sup>See idem, "Theological Motifs in the Transfiguration Narrative," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, p. 167, footnote 27.

<sup>278</sup>Morris, p. 172.

<sup>279</sup>Danker, p. 116.

9:31 Luke described Moses and Elijah as appearing "in glory" (NASB) or "glorious splendor" (NIV). They seemingly 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 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>280</sup> Jesus' exodus would open up a whole new wilderness experience for the church to tread as Moses' Exodus did for the Israelites (cf. Acts 13:24).

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 departure."<sup>281</sup>

9:32 This information is also unique to the third Gospel. Evidently the three disciples had been sleeping or had almost fallen asleep while Jesus was praying (v. 29; cf. 22:45). Thus they were not ready spiritually 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. Moreover by suggesting their construction he was perhaps unconsciously though nonetheless effectively promoting a delay of Jesus' departure to Jerusalem. He naturally viewed Jerusalem as a place to avoid in view of 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 those 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).

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<sup>280</sup>See J. Manek, "The New Exodus in the Books of Luke," *Novum Testamentum* 2 (1955):8-23.

<sup>281</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 271.



"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 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>282</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 fearful (cf. Matt. 17:5-7).

9:35 For a second time God spoke from heaven identifying Jesus as His Son (cf. 3:22). God's words here also show that Jesus was God's obedient Son and that He possessed divine authority. 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>283</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>284</sup>

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<sup>282</sup>Bailey, p. 121.

<sup>283</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 273.

<sup>284</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 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>285</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 Luke's emphasis falls on Jesus' authority. This is the first of four incidents that show 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 identify 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). Demons produced the symptoms of epilepsy in this boy, though not every case of epilepsy is the result of demon affliction, of course. Unfortunately through 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. 2 Kings 4:31) set the stage for a great demonstration of Jesus' unique power and authority (v. 42).

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<sup>285</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 389.

- 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.

- 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 sets their incomprehension off more strikingly. This announcement contained new information about His passion, namely, that 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. Most important they did not understand because God hid this understanding from them (cf. 24:16). 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>286</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>287</sup>

Thus there was a "suffering secret" as well as a "messianic secret" in Jesus ministry.<sup>288</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 desire first for position and then prestige in the kingdom. Their inappropriate attitudes are instructive for all Christian disciples.

#### **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 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.

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<sup>286</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>287</sup>Tannehill, 1:227.

<sup>288</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 393.

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>289</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 indeed minister to Jesus and to God the Father. The principle is that the disciple who is willing to sacrifice personal advancement to serve insignificant people, as the world views people, is truly great in God's estimation (cf. Matt. 25:35-40; Mark 9:41).

#### **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. Again Luke's account of this incident omits details 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. 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. The section consists largely of instruction that Jesus gave His disciples with only brief references to geographic movements. 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. 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.

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<sup>289</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "pais," by Albrecht Oepke, 5:639-52.

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>290</sup>

### **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 clearer.

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 who are similar to the Samaritans.

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

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<sup>290</sup>See Bailey, p. 123, for a diagram of the chiasm.

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 view 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 His disciples. They were not on a preaching mission. Normally Jewish pilgrims on their way from Galilee to Jerusalem passed through Samaria.<sup>291</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 pureblooded descendants of the Israelites who remained in the land.<sup>292</sup> Eventually the Samaritans rejected the Jewish Scriptures except the Pentateuch. The two groups of people were still mutually hostile in Jesus' day (cf. John 4:9).<sup>293</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. 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.

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.

<sup>291</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 406.

<sup>292</sup>Zondervan *Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Samaritans," by J. L. Kelso, pp. 244-47.

<sup>293</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, pp. 352-58.

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.

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. This 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). 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>294</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>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup>Bailey, p. 124.

<sup>295</sup>Morris, p. 180.



The dead whom Jesus said should bury the dead probably were the spiritually dead who did not believe in Jesus. The mission of believers was more important than even discharging customary family obligations when these conflicted with discipleship responsibilities. It is hard to imagine how Jesus could have set forth the importance of immediate and wholehearted participation in God's program more forcefully.

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.

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 did not record 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 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 because of why they believe Jesus may have 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>296</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>297</sup> Another view is that the 72 translators of the Septuagint influenced Him.<sup>298</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>299</sup>

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 God to send every qualified messenger out into the "field" and that none would fail to participate in this mission. Thus this verse expresses 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 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

<sup>296</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "hepta," by K. H. Rengstorff, 2:634-35.

<sup>297</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 415; and Morris, p. 181.

<sup>298</sup>S. Jellicoe, "St Luke and the Seventy-two," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1960):319-21; Tannehill, 1:233.

<sup>299</sup>J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, p. 235.

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 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 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). 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, namely, a man marked by the fullness of God's blessing on his life, the disciple's 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>300</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 that 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.

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<sup>300</sup>Morris, p. 182.

- 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. The mention 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. If the people had believed in Jesus, the kingdom would have begun shortly. The kingdom was near then spatially and temporally.
- 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.
- 10:13-14 The traditional site of Chorazin is at the north end of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>301</sup> Bethsaida 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 ones, 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>301</sup>Finegan, *The Archaeology* . . . , pp. 57-58.

judgment undoubtedly grew out of 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 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 tell them just 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 because they participated 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 symbolized by 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>302</sup>

10:19 The power that Jesus had given the Seventy to escape injury symbolized 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 and scorpions because they represented these spiritual foes (cf. Gen. 3:15). In other words, 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. 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 demons was, a greater cause for rejoicing was the Seventy's assurance that God would reward them. 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.

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

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<sup>302</sup>Morris, p. 185.

containing the names of the lost and their deeds (Rev. 20:12). There is a book with the names of the elect 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 keep records in since He knows all. This 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 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 His 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 the humble (cf. 1:48-55; 8:10; 1 Cor. 1:18-31). The last sentence 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 had of understanding God's ways as they participated in His mission.

10:22 This verse 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 what these disciples saw were blessed or fortunate. What they saw was 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 was 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). 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>303</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>303</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). Jesus affirmed that the lawyer had answered correctly (Gr. *orthos*, from which we get the word "orthodox"). However, He proceeded to assure 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. *plēsion*) 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 foreigners from this category.<sup>304</sup>

### **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.

- 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>305</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,

<sup>304</sup>See John Bowman, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Expository Times* 59 (1947-48):151-53, 248-49.

<sup>305</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 943; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 447.

which would have been a common reaction, and suffered a near fatal beating.

- 10:31 Jesus described the priest as happening 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 recorded the priest's unloving act 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.
- 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.
- 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 were again irrelevant. The Samaritan's compassion contrasts with the callousness of the priest and the Levite toward one of their own "neighbors." Oil soothed the victim's wounds, and wine disinfected them.<sup>306</sup> The Samaritan's love was obvious in his willingness to inconvenience himself and to make 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>307</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 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 showed compassion, whereas the true neighbor had.

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<sup>306</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 204.

<sup>307</sup>Idem, *Jerusalem in . . .*, p. 122.

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 man 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 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 one's neighbor. They 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.

## **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>308</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

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<sup>308</sup>Morris, p. 191.

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).

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>309</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>310</sup> She expressed concern that Jesus did not discourage Mary from sitting at His feet. She wanted Him to encourage Mary to help her with her hostess duties.

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. She had allowed her duties as hostess to become too burdensome. 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. 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 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.

"Few things are as damaging to the Christian life as trying to work for Christ without taking time to commune with Christ. . . .

"If serving Christ makes us difficult to live with, then something is terribly wrong with our service!"<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 944.

<sup>310</sup>H. K. Luce, *The Gospel according to S. Luke*, p. 208.

<sup>311</sup>Wiersbe, 1:213.

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>312</sup>

### **3. The relation of disciples to God the Father 11:1-13**

Jesus continued to point out the disciple's 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 in 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 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

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<sup>312</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 305.

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. They seem to have felt the need for help in learning to pray more than in learning how to preach. The disciples did not ask for instruction on the subject of prayer theoretically. They wanted help 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>313</sup>

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 as 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>314</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>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 456.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid.

<sup>315</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 947.

This view finds support in the recurrence of the aorist tense and a specific reference to the 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.

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>316</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 generally 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.

- 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 forgiveness from the 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

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<sup>316</sup>Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Daily Bread Motif in Antiquity," *Westminster Theological Journal* 28 (1965-66):147-56.



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. 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>317</sup>

### **The parable of the persistent 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>318</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>319</sup>

- 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 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 that this was an inconvenient time for the neighbor. Jesus did not explain why the man came so late, and the reason is immaterial.
- 11:7-8 This unfriendly behavior of this "friend" is understandable since in the typical one-room Palestinian home the whole family, and even often the household animals, all slept near each other. In the parable the sleeping neighbor's desire to avoid shame in the eyes of the knocking host, and

<sup>317</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>318</sup>See C. Samuel Storms, *Reaching God's Ear*, for a fuller development of this truth.

<sup>319</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 462.

probably in the eyes of all his neighbors once his inhospitable behavior became known, led him to get up and give his neighbor bread. The Greek word *anaideia* means shameless, or avoidance of shame, not persistence.<sup>320</sup>

Jesus was contrasting, not comparing, God's attitude with the friend's attitude (vv. 9-13).<sup>321</sup> God's attitude toward His children is the opposite of the attitude of the friend toward his knocking neighbor. God will not grant answers to prayer to avoid shame, as this man did. He will grant them unselfishly and lovingly. Jesus' point was that if shame was effective with such a friend how much more eagerly shall the heavenly Father respond when His children make requests of Him. God is more than the friend of disciples; He is their father.

### Encouragements to pray 11:9-13

Jesus continue 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 (v. 13). Jesus urged His disciples to pray. He probably meant that we must ask 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>322</sup>

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.

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

<sup>320</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.

<sup>321</sup>See Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, pp. 125-33.

<sup>322</sup>Wiersbe, 1:215. Author's italics removed.

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 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 when curled up, large Palestinian scorpions can resemble eggs. 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 does this when we trust in His Son (Rom. 8:9).

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.

