

THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE



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Chapter 1

Gospel of St. Luke

The Gospel according to Luke is the first part of a two-volume work that continues the biblical history of God's dealings with humanity found in the Old Testament, showing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus and how the salvation promised to Israel and accomplished by Jesus has been extended to the Gentiles. The stated purpose of the two volumes is to provide Theophilus and others like him with certainty-assurance-about earlier instruction they have received (Lk 1:4). To accomplish his purpose, Luke shows that the preaching and teaching of the representatives of the early church are grounded in the preaching and teaching of Jesus, who during his historical ministry (Acts 1:21-22) prepared his specially chosen followers and commissioned them to be witnesses to his resurrection and to all else that he did (Acts 10:37-42). This continuity between the historical ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles is Luke's way of guaranteeing the fidelity of the Church's teaching to the teaching of Jesus.

Luke's story of Jesus and the church is dominated by a historical perspective. This history is first of all salvation history. God's divine plan for human salvation

was accomplished during the period of Jesus, who through the events of his life (Lk 22:22) fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (Lk 4:21; 18:31; 22:37; 24:26-27,44), and this salvation is now extended to all humanity in the period of the church (Acts 4:12). This salvation history, moreover, is a part of human history. Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to events in contemporary Palestinian (Lk 1:5; 3:1-2; Acts 4:6) and Roman (Lk 2:1-2; 3:1; Acts 11:28; 18:2, 12) history for, as Paul says in Acts 26:26, “this was not done in a corner.” Finally, Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to contemporaneous church history. Luke is concerned with presenting Christianity as a legitimate form of worship in the Roman world, a religion that is capable of meeting the spiritual needs of a world empire like that of Rome. To this end, Luke depicts the Roman governor Pilate declaring Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing three times (Lk 23:4, 14, 22). At the same time Luke argues in Acts that Christianity is the logical development and proper fulfillment of Judaism and is therefore deserving of the same toleration and freedom traditionally accorded Judaism by Rome (Acts 13:16-41; 23:6-9; 24:10-21; 26:2-23).

The prominence given to the period of the church in the story has important consequences for Luke’s interpretation of the teachings of Jesus. By presenting the time of the church as a distinct phase of salvation history, Luke accordingly shifts the early Christian emphasis away from the expectation of an imminent parousia to the day-to-day concerns of the Christian community in the world. He does this in the gospel by regularly emphasizing the words “each day” (Lk 9:23; cf. Mk 8:34; Lk 11:3; 16:19; 19:47) in the sayings of Jesus. Although Luke still believes the parousia to be a reality that will come unexpectedly (Lk 12:38, 45-46), he is more concerned with presenting the words and deeds of Jesus as guides for the conduct of Christian disciples in the interim period between the ascension and the parousia and with presenting Jesus himself as the model of Christian life and piety.

Throughout the gospel, Luke calls upon the Christian disciple to identify with the master Jesus, who is caring and tender toward the poor and lowly, the outcast, the sinner, and the afflicted, toward all those who recognize their dependence on God (Lk 4:18; 6:20-23; 7:36-

50; 14:12-14; 15:1-32; 16:19-31; 18:9-14; 19:1-10; 21:1-4), but who is severe toward the proud and self-righteous, and particularly toward those who place their material wealth before the service of God and his people (Lk 6:24-26; 12:13-21; 16:13-15, 19-31; 18:9-14, 15-25; cf. Lk 1:50-53). No gospel writer is more concerned than Luke with the mercy and compassion of Jesus (Lk 7:41-43; 10:29-37; 13:6-9; 15:11-32). No gospel writer is more concerned with the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus and the Christian disciple (Lk 1:35, 41; 2:25-27; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 24:49), with the importance of prayer (Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; 11:1-13; 18:1-8), or with Jesus’ concern for women (Lk 7:11-17, 36-50; 8:2-3; 10:38-42). While Jesus calls all humanity to repent (Lk 5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:1-5; 15:7-10; 16:30; 17:3-4; 24:47), he is particularly demanding of those who would be his disciples. Of them he demands absolute and total detachment from family and material possessions (Lk 9:57-62; 12:32-34; 14:25-35). To all who respond in faith and repentance to the word Jesus preaches, he brings salvation (Lk 2:30-32; 3:6; 7:50; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 19:9) and peace (Lk 2:14; 7:50; 8:48; 19:38, 42) and life (Lk 10:25-28; 18:26-30).

Early Christian tradition, from the late second century on, identifies the author of this gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles as Luke, a Syrian from Antioch, who is mentioned in the New Testament in Col 4:14, Phlm 24 and 2 Tm 4:11. The prologue of the gospel makes it clear that Luke is not part of the first generation of Christian disciples but is himself dependent upon the traditions he received from those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Lk 1:2). His two-volume work marks him as someone who was highly literate both in the Old Testament traditions according to the Greek versions and in Hellenistic Greek writings.

Among the likely sources for the composition of this gospel (Lk 1:3) were the Gospel of Mark, a written collection of sayings of Jesus known also to the author of the Gospel of Matthew (Q; see Introduction to Matthew), and other special traditions that were used by Luke alone among the gospel writers. Some hold that Luke used Mark only as a complementary source for rounding out the material he took from other traditions. Because of its dependence on the Gospel of Mark and because details in Luke’s Gospel (Lk 13:35a; 19:43-

44; 21:20; 23:28-31) imply that the author was acquainted with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, the Gospel of Luke is dated by most scholars after that date; many propose A.D. 80-90 as the time of composition.

Luke's consistent substitution of Greek names for the Aramaic or Hebrew names occurring in his sources (e.g., Lk 23:33; Mk 15:22; Lk 18:41; Mk 10:51), his omission from the gospel of specifically Jewish Christian concerns found in his sources (e.g., Mk 7:1-23), his interest in Gentile Christians (Lk 2:30-32; 3:6, 38; 4:16-30; 13:28-30; 14:15-24; 17:11-19; 24:47-48), and his incomplete knowledge of Palestinian geography, customs, and practices are among the characteristics of this gospel that suggest that Luke was a non-Palestinian writing to a non-Palestinian audience that was largely made up of Gentile Christians.

Biography of Saint Luke

The name Lucas (Luke) is probably an abbreviation from Lucanus, like Annas from Ananus, Apollos from Apollonius, Artemas from Artemidorus, Demas from Demetrius, etc. (Schanz, "Evang. des heiligen Lucas", 1, 2; Lightfoot on "Col.", iv, 14; Plummer, "St. Luke", introd.)

The word Lucas seems to have been unknown before the Christian Era; but Lucanus is common in inscriptions, and is found at the beginning and end of the Gospel in some Old Latin manuscripts (ibid.). It is generally held that St. Luke was a native of Antioch. Eusebius (Church History III.4.6) has: Loukas de to men genos on ton apAntiocheias, ten episteuen iatros, ta pleista suggegonos to Paulo, kai rots laipois de ou parergos ton apostolon homilnkos—"Lucas vero domo Antiochenus, arte medicus, qui et cum Paulo diu conjunctissime vixit, et cum reliquis Apostolis studiose versatus est." Eusebius has a clearer statement in his "Quæstiones Evangelicæ", IV, i, 270: ho de Loukas to men genos apo tes Boomenes Antiocheias en—"Luke was by birth a native of the renowned Antioch" (Schmiedel, "Encyc. Bib."). Spitta, Schmiedel, and Harnack think this is a quotation from Julius Africanus (first half of the third century). In Codex Bezae (D) Luke is introduced by a "we" as early as Acts 11:28; and, though this is not a correct reading,

it represents a very ancient tradition. The writer of Acts took a special interest in Antioch and was well acquainted with it (Acts 11:19-27; 13:1; 14:18-21, 14:25, 15:22, 23, 30, 35; 18:22). We are told the locality of only one deacon, "Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch", 6:5; and it has been pointed out by Plummer that, out of eight writers who describe the Russian campaign of 1812, only two, who were Scottish, mention that the Russian general, Barclay de Tolly, was of Scottish extraction. These considerations seem to exclude the conjecture of Renan and Ramsay that St. Luke was a native of Philippi.

St. Luke was not a Jew. He is separated by St. Paul from those of the circumcision (Colossians 4:14), and his style proves that he was a Greek. Hence he cannot be identified with Lucius the prophet of Acts 13:1, nor with Lucius of Romans 16:21, who was cognatus of St. Paul. From this and the prologue of the Gospel it follows that Epiphanius errs when he calls him one of the Seventy Disciples; nor was he the companion of Cleophas in the journey to Emmaus after the Resurrection (as stated by Theophylact and the Greek Menologium). St. Luke had a great knowledge of the Septuagint and of things Jewish, which he acquired either as a Jewish proselyte (St. Jerome) or after he became a Christian, through his close intercourse with the Apostles and disciples. Besides Greek, he had many opportunities of acquiring Aramaic in his native Antioch, the capital of Syria. He was a physician by profession, and St. Paul calls him "the most dear physician" (Colossians 4:14). This avocation implied a liberal education, and his medical training is evidenced by his choice of medical language. Plummer suggests that he may have studied medicine at the famous school of Tarsus, the rival of Alexandria and Athens, and possibly met St. Paul there. From his intimate knowledge of the eastern Mediterranean, it has been conjectured that he had lengthened experience as a doctor on board ship. He travelled a good deal, and sends greetings to the Colossians, which seems to indicate that he had visited them.

St. Luke first appears in the Acts at Troas (16:8 sqq.), where he meets St. Paul, and, after the vision, crossed over with him to Europe as an Evangelist, landing at Neapolis and going on to Philippi, "being assured that God had called us to preach the Gospel

to them” (note especially the transition into first person plural at verse 10). He was, therefore, already an Evangelist. He was present at the conversion of Lydia and her companions, and lodged in her house. He, together with St. Paul and his companions, was recognized by the pythonical spirit: “This same following Paul and us, cried out, saying: These men are the servants of the most high God, who preach unto you the way of salvation” (verse 17). He beheld Paul and Silas arrested, dragged before the Roman magistrates, charged with disturbing the city, “being Jews”, beaten with rods and thrown into prison. Luke and Timothy escaped, probably because they did not look like Jews (Timothy’s father was a gentile). When Paul departed from Philippi, Luke was left behind, in all probability to carry on the work of Evangelist. At Thessalonica the Apostles received highly appreciated pecuniary aid from Philippi (Philippians 4:15-16), doubtless through the good offices of St. Luke. It is not unlikely that the latter remained at Philippi all the time that St. Paul was preaching at Athens and Corinth, and while he was travelling to Jerusalem and back to Ephesus, and during the three years that the Apostle was engaged at Ephesus. When St. Paul revisited Macedonia, he again met St. Luke at Philippi, and there wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

St. Jerome thinks it is most likely that St. Luke is “the brother, whose praise is in the gospel through all the churches” (2 Cor. 8:18), and that he was one of the bearers of the letter to Corinth. Shortly afterwards, when St. Paul returned from Greece, St. Luke accompanied him from Philippi to Troas, and with him made the long coasting voyage described in Acts 20. He went up to Jerusalem, was present at the uproar, saw the attack on the Apostle, and heard him speaking “in the Hebrew tongue” from the steps outside the fortress Antonia to the silenced crowd. Then he witnessed the infuriated Jews, in their impotent rage, rending their garments, yelling, and flinging dust into the air. We may be sure that he was a constant visitor to St. Paul during the two years of the latter’s imprisonment at Cæarea. In that period he might well become acquainted with the circumstances of the death of Herod Agrippa I, who had died there eaten up by worms” (skolekobrotos), and he was likely to be better informed on the subject than Josephus. Ample opportunities were given him,

“having diligently attained to all things from the beginning”, concerning the Gospel and early Acts, to write in order what had been delivered by those “who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word” (Luke 1:2, 3).

It is held by many writers that the Gospel was written during this time, Ramsay is of opinion that the Epistle to the Hebrews was then composed, and that St. Luke had a considerable share in it. When Paul appealed to Cæsar, Luke and Aristarchus accompanied him from Cæarea, and were with him during the stormy voyage from Crete to Malta. Thence they went on to Rome, where, during the two years that St. Paul was kept in prison, St. Luke was frequently at his side, though not continuously, as he is not mentioned in the greetings of the Epistle to the Philippians. He was present when the Epistles to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon were written, and is mentioned in the salutations given in two of them: “Luke the most dear physician, saluteth you” (Colossians 4:14); “There salute thee... Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke my fellow labourers” (Philem., 24). St. Jerome holds that it was during these two years Acts was written.

We have no information about St. Luke during the interval between St. Paul’s two Roman imprisonments, but he must have met several of the Apostles and disciples during his various journeys. He stood beside St. Paul in his last imprisonment; for the Apostle, writing for the last time to Timothy, says: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course... Make haste to come to me quickly. For Demas hath left me, loving this world... Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:7-11). It is worthy of note that, in the three places where he is mentioned in the Epistles (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11) he is named with St. Mark (cf. Colossians 4:10), the other Evangelist who was not an Apostle, and it is clear from his Gospel that he was well acquainted with the Gospel according to St. Mark; and in the Acts he knows all the details of St. Peter’s delivery—what happened at the house of St. Mark’s mother, and the name of the girl who ran to the outer door when St. Peter knocked. He must have frequently met St. Peter, and may have assisted him to draw up his First Epistle in Greek, which affords many reminiscences of Luke’s style. After St. Paul’s martyrdom practically

all that is known about him is contained in the ancient “*Prefatio vel Argumentum Lucae*”, dating back to Julius Africanus, who was born about A.D. 165. This states that he was unmarried, that he wrote the Gospel, in Achaia, and that he died at the age of seventy-four in Bithynia (probably a copyist’s error for Boeotia), filled with the Holy Ghost. Epiphanius has it that he preached in Dalmatia (where there is a tradition to that effect), Gallia (Galatia?), Italy, and Macedonia. As an Evangelist, he must have suffered much for the Faith, but it is controverted whether he actually died a martyr’s death as Jerome writes of him (*De Vir. III., vii*).

Gospel of St. Luke is always represented by the calf or ox, the sacrificial animal, because his Gospel begins with the account of Zachary, the priest, the father of John the Baptist. He is called a painter by Nicephorus Callistus (fourteenth century), and by the *Menology of Basil II*, A.D. 980. A picture of the Virgin in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome, is ascribed to him, and can be traced to A.D. 847 It is probably a copy of that mentioned by Theodore Lector, in the sixth century. This writer states that the Empress Eudoxia found a picture of the Mother of God at Jerusalem, which she sent to Constantinople (see “*Acta SS.*”, 18 Oct.). As Plummer observes, it is certain that St. Luke was an artist, at least to the extent that his graphic descriptions of the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Shepherds, Presentation, the Shepherd and lost sheep, etc., have become the inspiring and favourite themes of Christian painters.

St. Luke is one of the most extensive writers of the New Testament. His Gospel is considerably longer than St. Matthew’s, his two books are about as long as St. Paul’s fourteen Epistles: and Acts exceeds in length the Seven Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. The style of the Gospel is superior to any N.T. writing except Hebrews. Renan says (*Les Evangiles*, xiii) that it is the most literary of the Gospels. St. Luke is a painter in words. “The author of the Third Gospel and of the Acts is the most versatile of all New Testament writers. He can be as Hebraistic as the Septuagint, and as free from Hebraisms as Plutarch. He is Hebraistic in describing Hebrew society and Greek when describing Greek society” (Plummer, *introd.*). His great command of Greek is shown by the richness of his vocabulary and the freedom of his constructions.

Authenticity of the Gospel

Internal evidence

The internal evidence may be briefly summarized as follows:

The author of Acts was a companion of Saint Paul, namely, Saint Luke; and the author of Acts was the author of the Gospel.

The arguments are given at length by Plummer, “St. Luke” in “*Int. Crit. Com.*” (4th ed., Edinburgh, 1901); Harnack, “Luke the Physician” (London, 1907); “The Acts of the Apostles” (London, 1909); etc.

(1) The Author of Acts was a companion of Saint Paul, namely, Saint Luke

There is nothing more certain in Biblical criticism than this proposition. The writer of the “we” sections claims to be a companion of St. Paul. The “we” begins at Acts 16:10, and continues to 16:17 (the action is at Philippi). It reappears at 20:5 (Philippi), and continues to 21:18 (Jerusalem). It reappears again at the departure for Rome, 27:1 (Greek text), and continues to the end of the book.

Plummer argues that these sections are by the same author as the rest of the Acts: from the natural way in which they fit in; from references to them in other parts; and from the identity of style.