In this important teaching on prayer Jesus gave His disciples a distinctive prayer to pray that expressed appropriate concerns for them because of 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 disciple's privileged relationship to Him.<sup>323</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 rejection.

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<sup>323</sup>For a biblical theology of prayer, see Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer*.

**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 whether 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>324</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 dumb. This sign of His messiahship amazed the multitudes that observed it (cf. 4:36; 9:42-43; 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>325</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. He 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 (cf. Acts 19:13-14). Jesus' antagonists would have been unwilling to concede that. They wanted to maintain a double standard believing that their approved exorcists operated with God's power, but Jesus used

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<sup>324</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 317.

<sup>325</sup>Tannehill, 1:150.

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., action) 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.

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 overcome 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 did not gather people as sheaves and sheep into the barn and fold of the kingdom with Jesus scattered them abroad. There was no neutral ground. People either supported Jesus or opposed Him.

11:24-26 These verses were probably a word of warning to Jesus' critics who were scattering rather than gathering with Him (v. 23).<sup>326</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, called out from the crowd, triggered this response from Jesus that provides a fitting conclusion to the previous incident.

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<sup>326</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 479.

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 complementing Jesus. His response did not reflect unfavorably on Mary. 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 should also warn us against venerating Mary too highly.

### **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).

11:31-32 The Queen of the South (i.e., Sheba) traveled a great distance to hear Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-13), yet the people of Palestine 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 of 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 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>327</sup> Significantly for Luke's

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<sup>327</sup>Morris, p. 202.

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 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. 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.
- 11:35 If a person rejects Jesus' light (truth) for another so-called light, he or she will discover that that other light brings no true illumination. 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 as individuals.

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>328</sup>

Probably we are again dealing with two different teaching occasions.

**The question of true cleanliness 11:37-41**

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. 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>329</sup>

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<sup>328</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 492.

<sup>329</sup>Plummer, p. 310.



"The way to clean up a dirty vocabulary is not to brush your teeth but to cleanse your heart."<sup>330</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.

### **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>331</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 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 defiling many other people who were unaware of the Pharisees' evil influence on them. Their sins contaminated the whole nation.

### **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 from 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 law 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

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<sup>330</sup>Wiersbe, 1:217.

<sup>331</sup>Morris, p. 204.

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 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 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>332</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. That was really what they were doing 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 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>333</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.

The "Wisdom of God" may be a title for Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3).<sup>334</sup> However it seems unusual for Jesus to refer to Himself this way. Moreover what follows is Old Testament revelation. It could mean "God in His wisdom" making God the source of the words that follow (NIV).<sup>335</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>336</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>332</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>333</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>334</sup>Geldenhuis, p. 346.

<sup>335</sup>Danker, p. 146; Manson, p. 102.

<sup>336</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) whom He sent to 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 Son, not just His servants (cf. 20:9-19). It would prove to be the rejection that would add the last measure of guilt that would result in God pouring out His wrath 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, would not enter into the knowledge that acceptance of His teachings would have opened to them. Moreover 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>337</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 their

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<sup>337</sup>E.g., *Ibid.*, p. 507.

expertise. Now they sought to defend themselves by discrediting Him. They plotted 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 (v. 53). 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 mark disciples of Jesus if we 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>338</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.

"The coming judgment and the need for proper preparation are the threads that tie all of chapter 12 together."<sup>339</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.

#### **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

<sup>338</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 333.

<sup>339</sup>M. Bailey, p. 129.

view. In spite of this antagonism, Jesus had a very large following (Gr. *myriadon*, lit. ten thousand, but used here 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.

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 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>340</sup>

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. The word expressed confidence in the disciples and approval of them as those entrusted with His secrets and those 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 that the disciples would end up in 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 cited God's punitive

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<sup>340</sup>Morris, p. 208.

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>341</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. The cent (Gr. *assarion*) was a Roman coin worth about one sixteenth of a denarius, a day's wage (cf. Matt. 10:29). 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 or denying Him publicly were the disciples' options (cf. 9:26). Confessing (Gr. *homolgesei*) and denying (Gr. *arnesetai*) are polar expressions. In polarization extreme terms stress 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 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.
- 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

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<sup>341</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 959.

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 Spirit that 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 to their faith in Jesus boldly when faced with 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>342</sup>

## **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>343</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 By asking this question, Jesus forced the man to consider who Jesus was. This was the fundamental issue for this man. He had appealed to Jesus as a

<sup>342</sup>Tannehill, 1:244.

<sup>343</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 521.

judge, as the Jews often appealed to rabbis to settle such disputes.<sup>344</sup> Jesus asked if he realized what He was doing. Really 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>345</sup>

12:15 Jesus warned the man and the crowd, including His disciples, against every form of greed. 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 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).

### **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

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<sup>344</sup>Morris, p. 212.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid.



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 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 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>346</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 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>347</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 refrain from undue concern about possessions. The life (Gr. *psyche*) in

<sup>346</sup>M. Bailey, p. 129.

<sup>347</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 346.

view is the physical life 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 is foolish because life consists of more than what one eats and wears (cf. 4:4).

12:24 The raven illustration shows that God provides for His creatures. The implication is that God will provide for people, and even more so disciples, since they are more important to Him than birds. Jesus' choice of a raven for His illustration is interesting since ravens were unclean (Lev. 11:15) and are infamous for not feeding their own young, yet God sees that the young ravens eat. Birds do not and cannot provide for themselves as humans do and can, but God still provides for 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 really 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 farther outside our control.<sup>348</sup> The smaller matters include living longer and the larger 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 dependent on God. Still He provides for them and does so magnificently. He gives every common flower more glorious clothing than Solomon,

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<sup>348</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 963.

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) that 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.

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.

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 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). Likewise 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 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). Faithful disciples will receive an inheritance eventually.<sup>349</sup>

12:33 In view of this prospect Jesus' disciples should strip down and live simply so they could seek the kingdom without unnecessary materialistic distractions. By getting rid of their possessions they were in effect preparing to receive their reward. Jesus pictured this as making purses in anticipation of receiving something to put in them, namely, eternal rewards. Such purses would not wear out in contrast to the purses 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>350</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 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>351</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 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 affect objective change (vv. 25-28). Third, He noted that

<sup>349</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>350</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 352.

<sup>351</sup>Tannehill, 1:247-48.

worry characterizes pagans (vv. 29-31). Then He encouraged them with a reason 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). Likewise 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 in the future as they do in the present.

#### **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). This event will precede His second coming to the earth (Rev. 19). Jesus was not referring to the messianic banquet 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.

12:37-38 The blessing that Jesus promised was that the Master would serve His servants. 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.

"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>352</sup>

Messiah will continue to serve His people during the messianic kingdom, but He will honor the faithful 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 present the present world as a place of darkness in which a disciple can sleep rather than bear witness.<sup>353</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. This illustration gives a warning whereas the previous one provided encouragement. The previous one presented the possibility of delay, but the present one stresses sudden and unexpected arrival.<sup>354</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 would be unexpected because the exact day and hour were unknown, and His return would surprise many people (cf. Matt. 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13; Mark 13:32-33, 35).

### **The importance of faithfulness 12:41-48**

Faithfulness is important for disciples in view of the Lord's return as well as 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 and 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 it gave Peter the answer to his question. Obviously the faithful and sensible steward pictures a disciple. Jesus' question also taught that He would give

<sup>352</sup>Ibid., 1:218. Cf. 13:28-29; 14:15-24; and 22:16, 18 and 30.

<sup>353</sup>E. Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament*, pp. 84-91.

<sup>354</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 538.

such disciples authority over other servants of His in the future (i.e., in the kingdom). Evidently Jesus meant that faithful disciples would have authority over His other servants in the 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 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 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 unbelievers when Jesus returns.<sup>355</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 are unbelievers. Their horrible end is appropriate since they had great privilege and great responsibility but failed in their duty.
- 12:47-48 Jesus clarified the standard by which He would judge these unfaithful servants. 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 us to maintain our faithfulness as we increase our knowledge. All God's servants have a responsibility to know their Master's will as fully as we can, since we 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>356</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

<sup>355</sup>See Karl E. Pagenkemper, "Rejection Imagery in the Synoptic Parables," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:610 (April-June 1996):191-94.

<sup>356</sup>Tannehill, 1:250.

time when Israel had better respond before becoming nationally culpable for rejecting God's messenger."<sup>357</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 signification in Scripture. He had just spoken of judging unfaithful 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.

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 He will exercise judgment.

12:51-53 Evidently Jesus meant that He did not just come to bring 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 difference of opinion that divided people was their beliefs about Jesus' person and work. This situation would continue. No physical relationship would escape the possibility of this division (cf. Mic. 7:6). This situation posed a crisis for the future. Historically 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>358</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

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<sup>357</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 363.

<sup>358</sup>Tannehill, 1:252.



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 the people to join the ranks of His faithful disciples before it was too late.

12:54-55 Rain clouds moved in from the Mediterranean to the west and usually indicated showers. Southerly winds often brought hotter weather from the desert that lay in that general direction.

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 that He recognized that their professed inability to recognize Messiah's appearance was unreal. 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>359</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 to 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 (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 to get his or her friends and or relatives out of hell. 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). Jesus probably did not say the person in prison in His illustration had to stay there forever because in the prison in His illustration one could get out if he paid his debt. 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>359</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 then did non-priests offer sacrifices.<sup>360</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.
- 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 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, and all sin brings judgment.
- 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.<sup>361</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 than people who do not. More important, all people 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 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

<sup>360</sup>J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, p. 207, footnote 4.

<sup>361</sup>See the diagram "Jerusalem in New Testament Times" at the end of these notes.

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.

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.

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 affect change 13:10-17**

There are several thematic connections that tie this pericope with what has preceded and 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>362</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>363</sup> As usual, Luke noted the extent and duration of the affliction to stress 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

<sup>362</sup>Tannehill, 1:157-58.

<sup>363</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 971.

equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."<sup>364</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, or *skoliasis hysterica*, a hysterically induced paralysis, or some other condition.<sup>365</sup>

- 13:12-13 Perhaps Jesus called the woman to Himself rather than going to her so everyone present would see what He would do. Again Jesus healed the 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 recognized thereby 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. Instead of praising God with the woman he criticized 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>366</sup>
- 13:15-16 Jesus' 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 this 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 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 then.