The change of person seems natural and true to the narrative, but there is no change of language. The characteristic expressions of the writer run through the whole book, and are as frequent in the “we” as in the other sections. There is no change of style perceptible. Harnack (*Luke the Physician*, 40) makes an exhaustive examination of every word and phrase in the first of the “we” sections (xvi, 10-17), and shows how frequent they are in the rest of the Acts and the Gospel, when compared with the other Gospels. His manner of dealing with the first word (*hos*) will indicate his method: “This temporal *hos* is never found in St. Matthew and St. Mark, but it occurs forty-eight times in St. Luke (Gospels and Acts), and that in all parts of the work.” When he comes to the end of his study of this section he is able to write: “After this demonstration those who declare that this passage was derived from a source, and so was not composed by the author of the whole work, take up a most difficult position.

What may we suppose the author to have left unaltered in the source? Only the 'we'. For, in fact, nothing else remains. In regard to vocabulary, syntax, and style, he must have transformed everything else into his own language. As such a procedure is absolutely unimaginable, we are simply left to infer that the author is here himself speaking." He even thinks it improbable, on account of the uniformity of style, that the author was copying from a diary of his own, made at an earlier period. After this, Harnack proceeds to deal with the remaining "we" sections, with like results. But it is not alone in vocabulary, syntax and style, that this uniformity is manifest. In "The Acts of the Apostles", Harnack devotes many pages to a detailed consideration of the manner in which chronological data, and terms dealing with lands, nations, cities, and houses, are employed throughout the Acts, as well as the mode of dealing with persons and miracles, and he everywhere shows that the unity of authorship cannot be denied except by those who ignore the facts. This same conclusion is corroborated by the recurrence of medical language in all parts of the Acts and the Gospel.

That the companion of St. Paul who wrote the Acts was St. Luke is the unanimous voice of antiquity. His choice of medical language proves that the author was a physician. Westein, in his preface to the Gospel ("Novum Test. Græcum", Amsterdam, 1741, 643), states that there are clear indications of his medical profession throughout St. Luke's writings; and in the course of his commentary he points out several technical expressions common to the Evangelist and the medical writings of Galen. These were brought together by the Bollandists ("Acta SS.", 18 Oct.). In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for June, 1841, a paper appeared on the medical language of St. Luke. To the instances given in that article, Plummer and Harnack add several others; but the great book on the subject is Hobart "The Medical Language of St. Luke" (Dublin, 1882). Hobart works right through the Gospel and Acts and points out numerous words and phrases identical with those employed by such medical writers as Hippocrates, Arctæus, Galen, and Dioscorides. A few are found in Aristotle, but he was a doctor's son. The words and phrases cited are either peculiar to the Third Gospel and Acts, or are more frequent than in other New Testament writings. The argument is cumulative, and does not give way with its weakest strands. When doubtful cases

and expressions common to the Septuagint, are set aside, a large number remain that seem quite unassailable. Harnack (Luke the Physician! 13) says: "It is as good as certain from the subject-matter, and more especially from the style, of this great work that the author was a physician by profession. Ofcourse, in making such a statement one still exposes oneself to the scorn of the critics, and yet the arguments which are alleged in its support are simply convincing... Those, however, who have studied it [Hobart's book] carefully, will, I think, find it impossible to escape the conclusion that the question here is not one of merely accidental linguistic coloring, but that this great historical work was composed by a writer who was either a physician or was quite intimately acquainted with medical language and science. And, indeed, this conclusion holds good not only for the 'we' sections, but for the whole book." Harnack gives the subject special treatment in an appendix of twenty-two pages. Hawkins and Zahn come to the same conclusion. The latter observes (Einl., II, 427): "Hobart has proved for everyone who can appreciate proof that the author of the Lucan work was a man practised in the scientific language of Greek medicine-in short, a Greek physician" (quoted by Harnack, op. cit.).

In this connection, Plummer, though he speaks more cautiously of Hobart's argument, is practically in agreement with these writers. He says that when Hobart's list has been well sifted a considerable number of words remains. "The argument", he goes on to say "is cumulative. Any two or three instances of coincidence with medical writers may be explained as mere coincidences; but the large number of coincidences renders their explanation unsatisfactory for all of them, especially where the word is either rare in the LXX, or not found there at all" (64). In "The Expositor" (Nov. 1909, 385 sqq.), Mayor says of Harnack's two above-cited works: "He has in opposition to the Tübingen school of critics, successfully vindicated for St. Luke the authorship of the two canonical books ascribed to him, and has further proved that, with some few omissions, they may be accepted as trustworthy documents... I am glad to see that the English translator... has now been converted by Harnack's argument, founded in part, as he himself confesses, on the researches of English scholars, especially Dr. Hobart, Sir W. M. Ramsay, and Sir John Hawkins." There is a striking resemblance between the prologue

of the Gospel and a preface written by Dioscorides, a medical writer who studied at Tarsus in the first century (see Blass, "Philology of the Gospels"). The words with which Hippocrates begins his treatise "On Ancient Medicine" should be noted in this connection: 'Okosoi epecheiresan peri iatrikes legein he graphein, K. T. L. (Plummer, 4). When all these considerations are fully taken into account, they prove that the companion of St. Paul who wrote the Acts (and the Gospel) was a physician. Now, we learn from St. Paul that he had such a companion. Writing to the Colossians (4, 11), he says: "Luke, the most dear physician, saluteth you." He was, therefore, with St. Paul when he wrote to the Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians; and also when he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy. From the manner in which he is spoken of, a long period of intercourse is implied.

(2) The Author of Acts was the Author of the Gospel

"This position", says Plummer, "is so generally admitted by critics of all schools that not much time need be spent in discussing it." Harnack may be said to be the latest prominent convert to this view, to which he gives elaborate support in the two books above mentioned. He claims to have shown that the earlier critics went hopelessly astray, and that the traditional view is the right one. This opinion is fast gaining ground even amongst ultracritics, and Harnack declares that the others hold out because there exists a disposition amongst them to ignore the facts that tell against them, and he speaks of "the truly pitiful history of the criticism of the Acts". Only the briefest summary of the arguments can be given here. The Gospel and Acts are both dedicated to Theophilus and the author of the latter work claims to be the author of the former (Acts 1:1). The style and arrangement of both are so much alike that the supposition that one was written by a forger in imitation of the other is absolutely excluded. The required power of literary analysis was then unknown, and, if it were possible, we know of no writer of that age who had the wonderful skill necessary to produce such an imitation. It is to postulate a literary miracle, says Plummer, to suppose that one of the books was a forgery written in imitation of the other. Such an idea would not have occurred to anyone; and, if it had, he could not have carried it out with such marvellous success. If we take a few chapters of the Gospel and note down the special, peculiar, and characteristic

words, phrases and constructions, and then open the Acts at random, we shall find the same literary peculiarities constantly recurring. Or, if we begin with the Acts, and proceed conversely, the same results will follow. In addition to similarity, there are parallels of description, arrangement, and points of view, and the recurrence of medical language, in both books, has been mentioned under the previous heading.

We should naturally expect that the long intercourse between St. Paul and St. Luke would mutually influence their vocabulary, and (Horæ Synopticæ) and Bebb (Hast., "Dict. of the Bible", s.v. "Luke, Gospel of") state that there are 32 words found only in St. Matt. and St. Paul; 22 in St. Mark and St. Paul; 21 in St. John and St. Paul; while there are 101 found only in St. Luke and St. Paul. Of the characteristic words and phrases which mark the three Synoptic Gospels a little more than half are common to St. Matt. and St. Paul, less than half to St. Mark and St. Paul and two-thirds to St. Luke and St. Paul. Several writers have given examples of parallelism between the Gospel and the Pauline Epistles. Among the most striking are those given by Plummer (44). The same author gives long lists of words and expressions found in the Gospel and Acts and in St. Paul, and nowhere else in the New Testament. But more than this, Eager in "The Expositor" (July and August, 1894), in his attempt to prove that St. Luke was the author of Hebrews, has drawn attention to the remarkable fact that the Lucan influence on the language of St. Paul is much more marked in those Epistles where we know that St. Luke was his constant companion. Summing up, he observes: "There is in fact sufficient ground for believing that these books, Colossians, II Corinthians, the Pastoral Epistles, First (and to a lesser extent Second) Peter, possess a Lucan character." When all these points are taken into consideration, they afford convincing proof that the author of the Gospel and Acts was St. Luke, the beloved physician, the companion of St. Paul, and this is fully borne out by the external evidence.

External evidence

The proof in favour of the unity of authorship, derived from the internal character of the two books, is strengthened when taken in connection with the external evidence. Every ancient testimony for

the authenticity of Acts tells equally in favour of the Gospel; and every passage for the Lucan authorship of the Gospel gives a like support to the authenticity of Acts. Besides, in many places of the early Fathers both books are ascribed to St. Luke. The external evidence can be touched upon here only in the briefest manner.

The many passages in St. Jerome, Eusebius, and Origen, ascribing the books to St. Luke, are important not only as testifying to the belief of their own, but also of earlier times. St. Jerome and Origen were great travellers, and all three were omnivorous readers. They had access to practically the whole Christian literature of preceding centuries; but they nowhere hint that the authorship of the Gospel (and Acts) was ever called in question. This, taken by itself, would be a stronger argument than can be adduced for the majority of classical works. But we have much earlier testimony. Clement of Alexandria was probably born at Athens about A.D. 150. He travelled much and had for instructors in the Faith an Ionian, an Italian, a Syrian, an Egyptian, an Assyrian, and a Hebrew in Palestine. "And these men, preserving the true tradition of the blessed teaching directly from Peter and James, John and Paul, the holy Apostles, son receiving it from father, came by God's providence even unto us, to deposit among us those seeds [of truth] which were derived from their ancestors and the Apostles". (Stromata I.1.11; cf. Euseb., Church History V.11). He holds that St. Luke's Gospel was written before that of St. Mark, and he uses the four Gospels just as any modern Catholic writer. Tertullian was born at Carthage, lived some time in Rome, and then returned to Carthage. His quotations from the Gospels, when brought together by Rönisch, cover two hundred pages. He attacks Marcion for mutilating St. Luke's Gospel, and writes: "I say then that among them, and not only among the Apostolic Churches, but among all the Churches which are united with them in Christian fellowship, the Gospel of Luke, which we earnestly defend, has been maintained from its first publication" (Adv. Marc., IV, v).

The testimony of St. Irenæus is of special importance. He was born in Asia Minor, where he heard St. Polycarp give his reminiscences of St. John the Apostle, and in his numerous writings he frequently mentions other disciples of the Apostles. He was priest in

Lyons during the persecution in 177, and was the bearer of the letter of the confessors to Rome. His bishop, Pothinus, whom he succeeded, was ninety years of age when he gained the crown of martyrdom in 177, and must have been born while some of the Apostles and very many of their hearers were still living. St. Irenæus, who was born about A.D. 130, is, therefore, a witness for the early tradition of Asia Minor, Rome, and Gaul. He quotes the Gospels just as any modern bishop would do, he calls them Scripture, believes even in their verbal inspiration; shows how congruous it is that there are four and only four Gospels; and says that Luke, who begins with the priesthood and sacrifice of Zachary, is the calf. When we compare his quotations with those of Clement of Alexandria, variant readings of text present themselves. There was already established an Alexandrian type of text different from that used in the West. The Gospels had been copied and recopied so often, that, through errors of copying, etc., distinct families of text had time to establish themselves. The Gospels were so widespread that they became known to pagans. Celsus in his attack on the Christian religion was acquainted with the genealogy in St. Luke's Gospel, and his quotations show the same phenomena of variant readings.

The next witness, St. Justin Martyr, shows the position of honour the Gospels held in the Church, in the early portion of the century. Justin was born in Palestine about A.D. 105, and converted in 132-135. In his "Apology" he speaks of the memoirs of the Lord which are called Gospels, and which were written by Apostles (Matthew, John) and disciples of the Apostles (Mark, Luke). In connection with the disciples of the Apostles he cites the verses of St. Luke on the Sweat of Blood, and he has numerous quotations from all four.

Westcott shows that there is no trace in Justin of the use of any written document on the life of Christ except our Gospels. "He [Justin] tells us that Christ was descended from Abraham through Jacob, Judah, Phares, Jesse, David - that the Angel Gabriel was sent to announce His birth to the Virgin Mary - that it was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah... that His parents went thither [to Bethlehem] in consequence of an enrolment under Cyrenius - that as they could not find a lodging in the village they lodged in a cave close by it,

where Christ was born, and laid by Mary in a manger”, etc. (Westcott, “Canon”, 104).

There is a constant intermixture in Justin’s quotations of the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke. As usual in apologetical works, such as the apologies of Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, and Eusebius, he does not name his sources because he was addressing outsiders. He states, however, that the memoirs which were called Gospels were read in the churches on Sunday along with the writings of the Prophets, in other words, they were placed on an equal rank with the Old Testament. In the “Dialogue”, we have a passage peculiar to St. Luke. “Jesus as He gave up His Spirit upon the Cross said, Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit?” [Luke 23:46], even as I learned from the Memoirs of this fact also.” These Gospels which were read every Sunday must be the same as our four, which soon after, in the time of Irenæus, were in such long established honour, and regarded by him as inspired by the Holy Ghost. We never hear, says Salmon, of any revolution dethroning one set of Gospels and replacing them by another; so we may be sure that the Gospel honoured by the Church in Justin’s day were the same as those to which the same respect was paid in the days of Irenæus, not many years after.

This conclusion is strengthened not only by the nature of Justin’s quotations, but by the evidence afforded by his pupil Tatian, the Assyrian, who lived a long time with him in Rome, and afterwards compiled his harmony of the Gospels, his famous “Diatessaron”, in Syriac, from our four Gospels. He had travelled a great deal, and the fact that he uses only those shows that they alone were recognized by St. Justin and the Catholic Church between 130-150. This takes us back to the time when many of the hearers of the Apostles and Evangelists were still alive; for it is held by many scholars that St. Luke lived till towards the end of the first century.

Irenæus, Clement, Tatian, Justin, etc., were in as good a position for forming a judgment on the authenticity of the Gospels as we are of knowing who were the authors of Scott’s novels, Macaulay’s essays, Dickens’s early novels, Longfellow’s poems, no. xc of “Tracts for the Times” etc. But the argument does not end here. Many of the heretics who flourished from the beginning of the second century

till A.D. 150 admitted St. Luke’s Gospel as authoritative. This proves that it had acquired an unassailable position long before these heretics broke away from the Church. The Apocryphal Gospel of Peter, about A.D. 150, makes use of our Gospels. About the same time the Gospels, together with their titles, were translated into Latin; and here, again, we meet the phenomena of variant readings, to be found in Clement, Irenæus, Old Syriac, Justin, and Celsus, pointing to a long period of previous copying. Finally, we may ask, if the author of the two books were not St. Luke, who was he?

Harnack (Luke the Physician, 2) holds that as the Gospel begins with a prologue addressed to an individual (Theophilus) it must, of necessity, have contained in its title the name of its author. How can we explain, if St. Luke were not the author, that the name of the real, and truly great, writer came to be completely buried in oblivion, to make room for the name of such a comparatively obscure disciple as St. Luke? Apart from his connection, as supposed author, with the Third Gospel and Acts, was no more prominent than Aristarchus and Epaphras; and he is mentioned only in three places in the whole of the New Testament. If a false name were substituted for the true author, some more prominent individual would have been selected.

Integrity of the Gospel

Marcion rejected the first two chapters and some shorter passages of the gospel, and it was at one time maintained by rationalistic writers that his was the original Gospel of which ours is a later expansion. This is now universally rejected by scholars. St. Irenæus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius charged him with mutilating the Gospel; and it is known that the reasons for his rejection of those portions were doctrinal. He cut out the account of the infancy and the genealogy, because he denied the human birth of Christ. As he rejected the Old Testament all reference to it had to be excluded. That the parts rejected by Marcion belong to the Gospel is clear from their unity of style with the remainder of the book. The characteristics of St. Luke’s style run through the whole work, but are more frequent in the first two chapters than anywhere else; and they are present in the other portions omitted by Marcion. No writer in those days was capable of successfully forging such additions. The first two chapters, etc., are

contained in all the manuscripts and versions, and were known to Justin Martyr and other competent witnesses.

Purpose and contents

The Gospel was written, as is gathered from the prologue (1, 1-4), for the purpose of giving Theophilus (and others like him) increased confidence in the unshakable firmness of the Christian truths in which he had been instructed, or “catechized”- the latter word being used, according to Harnack, in its technical sense. The Gospel naturally falls into four divisions:

Gospel of the infancy, roughly covered by the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary (ch. 1-2);

ministry in Galilee, from the preaching of John the Baptist (iii, 1, to ix, 50);

journeys towards Jerusalem (9: 51- 19: 27).

Holy Week: preaching in and near Jerusalem, Passion, and Resurrection (19: 28, to end of 24).

We owe a great deal to the industry of St. Luke. Out of twenty miracles which he records six are not found in the other Gospels: draught of fishes, widow of Naim’s son, man with dropsy, ten lepers, Malchus’s ear, spirit of infirmity. He alone has the following eighteen parables: good Samaritan, friend at midnight, rich fool, servants watching, two debtors, barren fig-tree, chief seats, great supper, rash builder, rash king, lost groat, prodigal son, unjust steward, rich man and Lazarus, unprofitable servants, unjust judge, Pharisee and publican, pounds. The account of the journeys towards Jerusalem (9: 51- 19:27) is found only in St. Luke; and he gives special prominence to the duty of prayer.

Sources of the Gospel; synoptic problem

The best information as to his sources is given by St. Luke, in the beginning of his Gospel. As many had written accounts as they heard them from “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”, it seemed good to him also, having diligently attained to all things from the beginning, to write an ordered narrative. He had two sources of information, then, eyewitnesses (including Apostles) and written documents taken down

from the words of eyewitnesses. The accuracy of these documents he was in a position to test by his knowledge of the character of the writers, and by comparing them with the actual words of the Apostles and other eyewitnesses.

That he used written documents seems evident on comparing his Gospel with the other two Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark. All three frequently agree even in minute details, but in other respects there is often a remarkable divergence, and to explain these phenomena is the Synoptic Problem. St. Matthew and St. Luke alone give an account of the infancy of Christ, both accounts are independent. But when they begin the public preaching they describe it in the same way, here agreeing with St. Mark. When St. Mark ends, the two others again diverge. They agree in the main both in matter and arrangement within the limits covered by St. Mark, whose order they generally follow. Frequently all agree in the order of the narrative, but, where two agree, Mark and Luke agree against the order of Matthew, or Mark and Matthew agree against the order of Luke; Mark is always in the majority, and it is not proved that the other two ever agree against the order followed by him. Within the limits of the ground covered by St. Mark, the two other Gospels have several sections in common not found in St. Mark, consisting for the most part of discourses, and there is a closer resemblance between them than between any two Gospels where the three go over the same ground. The whole of St. Mark is practically contained in the other two. St. Matthew and St. Luke have large sections peculiar to themselves, such as the different accounts of the infancy, and the journeys towards Jerusalem in St. Luke. The parallel records have remarkable verbal coincidences. Sometimes the Greek phrases are identical, sometimes but slightly different, and again more divergent. There are various theories to explain the fact of the matter and language common to the Evangelists. Some hold that it is due to the oral teaching of the Apostles, which soon became stereotyped from constant repetition. Others hold that it is due to written sources, taken down from such teaching. Others, again, strongly maintain that Matthew and Luke used Mark or a written source extremely like it. In that case, we have evidence how very closely they kept to the original. The agreement between the discourses given by St. Luke and St. Matthew is accounted for, by some authors, by saying that

both embodied the discourses of Christ that had been collected and originally written in Aramaic by St. Matthew. The long narratives of St. Luke not found in these two documents are, it is said, accounted for by his employment of what he knew to be other reliable sources, either oral or written. (The question is concisely but clearly stated by Peake "A Critical Introduction to the New Testament", London, 1909, 101. Several other works on the subject are given in the literature at the end of this article.)

Saint Luke's accuracy

Very few writers have ever had their accuracy put to such a severe test as St. Luke, on account of the wide field covered by his writings, and the consequent liability (humanly speaking) of making mistakes; and on account of the fierce attacks to which he has been subjected.

It was the fashion, during the nineteenth century, with German rationalists and their imitators, to ridicule the "blunders" of Luke, but that is all being rapidly changed by the recent progress of archæological research. Harnack does not hesitate to say that these attacks were shameful, and calculated to bring discredit, not on the Evangelist, but upon his critics, and Ramsay is but voicing the opinion of the best modern scholars when he calls St. Luke a great and accurate historian. Very few have done so much as this latter writer, in his numerous works and in his articles in "The Expositor", to vindicate the extreme accuracy of St. Luke. Wherever archæology has afforded the means of testing St. Luke's statements, they have been found to be correct; and this gives confidence that he is equally reliable where no such corroboration is as yet available.

For the sake of illustration, one or two examples may here be given:

(1) Sergius Paulus, Proconsul in Cyprus

St. Luke says (Acts 13) that when St. Paul visited Cyprus (in the reign of Claudius) Sergius Paulus was proconsul (anthupatos) there. Grotius asserted that this was an abuse of language, on the part of the natives, who wished to flatter the governor by calling him proconsul, instead of proprætor (antistrategos), which he really was; and that St. Luke used the popular appellation. Even Baronius

(Annales, ad Ann. 46) supposed that, though Cyprus was only a prætorian province, it was honoured by being ruled by the proconsul of Cilicia, who must have been Sergius Paulus. But this is all a mistake. Cato captured Cyprus, Cicero was proconsul of Cilicia and Cyprus in 52 B.C.; Mark Antony gave the island to Cleopatra; Augustus made it a prætorian province in 27 B.C., but in 22 B.C. he transferred it to the senate, and it became again a proconsular province. This latter fact is not stated by Strabo, but it is mentioned by Dion Cassius (LIII). In Hadrian's time it was once more under a proprætor, while under Severus it was again administered by a proconsul. There can be no doubt that in the reign of Claudius, when St. Paul visited it, Cyprus was under a proconsul (anthupatos), as stated by St. Luke. Numerous coins have been discovered in Cyprus, bearing the head and name of Claudius on one side, and the names of the proconsuls of Cyprus on the other. A woodcut engraving of one is given in Conybeare and Howson's "St. Paul", at the end of chapter v. On the reverse it has: EPI KOMINOY PROKAU ANTHUPATOU: KUPRION—"Money of the Cyprians under Cominius Proclus, Proconsul." The head of Claudius (with his name) is figured on the other side. General Cesnol discovered a long inscription on a pedestal of white marble, at Solvi, in the north of the island, having the words: EPI PAULOU ANTHUPATOU—"Under Paulus Proconsul." Lightfoot, Zochler, Ramsay, Knabenbauer, Zahn, and Vigouroux hold that this was the actual (Sergius) Paulus of Acts 13:7.

(2) The Politarchs in Thessalonica

An excellent example of St. Luke's accuracy is afforded by his statement that rulers of Thessalonica were called "politarchs" (politarchai - Acts 17:6, 8). The word is not found in the Greek classics; but there is a large stone in the British Museum, which was found in an arch in Thessalonica, containing an inscription which is supposed to date from the time of Vespasian. Here we find the word used by St. Luke together with the names of several such politarchs, among them being names identical with some of St. Paul's converts: Sopater, Gaius, Secundus. Burton in "American Journal of Theology" (July, 1898) has drawn attention to seventeen inscriptions proving the existence of politarchs in ancient times. Thirteen were found

in Macedonia, and five were discovered in Thessalonica, dating from the middle of the first to the end of the second century.

(3) Knowledge of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe

The geographical, municipal, and political knowledge of St. Luke, when speaking of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, is fully borne out by recent research.

(4) Knowledge of Philippian customs

He is equally sure when speaking of Philippi, a Roman colony, where the *duumviri* were called “*prætors*” (*strategoi*-Acts 16:20, 35), a lofty title which *duumviri* assumed in Capua and elsewhere, as we learn from Cicero and Horace (*Sat.*, I, v, 34). They also had *lictors* (*rabsouchoi*), after the manner of real *prætors*.

(5) References to Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth

His references to Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, are altogether in keeping with everything that is now known of these cities. Take a single instance: “In Ephesus St. Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus, in the city of Socrates he discussed moral questions in the market-place. How incongruous it would seem if the methods were transposed! But the narrative never makes a false step amid all the many details as the scene changes from city to city; and that is the conclusive proof that it is a picture of real life” (Ramsay, *op. cit.*, 238). St. Luke mentions (Acts 18:2) that when St. Paul was at Corinth the Jews had been recently expelled from Rome by Claudius, and this is confirmed by a chance statement of Suetonius. He tells us (*ibid.*, 12) that Gallio was then *proconsul* in Corinth (the capital of the Roman province of Achaia). There is no direct evidence that he was *proconsul* in Achaia, but his brother Seneca writes that Gallio caught a fever there, and went on a voyage for his health. The description of the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19) brings together, in the space of eighteen verses, an extraordinary amount of knowledge of the city, that is fully corroborated by numerous inscriptions, and representations on coins, medals, etc., recently discovered. There are allusions to the temple of Diana (one of the seven wonders of the world), to the fact that Ephesus gloried in being her temple-sweeper her caretaker (*neokoros*), to the theatre as the place of assembly for the people, to the town clerk (*grammateus*), to the

Asiarchs, to sacrilegious (*ierosuloi*), to *proconsular* sessions, artificers, etc. The *ecclesia* (the usual word in Ephesus for the assembly of the people) and the *grammateus* or town-clerk (the title of a high official frequent on Ephesian coins) completely puzzled Cornelius a Lapide, Baronius, and other commentators, who imagined the *ecclesia* meant a synagogue, etc.

(6) The Shipwreck

The account of the voyage and shipwreck described in Acts (27 and 28) is regarded by competent authorities on nautical matters as a marvellous instance of accurate description (see Smith's classical work on the subject, “*Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*” (4th ed., London, 1880).

Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene

Gfrörer, B. Bauer, Hilgenfeld, Keim, and Holtzmann assert that St. Luke perpetrated a gross chronological blunder of sixty years by making Lysanias, the son of Ptolemy, who lived 36 B.C., and was put to death by Mark Antony, tetrarch of Abilene when John the Baptist began to preach (iii, 1). Strauss says: “He [Luke] makes rule, 30 years after the birth of Christ, a certain Lysanias, who had certainly been slain 30 years previous to that birth—a slight error of 60 years.” On the face of it, it is highly improbable that such a careful writer as St. Luke would have gone out of his way to run the risk of making such a blunder, for the mere purpose of helping to fix the date of the public ministry. Fortunately, we have a complete refutation supplied by Schürer, a writer by no means over friendly to St. Luke, as we shall see when treating of the Census of Quirinius. Ptolemy Mennæus was King of the Itureans (whose kingdom embraced the Lebanon and plain of Massyas with the capital Chalcis, between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon) from 85-40 B.C. His territories extended on the east towards Damascus, and on the south embraced Pnias, and part, at least, of Galilee. Lysanias the older succeeded his father Ptolemy about 40 B.C. (Josephus, “*Ant.*”, XIV, xii, 3; “*Bell. Jud.*”, I, xiii, 1), and is styled by Dion Cassius “King of the Itureans” (XLIX, 32). After reigning about four or five years he was put to death by Mark Antony, at the instigation of Cleopatra, who received a large portion of his territory (Josephus, “*Ant.*”, XV, iv, 1; “*Bel. Jud.*”, I, xxii, 3; Dion Cassius, *op. cit.*).

As the latter and Porphyry call him “king”, it is doubtful whether the coins bearing the superscription “Lysanias tetrarch and high priest” belong to him, for there were one or more later princes called Lysanias. After his death his kingdom was gradually divided up into at least four districts, and the three principal ones were certainly not called after him. A certain Zenodorus took on lease the possessions of Lysanias, 23 B.C., but Trachonitis was soon taken from him and given to Herod. On the death of Zenodorus in 20 B.C., Ulatha and Panias, the territories over which he ruled, were given by Augustus to Herod. This is called the tetrarchy of Zenodorus by Dion Cassius. “It seems therefore that Zenodorus, after the death of Lysanias, had received on rent a portion of his territory from Cleopatra, and that after Cleopatra’s death this ‘rented’ domain, subject to tribute, was continued to him with the title of tetrarch” (Schürer, I, II app., 333, i). Mention is made on a monument, at Heliopolis, of “Zenodorus, son of the tetrarch Lysanias”. It has been generally supposed that this is the Zenodorus just mentioned, but it is uncertain whether the first Lysanias was ever called tetrarch. It is proved from the inscriptions that there was a genealogical connection between the families of Lysanias and Zenodorus, and the same name may have been often repeated in the family. Coins for 32, 30, and 25 B.C., belonging to our Zenodorus, have the superscription, “Zenodorus tetrarch and high priest.” After the death of Herod the Great a portion of the tetrarchy of Zenodorus went to Herod’s son, Philip (Jos., “Ant.”, XVII, xi, 4), referred to by St. Luke, “Philip being tetrarch of Iturea” (Luke 3:1).

Another tetrarchy sliced off from the dominions of Zenodorus lay to the east between Chalcis and Damascus, and went by the name of Abila or Abilene. Abila is frequently spoken of by Josephus as a tetrarchy, and in “Ant.”, XVIII, vi, 10, he calls it the “tetrarchy of Lysanias”. Claudius, in A.D. 41, conferred “Abila of Lysanias” on Agrippa I (Ant., XIX, v, 1). In A.D. 53, Agrippa II obtained Abila, “which last had been the tetrarchy of Lysanias” (Ant., XX., vii, 1). “From these passages we see that the tetrarchy of Abila had belonged previously to A.D. 37 to a certain Lysanias, and seeing that Josephus nowhere previously makes any mention of another Lysanias, except the contemporary of Anthony and Cleopatra, 40-36 B.C... criticism has endeavoured in various ways to show that there had not afterwards

been any other, and that the tetrarchy of Abilene had its name from the older Lysanias. But this is impossible” (Schürer, 337).

Lysanias inherited the Iturean empire of his father Ptolemy, of which Abila was but a small and very obscure portion. Chalcis in Coele-Syria was the capital of his kingdom, not Abila in Abilene. He reigned only about four years and was a comparatively obscure individual when compared with his father Ptolemy, or his successor Zenodorus, both of whom reigned many years. There is no reason why any portion of his kingdom should have been called after his name rather than theirs, and it is highly improbable that Josephus speaks of Abilene as called after him seventy years after his death. As Lysanias I was king over the whole region, one small portion of it could not be called his tetrarchy or kingdom, as is done by Josephus (Bel. Jud., II, xii, 8). “It must therefore be assumed as certain that at a later date the district of Abilene had been severed from the kingdom of Chalcis, and had been governed by a younger Lysanias as tetrarch” (Schürer, 337).

The existence of such a late Lysanias is shown by an inscription found at Abila, containing the statement that a certain Nymphaios, the freedman of Lysanias, built a street and erected a temple in the time of the “August Emperors”. Augusti (Sebastoi) in the plural was never used before the death of Augustus, A.D. 14. The first contemporary Sebastoi were Tiberius and his mother Livia, i.e. at a time fifty years after the first Lysanias. An inscription at Heliopolis, in the same region, makes it probable that there were several princes of this name. “The Evangelist Luke is thoroughly correct when he assumes (iii, 1) that in the fifteenth year of Tiberius there was a Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene” (Schürer, op. cit., where full literature is given; Vigouroux, op. cit.).

Who spoke the Magnificat?

Lately an attempt has been made to ascribe the Magnificat to Elizabeth instead of to the Blessed Virgin. All the early Fathers, all the Greek manuscripts, all the versions, all the Latin manuscripts (except three) have the reading in Luke 1:46: Kai eipen Mariam-Et ait Maria [And Mary said]: Magnificat anima mea Dominum, etc. Three Old Latin manuscripts (the earliest dating from the end of the

fourth cent.), a, b, 1 (called rhe by Westcott and Hort), have Et ait Elisabeth. These tend to such close agreement that their combined evidence is single rather than threefold. They are full of gross blunders and palpable corruptions, and the attempt to pit their evidence against the many thousands of Greek, Latin, and other manuscripts, is anything but scientific. If the evidence were reversed, Catholics would be held up to ridicule if they ascribed the Magnificat to Mary. The three manuscripts gain little or no support from the internal evidence of the passage. The Magnificat is a cento from the song of Anna (1 Samuel 2), the Psalms, and other places of the Old Testament. If it were spoken by Elizabeth it is remarkable that the portion of Anna's song that was most applicable to her is omitted: "The barren hath borne many: and she that had many children is weakened." See, on this subject, Emmet in "The Expositor" (Dec., 1909); Bernard, *ibid.* (March, 1907); and the exhaustive works of two Catholic writers: Ladeuze, "Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique" (Louvain, Oct., 1903); Bardenhewer, "Maria Verkündigung" (Freiburg, 1905).