"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>367</sup>

<sup>364</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 9.

<sup>365</sup>See J. Wilkinson, "The Case of the Bent Woman in Luke 13:10-17," *Evangelical Quarterly* 49 (1977):195-205.

<sup>366</sup>Martin, p. 240.

<sup>367</sup>Tannehill, 1:84.

13:17 Jesus' action caused a double reaction. His opponents felt humiliated because Jesus' obviously had divine power and compassion, but they had been criticizing Him (cf. Isa. 45:16). The multitudes rejoiced 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.

### **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 clear-cut 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 the same teaching on another 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 in the preaching of Jesus, but it will grow to be a very large entity. It will eventually encompass the whole earth and the entire human race (Ps. 2; et al.). Luke did not mention its small beginning, only its large final form.

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 profit 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) and the power that results in the tree's unusual growth into a worldwide kingdom.

### **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 more than the first one did. The idea of mysterious growth also carries over.

"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>368</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 that the other Gospel writers wrote that He used 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.

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<sup>368</sup>Morris, p. 225.

- 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 meant the door was the way He taught in contrast to the more popular way that the religious leaders taught. Striving consisted of believing Jesus in spite of 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>369</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. Here Jesus 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>370</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 then to enter the kingdom (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

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<sup>369</sup>John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>370</sup>See Pagenkemper, pp. 183-86, 188-90.

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 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. 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.

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>371</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>372</sup> In this case the days would refer to the time of present opportunity culminating in the end of that opportunity.<sup>373</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 with the tradition of prophets who had died there 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 prophets it was appropriate for Him to die there too.

13:34-35 The double reference to 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 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.

"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>374</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>371</sup>Hoehner, p. 62.

<sup>372</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 571-72.

<sup>373</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 974.

<sup>374</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. 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**

- 14:1           The setting for what follows 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 (v. 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 said: 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 kidneys.<sup>375</sup> The rabbis regarded this disease as the result of immorality.<sup>376</sup>
- 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.

<sup>375</sup>Zondervan *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Diseases of the Bible," by R. H. Pousma, 2:134.

<sup>376</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 579.

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 and even an animal in such a situation (cf. Exod. 23:4-5).<sup>377</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. Moreover 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 one was to the host, who reclined at the center or bottom of the U, the higher was his status. Jesus' fellow guests had tried to get the places closest to their host that implied 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 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 would experience exaltation by God in the kingdom when it began (v. 11).

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<sup>377</sup>Mishnah *Shabbath* 128b.

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 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>378</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 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*) is Jesus. The people invited were the Jews primarily. In Jesus' day a banquet took a long time to prepare.<sup>379</sup> Likewise 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. 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 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. These individuals represent the many who had declined to accept Jesus' gospel invitation for similar reasons.

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<sup>378</sup>Zane C. Hodges, "Stop and Think! (Luke 14:13-14), Rewardable Hospitality," *The KERUGMA Message* 3:1 (Spring 1993):3.

<sup>379</sup>Morris, p. 233.

14:21-22 The host legitimately felt 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 people correspond to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. The other people the host included 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>380</sup> The servant's commission was urgent because the feast waited for guests.<sup>381</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. Compelling (Gr. *anagkazo*) did not involve forcing them against their wills but urging them to come. It manifested "an insistent hospitality."<sup>382</sup> These people doubtless represent the remainder of 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 but 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 favor and therefore happy. 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

<sup>380</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 978.

<sup>381</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 590.

<sup>382</sup>Manson, p. 130.

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>383</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 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. 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.

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>384</sup>

"Discipleship means giving one's first loyalty."<sup>385</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 count the cost before they embarked on a life of discipleship.

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<sup>383</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 591.

<sup>384</sup>Wiersbe, 1:232.

<sup>385</sup>Morris, p. 235.

"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>386</sup>

A person who begins following Jesus and then stops following 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 first 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>387</sup>

14:33 Jesus now applied the parables (cf. vv. 26-27). Obviously the Twelve had not given away everything they owned, but they had adopted a lifestyle conducive to fulfilling their mission that 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 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 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>388</sup> All of these

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<sup>386</sup>Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* pp. 80, 82.

<sup>387</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>388</sup>Eugene P. Deatrick, "Salt, Soil, Savor," *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (1962):44-45.



uses are in view in this passage. 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>389</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 they could preserve it as fertilizer until they needed to use it.<sup>390</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 then choose to follow Him faithfully.

"His [Luke's] main point is that successful discipleship requires Jesus to be a priority in life."<sup>391</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.

### **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 that group of needy spiritual outcasts as responding to Jesus' ministry. However, he 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. 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>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup>Donald A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Matthew-Luke*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 138.

<sup>390</sup>Deatrick, p. 46.

<sup>391</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 401.

<sup>392</sup>Morris, p. 237.

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>393</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>394</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 stress 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.

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>395</sup> It was also normal for a shepherd to count his sheep every night.<sup>396</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.

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.

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<sup>393</sup>J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 99.

<sup>394</sup>M. Bailey, p. 135.

<sup>395</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 133.

<sup>396</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 981.

### **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. 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>397</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 carelessness. Peasants' houses in Palestine normally had no windows, so she needed to get a lamp to help her see.<sup>398</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>399</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>400</sup>

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. 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 the 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 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

<sup>397</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, p. 100; idem, *The Parables . . .*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>398</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 603.

<sup>399</sup>See A. F. Walls, "In the Presence of the Angels' (Luke xv. 10)," *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959):314-16.

<sup>400</sup>Morris, p. 239.

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>401</sup>

### 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). Therefore 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>402</sup> Jesus did not explain the exact terms of the settlement since they were insignificant details. However the 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>403</sup>

This father's willingness to accommodate his younger son's request shows that he was gracious and generous. Evidently 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>404</sup>

15:13-16 Evidently the son turned his assets into cash and then departed to have fun. He may have wanted to "find himself," but he ended up losing himself. 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 son was willing to do this because his need had become so great. The pigs and the son evidently ate the seeds of carob trees.<sup>405</sup> This was not very nourishing or appetizing fare. He had sunk so low that no one showed him any compassion.

". . . neither sense nor reason exists in sin but the very contrary."<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>401</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 412.

<sup>402</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, p. 107.

<sup>403</sup>M. Bailey, p. 164.

<sup>404</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 607.

<sup>405</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 984.

<sup>406</sup>Lenski, p. 812.

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>407</sup> He changed his mind about 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 since his father had a reputation for paying his servants generously (v. 17).

". . . the boy's proposal indicates that, while he desires the father's house, he doesn't understand the father's heart."<sup>408</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 contrasts with the elder brother's attitude and the Pharisees' attitude. The father initiated the restoration of fellowship before the son could articulate his confession. The word translated "kissed" (Gr. *katephilesen*) may mean either "kissed many times" or "kissed tenderly."<sup>409</sup>

15:21-24 Evidently the father cut his son's confession short because he knew what was in his heart. 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>410</sup> Then he prepared a banquet for him that 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

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<sup>407</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>408</sup>Gary Inrig, *The Parables: Understanding What Jesus Meant*, p. 19.

<sup>409</sup>Morris, p. 242.

<sup>410</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 130.

future. What made the difference? Instead of saying, 'Father, *give* me!' he said, 'Father, *make* me!' He was willing to be a servant!"<sup>411</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>412</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 teach 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 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>413</sup>

"To an alarming degree it [the evangelical church of today] has lost touch with the unconditional love of God."<sup>414</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 likewise 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

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<sup>411</sup>Wiersbe, 1:236.

<sup>412</sup>Ibid., 1:233-35.

<sup>413</sup>Inrig, pp. 20-21.

<sup>414</sup>Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* p. 18.

apparently because of his preoccupation with work and his distant relationship with his father.

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 as the father reached out to his older son.

15:29-30 After a disrespectful address, the older son boasted of what he had done for his father and then blamed him for not giving him more. Clearly he felt that the father's response should reflect 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>415</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>416</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 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>417</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 stressed his older son's privileged position as always enjoying 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. It was necessary (right, not just good) to celebrate the return of sinners, implying that the older brother should have joined in the rejoicing.

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<sup>415</sup>Inrig, p. 25.

<sup>416</sup>Wiersbe, 1:236.

<sup>417</sup>Morris, p. 244.

The reason for the rejoicing was the salvation of the lost. 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.

"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>418</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. Moreover the younger son received a position that he had not enjoyed previously when 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>419</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 (13:34-35), Jesus' mission primarily to the Jews declines and His worldwide mission to the Gentiles becomes an ever-increasing emphasis.

### **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. All the teaching in this chapter deals with material possessions. The section begins with instruction for the disciples but 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>420</sup>

<sup>418</sup>Pentecost, *The Parables* . . . , p. 105.

<sup>419</sup>Martin, p. 244.

<sup>420</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 418.



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 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 an agent 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.

16:2 There is no indication in the parable whether the agent failed his master innocently or deliberately. That is unimportant. For whatever reason his 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 agent 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 agent'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. The amounts these debtors owed were quite large. 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.

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>421</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 agent had chosen to cheat his

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<sup>421</sup>Derrett, *Law in . . .*, pp. 72-73.

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>422</sup> The agent could well have received a commission for each of the transactions that he had negotiated for his employer and deducted these commissions from the debtors' costs. Even a 100 percent commission (v. 6) was not unknown in Jesus' culture.<sup>423</sup> Probably the commission was part of the original bill.<sup>424</sup> Another possibility is that the steward eliminated his fee plus illegal interest that had been charged.<sup>425</sup> It appears that the steward cancelled the interest due that would have come to him as a commission.

- 16:8 Jesus commended the agent's shrewdness or prudence (Gr. *phronimos*, i.e., practical wisdom) in spending his (the steward's) wealth (his commission) to secure his future (cf. 12:42). He commended him for his wise use of opportunity. He did not, of course, approve of his squandering his master's money earlier through incompetence or dishonesty (v. 1), whichever option may have characterized him. That simply marked him as an unrighteous man. The fact that he had not been shrewd at first sets off his later shrewdness as even more commendable.

The sons of this age are unrighteous unbelievers who live simply 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 as we 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 to make friends who would welcome them into the kingdom and heaven 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. Jesus pictured the converts as dying before the disciples and welcoming them into heaven when the disciples arrived. Disciples should use our money to lead people to Jesus Christ. We should not consume it all on ourselves or pass it all on to our heirs or hoard it, but invest it in "the Lord's work."

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<sup>422</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 J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 4:317-19.

<sup>423</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 619.

<sup>424</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>425</sup>Inrig, p. 112.

The word "mammon" is a transliteration of the Aramaic word *mamon* meaning "what one trusts" and therefore "wealth." "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>426</sup>

The reason Jesus taught this lesson appears to have been the Pharisees' money-grabbing reputation (cf. v. 14; 20:47). This 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.

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. 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 as well as his or her treasure. If disciples squander what God has entrusted to their care on the earth, who will give 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

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<sup>426</sup>Pentecost, *The Parables* . . . , p. 110.

God's rival. Disciples obviously can serve God and mammon, but they cannot be the servant, in the true sense of that word, of both God and mammon. They can only be the servant of one.<sup>427</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).

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.

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 come the message that he and Jesus had proclaimed had been that the Messiah was present and the kingdom was at hand. A new era had begun with John's preaching, 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 trying to get 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

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<sup>427</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.

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>428</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 them did not grant women the same privilege.<sup>429</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>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup>Morris, p. 251.

<sup>429</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 631.

<sup>430</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 429.

### 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, of which Lazarus is the Greek form of the name, to Sodom to test the hospitality of its citizens may lie behind this parable.<sup>431</sup> Jesus may have built this 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 flamboyantly in 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. Lazarus on the other hand was poor, incapacitated, begging, diseased, hungry, unclean, and despised. These descriptions prepare 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>432</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>433</sup>

Lazarus was a common name, the equivalent of the Hebrew Eleazar, meaning "whom God has helped." Abraham, also mentioned in this

<sup>431</sup>Derrett, *Law in . . .*, pp. 86-92.

<sup>432</sup>R. Summers, *Commentary on Luke*.

<sup>433</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 431.

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>434</sup> One such writer concluded that Jesus was teaching that severe judgment would come on the Jews if they failed to repent.<sup>435</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>436</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 callousness. It is not simply being wealthy but this callousness toward the suffering poor which is condemned in the parable."<sup>437</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 and 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) seems to be 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>434</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.

<sup>435</sup>C. H. Cave, "Lazarus and the Lucan Deuteronomy," *New Testament Studies* 15 (1968-67):319-25.

<sup>436</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 634-35.

<sup>437</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:131.

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. The rich man still viewed Lazarus as a servant who could 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.

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). 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. Lazarus had been one of those poor and crippled that had responded to Jesus' invitation and had become a believer (cf. 4:18; 14:13, 21).

16:27-31 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 implied that they would not believe on Jesus even though Jesus would rise from the dead (cf. 9:22; 11:29-30; 13:32). 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.

"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>438</sup>

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<sup>438</sup>Morris, p. 154.



Not long after this teaching Jesus did raise someone from the dead who bore witness to Jesus' 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 raised the other Lazarus from the dead.

These verses should warn us against putting too much hope in signs and wonders as what will 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 the disciples and the Pharisees. They should serve God as faithful servants rather than serving mammon. 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>439</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>440</sup>

#### **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.

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<sup>439</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 432.

<sup>440</sup>M. Bailey, p. 137.

### **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>441</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 though 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>442</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>443</sup>

<sup>441</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 642.

<sup>442</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 994.

<sup>443</sup>Manson, p. 141.

"It is not so much great faith in God that is required as faith in a great God."<sup>444</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 one 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 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,

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<sup>444</sup>Morris, p. 256.

though it does that. It is rather another lesson for the disciples on an important attitude that should characterize them.

"Not only is this narrative peculiar to Luke, but it also stresses several characteristically Lukan themes. Jerusalem is the goal of Jesus' journey (cf. 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>445</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.

This incident happened somewhere close to the border between southern Galilee and northern Samaria. This accounts for the mixture 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. They realized that their only hope for healing was His 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 healing. 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. However these lepers could have refused to go and 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 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.

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<sup>445</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 995.

- 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; 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.
- 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>446</sup>

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<sup>446</sup>Manson, p. 304.

Jesus probably meant that signs that the Pharisees asked Jesus to perform would not precede the messianic kingdom (11:29). Another view is that Jesus meant no signs that people can observe will precede the kingdom.<sup>447</sup> However, He told the disciples that the sign of the coming of the Son of Man would precede it (Matt. 24:3, 27). A third view is that Jesus meant that the coming of the kingdom would not be an observable process.<sup>448</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>449</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>450</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>451</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>452</sup> Moreover even if the kingdom were internal, it would hardly have been within the unbelieving Pharisees whom Jesus was addressing. It was in their midst or among them in that the Messiah was standing right in their presence. If they had believed on Him, the kingdom would have begun shortly, immediately after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, ascension, the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 9:24-27), and His return. It was within their reach.<sup>453</sup>

## **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).

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<sup>447</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 654-55; Manson, p. 304.

<sup>448</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 997.

<sup>449</sup>R. J. Sneed, "'The Kingdom of God is within you' (Lk. 17, 21)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24 (1962):363-82.

<sup>450</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 653.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid., p. 655. Cf. Morris, p. 259.

<sup>452</sup>Manson, p. 304; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 655.

<sup>453</sup>C. H. Roberts, "The Kingdom of Heaven (Lk. xvii. 21)," *Harvard Theological Review* 41 (1948):1-8.

This one stresses the distant future and the Second Coming. The one 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>454</sup> The use of "Son of Man" recalls Daniel 7:13-14 that predicts the earthly reign of Messiah. The disciples would desire to see the kingdom come because they would experience 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 would 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 then in it. Everyone will know when it begins. 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. 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 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 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

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<sup>454</sup>Plummer, p. 407.

was picturing the worst kinds of evil running rampant. Destruction unexpected by most people fell quickly and interrupted normal daily living.

- 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). Likewise 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 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 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 either time. Of course, 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). Then Jesus will take the godly into heaven and will leave the unbelievers on earth to enter the Tribulation.<sup>455</sup>

A scribe probably inserted verse 36 (cf. Matt. 24:40). It is absent in the best ancient Greek manuscripts.

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<sup>455</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.



### **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 indicate the coming of one to clean it up. Similarly the presence of a dead body outdoors indicated that a vulture would be along soon to eat the carrion (cf. Matt. 24:28; Rev. 19:21). Jesus may have been using a proverbial expression.

"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>456</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. 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 praying and not to grow discouraged. The reference to "all times" or "always" 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.

"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>457</sup>

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<sup>456</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 137.

<sup>457</sup>Morris, p. 262.

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>458</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>459</sup> In first-century Palestine a single judge often handled the type of monetary case that this widow presented to this judge.<sup>460</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>461</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 persistence is effective with unjust judges. How much more will it be effective 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).<sup>462</sup> He granted her request for selfish reasons.

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. 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 a stranger to the unjust judge. Moreover Jesus said He would not delay to give the protection His disciples need.

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<sup>458</sup>Danker, p. 184.

<sup>459</sup>See J. D. M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: The Unjust Judge," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1071-72):178-91.

<sup>460</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 153.

<sup>461</sup>Plummer, p. 412.

<sup>462</sup>Derrett, "Law in . . .," p. 191.

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>463</sup>

Jesus' final question suggests that there will be comparatively few on the earth who believe in Him and in the whole body of revealed truth when He returns (17:22—18:1). 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.

## **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>464</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.

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<sup>463</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 455.

<sup>464</sup>Danker, p. 185.

"This parable follows as giving the spirit in which men should pray."<sup>465</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.

- 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. 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.
- 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 that he did that separated him from others. The most pious Pharisees fasted twice a week (cf. 5:33).<sup>466</sup> This Pharisee was also scrupulous about tithing (cf. 11:42).
- 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 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 chest expressed contrition, which he articulated in his prayer. He did not boast of his own 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.

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<sup>465</sup>Morris, p. 264.

<sup>466</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "nestis," by J. Behm, 4:930.

"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>467</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>468</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>469</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 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 we 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.

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<sup>467</sup>Bock, *Luke*, pp. 460-61.

<sup>468</sup>*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1108.

<sup>469</sup>See F. F. Bruce, "Justification by Faith in the non-Pauline Writings of the New Testament," *Evangelical Quarterly* 24 (1952):66-77.

## **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 to illustrate the 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>470</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 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, outcasts, and other types of dependent people (4:18; et al.).

## **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.

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<sup>470</sup>Carson, p. 420.

"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>471</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 man 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 that he had a good chance of obtaining because of his ethnic relationship to Abraham.
- 18:19        Jesus' question accomplished two things. It set the standard for goodness, namely, God (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>472</sup> Jesus cited the fifth through the ninth commandments from the Decalogue that deal with a person's responsibilities to his or her fellowman (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

<sup>471</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:187.

<sup>472</sup>Morris, p. 267.

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).

18:23 The man's sorrow on hearing Jesus' command was proportionate to his 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 God alone is perfect (v. 19). Moreover 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 conclude that because they are rich they are superior to the poor, 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>473</sup>

A camel going through the eye of a sewing needle (Gr. *belones*) was evidently a proverbial expression describing a very difficult thing.

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<sup>473</sup>Wiersbe, 1:250.



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).

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>474</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.

First, that one 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 enduring life in the coming kingdom. Jesus and the apostles spoke of 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>475</sup> Jesus mentioned it here with rewards because it provides the ultimate contrast with what disciples give up now. Giving up a wife may refer to giving 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

<sup>474</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 688.

<sup>475</sup>See Dillow, pp. 135-45, for an explanation of the biblical teaching regarding inheriting eternal life as a reward.

the third passion announcement that Jesus gave beside 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>
<b>First passion announcement</b>	16:21-23	8:31-33	9:22
<b>Second passion announcement</b>	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43-45
<b>Third passion announcement</b>	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' ministry fulfilled prophecy so his readers would have greater 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>476</sup>

<sup>476</sup>Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 845.