The census of Quirinius

No portion of the New Testament has been so fiercely attacked as Luke 2:1-5. Schürer has brought together, under six heads, a formidable array of all the objections that can be urged against it. There is not space to refute them here; but Ramsay in his "Was Christ born in Bethlehem?" has shown that they all fall to the ground:-

(1) St. Luke does not assert that a census took place all over the Roman Empire before the death of Herod, but that a decision emanated from Augustus that regular census were to be made. Whether they were carried out in general, or not, was no concern of St. Luke's. If history does not prove the existence of such a decree it certainly proves nothing against it. It was thought for a long time that the system of Indictions was inaugurated under the early Roman emperors, it is now known that they owe their origin to Constantine the Great (the first taking place fifteen years after his victory of 312), and this in spite of the fact that history knew nothing of the matter. Kenyon holds that it is very probable that Pope Damasus ordered the Vulgate to be regarded as the only authoritative edition of the Latin Bible; but it would be difficult to Prove it

historically. If "history knows nothing" of the census in Palestine before 4 B.C. neither did it know anything of the fact that under the Romans in Egypt regular personal census were held every fourteen years, at least from A.D. 20 till the time of Constantine. Many of the census papers have been discovered, and they were called apographai, the name used by St. Luke. They were made without any reference to property or taxation. The head of the household gave his name and age, the name and age of his wife, children, and slaves. He mentioned how many were included in the previous census, and how many born since that time. Valuation returns were made every year. The fourteen years' cycle did not originate in Egypt (they had a different system before 19 B.C.), but most probably owed its origin to Augustus, 8 B.C., the fourteenth year of his tribunitia potestas, which was a great year in Rome, and is called the year I in some inscriptions. Apart from St. Luke and Josephus, history is equally ignorant of the second enrolling in Palestine, A.D. 6. So many discoveries about ancient times, concerning which history has been silent, have been made during the last thirty years that it is surprising modern authors should brush aside a statement of St. Luke's, a respectable first-century writer, with a mere appeal to the silence of history on the matter.

(2) The first census in Palestine, as described by St. Luke, was not made according to Roman, but Jewish, methods. St. Luke, who travelled so much, could not be ignorant of the Roman system, and his description deliberately excludes it. The Romans did not run counter to the feelings of provincials more than they could help. Jews, who were proud of being able to prove their descent, would have no objection to the enrolling described in Luke 2. Schürer's arguments are vitiated throughout by the supposition that the census mentioned by St. Luke could be made only for taxation purposes. His discussion of imperial taxation learned but beside the mark (cf. the practice in Egypt). It was to the advantage of Augustus to know the number of possible enemies in Palestine, in case of revolt.

(3) King Herod was not as independent as he is described for controversial purposes. A few years before Herod's death Augustus wrote to him. Josephus, "Ant.", XVI, ix., 3, has: "Caesar [Augustus]... grew very angry, and wrote to Herod sharply. The sum of his

epistle was this, that whereas of old he used him as a friend, he should now use him as his subject." It was after this that Herod was asked to number his people. That some such enrolling took place we gather from a passing remark of Josephus, "Ant.", XVII, ii, 4, "Accordingly, when all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their good will to Cæsar [Augustus], and to the king's [Herod's] government, these very men [the Pharisees] did not swear, being above six thousand." The best scholars think they were asked to swear allegiance to Augustus.

(4) It is said there was no room for Quirinius, in Syria, before the death of Herod in 4 B.C. Sentius Saturninus was governor there from 9-6 B.C.; and Quintilius Varus, from 6 B.C. till after the death of Herod. But in turbulent provinces there were sometimes two Roman officials of equal standing. In the time of Caligula the administration of Africa was divided in such a way that the military power, with the foreign policy, was under the control of the lieutenant of the emperor, who could be called a hegemon (as in St. Luke), while the internal affairs were under the ordinary proconsul. The same position was held by Vespasian when he conducted the war in Palestine, which belonged to the province of Syria—a province governed by an officer of equal rank. Josephus speaks of Volumnius as being Kaisaros hegemon, together with C. Sentius Saturninus, in Syria (9-6 B.C.): "There was a hearing before Saturninus and Volumnius, who were then the presidents of Syria" (Ant., XVI, ix, 1). He is called procurator in "Bel. Jud.", I, xxvii, 1, 2. Corbulo commanded the armies of Syria against the Parthians, while Quadratus and Gallus were successively governors of Syria. Though Josephus speaks of Gallus, he knows nothing of Corbulo; but he was there nevertheless (Mommsen, "Röm. Gesch.", V, 382). A similar position to that of Corbulo must have been held by Quirinius for a few years between 7 and 4 B.C.

The best treatment of the subject is that by Ramsay "Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?" See also the valuable essays of two Catholic writers: Marucchi in "Il Bessarione" (Rome, 1897); Bour, "L'Inscription de Quirinius et le Recensement de S. Luc" (Rome, 1897). Vigouroux, "Le N. T. et les Découvertes Modernes" (Paris, 1890), has a good deal of useful information. It has been suggested that Quirinius is a copyist's error for Quintilius (Varus).

Saint Luke and Josephus

The attempt to prove that St. Luke used Josephus (but inaccurately) has completely broken down. Belser successfully refutes Krenkel in "Theol. Quartalschrift", 1895, 1896. The differences can be explained only on the supposition of entire independence. The resemblances are sufficiently accounted for by the use of the Septuagint and the common literary Greek of the time by both. See Bebb and Headlam in Hast., "Dict. of the Bible", s. vv. "Luke, Gospel" and "Acts of the Apostles", respectively. Schürer (Zeit. für W. Th., 1876) brushes aside the opinion that St. Luke read Josephus. When Acts is compared with the Septuagint and Josephus, there is convincing evidence that Josephus was not the source from which the writer of Acts derived his knowledge of Jewish history. There are numerous verbal and other coincidences with the Septuagint. St. Luke did not get his names from Josephus, as contended by this last writer, thereby making the whole history a concoction. Wright in his "Some New Test. Problems" gives the names of fifty persons mentioned in St. Luke's Gospel. Thirty-two are common to the other two Synoptics, and therefore not taken from Josephus. Only five of the remaining eighteen are found in him, namely, Augustus Caesar, Tiberius, Lysanias, Quirinius, and Annas. As Annas is always called Ananus in Josephus, the name was evidently not taken from him. This is corroborated by the way the Gospel speaks of Caiphas. St. Luke's employment of the other four names shows no connection with the Jewish historian. The mention of numerous countries, cities, and islands in Acts shows complete independence of the latter writer. St. Luke's preface bears a much closer resemblance to those of Greek medical writers than to that of Josephus. The absurdity of concluding that St. Luke must necessarily be wrong when not in agreement with Josephus is apparent when we remember the frequent contradictions and blunders in the latter writer.

Chapter 2

Prayer in the Gospel of Luke

Prayer always has been, and always will be, a staple of Christian practice. Jesus devotes much time both in prayer and teaching his disciples to pray. All four of the gospels devote time and space to the subject of prayer. According to Lindell Harris, though, the gospel of Luke has more to say about prayer than any of the other gospels¹. Therefore, it is easy for one to gather that Luke held a high regard for the institution of prayer. In fact, P. T. O'Brien has stated that "prayer is a significant motif in the Lukan writings as both the terminology and the contexts make plain."² This Chapter seeks to explore Luke's treatment of prayer by separating the instances of prayer into two categories: the prayers of Jesus in Luke and prayer as didactic in Luke.

Instances of Prayer In Luke

According to K.S. Han, Luke uses two Greek words translated for prayer a total of forty-one times in his gospel. The verb *proseukomai*, and its noun form *proseuke*, are used twenty-two times while the verb *deesis* is used nineteen times³. When the use of *proseukomai* in Luke is combined with that in Acts, it totals thirty-five times (out of a total eighty-six uses in the New Testament)⁴. This fact reiterates how

important prayer is to the author. Harris explains the difference in the two words that Luke uses to describe prayer: *deesis* gives prominence to the expression of personal need while *proseuke* pertains to the element of devotion⁵. Harris goes on to explain that the use of *deesis* is not limited to God, but can also be used of a request addressed to a man. *Proseuke*, however, is limited to God.⁶

Given the understanding of the importance of prayer to Luke, it is interesting to note that Luke both opens and closes his gospel with instances of prayer. In Luke 1:10, God's people are praying outside of the temple prior to the angelic announcement of the birth of John to Zechariah. The last verse of the gospel (24:53) shows a scene of Jesus' followers at the temple continually offering blessing to God⁷.

Of the prayer instances recorded in Luke's gospel, there are eight texts that relate to prayer in the life of Jesus⁸. The majority of the other prayer texts deal with the instruction of prayer for the disciples. Only a handful of references fall outside these two distinctions: the prayers of Zechariah and Elizabeth for a son (1:13), the prayers of Anna (2:36-38), and Simeon's prayer of thanksgiving (2:26-32).

Prayers of Jesus

By reading any of the gospels, especially Luke, one will easily understand that Jesus was not only a man that taught about prayer, but he was one that also practiced it. I. R. Beiler states it this way: More compelling than anything Jesus taught about prayer by precept was what he taught by his prayer practice. he depended upon it in the great soul-moving experiences of his life... Whether he needed courage, strength, or fellowship with the Father, prayer was his reliance, his very mood.⁹

In many of the important ministry points of Jesus' life, Luke makes sure to record the fact that Jesus prayed. In no way was prayer an action that Jesus failed to practice. He not only taught his disciples how to pray, he demonstrated to them how to pray.

Prayer at the Baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21)

In this scene, after Jesus was baptized, he was praying as the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended. J. M. Creed notices Luke's correlation between the prayer of Jesus and the descending of the Spirit in the baptismal account. He points out that Luke uses

the present participle *proseukomenou* (“praying”) in contrast to the aorist *baptisthentos* (“baptized”). This indicates that Luke understands the descent of the Spirit to be coincident with the prayer of Jesus, not the baptism which had already been completed¹⁰

Oscar Cullmann also sees a correlation with Jesus’ prayer at his baptism and his prayer at the crucifixion. He argues that the true meaning of the baptism was not fully established until his death and resurrection. Because Jesus prays at his crucifixion as well, the baptism not only inaugurates his public mission, it also proleptically indicates his death and resurrection¹¹

Routine Prayer (Luke 5:16)

Luke is the only author to record Jesus retreating to pray subsequent to the healing of the leper and just prior to his first major encounter with the scribes and Pharisees.¹² It may have been an oversight of the other authors, because of no direct correlation between this prayer and the events that preceded or succeeded. It seems, though, that Luke is offering an insight into the routine of Jesus. As Han states, Luke is noting the regularity of Jesus’ prayer life¹³

Danker does notice a correlation between Luke’s explanation of Jesus’ routine prayer time with the events that will follow regarding the scribes and Pharisees. He believes that Luke is using this instance to indicate Jesus’ desire to spend time with God before he was to face any sort of opposition¹⁴

Harris understands this verse to explain Jesus’ need to “recharge” himself occasionally. He notes the constant drain of his human energy due to constant demands for his sympathy and compassion. In order for him to respond to the needs of those who flocked to him, Jesus occasionally needed to separate himself for communion with God¹⁵

The Choosing of the Twelve (Luke 6:12)

Prior to calling his twelve disciples, Luke states that Jesus prayed all night. O’Brien suggests that Luke was illustrating Jesus’ prayer over the momentous issues of the choice which Jesus was about to make¹⁶ Han adds to this theory by stating:

The calling of disciples stresses the continuation of Jesus’ work after his death. Since the entire context of Luke-Acts develops how

the disciples follow Jesus’ way, Jesus’ prayer has to do with the life of the disciples¹⁷

Harris goes on to state that in this instance prayer became not only Jesus submitting his petitions, but also a time for him to listen to God in an undistracted manner¹⁸ In other words, Jesus made himself available in the times when others were sleeping so that there were no distractions in his hearing the voice of the Father.

Peter’s Confession (Luke 9:18)

Jesus prays before he questions the disciples of his true identity. Luke is the only author to introduce this story with Jesus praying. Unlike Mark, Luke omits Peter’s erroneous protest and Jesus’ subsequent rebuke. It would seem that Luke is directing the reader away from the negative aspect of Peter’s objection, and, instead, pointing the reader towards the positive fact that Jesus’ preceding prayer had been answered.

Han states that Jesus’ prayer had been effective because “the Father had revealed to Peter the secret of [Jesus’] messianic person and dignity.”¹⁹

The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-29)

Jesus takes his inner circle of three disciples to the mountain to pray. As he is praying, Luke records that his appearance was changed and he was joined by Moses and Elijah. Han references Jesus’ routine prayer in 6:12 with this passage to indicate that this prayer time was also a part of Jesus’ common routine²⁰

It is noted that this is the only time that others were present when Jesus prayed. MacLaren offers an interesting theory about the transfiguration. He suggests that it could have been a common occurrence when Jesus entered into prayer only that no one was present to witness it, save this one time. Was it possible that, at some point, as Jesus entered into closer communion with his Father that glory shone from his face, though no one was there to record it?²¹

Intercession for Peter (Luke 22:32)

In this text, Luke states that Jesus has specifically prayed for Peter to maintain his faith. Although it has been assumed in the

previous passages that Jesus has offered prayers for others, here Luke points out that Jesus definitively has offered a priestly prayer for Peter. O'Brien indicates that the plural use of "you" in this passage makes Peter a representative of the twelve, and by extension, all believers.²² All believers have benefited from Jesus' intercessory prayer for Peter.

Prayer at Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46)

This text shows Jesus offering prayer for himself regarding the event that will soon follow. This is the first time that Jesus has prayed a prayer of supplication for himself²³. It is interesting, also, to note that Luke begins and ends this passage with Jesus urging the disciples to "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."

Han sees a specific purpose for Luke mentioning both the prayer of Jesus and his exhortation to the disciples. In verse 39, he notes that the term Luke uses for discipleship, *akolouthein*, is a technical term which implies participation in the fate of Jesus. Although the disciples would not share Jesus' fate immediately, Jesus' exhortation for them to pray was to prepare them for things to come while his prayer for himself was to prepare him for things to come.²⁴

Prayer on the Cross (Luke 23:34, 46)

Luke is the only author to record the prayers of Jesus on the cross. The first is a prayer of forgiveness for those executing him. Harris states that Jesus "phrased in prayer the forgiveness which his death was destined to achieve for sinful men."²⁵ Even while on the cross, Jesus' thoughts and prayers were focused on those whom he came to save. The second prayer is described as a prayer of trust: "Father into your hands I commit my spirit."²⁶ It is not a prayer out of doubt or agony, rather, it is a declaration that the kingdom of God has been established by the completion of Jesus' ministry.²⁷

Didactic Prayer

Apart from practicing prayer in his own life, Jesus taught others both about prayer and how to pray. Luke takes notice of this and devotes much of his work to Jesus' prayer teachings. There are five main passages in which Luke discusses the teaching of prayer.²⁸ Han suggests that these five passages taken together offer a paradigm

for prayer. The two parables teach one how to pray, the Lord's prayer teaches one what to pray, and in the final passage, Jesus teaches why one should pray persistently.²⁹

Prayer after the Mission of the Seventy (Luke 10:21-24)

This is one of the few instances in Luke in which he gives the reader an example of Jesus' prayer. Even though the passage is not explicitly labeled a prayer, scholars agree that it represents Jesus praying. According to Han, this section is didactic because it instructs the disciples who will engage in the harvest (referred to in 10:2) based upon the present kingdom, and it demonstrates that their prayers will bring God's harvest to completion.³⁰ In this text Luke shows that prayer is the lifestyle of those who will enter the kingdom.

The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2-4)

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he responded with what is now labeled, The Lord's Prayer. Luke's account of the prayer differs slightly from the Matthean account (Matthew 6:9-13). This prayer was given to serve as an outline for the disciples to follow.

Harris notes that Jesus instructs that prayer is directed toward God and representative of his holiness ("Father, hallowed be your name.")³¹ "Your kingdom come," was an instruction to pray that the kingdom which had already come in Jesus would be brought to fruition.³² "Give us each day our daily bread," is a prayer of provision and constant reminding of our dependence on God.³³ "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us," is somewhat self-explanatory—"forgive us as we forgive others." Although, Luke uses the term "sin" when Matthew uses the term "debts." Harris suggests that this is because of the difference in audiences (Matthew wrote with Jews in mind while Luke wrote with Gentiles in mind.)³⁴ "Lead us not into temptation," is a prayer for God's providence.

Parable of the Midnight Friend (Luke 11:5-13)

Jesus uses this parable to teach on the persistence of prayer. The request of the friend is outrageous, since his midnight venture would surely wake the entire household, however, persistence is rewarded.³⁵ Just as the persistent friend would eventually receive that which he asked for, so too, will the persistent pray-er when he asks, seeks, and knocks.

Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

This parable is another tool that Jesus uses to teach on the persistence of prayer. A widow who seeks justice against her adversary is persistent in pleading with a judge that has no concern for her. Eventually, the judge gives in to her in order for her nagging to cease. This parable is preceded by Jesus' exhortation to always pray and never give up. Luke opens the story with this exhortation to give focus to the point of the parable: "God will hear and speedily answer the cries of his people who are persistent and faithful in prayer."³⁶ O'Brien goes on further to suggest that Luke is addressing a situation in which Christians, under severe persecution, are denying their faith. Their persistence in prayer will insure that God acts speedily on their behalf.³⁷ Regardless of whether this is the case or not, the point is clear: God answers those who pray persistently.

The Watchful Prayer (Luke 21:36)

This verse is an exhortation from Jesus to always be on the watch. Again, this verse points to the idea of persistent prayer with the use of the word "always." Morris suggests that this verse also has an eschatological perspective. "The prayer he urges involves an attitude of life, an attitude that seeks to flee worldly sins as the believer concentrates on the service of God. *To stand before the son of man* is to possess the ultimate salvation."³⁸ The believer is to be on the watch and persistent in doing so, but this type of prayer lends itself to a lifestyle that seeks to avoid the coming age.

Conclusion and Ministry Application

There has been much debate on which aspect of prayer in Luke is more important, the prayer life of Jesus or his teachings on prayer. It would seem, in reality, both are equally important. Jesus himself displays how important prayer is by offering his own prayer life as a model. With Jesus as the ultimate example for righteous living, how much more should believers strive to emulate him.

Jesus takes it a step farther, though. Not only does he live the example of prayer, he teaches his followers both how to pray (the Lord's prayer) and in what manner to pray (persistently). Turner sums it up when he states that "The texture of Luke's portrait of prayer is too exotic to sum up in any epigram; for him prayer is not a

technique for achieving some object or goal, it is man relating every aspect of his life... to God."

Luke has more than shown the importance of prayer in the life of the believer. As seen in the Lord's prayer (Luke 11:2-4), prayer is the believer's connection to the Father. It is the means by which the believer not only asks for provision and protection ("Give us each day our daily bread... and lead us not into temptation."), but also a means of offering praise to the Father ("Hallowed be Your name."). In other words, prayer is direct connection with God.

Jesus himself displayed the importance of prayer by practicing it himself. It is interesting to note that before many of the major events in the life of Jesus (calling of the twelve, the transfiguration, his arrest and trial, the crucifixion, etc.) he preceded those times with prayer. There is a vital application for the believer to be drawn from this example. Significant events in the believer's life should not be experienced without prayer in the equation.

Luke has made clear that prayer is a vital aspect of the life of the believer. Jesus not only taught about prayer, he also provided the example and set the standard. The believer should emulate Jesus in any way possible.

End Notes

- 1 Lindell O. Harris, "Prayer in the Gospel of Luke," SWJT 10 (1967): 59-69.
- 2 P. T. O'Brien, "Prayer in Luke-Acts," TB 24 (1973): 111-27.
- 3 Kyu Sam Han, "Theology of Prayer in the Gospel of Luke," JETS 43 (2000): 675-93.
- 4 O'Brien, "Prayer," 113.
- 5 Harris, "Prayer," 59.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Other references to prayer in Luke's gospel include: 2:36-38; 3:21; 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 29; 10:21-23; 11:1-13; 18:1-14; 21:36; and 22:29-46.
- 8 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:29; 22:32; 22:39-46; and 23:46
- 9 Irwin Ross Beiler, *Studies in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1936), 181.
- 10 John Martin Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: McMillan, 1953), 57

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- 11 Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson: 1950), 19.
- 12 O'Brien, "Prayer," 114.
- 13 Han, "Theology," 681.
- 14 F. W. Danker, *Jesus and New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 120
- 15 Harris, "Prayer," 60-61.
- 16 O'Brien, "Prayer," 115.
- 17 Han, "Theology," 682.
- 18 Harris, "Prayer," 61.
- 19 Han, "Theology," 682.
- 20 Han, "Theology," 683.
- 21 Alexander MacLaren, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1909), 277.
- 22 O'Brien, "Prayer," 115-116.
- 23 S. John Roth, "Jesus the Pray-er," *CTM* 33 (2006): 488-500.
- 24 Han, "Theology," 685.
- 25 Harris, "Prayer," 64.
- 26 Han, "Theology," 685.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 10:21-24; 11:2-4, 5-8; 18:1-18; 21:36. Luke 11:2-4, 5-8 are separated because the former is "The Lord's Prayer" and the latter is a parable on prayer.
- 29 Han, "Theology," 687
- 30 Han, "Theology," 688.
- 31 Harris, "Prayer," 65.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Leon Morris, *Luke* (TNTC 3; Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 212.
- 34 Harris, "Prayer," 66.
- 35 O'Brien, "Prayer," 118.
- 36 Han, "Theology," 690.
- 37 O'Brien, "Prayer," 117-118.
- 38 Morris, *Luke*, 329.

Chapter 3

The Poor and the Rich in the Gospel of Luke

This chapter examines an identifiable Lukan theology to the poor in the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Luke consistently maintains a theology to the poor; therefore, this chapter seeks to determine the implications for the modern Church and apply it to contemporary theology by determining ways in which Christians should respond to the financial state of others, as well as how one should maintain his or her individual economic policies according to Luke and his understanding of the teachings of Christ regarding the poor.

Luke's social consciousness is generally supported in five significant emphases: (1) his considerable focus on the rich and the poor, (2) prominent inclusion of women, (3) acceptance of religious and social outcasts, (4) healing as a noteworthy part of Jesus' ministry and that of His followers, and (5) exhortations to and examples of almsgiving.

John Roth asserts that Luke has "proportionally more material than the other Gospels dealing with the rich and the poor" and is "particularly fond of exhortations to and examples of almsgiving." Walter Pilgrim also

emphasizes a Lukan theology to the poor by stating that the subject of wealth and poverty is of greater importance to Luke than any other evangelist as part of both the tradition of Jesus and as a message for the Christian communities to whom he is writing. The subject of wealth and poverty seems to be regarded by Luke as a “practical test-case in the Christian realization of good news to the poor.” Luke offers a vast amount of information involving economics for the Christian community.

While this topic is essential to the Christian community regarding both the believer's common life and the responsibilities of the Church, a conclusive theology has yet to be determined. Kyoung-Jin Kim states that many attempts have been made by Lukan scholars in recent decades to define and solve the problem regarding the Church theology to the poor. However, Kim asserts that an adequate solution to this problem has not been offered. In the past, the Church has debated the controversial topic of how much responsibility rests on the Christian community in this arena. Denominational boundaries have often created friction because of differing beliefs on obligation to the poor. The Catholic Church has largely maintained a specific accountability to the poor, while some Pentecostal theologians have depended on the prosperity gospel to support their reasons for not aiding those living in poverty. Other concepts such as liberation theology have shaped the way the Christian world perceives those living in poverty. Examples of these denominational concepts will receive greater attention and documentation in another section of the paper.

Many people in the Church, even within recent years, have debated the Church responsibility of responding to the poor and how that responsibility should affect the individual believer's economic policy. Due to the immense controversy in Christian theology regarding the poor, seeking a solution through Lukan theology is vital to the Church. The current economic crisis has encouraged interest in the Christian response to financial responsibility as well. Analysis of Luke's heavy emphasis on economics and financial status in relation to Christ and His followers could significantly aid the individual believer and the Church in understanding the roles each should play in this realm.

In his article, “Why Has the Church Ignored the Poor?” Shane Clifton quotes Karl Marx who states:

“The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable. The social principles of Christianity transfer the consistorial councilors adjustment of all infamies to heaven and thus justify the further existence of those infamies on earth. The social principles of Christianity declare all vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either the just punishment of original sin and other sins or trials that the Lord in his infinite wisdom imposes on those redeemed.” While Marx does not adequately grasp Christian theology, he rightly identifies the Church's obvious neglect of the poor throughout history. This neglect must be addressed. Clifton proposes that religion, and Christianity in particular, has been described as a significant part of the problem in aiding the poor—even something that should be put aside if the challenge of poverty is to be adequately addressed. Clifton provides an interesting example in which a woman named Sarah Jane Lancaster was condemned for establishing a soup kitchen for the unemployed and told that “the money spent in feeding the unemployed would be better spent in evangelizing and building up the church.” The author states that many reasons might exist as to why the Church has not taken the condition of the poor seriously. “Perhaps the main reason, however,” he states, “is that we have misread the message of the gospel of Jesus, and failed to follow His model and pursue His mission.” While attempts have been made to settle the issue and identify a Lukan theology from which the universal Church can practically apply its message, one could conclude that a fresher look is needed due to the current economic crisis and the effect this devastation is having upon so many people. Christians must not only understand this Lukan theology to the poor, but practically apply the message in the life of the Church and the individual believer.

This writer's method and approach involves specific emphasis on differing theological conclusions regarding Luke's writings about the poor by incorporating the views of theologians from differing denominational backgrounds. To discover an answer regarding the Church perception of the poor, the process involves the utilization of

various commentaries, dictionaries, articles, and books surrounding Lukan theology specifically. Methodology will also include a brief discussion of the Church historical response to the poor and the implications upon the modern day Christian community. Looking to the universal Church in light of its history will better inform the reader on how scholars in differing denominations have often interpreted Luke's concepts in this area and what it has meant for the Christian body. Combining the data from the Church historical response to the poor with an exegetical breakdown of Luke's theology to the poor in both his Gospel and in Acts will provide a basis for an understanding of how the Church and individual Christians should respond to the poor in the modern world. This methodology will also reveal the way in which one should handle his or her own financial state.

The evidence of research supports the view that Luke does in fact possess a consistent theology regarding the poor in both his Gospel and in Acts based on the teachings of Christ. A solution regarding the effect Lukan theology to the poor has on moral obligations for the Church will be provided. Based on this evidence, this seminar paper includes the presentation of an historical and exegetical overview of Luke's economic theology and practical application for the universal Church current state in the modern world as it relates to the poor. This information will also include an overview of the economic and financial obligations of the individual believer.

Inductive Literary and Exegetical Analysis

The Identity of the Poor

When discussing a biblical theology to the poor, it is essential that one understand who exactly the poor were and the conditions of the ones to whom Luke was writing or speaking in his works. In order to understand Lukan theology regarding the poor, one must be aware of the Old Testament idea of the poor in Israel according to God's commands. Jesus was, after all, a Jew, and the Scripture He used was the Old Testament. Although poverty was often identified in the Old Testament as a result of sin (Prov. 10:4; 13:18; 21:17; 24:30-34; 19:15), the concept is most often pointed out in reference with those who were not considered poor and their failure to live up to their obligations. In his article on the poor in the Old Testament, Allen Myers asserts that the issue of poverty did not significantly arise until

Israel settled into Canaan, due to their earlier equality as slaves in Egypt. God made special provisions for specific groups of poor people within the giving of the law (Exod. 23:6; Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 15:11; 24:19-22; Prov. 22:22-23; Isa. 25:4). God kept the plight of the poor in mind when giving instruction for sacrifices. The regulations regarding the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee were meant to keep any individual or group from oppressing another group. The issue of poverty was addressed to the people as a whole rather than to individuals, and unified Israel was promised to avoid poverty if they were obedient to God.

Myers states that poverty increased with the rise of the monarchy, as changes in social structure occurred. The oppressed and poor came to be seen as God's righteous people (Ps. 9:9-10; 14:4-6; 37:14-15; 69:33; Isa. 3:15; Hab. 3:13-14). Myers also affirms that the hope of the coming age holds special significance for the poor in Old Testament understanding (Isa. 11:4; 29:19; 41:17). This Old Testament consideration of the identity of the poor would directly influence the teachings of Christ, and, therefore, Luke.

Peter Davids suggests that the material in the Gospels regarding the rich and the poor was set against a background of the society in Jesus day and the way in which Judaism was responding to the world. First-century Judaism differed significantly from the modern world, and was not made up of the social classes of today's understanding. In fact, the majority of the first-century Palestinian world was made up of two people groups: the rich and the poor. The religiously and socially wealthy could be categorized into two main groups: the observant Jewish leaders and those associated with the Herodians and Romans who were accepted for their power but made outcasts for their lack of morality. On the other end of the spectrum, significantly poor minorities existed in the larger part of society. In fact, it seems that fairly large 5 segments of the population lived in or on the edge of poverty. Although a very small middle class made up of skilled artisans, medium land-owning farmers, and merchants existed, almost everyone outside the two major groups of wealthy people were considered poor. The poor would include everyone from small land-owners, tenant farmers, and traders such as fishermen and carpenters down to those who owned no land, did not possess artistic skills, or were even slaves or beggars.

The Plight and Status of the Poor

Interestingly, the poor obtained their classification through both economic and religious standards. Davids asserts, “The observant group justified their oppression through legal interpretation, which in the eyes of Jesus was viewed as more culpable, for it appeared to put God on the side of injustice.” Because they continually lived on the edge of existence, the financially poor were often unable to observe the Jewish standards as the Law required. Consequently, poor peasants of the land, or the “masses,” were looked down upon by the religious elite as lax in their observance of the Law and were given their title of status as a religious rather than socioeconomic classification. In Old Testament literature, the “people of the land” were considered those who were not aristocrats or were not Jewish and living in traditional Jewish land. In rabbinic times, the classification of “the masses” often referred to those who were not observant of the Law in comparison with the Pharisees. If those living on the edge of poverty did pay their temple taxes as well as the taxes required of Roman and Herodian rule, it is even more likely that they lived on the brink of poverty.

A modern-day understanding of poverty is significantly different than the first-century Judaic comprehension of the poor where the vast majority of the population was considered of poor status from both an economic and religious standpoint. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of “the poor” it is likely that He not only refers to ones financial state, but to the oppression by the religious elite for ones standing in regard to Jewish law.

The perception of possessions as evil in Jewish tradition creates a common misconception. Many significant biblical examples of wealthy followers of God can be found throughout Scripture. However, the response of the people with financial means served as the important factor. Their relationship with God and the way in which they used their wealth determined their status in the eyes of God. For instance, Davids asserts that Abraham, Solomon, and Job illustrate the connection between wealth and the blessing of God (the “piety prosperity equation”), but a wealthy person could only be considered as such in the eyes of God if he or she demonstrated righteousness and honor through charity. Davids states, “Thus in Jewish tradition Abraham and Job were singled out as being wealthy persons who

were righteous because they excelled in generosity.” For example, Abraham’s possessions increased after he was called (Gen. 12:16). Reemphasizing the point, Pilgrim asserts:

There is a continuous tradition running throughout the Old Testament that regards possessions as a sign of God’s blessings. In this view, wealth and poverty are regarded as good gifts of God and the fact of possessing wealth, even great wealth, is interpreted as a sign of God’s favor. This is true already in 6 the patriarchal narratives of Genesis, which describe, often in great detail, the considerable wealth of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 13:2; 26:13; 30:43; 41:40). With their large flocks and families and numerous servants and slaves, the patriarchs bear the covenant promise of God without any hint of God’s displeasure over their wealth. Along with this, goes an emphasis upon their generosity and hospitality to friends and foes alike.

Many Christians falsely perceive the biblical text as stating that wealth and money are evil and that having possessions is wrong. However, one must not misunderstand the message of Luke or any other biblical writer. These biblical examples of righteous and devout followers of God who lived in the abundance of wealth reveal that one can enjoy the blessings of God if done in a correct manner. In support of this concept, Deuteronomy 15:4-5 states: “However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today.” This Judaic understanding is important for the modern-day comprehension of how the Jewish people perceived wealth. According to Davids, during the time of Christ many people lived in extreme poverty, and confusion had taken over the Judaic understanding of how to deal with the large gap between the religious elite and the “people of the land” living in poverty.

Jesus needed to reinforce the correct Judaic understanding of how the wealthy should handle themselves financially and the way in which the poor should view their own economic and religious state. While the Pharisees and wealthy classes often viewed the poor as religiously and spiritually poor, Jesus sayings contrast the poor with the rich, instead of the greedy or wicked as in the Old Testament.

This perception reveals that economic issues were of great importance in His day.

Luke's Gospel heavily focuses on the presence and condition of the poor, the way in which God viewed those living in poverty, Jesus attitudes, actions, and teachings involving the poor, and His warnings regarding their abuse and neglect. Mel Shoemaker concludes that Luke's Gospel is primarily addressed to those who are actually far from poverty and categorized as wise, influential, and of noble birth, all of which are considered wealthy in most cases. Perhaps Luke's intent is to proclaim to those of wealthy status the need to care for those who did not share their financial state. Throughout his article, the primary passages Davids refers to in Luke's Gospel that convey the idea of the "rich and poor," whether mentioned or implied, are: 4:18-21, 6:20 and 24, 12:16-21 and 33-34, 14:14 and 21, 16:9 and 19-31, and 16:19-3. Bock also provides a list of texts in which the poor or rejected are mentioned, including Luke 1:46-55 and 21:1-4.