18:34 Luke alone repeated three times that the disciples failed to comprehend Jesus' words. He strongly suggested that their failure was due to God withholding this understanding from them (cf. 24:16, 25-26). That is, it was not within God's purpose for them to understand at this time. The illumination of believers is a necessary work of God's Spirit that is supernatural. The Twelve probably would not believe that such a fate would befall Jesus.

"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>477</sup>

#### **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>478</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

<sup>477</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:254.

<sup>478</sup>See Zane C. Hodges, "The Blind Men at Jericho," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122:488 (October-December 1965):319-30.

fourth and preferable explanation is that there was one incident that happened as Jesus was leaving old Jericho and entering new Jericho.<sup>479</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 done this 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.
- 18:40-43 Jesus evidently asked His question to elicit the blind man's faith. He certainly knew what he 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 efficient 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 he glorified God (cf. v. 23). Likewise the observers' reaction was to praise 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 would have been a lesson to the disciples as well as 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 is really the key verse in this Gospel.

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<sup>479</sup>See Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 4:8:3, for the identification of these two Jerichos.

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 stressed 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>480</sup>

- 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 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 those that the Jews 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 will 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). Moreover Jesus had a reputation for associating with people in his profession (5:29-30; 7:29, 34; 15:1). Luke's reference to his stature prepares the reader for his climbing a tree to see Jesus (v. 4). 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 His parable for childlike faith (18:13). He had also taught the importance of childlike faith (cf. 18:16-17).

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<sup>480</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1007.

"The crowd as physical barrier and Zacchaeus' strange position up in a tree can serve as spatial symbols of his isolation from his community."<sup>481</sup>

19:5-6 Jesus initiated a relationship with Zaccheus. Since he called him by name He evidently knew about him, though Zaccheus 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" further stresses urgency and the fulfillment of God's plan (cf. 2:11; 4:21; 19:9).<sup>482</sup> This attitude was typical of Jesus who sought out lost people. Zaccheus gladly and obediently responded to Jesus' offer.

". . . the coming of Jesus to share his home is a sign of fellowship and ultimately forgiveness."<sup>483</sup>

Verse 5 records an instance of divine sovereignty and verse 6 human responsibility.<sup>484</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 today does. Staying in a person's home amounted to sharing in his sins.<sup>485</sup>

19:8 Zaccheus' stood up 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 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). Zaccheus' words were the signs of true repentance (cf. 3:8; 14:33; 18:22).

"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>486</sup>

<sup>481</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:123.

<sup>482</sup>Ellis, p. 221.

<sup>483</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 697.

<sup>484</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1007.

<sup>485</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 697.

<sup>486</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:124. Cf. 7:36-50; and Matt. 26:6-13.

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>487</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 that 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>488</sup> His faith and works proved that he was a 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>489</sup>

- 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>490</sup>

### **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.

<sup>487</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 698; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1007; and Morris, p. 273.

<sup>488</sup>Ellis, p. 220.

<sup>489</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:124.

<sup>490</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1008.

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 that was appropriate for the mixed audience that Jesus addressed in Zaccheus' house (v. 27).

19:11        The connection between Jesus being almost at 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.

"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>491</sup>

19:12        The nobleman represents Jesus. The distant country to which he went stands for heaven, and the place to which he would return 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. 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. 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.

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>492</sup>

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<sup>491</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:260.

<sup>492</sup>E.g., Morris, p. 274.



- 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>493</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 round 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.
- In the parable of the talents, each servant received a different sum representing the different gifts and talents that each has compared with the others. In this parable each servant received the same sum 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>494</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 the judgment 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 great compared to what the servant had received to invest. In view of the time of this judgment the reward would apply to the messianic kingdom that would 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 was the reward. Throughout history kings have rewarded faithful servants by giving them positions of significant

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<sup>493</sup>*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "money," by H. W. Perkin, 3:409.

<sup>494</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 17:9:3-7 and 17:11:1-4; idem, *The Wars . . .*, 2:2:1-3.

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.

"The reward is not rest, but the opportunity for wider service."<sup>495</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>496</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 He 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>497</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>498</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

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<sup>495</sup>Morris, p. 275.

<sup>496</sup>Jeremias, *The Parables . . .*, p. 61.

<sup>497</sup>See Thielicke, pp. 143-45.

<sup>498</sup>Morris, p. 275.

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.

"In the Christian life we do not stand still. We use our gifts and make progress or we lose what we have."<sup>499</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.

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>500</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).

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<sup>499</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>500</sup>See Pagenkemper, pp. 194-98.

"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>501</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 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 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>502</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>503</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'

<sup>501</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:161.

<sup>502</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 488.

<sup>503</sup>E.g., Luce, p. 297.

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.

### **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 stressed 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>504</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 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>505</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>506</sup> However, this colt was tied up (cf. Gen. 49:11), and no one had ridden it previously (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>507</sup>

<sup>504</sup>Martin, p. 253.

<sup>505</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 712.

<sup>506</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: The Palm Sunday Colt," *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971):244.

<sup>507</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 248-49.

- 19:31 The term "Lord" probably refers to Jesus as the person the owner knew needed the colt, but Jesus was the real 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>508</sup>
- 19:32-34 This record shows that things turned out just as Jesus 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. Probably Jesus had previously arranged for the use of the colt. However the evangelists told the story to stress Jesus' knowledge of things to come.
- 19:35-36 Others placed Jesus on the colt, but 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 others 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. Fulfillment will come at the Second Coming. Jesus had predicted His entrance into Jerusalem (13:35). Perhaps Luke pictured Jesus descending toward Jerusalem as stage setting 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).
- 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>508</sup>Morris, p. 278.

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 there they thanked Him for peace on earth, not peace in heaven. Probably the disciples were honoring God as the author of peace 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 of Jesus and suggesting that He fulfilled messianic prophecy (cf. Matt. 21:14-16). They asked Jesus to silence them. Obviously they thought He would agree that they 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>509</sup>

19:40 However, Jesus refused to silence the disciples. They spoke the truth. The figure of stones crying out (personification) stresses the appropriateness of the disciples crying out. If the disciples kept silence, the stones would need 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>510</sup>

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.

<sup>509</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:170.

<sup>510</sup>Martin, p. 253.

### **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.

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 it visited in judgment later since it had 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 day (cf. 4:21; 19:5, 9), what would result in peace for them, they could experience peace. Acceptance of Him and the inauguration of the kingdom would bring peace (i.e., salvation) to the city of peace, Jerusalem. However they did not realize the consequences of their decision. 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 realize Messiah's visit and His offer of salvation. Consequently His visit would result in judgment.

### **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 here at the end. Luke stressed the temple as a place of prayer. Jesus purified it 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.



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.

### **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 and working 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). 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 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>511</sup>

20:3-6 Jesus' reply with a counter-question was common in rabbinic discussions.<sup>512</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

<sup>511</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>512</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 725.

leaders' fear of stoning. Stoning was the penalty for prophesying falsely (Deut. 13:1-11). Here the leaders feared that they might suffer the same fate for denying the legitimacy of a true prophet. 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 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 that 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 results 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 are Israel's religious leaders. The harvest stands for the inauguration of the kingdom, and the servants represent the prophets. The produce of the vineyard symbolizes the fruits of righteousness that God hoped to find in His people. Luke simplified the story compared with Matthew and Mark's versions probably to stress 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 the owner would turn the vineyard over to them having no other heir. This was 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>513</sup>

- 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 it would only destroy themselves, and it would crush those on whom it fell. The stone in Daniel 2 represents a kingdom. Likewise Jesus as the King of the kingdom of God would serve as God's agent of judgment in the future. However even now Jesus was the stone that would bring judgment on God's enemies.

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<sup>513</sup>Morris, p. 285.

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 supported Jesus (cf. 19:47-48; 22:2).

**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 likewise 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. The image indicated 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 indicated 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.

Jesus added that His questioners and all people who bear the image of God should also 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>514</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 larger 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>515</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>514</sup>See *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Coins," by Gleason L. Archer, 1:902-11.

<sup>515</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 that was the central problem that they brought to Jesus. Most Greeks denied the resurrection of the body too (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12). Much Greek psychology viewed the body as the temporary prison of the soul that 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 at 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>516</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 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) nor 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 we 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>516</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 said 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 rise. 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 will experience 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.

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 jumped 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.

**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 asking the question of the Pharisees (Matt. 22:41). Mark has Him asking generally 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 those whom Jesus addressed as well as 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>517</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 this psalm 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. Moreover 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 drew 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. The conclusion was obvious but unacceptable to the religious leaders. They did not want to admit that Messiah was God. If they did, they would have 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.

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<sup>517</sup>Morris, p. 293.



"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>518</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 condemned their practice. Immorality often accompanies heterodoxy. Jesus attacked their attitudes particularly. These words constituted Jesus' final break with Israel's religious leaders.

Jesus 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>519</sup> They greedily took money from widows who needed it more than they did, apparently violating the trust of these dependent women.<sup>520</sup> This may have included abusing the hospitality of widows who had little money.<sup>521</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).

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.

<sup>518</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 104.

<sup>519</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "stole," by U. Wilckens, 7:690-91.

<sup>520</sup>See J. D. M. Derrett, "Eating up the Houses of Widows: Jesus's Comment on Lawyers?" *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972):1-9.

<sup>521</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in . . .*, p. 114. Cf. Morris, p. 294.

"We tend to appreciate the amount of a gift, not necessarily the sacrifice that went into the giving."<sup>522</sup>

Jesus observed people depositing their gifts in the temple offering receptacles. The "treasury" was a section of the court of the women in the temple complex. When He 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 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*) that she donated were together worth only about one sixty-fourth of a denarius, the day's wage of a workingman in Palestine. 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>523</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>524</sup>

#### **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 relationship of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem to 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>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 527.

<sup>523</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 751.

<sup>524</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 752.

<sup>525</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>526</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 decorations 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 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. 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.

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<sup>526</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:162.

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 spoken of 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 words (cf. Exod. 4:11, 15; Ezek. 29:21) and the wisdom they would need then (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. 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.