Wealth and Poverty in Luke's Gospel

Perception of the Poor

At the beginning of Luke's Gospel, Mary rejoices in God through song after receiving the announcement of her pregnancy with the Son of God. Record of her song, the Magnificat, is found in 1:46-55, and she specifically emphasizes the status of the humble and lowly. Mary praises God for choosing to use her as an instrument of 7 blessing in her lowly state (v. 48), exalting those of inferior status (v. 51-56), and filling the hungry with good things along with sending the rich away empty (v. 51-53). In the first chapter of Luke, the reader is already given a clear indication through Mary's song that the poor are chosen of God and are promised His rewards.

Perhaps the passage of greatest significance in Luke's Gospel where the poor are specifically mentioned is in 4:18-21. In this particular passage, Jesus has just returned to His hometown of Nazareth after being in the wilderness for forty days during His temptation. He reads from the scroll of Isaiah and quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 which states, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lords

favor." Jesus then tells those listening, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v.20). This statement is the readers first clue that God gives the poor the priority of the gospel message. This same passage, also found in Matthews Gospel, confirms that God's special interest in the poor stems from the Old Testament idea of Gods care for the poor. This specific passage is extremely significant because it provides the four major emphases of the programmatic text for Luke's writings: (1) the announcement of Christ's ministry as the fulfillment of God's salvation-time, (2) a statement giving the content of Jesus ministry based on the Isaiah quotation, (3) the foreshadowing of Jesus suffering and rejection, and (4) the foreshadowing of the gospel movement from Jew to Gentile.

Pilgrim states that the phrase "good news to the poor" in this particular passage might be understood as introducing and directing the following lines in which the concept of the "poor" categorizes the captives, blind, and oppressed. As previously stated, the first-century concept of the poor may not necessarily be limited to those of low economic standards. Davids confirms that the poor referred to in this passage, however, are the "people of the land" (am ha ares) to whom He also sends His disciples in Matthew 10:6-7. One scholar concludes that the poor in Luke's context are put in Old Testament terms as those of both social and religious humility, and that Jesus programmatic proclamation confirms His fulfillment of Isaiahs prophecy for the deliverance of the spiritually, physically, socio-politically, and psychologically oppressed. Although this passage does not specifically address the economically poor, one can conclude that people burdened financially were of high priority in Jesus message of freedom and deliverance.

Contrast between the Rich and the Poor

Luke 6:20 and 24 provides an excellent example of Jesus contrast between the rich and the poor during the giving of "the Beatitudes." He first admonishes the poor by stating in verse 20, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God..." while specifically looking at His disciples. A few verses later (6:24), He contrasts this statement with His warning to the rich, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort..." Due to God's overarching love for all people, one cannot conclude that Christ despises the rich; however, one can see His displeasure with the

oppression of those who base their status on riches and squander their wealth on personal gain.

Jesus expresses obvious concern for the salvation of the economically rich as well as the poor. However, in Luke, He seems to have a special interest directed toward the marginalized and wants to make sure they are cared for. Frank Thielman concludes, “God’s saving purposes involve, to some extent, an economic leveling so that the disparity between rich and poor is not as great among God’s people as it is among those outside his people.” These saving purposes can be accomplished through the giving of wealth to the poor as seen later in Luke’s Gospel. Equality and the discouragement of favoritism toward the rich seem to be the key issues. Salvation through Christ is not dependent on the economic status of an individual. Giving to the poor and to the causes of Christ rather than living a life of greed will accomplish Christ’s purposes in significant ways.

Luke provides an excellent example of this concept in the “parable of the rich fool”:

And he told them this parable: The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21).

This parable clearly reveals Jesus’ assessment of greed. This “fool” had not given to the poor, which hindered him from becoming “rich towards God.” He instead stored up for himself. The parable is taught in relation to the earlier matter of dealing with possessions in verses 13-15 in the same chapter. In verse 33, Jesus states, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” This verse might confirm Luke’s particular emphasis on almsgiving, especially when

seen in relation to the counterpart in Matthew 6:19-21. By giving to the poor rather than hoarding one’s wealth, the believer can further the cause of the kingdom and become “rich toward God.”

Jesus, while at the home of a Pharisee, emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself (Luke 14). Jesus implores the host to invite the poor to dinner rather than the “rich neighbours” who are fully capable of repayment (vs. 12-14). Jesus states, “...and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Jesus clearly confirms that blessing the poor results in heavenly blessings. Pilgrim asserts that the inclusion of “rich neighbours” at the beginning of the parable perhaps alludes to certain actions directed at creating relations in order to gain selfish favors or advantages. Although this behavior would be considered normal, Jesus “turns the norm upside down” by defining the normalcy of the Kingdom: inviting those who cannot repay, give no advantage, and would ultimately be a constant burden. The reward of exhibiting this agape-love to the 9 poor results in the eschatological reward of salvation and doing the will of God.

Eschatological Implications in Jesus’ Teachings Regarding the Poor

Luke 14 continues with a further admonition regarding this same concept with “the parable of the great banquet” in verses 15- 24. Jesus tells the story of a man who threw a great feast but was turned down by many guests who made excuses as to why they could not come. The excuses all center on circumstances involving wealth: the purchase of a field, the purchase of an ox, and marriage. Finally, the host ordered his servants to bring in the “poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (v. 21b). When these did not fill up the room, the owner called for all to come in, saying that not one of the men who were originally invited will have a taste of the banquet (14:24).

This parable again indicates a high concern for the poor and confirms the obedience exhibited by the marginalized. Luke seems to interpret this parable as confirming that the wealthy reject God’s generous offer while the poor become grateful guests at the banquet, displaying the eschatological reversal of the poor and rich. This parable signifies that wealth can impede the rich and prevent them from heavenly reward and entering into God’s kingdom. This hindrance is

created by selfish greed instead of unselfish, agape love that is essential to the gospel. As Pilgrim concludes, “Thus the parable as a whole serves to warn the rich to accept God’s invitation. And that means to invite the poor and maimed and blind and lame to their tables, lest God leave them out of the heavenly banquet.” Luke emphasizes the renouncement of ones possessions, again confirming that the concern of wealth and poverty is at the forefront of his priority: “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

In Luke 16:19-31, the author records another story that emphasizes the importance of taking care of the poor. In the story of “the rich man and Lazarus,” the beggar, Lazarus, receives no help from the rich man after lying outside of his gate every day. When both die, the rich man finds eternal torment in hell while Lazarus resides in heaven at Abrahams side. The rich man attempts to beg for water from Lazarus, “But Abraham replied,” Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony” (v. 25).

This story provides one of the greatest examples of Jesus emphasis on giving to the poor and the difference ones generosity on earth makes in eternity. According to the biblical text, the rich man does not deserve the torment in hell based on what he did on earth, but rather on what he failed to do. He does not show love to God and his neighbor, a commandment to all Jews as seen in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The appearance of Abraham is of significance because the patriarch could stand as representation of the spiritual ties from which the rich man has severed himself by ignoring the needs of others. The rich man is unable to receive any help as seen in Abrahams words: “And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:26). This clearly indicates that the way in which one deals with worldly finances significantly impacts the afterlife. The truths exhibited in the story of “the rich man and Lazarus” concerning neglect of the poor essentially 10 relate to the integrity with which one handles his or her finances.

A significant relationship exists between this story and the parable of “the unjust steward” found in Luke 16:1-15. In this story, the

steward fails to manage his masters funds with honesty. In the end, he finally attempts to use his entrusted wealth for the welfare of poor debtors by decreasing their debt. In verse 9, Jesus states, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Kim concludes, “According to 16:9 he would have been received into the eternal habitations by the help of his witnesses, that is, the recipients of his benevolence on earth.” This concept contrasts with the latter parable of the rich ruler in 16:19-31, in which the rich ruler uses his wealth for the interest of selfish ends. “If we apply 16:9 to this case, he is not received into the eternal habitations, because no friend would witness to his benevolence on earth, and he eventually falls into hell, as described in 16:23. In this sense, 16:9 can be regarded as a theme verse which plays an important role in unfolding the implication of both parables.”

Luke’s Gospel emphasizes particular concern for the poor in the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus welcomes Zacchaeus, a tax collector, despite his wayward lifestyle of manipulation and selfish greed. Zacchaeus shocks the crowd by standing up and proclaiming, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (v. 8). Jesus responds by stating, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (vv. 9- 10). One could conclude that Jesus, in part, associates salvation with the desire to give to the poor and aid others who are in need. Luke utilizes Zacchaeus as an example to be emulated by anyone who comes to experience the salvation of God and give generously to the poor. If the “chief tax collector” (v. 1) willingly provided for the needy, surely the wealthy elite could learn to generously care for others.

While many possible examples regarding care for the poor exist in Luke’s writing, the previous stories stand as sufficient witnesses to establish Lukan concern for ministry to the marginalized. Luke obviously desired to emphasize care for the poor and downtrodden, especially from an economic standpoint. He records much of Jesus sayings regarding this thought process, and he carefully includes many instances that exemplify concern for the poor. Luke not only focuses on concern for the poor in the teachings of Christ in his Gospel, but

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he continues this theme in Acts as well. Throughout Acts, one can see concern for the poor exemplified in the Early Church and in the lifestyle of the apostles.

Analysis of the Lukan text in both his Gospel and in Acts reveals a clear message regarding the poor. Not only does the author confirm that Jesus brings the good news of the gospel message specifically to the poor in order to save their souls, but He also comes to aid them in economic and social ways. Luke also emphasizes the responsibility of believers to handle their own wealth correctly, while warning them of the vast dangers associated with riches. He consistently encourages giving to those in need. The Church has a heavy responsibility to aid those living in poverty, as well as making sure that its own finances are being handled wisely. While economic crisis might instill a sense of fear, discouraging one from Christian financial duties, recognizing the importance of Jesus' emphasis on the poor and what it means for the modern-day Christian remains essential.

Applying the Lukan concepts to the present day, one must conclude that the Church has an obligation to recognize the issue of poverty and address it in an effective way through outreach. A correct understanding of Lukan theology indicates that the Christian community is not only responsible for the salvation of souls, but also for participating in the social and economic aspects of those in need. While the Church must obviously beware of those who might try to take advantage of this concept, it should not neglect the poor as burdens or outcasts.

Handling one's own finances, in light of a Lukan understanding, involves recognizing God as the provider of all possessions; it also involves recognizing the correct utilization of these possessions and caring for those in need. As the National Council of the Churches of Christ states, "Thus, the 19 expression of our love for God is inextricably linked to the quality of our relation with others. Care for the neighbor is a means by which we testify to the power of the resurrection of the Lord among us."

According to Luke's teaching, the believing community's responsibility rests in its ability to handle finances in a manner pleasing to God while exhibiting care for others.

Chapter 4

Lukan Infancy Narratives

How does one extract theology from a narrative? The infancy material in Luke 1:5-2:52 is an example of a narrative text that is full of theology. It (1) reviews and previews events, (2) uses scriptural quotations and allusions to reveal God's purpose, (3) reveals that purpose through dialogue from God's commissioned agents, and (4) gives testimony through reliable characters within the account (Tannehill 1986:21). In fact, these first two chapters serve as an overture to the Gospel, revealing the major themes that Luke will develop throughout his portrayal of Jesus. Even the style in these chapters differs from the rest of the book, as it mimics the style of the Greek Old Testament. This is a neat literary touch, for it signals the recounting of sacred events. By explaining the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus, Luke notes how the torch of God's plan is relit and moves ahead.

John is the major focus of Luke 1:5-25, 46-80, while Jesus is the subject in Luke 1:26-38 and 2:1-40. Technically the infancy material ends at 2:40, since the scene of 2:41-52 involves Jesus' actions as a young adolescent. However, in literary terms the section extends through this passage, since the note about Jesus' growth in 2:52 parallels the note about John's growth in

1:80. As we shall see, the section is rich in theology, but three points stand out: (1) Jesus is superior to John, (2) God is bringing to pass what he promised long ago, and (3) what God promises now through his Word will come to pass. Even the amount of time spent on Jesus versus John reveals the first point, while the second and third points emerge in how the infancy story is told.

Announcing the Forerunner, John the Baptist

The announcement of John the Baptist's birth signals God's renewed activity on behalf of his people in light of promises made long ago. Many of the details of this event and those that follow in the infancy section recall events of the Old Testament. God is again at work to bring his promise to pass.

A Tragic Situation (1:5-7)

When God acts to fulfill his promises, he meets a wide array of needs. After a long period of silence, here God acts in the time of Herod the Great to begin realizing key aspects of his plan. Though he is concerned to fulfill his promises to Israel, God is also meeting the personal needs of a righteous couple.

Luke introduces the parents of John as pious, law-abiding saints. Thus from its very beginning the new movement of God is steeped in righteousness. Yet despite their righteousness, they have suffered the disappointment of barrenness, a condition Elizabeth will later refer to as a disgrace (v. 25). Elizabeth's feelings are perfectly understandable, but to be barren is not an indication of the presence of sin or of condemnation; it may be an opportunity for blessing, whether God grants a child late in life or allows a couple to pursue other opportunities of service. In Scripture, when God allows a woman to be barren, he often has something special in mind for her (Sarah, Gen 18:11; Rebekah, Gen 25:21; Rachel, Gen 29:31; Samson's mother, Judg 13:2, 5; Hannah, 1 Sam 1-2). Aware of this pattern, the rabbis of Judaism argued that when Scripture says, "She has not," God gave a child (Genesis Rabbah 38). So in the case of Elizabeth and Zechariah, God's action parallels the way he often worked among the fathers and mothers of Jewish faith. His word and plan are coming to pass again.

The Announcement of John's Birth (1:8-23)

The announcement of John's birth comes at a high moment in Zechariah's career. As one of about eighteen thousand priests, Zechariah serves in the temple twice a year, but only once in his life does he get to assist in the daily offering by going into the holy place. This honor had fallen to him by lot (m. Tamid 5:2-6:3). His job was to offer incense, a picture of intercession rising to God (Ps 141:2; Rev 5:8; 8:3-4). Everything about the announcement's timing points to a moment of high piety. Zechariah goes in while the people are praying. A later prayer from the Targum of Canticles 4:6 may well express their thoughts: "May the merciful God enter the Holy Place and accept with favor the offering of his people."

As Zechariah offers up the incense and prayer, an angel appears. Angelic visitations to announce births of major figures are common in the Old Testament (Gen 16:10-11; 17:15-19; 18:10-15; 25:23; Judg 13:3-21). This announcement is unusual, however, in that the father rather than the mother receives the message. The angel's arrival produces fear in the priest. He senses the presence of God's agent (Lk 1:29-30; 1:65; 2:9; 5:8-10, 26; 7:16; 8:37; 9:34) and is taken back by this surprising development.

The angelic announcement proceeds in stages: the child's name (v. 13), the response to the child (v. 14), the position and character of the child (v.15) and the mission of the child (vv.16-17). Zechariah's prayer is being answered. Since he had given up believing that God would give him a child (v. 18), his prayer has probably been focused on the nation's hope, especially since much of the angel's message focuses on this point. Nonetheless, the child will also fulfill the personal desire of Zechariah and Elizabeth, being a cause of joy and delight for them and for many in the nation. So God is tackling two requests at once, one national and the other personal, a prayer that had long since been abandoned and all but forgotten. Sometimes God's answers to prayer come in surprising ways after a long time.

The child will be named John. When God names a child, that child is especially significant in God's plan (Gen 16:8, 11; 17:19; 1 Kings 13:2; Is 7:14; 49:1; Mt 1:21; Lk 1:31). This child will be great before God. In Luke 7:28 Jesus says that no one greater had been born of woman before John. His greatness emerges from his prophetic role

and from his function as a forerunner to Jesus, as the rest of Luke 1 makes clear.

John is to live an ascetic life of discipline. This will stand in contrast to Jesus (7:31-35). The refusal to drink shows a special consecration, and the language recalls the description of the prophet Samuel, Israel's first prophet (1 Sam 1:11). Since the angel does not say that John should not cut his hair, however, he is probably not being called on to take a Nazirite vow (Num 6:1-21; Judg 13:4-5).

More important, the child will be empowered by the Spirit even from birth (that is, from his mother's womb). The Spirit is very active in these opening chapters (see 1:35, 41, 67; 2:25-27). This promise has an initial fulfillment in the events of Luke 1:39-45, especially verse 44. But the Spirit's abiding with John is an intensification of the Spirit's presence among Old Testament prophets (contrast with 1 Sam 10:10; 2 Kings 2:9-16; see Is 61:1; Ezek 11:5; Joel 2:28). Everything about these events shows that they hark back to the great era of old, but reveal an escalation of God's work and thus the approach of a new era.