- 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 descend on many more than 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>527</sup> Some interpreters believe it refers to their spiritual safety.<sup>528</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>529</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 may mean that perseverance will earn an eternal reward (cf. v. 36; Rev. 2:10).

### **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;

<sup>527</sup>Geldenhuys, p. 527; Morris, p. 298; Lenski, p. 1017.

<sup>528</sup>E.g., Plummer, p. 480; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 769; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 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>529</sup>E.g., Martin, p. 257.

Mark 13:14-20). Even some commentators who believe that Luke depended heavily on Mark for his material admit this difference.<sup>530</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 should move farther from it. God's vengeance on the city would descend shortly in fulfillment of prophecy (Dan. 9:26).

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 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>531</sup>

21:23-24 The distress of pregnant women and nursing mothers then 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 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 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>532</sup> Luke's reference to the times of the Gentiles is consistent with his interest in Gentiles.

<sup>530</sup>E.g., Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 770-71.

<sup>531</sup>Morris, pp. 298-99.

<sup>532</sup>See J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p. 399; John F. Walvoord, "The Times of the Gentiles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125:497 (January-March 1968):3-9.

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.

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' warnings 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). 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>533</sup>

- 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

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<sup>533</sup>Morris, p. 300.

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).

**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). He had recorded this teaching earlier when Jesus gave it in another context (17:26-27, 34-35).

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).

"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>534</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."

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<sup>534</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.



"This generation" refers 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. A better interpretation is that "this generation" refers to the generation referred to in verse 25 that will see the beginning of the end in the cosmic signs.<sup>535</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 universalism.<sup>536</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 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 as 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 of life that they lose sight of it.
- 21:36 Praying brings spiritual strength to maintain alertness. It enables disciples to withstand their temptations 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).

<sup>535</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.

<sup>536</sup>See A. J. Mattill Jr., "Representative Universalism and the Conquest of Canaan," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35:1 (1967):8-17.

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.

Luke's original readers evidently lived after Pentecost and before the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>537</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 anytime if the Rapture occurred during their lifetime.

As history has unfolded, we know that the Second Coming is still future. Before that 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 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.

#### **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.

Again Luke mentioned the eagerness of the people generally (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.

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<sup>537</sup>See my introductory comments on the date of composition.

## **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. It also clarifies some of the events surrounding Jesus' trials. It provides additional details of the crucifixion, and it includes other of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. 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. His presence in Jerusalem for the Passover season gave them a chance to arrest Him and 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 this feast as the feast of Unleavened Bread more commonly 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 lawyers. The Jewish leaders could not discover a way to take 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). By his 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 for his readers (cf. 6:16) and noted Judas' contact with the Jewish officers of the temple guards. It was probably these soldiers 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 joy 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 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>538</sup>

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 stressed 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. Usually women did and men carried water in leather skins.<sup>539</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 informed Peter and John of its location as He did. 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

<sup>538</sup>Morris, p. 304.

<sup>539</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 791; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1025.

an extra room. It would have been accessible by an external stairway. The owner would have furnished it with cushions for reclining on at least.<sup>540</sup> Traditionally the upper room was on Mt. Zion just to the north and east of the Hinnom Valley and west of the City of David.<sup>541</sup>

22:13 This verse underlines Jesus' 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 and 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 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).

#### **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.

22:16 Jesus announced that He would not 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>542</sup>

<sup>540</sup>Jeremias, *The Eucharistic . . .*, p. 48, footnote 1.

<sup>541</sup>See the diagram "Jerusalem in New Testament Times" at the end of these notes.

<sup>542</sup>Martin, p. 259.

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 drank the fourth cup. The cup in view in this verse may have been the first of the four. If it was, Jesus evidently did not participate in the drinking of the following three cups (v. 18).<sup>543</sup> 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 did participate 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 stressing 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 stresses 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 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.

<sup>543</sup>Jeremias, *The Eucharistic . . .*, pp. 211-12.

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>544</sup>

". . . Jesus meant that the new covenant would take effect through that which the contents of the cup signified, namely, his sacrificial death."<sup>545</sup>

Much of the New Testament is an exposition of the significance of Jesus' sacrificial death to which He referred so cogently here. Luke stressed 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>546</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 as 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' 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).

<sup>544</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>545</sup>Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, p. 126. Cf. Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 806.

<sup>546</sup>See Eugene H. Merrill, "Remembering: A Central Theme in Biblical Worship," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:1 (March 2000):27-36.

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 who of them was the greatest appears 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 service of 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). Really Jesus is the only true benefactor (Gr. *euergete*, cf. Acts 10:38).

22:26 Typically the younger serve the elder, 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>547</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 slave (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.

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<sup>547</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 813.



### 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 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>548</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 will 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 failed Him. The theme of testing and faithfulness is quite prominent in Luke.<sup>549</sup>

<sup>548</sup>Larry R. Helyer, "Luke and the Restoration of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36:3 (September 1993):328-29.

<sup>549</sup>See S. Brown, *Apostasy and . . .*

**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. That would not continue. However, he 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.

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>550</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. 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 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>551</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 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 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 complimentary.

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<sup>550</sup>See Page, pp. 456-57.

<sup>551</sup>Morris, p. 309.

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. 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 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 up-coming 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 purse, 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 them to be ready for hardship and self-sacrifice.<sup>552</sup>

Some commentators took Jesus' command literally.<sup>553</sup> The purse 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. However, Jesus later rebuked Peter for using a sword to defend himself (Matt. 26:52). Furthermore Jesus never taught His disciples to arm themselves so they could 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 regard Him as a criminal. Therefore it would be very difficult for His disciples. They would face intense opposition, as Peter experienced in the

<sup>552</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 825; Creed, p. 270; Luce, pp. 335-36; et al.

<sup>553</sup>E.g., Plummer, p. 505; Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1029-30; and Easton, p. 329.

high priest's courtyard. Jesus did not want them to underestimate the strength of the opposition that they would face so they would depend on God and not on themselves to 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>554</sup>

22:38 The disciples evidently took 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. 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>555</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>556</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. The 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).

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 and arm ourselves with the resources that only God can provide (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). The disciples slept in Gethsemane when they should have been praying (vv. 40, 46). Likewise 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.

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<sup>554</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1116.

<sup>555</sup>Danker, p. 225; P. S. Minear, "A Note on Luke xxii. 36," *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964):128-34; and Martin, p. 260.

<sup>556</sup>Manson, p. 342; Morris, p. 310; M. Bailey, p. 148; et al.

**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.

22:39-40 Luke had earlier revealed that during this week Jesus spent His nights on the Mount of Olives (21:37). It is apparently to this custom that the writer referred here. Judas would have expected Jesus to do this, 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 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 and as failing.

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. Luke did not record that Jesus lay prostrate during part of His prayer vigil (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35).

The prayer itself reveals complete dependence on the Father's will. Jesus asked for a removal of the cup, the symbol of His sufferings because of 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 if possible (Gr. *ei boulei*). Notwithstanding 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>557</sup>

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<sup>557</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 831.

22:43-44 Only Luke mentioned the angel who strengthened Jesus (cf. 9:26; 12:8-9; 15:10; 16:22). 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>558</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>559</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>560</sup> Luke may have been creating a rhetorical expression, namely, tears of blood.<sup>561</sup> Perhaps Jesus' sweat was red because blood exuded through the pores of His skin.<sup>562</sup> Probably Luke made a connection with blood because Jesus' sweat was the result of His great sufferings as shedding blood 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 sorrow (Gr. *lupe*, grief) at the prospect of Jesus' impending death had worn them out. The NEB translation "worn out by grief" is helpful. 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 has more effect than just calling for rescue when we are in it does (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

<sup>558</sup>Bock, *Luke*, p. 568.

<sup>559</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1032.

<sup>560</sup>Martin, p. 260.

<sup>561</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 832.

<sup>562</sup>Plummer, pp. 510-11.

pray. Judas preceded the arresting mob (Gr. *ochlos*, crowd) as Jesus had preceded His disciples, namely, as their leader (v. 39). Luke stressed 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 Jesus knew Judas' purpose. Disciples of rabbis often greeted their teachers with a kiss on the hand.<sup>563</sup> Luke described Judas as "one called Judas," a way of keeping him at a distance while viewing him. "Son of Man" stresses 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 use 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 expressed 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. Evidently 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>564</sup>

22:51 Jesus rebuked Peter's aggressive defensive measure. This is more probable than that He spoke to the soldiers and requested permission to heal the servant.<sup>565</sup> Another improbable interpretation is that Jesus meant that the disciples should let the soldiers have their way with Him.<sup>566</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 their 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.

<sup>563</sup>E. F. F. Bishop, *Jesus of Palestine: The Local Background to the Gospel Documents*, p. 246.

<sup>564</sup>Wiersbe, 1:270.

<sup>565</sup>Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:649.

<sup>566</sup>Creed, p. 274; Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 837; and Morris, p. 313.

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>567</sup>

#### **E. THE TRIALS OF JESUS 22:54—23:25**

The following table identifies the aspects of Jesus' two trials that each evangelist recorded.

<i>Jesus' Religious Trial</i>				
	<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	
<i>Jesus' Civil Trial</i>				
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

#### **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

<sup>567</sup>Wiersbe, 1:270.



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). Seemingly 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.

"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>568</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.

The person who accused Peter next was another maid, though Luke did not identify her (cf. Mark 14:69). Evidently a man joined her in accusing Jesus since Luke wrote that Peter addressed him when he responded. 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). 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 his denying that he knew Jesus (Matt. 26:74; Mark 14:71). Immediately the cock 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

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<sup>568</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1035.

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 stresses 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 accounts 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 to prophesy was not due to inability but to His purpose to lay down His life as a sacrifice. Jesus' passive acceptance of all this foul treatment shows the same thing.<sup>569</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 interviews late at night by Annas and Caiaphas. This meeting took place very early on Friday morning, April 3, A.D. 33.<sup>570</sup>

22:66           The Sanhedrin, also known as the council of the elders, was Israel's supreme court. It could only conduct cases involving potential capital punishment during daylight hours.<sup>571</sup> This seems to be the reason for the time of this meeting. Evidently the Sanhedrin members wanted to send Jesus on to Pilate for trial as early as they could. The Sanhedrin normally met in a building not far to the west of the western wall of the temple.<sup>572</sup> But archaeologists have not yet been able to determine exactly where.

<sup>569</sup>See Laurina L. Berg, "The Illegalities of Jesus' Religious and Civil Trials," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161:643 (July-September 2004):330-42.

<sup>570</sup>Hoehner, p. 143.

<sup>571</sup>Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4:1.

<sup>572</sup>Josephus, *The Wars* . . . , 5:4:2; 6:6:3.

- 22:67-68 The Sanhedrin asked Jesus if He was claiming to be the Messiah. Jesus replied that they 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 referred to the discussion He had had with some of His accusers on Wednesday (20:41-44). Then Jesus had questioned them about the identity of David's Son in Psalm 110:1. He had showed that David's Son, the Messiah, was divine. Now Jesus referred to the same verse again and said 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.<sup>573</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 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).
- 22:71 The Sanhedrin recognized Jesus' statement to be an unequivocal claim to be the Son of God. This was a claim to be God. Consequently it appeared to them to be blasphemous. They now had sufficient grounds to demand the death sentence from Pilate.

Luke's record stresses the identity of Jesus as Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God, but also 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>574</sup> It did not take long for Pilate to determine that Jesus was innocent of any crime worthy of death. Notwithstanding the record stresses how difficult it was for him to convict an innocent man. Pilate normally resided in the provincial capital at Caesarea. He was in Jerusalem because of the Passover season that drew huge crowds and possible civil unrest to the city.

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<sup>573</sup>See Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus*, pp. 30-183.

<sup>574</sup>See R. Larry Overstreet, "Roman Law and the Trial of Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135:540 (October-December 1978):323-32.

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. 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. This 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 answer is that Luke did not record the conversation that took place between verses 3 and 4 (cf. John 18:35-38). In this conversation Pilate learned that Jesus did not claim to be a king in the ordinary sense. He concluded that Jesus posed no treat 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 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 so relieve himself of his own responsibility but to secure Herod's counsel in Jesus' case (cf. vv. 7, 11).

### **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).

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 about His miracles that Herod questioned Jesus. Jesus did not respond 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>575</sup>

23:10-12 The accusations of the Jewish leaders (cf. 22:66) and the insult that Herod must have felt at being rebuffed resulted in more contempt and mocking for Jesus (cf. Isa. 53:7). This shows 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 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. 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

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<sup>575</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

sympathetic or at least neutral toward Jesus heard Pilate's verdict along with the antagonistic Sanhedrin members.<sup>576</sup>

23:15 Pilate also announced that Herod's verdict agreed with his own. Herod was a recognized authority on Jewish affairs that Pilate's hearers probably respected more than they did Pilate since Herod was Semitic. Both men agreed that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death.

23:16 Pilate evidently punished Jesus 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. This is one of several indications in Luke's Gospel that the writer wanted his Gentile readers to view Christianity favorably. This desire comes through at several places in Acts too. The flogging (Gr. *phragellosas*, Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15) that Jesus received before His crucifixion was much more severe than the scourging (Gr. *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>577</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.

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 justified Jesus 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; 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>578</sup>

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<sup>576</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1040.

<sup>577</sup>Morris, p. 322.

<sup>578</sup>Martin, p. 262.

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' 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 cries of the crowd made Pilate conclude that he could not convince them. 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>579</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>580</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>581</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 could realistically. 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>582</sup>

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<sup>579</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel* . . . , p. 861.

<sup>580</sup>Morris, p. 324.

<sup>581</sup>Wiersbe, 1:274.

<sup>582</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative* . . . , 1:164.

## **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 stress 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 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>583</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 facts 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 in North Africa. Normally criminals condemned to crucifixion had to carry the large crosspiece of their own cross to their place of execution.<sup>584</sup> Apparently Jesus' severe beating had made it impossible for Him to carry it 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 though 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). Apparently they were residents of Jerusalem rather than women from Galilee who had been ministering to Jesus, since Jesus

<sup>583</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 862.

<sup>584</sup>Creed, p. 285.



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.

- 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 of Jesus' quotation from Hosea 10:8 is 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 from God's wrath (cf. Rev. 6:15-16). The Tribulation is in view in the Hosea passage. Probably the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the Tribulation judgments on Jerusalem are in view here. 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. 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?

"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>585</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 important, it associates Jesus with guilty sinners.<sup>586</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).

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<sup>585</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

<sup>586</sup>W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, p. 1027.

## **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>587</sup>

Jesus' central position among the three 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 those who crucified Him. He prayed for them basing His petition for mercy on their ignorance even though at the same time they were stealing 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 other sinners instead. Stephen followed Jesus' good example here when he 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. 21:8). Perhaps Luke wrote that even the rulers sneered 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 ironically, 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).

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<sup>587</sup>M. Bailey, p. 150.

"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>588</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 His 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>589</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>590</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.

"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>591</sup>

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<sup>588</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

<sup>589</sup>Ellis, p. 267.

<sup>590</sup>Morris, p. 328.

<sup>591</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

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. It anticipated a distant time when Jesus 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>592</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 Jesus. He would be with Him in the place of righteous departed spirits that very day when they both died.

Paradise and Abraham's bosom (16:22-26) are the same place. The word "paradise" has come into English from Greek but originally 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 of 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>593</sup>

When Jesus suffered on the cross, He experienced separation from the Father, which is spiritual death. Having died physically His body went

<sup>592</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:126, 127.

<sup>593</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 873.

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 in the heart of the earth or at least as under the surface of the earth. The formulators of the Apostles Creed apparently confused the temporary destiny of Jesus' spirit (i.e., His immaterial part) with the temporary destiny of His body (i.e., His material part). 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 this verse, include Acts 2:27 (cf. Ps. 16:8-11); Ephesians 4:7-10; and 1 Peter 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).

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>594</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 these unusual occurrences to show God's displeasure with humankind for rejecting His Son.<sup>595</sup> The sixth and ninth hours were noon and 3:00 p.m. respectively. Darkness obscuring the sun represented judgment obscuring the beneficent light of God's countenance (cf. Isa.

<sup>594</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 1119.

<sup>595</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, pp. 873-74.

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.

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. It symbolizes the opening of the way into God's presence that Jesus' death affected 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.

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>596</sup> They expressed Jesus' trust in God as well as His commitment to Him. The strength with which Jesus cried out showed His physical strength but, more important, the significance of His declaration. Jesus sovereignly controlled His circumstances to the end of His life.

<sup>596</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1045.

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>597</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. 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 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 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 stressed 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 also included the centurion's confession of Jesus' innocence (v. 47). Finally he noted the reaction of the crowd that showed 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 sinner.

**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 Sanhedrin who was a believer in Jesus. Luke did not stress 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

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<sup>597</sup>Wiersbe, 1:277.

unanimous (22:70; Mark 14:64). Not all 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 be part of a group that rejects Him. Joseph's desire for Jesus' body indicated his intention to give it a decent burial and so honor Jesus.

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.

23:55-56 This reference to the women prepares for 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. They prepared spices for their return visit on Sunday to honor Jesus further. Luke's reference to the passing of the Sabbath with no disciple activity 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 stresses the reality of that event and the reactions of the witnesses to it. All 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>598</sup>

24:1 Saturday was a day of rest, but when Sunday came the women went into action.<sup>599</sup> Luke dated their arrival at the tomb at "early 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 perfume (23:56) to anoint the body of Jesus. They were the first to

<sup>598</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:277.

<sup>599</sup>See Zane C. Hodges, "The Women and the Empty Tomb," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123:492 (October-December 1966):301-9.



learn of the resurrection because their devotion to Jesus moved them to seek Him out. Their example has challenged believers ever since to emulate their love for the Savior.

- 24:2-3 Luke stressed the absence of Jesus' body more 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).
- 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). They then flatly declared that Jesus had risen from the dead and reminded the women of Jesus' prophecy that He would rise after three days (9:22, 43-45; 18:31-33). Luke wrote 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).
- 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 of it to 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	

Salome 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 could 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 ready to go yet though.

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 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 believed nor disbelieved that Jesus had risen yet. 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 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.

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 presented Jesus as heading to Jerusalem and the Cross through 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. Now we see Jesus approaching two disheartened disciples as they began to leave Jerusalem. They needed more training before they could represent Him effectively. Emmaus (lit. warm springs) was about seven miles west of Jerusalem, toward the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>600</sup>

24:15-16 Luke pictured the scene dramatically. 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>601</sup> Luke's obvious implication was that God was preventing them from recognizing Jesus (cf. 9:45; 18:34). Evidently Jesus looked like the real man that He was albeit now immortal, but 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

<sup>600</sup>See the *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Emmaus," 1:525-26, for discussion of possible sites.

<sup>601</sup>E.g., Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1051.

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, Joseph's brother, and he became a leader of the Jerusalem church.<sup>602</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>603</sup>

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 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>604</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>605</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. Their reference to the third day since Jesus' death implied that they had expected something important to happen by then. The fact that nothing had happened disappointed them.

Possibly these disciples were not yet believers. They appear not to have recognized that Jesus was more than a prophet or a political Messiah but the divine Son of God.

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<sup>602</sup>Eusebius, 3:11; cf. Ellis, p. 894.

<sup>603</sup>For defense of this view, see Wenham, pp. 29-32.

<sup>604</sup>R. J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24*, p. 114.

<sup>605</sup>Liefeld, "Luke," p. 1052.

"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>606</sup>

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 they were not aware of anything outstanding happening on the third day yet since the report of some women in their group of disciples puzzled 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 an angelic visit did not lift 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 had failed to do that. They were also slow to believe what they did know that the former prophets 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 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>607</sup>

Luke highlighted Jesus' identification as the risen Christ by placing the word translated "He" in the emphatic position in the Greek text in verses 24 and 25. Jesus 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, resulting in Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Messiah."<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>606</sup>Ibid.

<sup>607</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 896.

<sup>608</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 and 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 burned within them as Jesus explained the Scriptures to them (v. 32).