John will be a prophet. His call to the people to repent will be detailed in 3:1-20. Here the angel describes his ministry as preparing a remnant for God: Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord. In other words, he will turn Israel to the Lord their God. The expression "to turn" has Old Testament roots (Deut 30:2; Hos 3:5; 7:10). John will redirect those who respond to his message toward a walk with God. In fact, he will be like Elijah in his ministry (1 Kings 17-18; Mal 4:5; Sirach 48:10). In speaking of turning the hearts of parents to their children, Luke is indicating that reconciliation with God will produce reconciliation elsewhere. When God touches a life, relationships with others on this earth are also touched. So John will make ready a people prepared for the Lord. This language recalls Isaiah 43:7 and 2 Samuel 7:24. This will be a nation of people God has called to himself, a faithful remnant sharing in the realization of God's promise because they have turned to him.

Zechariah's response, though coming from a pious man, is very human. He does not take the miraculous as a matter of course. He has a natural objection to the promise that they will receive a child: their old age. Zechariah understands the basics of biology and aging. He and his wife are "past their prime."

In response, the angel announces his name, Gabriel, and indicates that God will bring his promise to pass. The angel's giving his name and position communicates that his message is to be accepted as coming from the throne room of heaven. Zechariah, righteous as he is, needs to learn that God will fulfill his promises when he sovereignly chooses to act. The God of heaven may even do things out of the ordinary. The major lesson in this announcement for the priest, as well as for Luke's readers, is that God will do what he promises in his own way.

To drive the point home, Zechariah becomes temporarily deaf and dumb. This short-term judgment from God allows the priest to reflect on what he must learn. As Luke 1:56-79 shows, Zechariah will learn from his time of silence. The angel is explicit that the reason for the imposition of muteness is that Zechariah did not believe the angel's words. Sometimes we experience trial so that we can learn to trust God more.

The crowd becomes nervous because of Zechariah's delay in emerging from the holy place; they deduce that something unusual is slowing down the ceremony. According to Jewish tradition, the high priest was to recite a short prayer when he was in the Holy of Holies ministering on the day of Atonement, lest the people worry (m. Yoma 5:1). It was assumed that God's holiness made it difficult to stay in his presence for very long. Such an attitude seems to fuel the people's concern here.

When Zechariah emerges, he is unable to give the benediction, which probably consisted of the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24-26 (m. Tamid 7:2). So he signs a message. The people conclude that Zechariah has experienced a very direct encounter with heaven, a vision. Zechariah heads home, reflecting in his silence on what God is going to do. The Beginning of Realization (1:24-25)

God's word will be realized. So Elizabeth becomes the next one to encounter his work. The text simply notes this fulfillment by mentioning that she became pregnant. There is no fanfare, just a simple declaration that what the angel had promised in verses 13-17 comes to pass. For some time Elizabeth remained in seclusion. Her withdrawal has no stated motive, though many have speculated on her reasons. What we do know is that she praised God for what he

was doing through her. Her disgrace, the reproach of barrenness, was gone. Such thankfulness for the arrival of a child was common (as in Gen 21:6; 30:23). Joy and relief are mixed together in Elizabeth. She appears to be preparing herself for what is ahead. God is powerfully at work again for Israel and for this righteous couple, who are learning anew what it is to trust God. When God speaks and acts, people are supposed to listen. His word will come to pass.

The Announcement of the Birth of Jesus to Mary (1:26 - 38)

It often is said that good things come in small packages. This passage adds a twist to that theme. For the announcement of Jesus' birth shows that wonderful things come in surprising packages. God does not always do things the way we would do them.

The announcement to Mary sets up a parallel to John's birth and mirrors a number of birth announcements in the Old Testament. But this passage's mood is very different from the Zechariah account. A simple calmness rules the exchange between Mary and Gabriel. Where Zechariah was in the midst of activity before the whole nation in its religious center, this announcement comes to the future childbearer privately, in the country. Had we designed these events, pomp and circumstance probably would have attended the announcement and birth of Jesus, but God chose to use an average young woman and to announce his intentions in quiet obscurity. The fulfillment of God's promise came to earth in an unadorned package of human innocence, without any pomp, far away from any palace. The promised one entered human life as he still seeks to meet it: at the level of everyday experience with everyday people.

Mary and the Angel's Arrival (1:26-28)

God again takes the initiative when he sends Gabriel to Galilee, a region some forty-five to eighty-five miles north of Jerusalem. God's announcement comes to a betrothed virgin, Mary. God will bring an unexpected addition into her family. Betrothal in the ancient world was part of a two-stage marriage process. The initial phase, the betrothal, involved a formal, witnessed agreement to marry and the giving of a bridal price (Mal 2:14; m. Ketubot 4:4-5). At this point the bride legally became the groom's and could be called his wife. About a year later the actual marriage followed, and the husband took his wife home. In the first century betrothal could take place starting at

the age of twelve. Mary's age is unstated. It is during this betrothal stage that Gabriel breaks the news.

Mary's chaste character is highlighted by the description of her as a virgin. It is clear that the account attributes Jesus' origins to the Holy Spirit (vv. 34-35). But the human Davidic connection, the tie to the royal line, is also noted in verse 27. The point is important, for it seems that this connection is attributed to Joseph and comes to Jesus through him. Joseph need not be the biological father in order to pass such lineage on to Jesus (Schweizer 1984:27-28). The virgin birth is one mark of superiority for Jesus over John the prophet. It makes Jesus totally unique. The only other person to have had such a direct divine intervention in his birth was Adam—a point Luke will note in 3:38.

The portrait Luke paints of Mary is significant. She is a model believer, taking God at his word, in contrast to Zechariah (vv. 37-38). She is favored of God (v. 30), thoughtful (v. 29; 2:19, 51), obedient (v. 38), believing (v. 45), worshipful (v. 46) and a faithful follower of God's law (2:22-51; Craddock 1990:27-28). It must be emphasized, however, that despite all these qualities, God's choice of Mary to bear this child springs from his grace, not from any inherent merit that she possesses. She is the object of God's unmerited, graciously provided goodness. Her description as one who has found favor with God (*kecharitomene*, v. 30) makes it clear that God has acted on her behalf and not because of her. In fact, Mary is totally perplexed by the sudden announcement. She did not ask for or seek this role in God's plans; God has simply stepped into her life and brought her into his service. Her asset is that she is faithful. She should be honored for her model of faithfulness and openness to serve God, but that does not mean she is to be worshiped. Luke wants us to identify with Mary's example, not to unduly exalt her person.

The Announcement About Jesus (1:29-38)

The announcement of Jesus' birth, which is formulated like Old Testament announcements (Gen 16:11; Is 7:14), stresses three things about Jesus: his position (Son of God, Son of the Most High, ruler), his authority (seated on Israel's throne forever; ruler of a kingdom that will never end) and his divine ties (the Holy Spirit will come... and... overshadow you). In short, Jesus is the promised king of the

Davidic line. Old Testament roots for this promise come from 2 Samuel 7:8-17 and Psalm 89 and 132, along with Isaiah 9:5-6; 11:1-5, 10; and Jeremiah 23:5-6 (C. A. Evans 1990:25). The kingdom in view here was the promised messianic kingdom, and Luke will develop and expand the Old Testament understanding of that kingdom through Jesus' teaching, the hymnic material of Luke 1-2, the ministry of John the Baptist and the miracles of Jesus. The expansion will not be at the expense of what the Old Testament promised, but comes in to complement it. God will complete promises made to Israel, the original recipients of his promise, even as he expands that promise later in the New Testament period to involve the Gentiles. In Christ both Jew and Gentile—that is, all humanity—have access by faith to God (Gal 3; Eph 2:11-22; 3:1-7).

So Jesus is not only great, as John was, but Son of the Most High, Son of God (vv. 32, 35). To Jewish ears this would be the same as calling him king (2 Sam 7:8-17; Ps 2:7). The Jews did not expect a “divine” Messiah, as the Gospels themselves make clear. God had promised David that the king would be God's son, since Yahweh would be the son's Father. This birth would be the first step in bringing the promise to David to its permanent, ultimate fulfillment. This long-held Father-son relationship was to reach unique heights in Jesus. It is clear from Mary's reactions to Jesus in his early years that she did not understand the angel's promise to be a declaration of Jesus' ontological deity (2:41-52; see also Mk 3:31-33). Her hymn and those that follow it in the infancy section stress Jesus' regal and delivering role. Jesus is the holy one; he is begotten of God; but the full implications of these statements will not be realized for some time. Luke chooses to present Jesus from the “earth up”—that is, showing how, one step at a time, people came to see who Jesus really was. He starts with Jesus as the promised king and teacher who reveals himself as Lord in the context of his ministry. Only slowly do people grasp all of what is promised.

This approach matches how most people today come to see who Jesus is. Drawing on two thousand years of theological reflection about Jesus, the church often tells the story from heaven down, but there is merit in Luke's path. It is the path of people's experience. Luke's approach is different from that of the Gospel of John, which presents Jesus as sent from heaven to earth. At the start of John's

story there is no doubt that Jesus was with God in the beginning. Both approaches are true; they are just different ways to consider the person of Christ. The church has tended to emphasize John's approach, because it is the full story, but there also is value in unfolding the story gradually as Luke does.

Mary has difficulty comprehending the announcement. She asks, “How will this be?” She knows she cannot yet have conceived a child, since she is a virgin. The answer comes in terms of God's creative overshadowing power. Mary's faith is put on the line at the start. Will she believe that God has the capacity to create life within her? God does not leave her alone in the decision. The angel notes the life that is stirring within the womb of an elderly woman, Elizabeth, Mary's relative. Thus John serves as a pointer to Jesus not only in his preaching but also in his birth.

The angel states the basic premise “Nothing is impossible with God.” Mary simply responds in humble acceptance, “I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.”

We can only imagine what this announcement required of Mary, especially as her condition became obvious. A hint of the issue is raised in the story of Joseph's dilemma in Matthew 1:18-25. Is God's power such that he can create life and exercise sovereignty over it? This is a question Jesus' birth should raise. Would people believe the claims surrounding Jesus? The questions are profound. Wonderful things come in surprising packages, but they can come, because God has the power to deliver them.

Mary's Hymn of Praise: Magnificat (1:46-51)

Mary's hymn is one of three major hymnic pieces in the infancy material (the others are known as the Benedictus, Lk 1:67-79, and Nunc Dimittis, Lk 2:28-32). The Latin names come from the phrases that begin the hymns. Mary's hymn expresses praise to God for his treatment of her, but then extends her praise to how God has treated the righteous throughout the ages and how he will vindicate them fully in the future. Understanding what God is doing, Mary possesses a mood of joy. She speaks for herself and for her community, the people of God throughout time. God is worthy of praise for what he will do in taking care of his own. Understanding God's blessing moves

the believer to joy and appreciation, since the Almighty cares personally for us and acts on our behalf.

Mary is exemplary of the humble, faithful disciple. That a woman provides such an example is significant, since first-century culture often relegated women to a secondary status. Such examples exist in the Old Testament as well (Miriam in Ex 15:21; Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1-10; Deborah in Judg 5). One of the beauties of Luke's infancy material is that different sorts of people all experience joy at the arrival of Jesus. This reveals Jesus' universal appeal. Praise for God's Word to Mary (1:46-49)

Mary's poetic outburst echoes Old Testament language with a perspective that sees the present in light of God's consistent activity throughout time. Her praise is personal—her soul and spirit offer praise. She glorifies the Lord, which means her words acknowledge his goodness and bring attention to him like a huge neon light shining out from a building (Ps 34:3; 69:30). She makes his name great. She approaches him recognizing her humble state as his servant and thus acknowledging him as sovereign Master (see also v. 38; 2 Kings 14:26; Ps 9:11-14; 25:16-18). Yet though she addresses God as the Mighty One (Deut 10:21; 34:11; Ps 44:4-8; 89:8-10; 111:2, 9; Zeph 3:17), she knows that she has nothing to fear from his power, because he also is her Savior (Ps 25:5-6; Is 12:2; Mic 7:7). All these titles serve to show Mary's humble spirit. Her humble perspective forms the basis of her gratitude. The exemplary character of Mary grows out of her understanding of God's character. God owes her nothing; she owes God everything. All the good things that come from his hand are acts of grace.

Despite her humble position, she will be honored by all generations. Here is the reason for both her honor and her praise—God the Almighty has done great things on her behalf. Generations will see her as an example of a simple human touched by divine power and presence. But it is God who is unique, as her declaration of his holiness makes clear. He is the one “set apart” who is worthy of praise. For her, his name is wonderful because his character is true. Praise for God's Acts to All (1:50-53)

Mary generalizes her praise: God's mercy extends to those who fear him. This description is important in setting the context of the hymn's statements. It is the righteous, those who look and turn to

God, who are the objects of his blessing. Though the blessings of verses 50-53 come to those in need, they are not a *carte blanche* offer to all the poor and hungry, but only to those who look to God for care. God's mercy shows his “loyal love” or *hesed*. Such love is faithful as well as gracious (Ps 103:2-6, 8-11, 13, 17). Loyal love is the hymn's basic theme, and God's treatment of Mary is but one example. His divine loyalty requires his action on behalf of the beloved. Those who stand in opposition will face God's power and authority to bring down.

So God will deal with the proud. His arm will be raised against them (Deut 4:34; Ps 44:3; 89:13; 118:15). The promise of God's judgment here recalls the exodus, when God exercised his power in total judgment (Ex 6:1, 6; Deut 3:24; 7:19). Whatever earthly authority exists, it is nothing before the mighty, decisive exercise of divine authority. He has brought down rulers (Ps 68:1; 89:10) but has lifted up the humble (1 Sam 2:7; Ps 147:6). He has filled the hungry with good things (1 Sam 2:5; Ps 107:9; 146:7) but has sent the rich away empty (1 Sam 2:5; Job 15:29; Jer 17:11). Here is God working on behalf of the pious downtrodden, a group the Old Testament called the *anawim* (Ps 9:11-12, 17-20; 10:1-4; 12:1-5; 18:25-29).

These verses express the traditional Jewish hope of vindication in the face of oppression at the hands of foreign, pagan rulers (1:71-75 is similar; in Judaism, see Psalms of Solomon 17-18). Mary's remarks are often misinterpreted in two directions. Some see them solely as a reference to God's defense of all the poor, all the hungry. A whole theology of liberation is built around such a reading of these verses and others like them. This ignores the spiritual dimension present throughout the hymn, not to mention the national character of the hope expressed in verses 54-55. On the other hand, some want to dilute the references to the poor and hungry altogether and speak only of the poor and hungry in spirit. This also undercuts the passage's force. The spirit of this text is reflected in other New Testament texts (1 Cor 1:25-31; Jas 2:5). Often it is those in need who are the most spiritually sensitive to God and who are gifted with faith by him. God promises them that despite their current deprivation, they will experience great reward in the future.

Luke raises a theme here that he will return to again and again: God's desire to minister to the poor. Luke will stress a ministry of

social concern for those in need and warn those who are wealthy not to hoard what God has given to them (6:20-26; 7:22-23; 12:13-21; 14:12-14; 16:14-29). He warns about a reversal of roles in the judgment for those who do not hear this admonition. Praise for God's Acts for His People, Israel (1:54-56)

God is acting for his people, Israel. God's actions reflect his mercy. He committed himself to such loyalty and compassion when he made promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). One of the lessons of the infancy section is that God keeps his word, including the promises made to the nation of Israel. Mary knows that the promises of God abide, and this is evident in her praise. God's loyal love is central to the hope and assurance of those to whom God has made himself known.

Israel is called his servant. This reference recalls a major motif from Isaiah (Is 41:8-9; 42:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3). Later Luke will describe Jesus in terms that picture the Servant (Lk 22:37; Acts 8:32-33). Even later in Acts, Paul and Barnabas recall this calling to serve as "light for the Gentiles" (Acts 13:47). The various points of connection to the Servant concept mark this as a pattern prophecy: the role God had designed for Israel is fulfilled in the regal representative of the nation and in those who are identified with him.

Though Luke will develop the concept of God's constant care for Israel according to covenant promise, his portrayal of Mary here shows a woman confident that God will care for a remnant in his nation. They, like she, will see the Lord's powerful hand move on their behalf. God's loyal love and the truthfulness of his holy character make such assurance and hope possible. Even more amazing is what the progress of Luke's story reveals. Others who were not originally included in the promise, namely Gentiles, will come to share in this hope and will benefit from the vindication described here. In fact, it is quite likely that Theophilus himself is one of these additional beneficiaries, along with many others after him who have come to fear the Lord.