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. 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) 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>609</sup>

The fact that Jesus acted as the host shows that He was the most important person present, which these disciples evidently recognized even before they knew 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. God is the One who

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<sup>609</sup>Ibid., 1:289.

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>610</sup>

After His resurrection, Jesus could appear and disappear at will (cf. v. 36). This is an attribute of His resurrection body. He disappeared then 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 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.

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 impressed them. Perhaps Luke mentioned again that the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread since for Christians that happens whenever we 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

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<sup>610</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.

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 stress 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 closes with this balanced emphasis.

24:36-37 This incident followed the preceding one immediately. As Jesus had disappeared (v. 31), so He now appeared. The doors to the room were shut (John 20:19). Luke stressed 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 terrified the disciples (cf. 1:12). They apparently thought that Jesus was an apparition (Gr. *pneuma*, a person lacking corporeal existence), not an angel, since He appeared as He did (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 only imagined that He arose.

24:39 Anyone wishing to prove his real presence might 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 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, feet, and 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 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 fish that was convenient. 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).

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 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 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 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 predicting 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' explanation.

When God created man, He gave him a cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28). Essentially this was to rule over the earth. This involves the advancement of civilization. This is 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 the 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 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 through this Gospel (e.g., 1:35; et al), and it is very evident in Acts as well.

". . . 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>611</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>612</sup>

### **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 stress the significance of the resurrection.<sup>613</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>614</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>615</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 to do so traditionally symbolized a priestly transference of blessing from heaven 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).

<sup>611</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:298.

<sup>612</sup>Thomas S. Moore, "The Lucan Great Commission and the Isaianic Servant," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:613 (January-March 1997):47.

<sup>613</sup>Bock, "A Theology . . .," p. 116.

<sup>614</sup>Marshall, *The Gospel . . .*, p. 908.

<sup>615</sup>William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 26.

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.

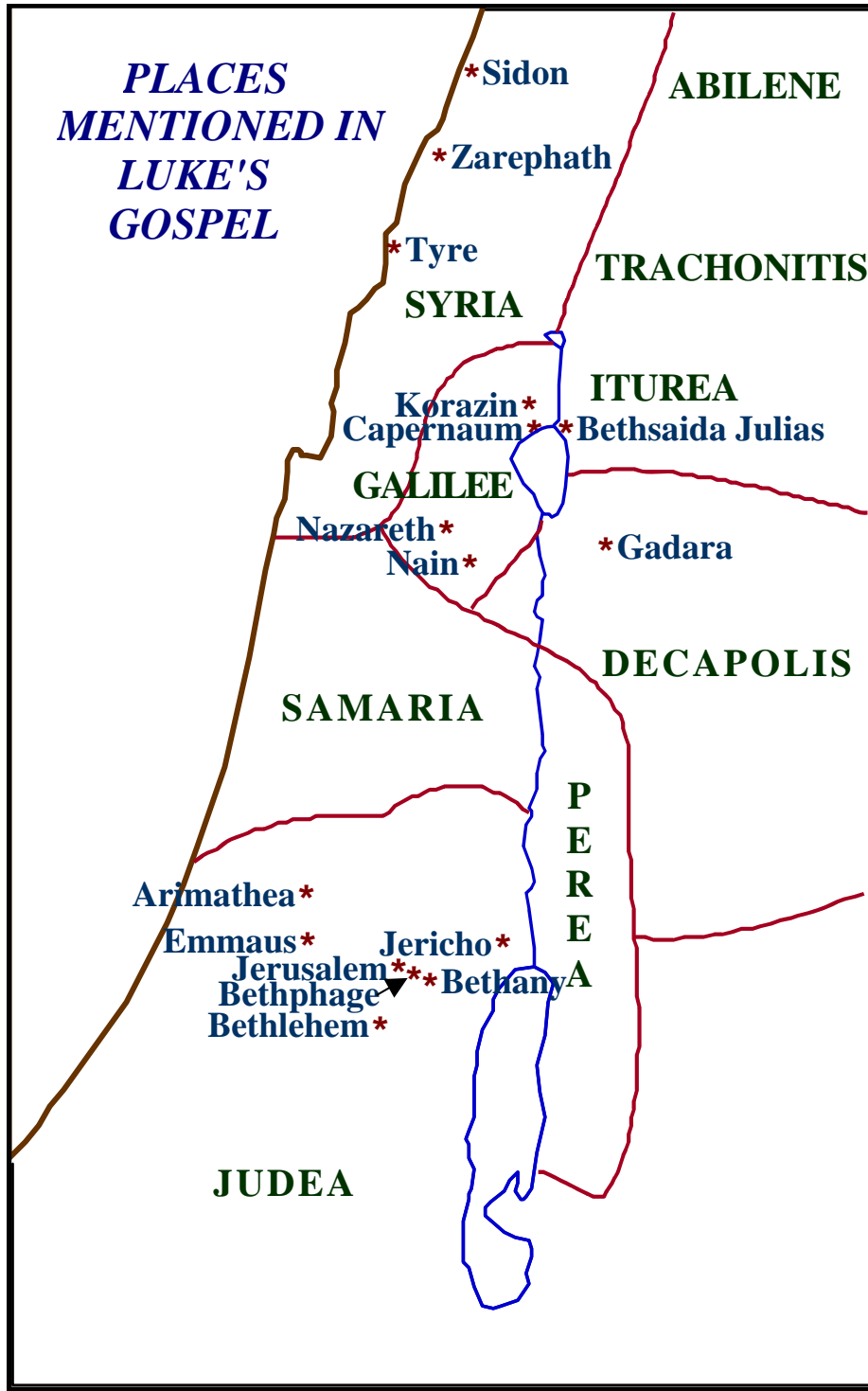
The disciples returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem joyful because they finally understood and accepted God's program for Messiah and for them (cf. 2:10). Jerusalem would shortly become the birthplace of Christianity. Their constant praise in the temple, the place of prayer, was undoubtedly for the gospel, the good 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).

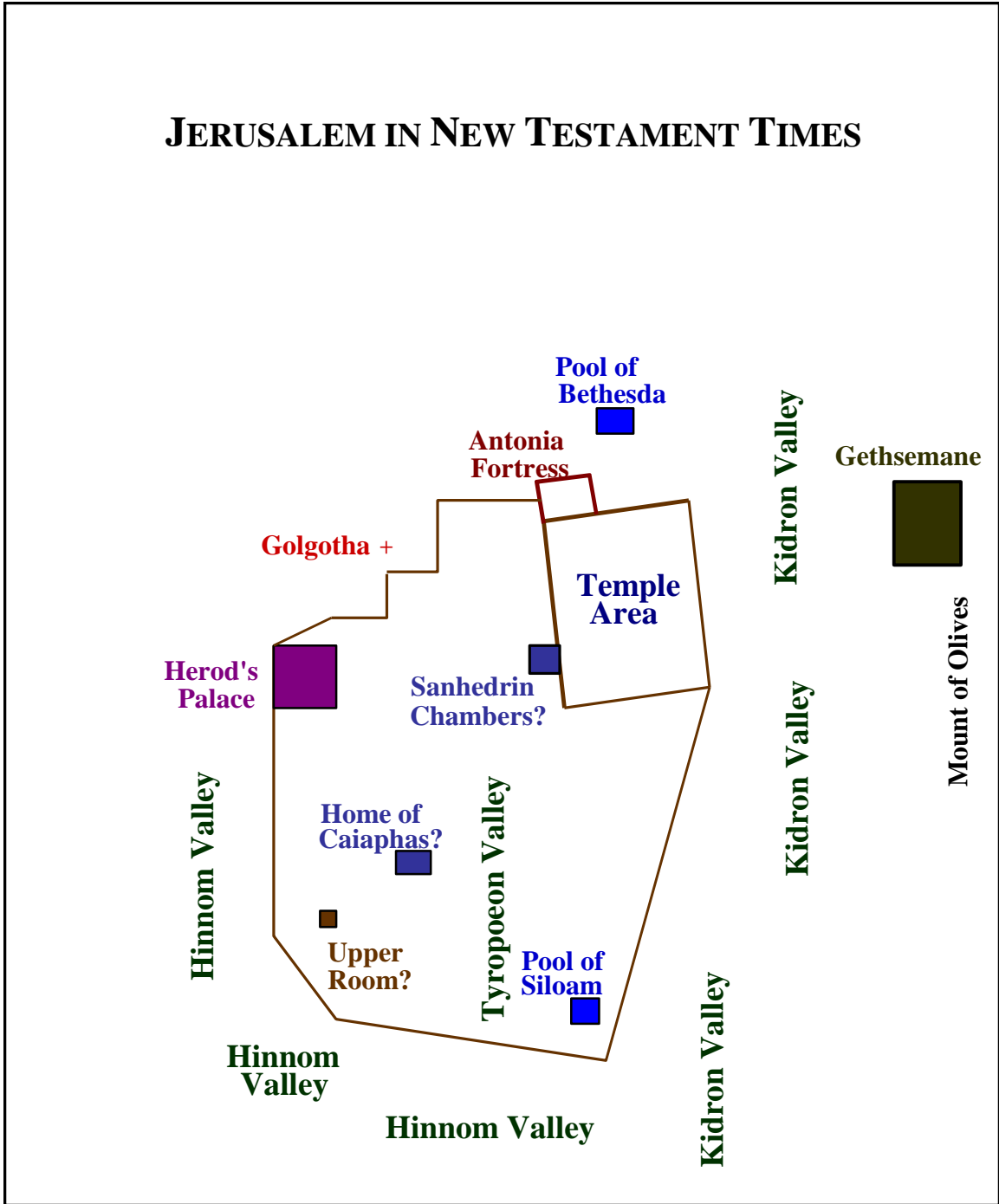
"The return at the end of Luke to the mood of joyful praise of God that filled the birth stories rounds off the story of Jesus; it also affirms that the joy felt by the devoted Jews who greeted the infant Jesus has been justified by later events, bringing the story to a happy resolution. The joy and 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>616</sup>

These original disciples set all of their subsequent fellow disciples a good example. 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>616</sup>Tannehill, *The Narrative . . .*, 1:301.





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