In fact, the two points of assurance are linked. Since God remembers the loyal love promised in covenant to Israel, Theophilus can rest assured that God will remember his promises to this Gentile believer. God's care for one promise reinforces the other. The basic teaching implied here is very similar to Paul's argument for the hope of Israel in Romans 9-11.

The Birth of Jesus (2:1-20)

If ever there was an opportunity for God to enact his plan with a majestic flourish, it was at Jesus' birth. But God did not presume upon humanity when he stepped in to redeem it. There was no pretense in this arrival. Rather, God chose to identify in the humblest way with those made in his image. The story of Jesus' birth in Luke mixes praise with simplicity. Its contrast to the birth of John the Baptist is remarkable. John's birth was announced in the capital, at the temple, in the center of the Jewish nation. But Jesus arrives in rural anonymity. John is the child of a priest and his righteous wife; Jesus belongs to Jews of average social status.

Yet it is Jesus' birth that draws an angelic host. Once again, appearances are deceiving. As humble as the setting is, his birth is accompanied by the attention of the heavenly host. The shepherds who are privileged to share in the moment become bearers of a story full of wonder. Jesus' birth is more than a cosmic event; it is the arrival of divine activity that should provoke joy, reflection and attentiveness. That is why Mary ponders these events and the shepherds return glorifying God. The Birth (2:1-7)

A regional census leads Joseph and his betrothed, Mary, to the city of David, better known as the hamlet of Bethlehem. The decree comes from Caesar Augustus, better known as Octavian, who ruled alone from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. The administrator of the census was Quirinius (Tacitus Annals 2.30; 3.22, 33, 48; Strabo Geography 12.6.5). This census probably sought to produce a registration list for taxes. A journey to the ancestral home would have fit Jewish practice, so that the custom was done in a culturally inoffensive manner (2 Sam 24). This was important, since the tax itself would have been a painful reminder of Israel's position before Rome. Nazareth to Bethlehem was about a ninety mile trip, assuming that Samaria was bypassed. Such a journey would have taken around three days.

That Bethlehem is the town of David indicates the birth's connection to promise (Mic 5:1-2; the Greek is literally "city of David"). Luke makes the connection less directly than Matthew 2:6 does, but the association of David with the birth sounds a regal note, even if the allusion is made subtly. As the couple arrives in the city, the time comes for the child's arrival.

Many of the details supplied in Christmas tellings of this story do not come from Luke. There is no indication of a long search for a place to stay or of an insensitive innkeeper who made Mary and Joseph stay outdoors. The text merely describes the arrival in simple terms: She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In all likelihood, the manger is an animal's feeding trough, which means the family is in a stable or in a cave where animals are housed (Hengel 1974:53-54). Swaddling clothes were cloth wrapped around the baby's arms and legs (see Ezek 16:4); they kept the limbs covered and protected. The contrast between the birth's commonness and the child's greatness could not be greater. The promised one of God enters creation among the creation. The profane decree of a census has put the child in the promised city of messianic origin. God is quietly at work, and a stable is Messiah's first throne room. Response to the Birth (2:8-21)

Jesus' birth sparks joy, surprise and wonder. All these emotions flow from the experience of the shepherds, who observe with amazement as heaven confesses the child's identity (vv. 10-11). The major offices of Jesus are confessed in one sentence: he is Savior, Lord and Christ—that is, deliverer, master and anointed king. As unbelievable as it may seem, the one with authority over salvation spends his first nights not in a palace but in the open air among simple people like the shepherds. Born in the ancient equivalent of a tent village, Jesus arrives to fulfill God's promise. All the imagery shows God's concern for people regardless of their social status or vocation. He cares for all and identifies with all.

Joy comes with an angelic proclamation of good news (euangelizomai). The message is for all the people. Though in the original context such a messianic announcement would have been understood as being for the people of Israel, the development of Jesus' ministry shows that Jesus' work reaches beyond such national boundaries. The two volumes of Luke-Acts tell the story of how Jesus, the Savior, Lord and Christ, brought salvation to all people regardless of nationality. They need only turn to him (Acts 10:34-43).

As with other incidents in the infancy material, the angel describes a sign: the shepherds will know this announcement is true when they

see the child in a manger. The angelic announcement does not come in mystical isolation; it connects to concrete events.

The praise of the heavenly host offers honor to God and peace to men on whom his favor rests. This last phrase is not a declaration of universal salvation but refers to those who are the special objects of God's grace. They are like the God-fearers Mary mentioned in Luke 1:50-53, whom God will exalt with his blessing. They are the "saved" or the "elect," those on whom God has bestowed the favor of his grace.

In this account each set of characters plays a major role. The angels present the commentary of heaven on the events of Luke 2:1-7. They identify the child and reflect the heavens' excitement that this child has come to do God's work. The shepherds have the type of response any of us should have as we contemplate these events. Their curiosity leads them to go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. As they see God's word honored in the presence of the sign, they come to testify to God's work and tell the story of the child. Mary depicts the wonder of experiencing the inbreaking of God in her life. She pondered these things in her heart. The audience to the shepherds' report were amazed. Their response exemplifies the awe that should fill anyone who hears Jesus' story.

In addition, there is the shepherds' glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen. This birth is no mere arrival of a new life, as poignant as each such event is. The story is not told so that hearers can identify with the new mother and father or enjoy a story of hope, of a touching birth in humble surroundings. This birth has value because of whose birth it is. The shepherds have found that the angel's words were true, that events have transpired just as they had been told. God's word is coming to pass; his plan is again strategically at work. They break out in praise to God because he has sent Jesus, the Savior, Lord and Christ.

Reflecting the piety of obedient Jewish parents, Joseph and Mary undertake to circumcise the child on the eighth day and give him the name the angel said he should possess, Jesus. In every action this couple is showing faithfulness. They are examples of faith. As devout Jewish parents, they follow the Mosaic law. Jesus has been born into a good family.

The Witness of a Man and Woman at the Temple (2:22-40)

The testimony to Jesus continues as both a prophet and a prophetess reveal God's plan. By showing how each gender among the people of God testifies to what God is doing through this child, Luke is saying that all should rejoice at his coming. And culturally it is no accident that both Simeon and Anna are advanced in years. Here is the testimony of two with a full resume of life experience.

Anna's and Simeon's prophecies share a note of hope and expectation, along with declarations that in this child God's promise is moving into realization. Luke also reveals Jesus' superiority to John in this passage, for the testimony about John stops with his circumcision but the praise of Jesus extends long past the eighth day of life. Here two old and wise prophets of Jewish piety speak not only for the nation but for all humankind, as Simeon's prophecy mentions Jesus' relationship to the Gentiles (for the first time in the book). This passage also provides the first hint that all will not go well. Mary will experience the pain of seeing her son rejected by a divided Israel. The Purification of Jesus (2:22-24).

Jesus' parents are law-abiding Jews. They show up at the temple to perform sacrifices associated with the wife's purification after birth (Lev 12:2-4, 6). Such a ceremony occurs forty days after the child's arrival. At the same time the firstborn child is to be set aside to the Lord (Ex 13:2, 12, 16; 34:19; Num 18:15-16). Jesus' parents bring the child along, though that is not necessary. They offer a pair of doves or two young pigeons. This offering recalls Leviticus 12:8, though the wording is closer to the Greek Old Testament version of Leviticus 5:11. Since this offering is the one usually made by the poor, Jesus is identified with the very people he reached out to save (1:52; 4:18-19; 6:20; 7:22-23; Greeven 1968:69). But Joseph and Mary do not live in abject poverty, since Joseph is a carpenter by trade (Mk 6:3; Plummer 1922:65). This could be the offering of someone from a "middle-class" background as well. Regardless of their precise social status, Luke is making it clear that Jesus' parents are not spiritual renegades, but Jews who are sensitive and faithful to the Mosaic law—a point reinforced in Luke 2:40-52, when they will make their customary annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. All the persons surrounding Jesus at his birth have a heritage of devotion to God. The testimony

to Jesus stands on the shoulders of a series of highly respectable figures. Simeon's Prophecy (2:25-35)

The Spirit leads an old man to the temple to greet Jesus. He is righteous and devout (compare Mt 10:41; 19:17; 23:29, 35; 2 Pet 2:7-8), yet another witness to Jesus who possesses a vibrant walk with God. Such piety includes having an eye on the hope of God's redemption. Luke expresses this hope in national terms appropriate for this first-century saint: Simeon has been waiting for the consolation of Israel. He longs for the nation's deliverance, just as Zechariah had (1:68-75; Is 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 57:18; 61:2; 2 Baruch 44:7). In fact, later rabbis will call the Messiah Menahem, or Comforter (Schmitz and Stahlin 1967:793; y. Berakot 2:3). It was such deliverance that Simeon expected.

The Spirit of God directs this scene, because he had revealed to Simeon that death would not come until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Promise, fulfillment and God's direction stand behind the prophecy of this old saint.

Simeon's remarks are set within a hymn known as the Nunc Dimittis, from the Latin of the hymn's opening phrase. The prophecy itself is a statement of mature faith. Simeon can die in peace as you have promised and be taken by God, his Sovereign Lord (despota or Master), because my eyes have seen your salvation. There is a significant equation in this remark. To see Jesus is to see God's salvation. They are inseparable. There is joy, even in the face of death, when one has seen the source of life. Simeon's job as a sentinel for Messiah is done. The Lord can take him home. Simeon pictures a faithful servant who is at home in God's purpose and plan, even when his time is up.

God's work is for all people (laon). As in 2:10, the reference to the people ultimately is broad, encompassing both Jew and Gentile, as verse 32 makes clear. In fact, Jesus is light (phos), an image that recalls the description of the Davidic son as the dayspring or bright morning star in 1:78-79. But Jesus serves as light in two distinct ways. For Gentiles he is a revelation. This term refers to his opening up the way of salvation to the nations in a way unknown before his coming. But for Israel, God's people, Jesus is glory—that is, his activity represents the realization of promises made by God and thus shows

Israel's special place in his heart (Is 46:13). The remarks in this verse recall Isaiah 60:1-3, which in turn recall imagery surrounding the promised Servant of the Lord. Though the church today associates the Servant figure with the suffering of Jesus, Luke prefers here to highlight those aspects of the Servant's work that mean hope and vindication.

Once again, the parents marveled at the prophecy. Luke's reader is to identify with their response and sense of wonder.

But Simeon is not done. There is a note of foreboding he must leave with Mary. Jesus will be the cause of division: This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel. The imagery of this verse comes from Isaiah 8:14-15 and 28:13-16. These Old Testament texts are frequently alluded to in the New Testament (Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6-8; Lk 20:17-18, also at Qumran, 1QH 2:8-10; 14:11). Jesus will divide the nation in two. Some will respond and others will oppose. That means that he will be a sign that will be spoken against. People will contend against and about Jesus. The road to promise-fulfillment is not smooth. To identify with Jesus will bring pain, because many will reject him.

This rejection explains Simeon's reference to a sword piercing through Mary's soul. She will feel a mother's pain as she watches her son go his own way and suffer rejection, but the sword also reflects the pain anyone who identifies with Jesus feels as the world rejects what Jesus has to offer. Simeon's remark to Mary is an aside, but an important one, since it shows that identifying with Jesus has painful personal consequences.

The division Jesus brings reveals the thoughts of many hearts. Jesus is God's litmus test for where a person is. Do I sense a need to depend on God and come to him to walk in light, or do I not? My response to Jesus is the test, and the answer comes from my heart. Each person's response to him reveals where he or she is before God, just as one day Jesus will reveal where everyone's heart is (Acts 10:42-43). Anna's Prophecy (2:36-38).

Though no details of Anna's prophecy are given, this section completes the cycle of male and female witnesses. Again, Anna's piety is underlined by references to her old age, her faithful widowhood

and her regular ministry at the temple. She is full of thanksgiving at the arrival of the child who will complete God's promise, and she speaks about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Her teaching would have been heard by all who frequented the temple. Her hope, like Simeon's, looks to the completion of what God is starting. Jesus' Growth (2:39-40)

Having obeyed the Mosaic law, Jesus' parents return with him to Nazareth in Galilee. There Jesus grows in strength and wisdom, receiving the favor of God. There he awaits the ministry that will fulfill what Mary, Zechariah, the angels, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna have proclaimed. God will fulfill his word and perform his plan.

Chapter 5

Baptism and Temptation of Jesus (3:21-4:13)

John has already pointed to Jesus, so Luke turns now to describe Jesus' preparation for ministry. A divine endorsement accompanies Jesus' arrival (3:21-22), while the genealogy (3:23-38) and the temptations (4:1-13) give his historical and spiritual credentials. These latter two passages highlight Jesus' connection to Adam, showing that Jesus, though unique, has come to serve all humanity. Jesus' faithfulness to his ministry, along with God's endorsement of him, is the theme of Luke's opening presentation of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' Baptism (3:21-22).

Baptism of Jesus

The closest modern parallel to Jesus' baptism—though of course it is not at all the same—is the selection of a presidential candidate at a political convention. At this ancient “convention,” however, there is only one elector who speaks, only one vote that counts. This is the first of two times in Luke's Gospel that a voice from heaven addresses Jesus (the other is in 9:28-36). Both events represent a divine endorsement of him (Acts 10:37-38; 13:23-25). This first endorsement contains two elements—the descent of the Spirit and the word from heaven; the second is marked by a cloud and a divine word.

After almost two thousand years of established theological teaching about Jesus, it is hard to appreciate how revolutionary the baptismal endorsement was, even though in all likelihood Jesus experienced it privately. The description of this miraculous event, unlike accounts of other miraculous events, gives no indication of bystanders' reactions (compare Paul's conversion, Acts 9:7; 22:9). There is simply a word to Jesus. Luke's presentation of the event, like the parallel Synoptic accounts (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11), pulls the curtain away from the heavens and lets us see how God views Jesus' arrival.

The divine word from heaven explains who Jesus is and uses Old Testament language. As important as this description is, the environment in which the remark appears is also significant. Jesus, by submitting to baptism, identifies with humanity's need for cleansing. Luke will return to the connection between John and Jesus' ministry in 20:1-8; Matthew makes more of this identification by speaking of the need for fulfilling all righteousness (Mt 3:15). But the point here is crucial. The temptations will show that Jesus is different from Adam; he is able to resist the temptation to go his own way selfishly in sin. So Jesus does not accept baptism for the sake of his own sin. His participation in the rite indicates his readiness to take up humanity's cause in salvation. Here begins the realization of what John preached, the opportunity for the forgiveness of sins (Lk 1:76-79). John baptizes in water to picture cleansing, but Jesus brings the Spirit to wash away sin, to bring God's presence into people's lives and to guide them into the way of peace. This hope is why the Spirit descends on Jesus: God both endorses Jesus and pictures the enabling presence that comes in and through him.

A second key element associated with this event is that the Spirit descends after prayer. Luke alone notes this detail. With this unique mention of prayer the theme of devotion and nearness to God emerges. Jesus looks to God during every step of his mission. The endorsement is clear, direct and filled with Old Testament background. There are three points of Old Testament contact.

First, Jesus is my Son. This is an allusion to verse 7 of Psalm 2, a regal psalm that probably has roots in the promise to David that God would be a father to David's descendant (2 Sam 7:14). Hebrews 1:5 explicitly links these Old Testament texts together.

Second, the quality of this relationship emerges in the description of Jesus as the beloved Son, the one whom I love. Here the emphasis may well be on Jesus' elect status (Is 41:8), highlighting that he is uniquely chosen for his task. Others suggest the allusion is to Genesis 22:12, 16 and to Isaac typology, but then Son would have both regal and national meaning simultaneously. Since Luke lacks Isaac typology elsewhere, this sense seems less likely.

Third, this Son is one with whom God is well pleased. This portion of the statement alludes to Isaiah 42:1 and serves as an initial Lukan description of Jesus as connected to Isaiah's Servant figure (on the evidence for this allusion, see Marshall 1969:336-46). As Servant, Jesus will carry out both prophetic and representative roles.

So in this short event heaven places its endorsing stamp on Jesus. He is the promised regal Son, the chosen one, unique in his call. He reveals the will of God and serves him. This is the one for whom John prepared the people. Anointed with the Spirit, Jesus is truly the Christ, a term that means "anointed one" (4:18). He is ready to minister and carry out his call.

The Temptations of Jesus (4:1-13)

Most lives have a moment of truth, a crossroads where one's mettle is tested and one's character emerges. In such moments the ethical options stand out starkly, and the choice that is made reveals on which road a person is traveling.

Satan's temptations of Jesus are such a moment for the recently anointed Son. How is the "beloved Son" going to carry out his task? His choices reveal his commitment and also point to the road of faithfulness and dependence that disciples should travel.

The event can also be compared to a cosmic, heavyweight championship fight. This is but the first round of many battles Jesus will have with Satan and other demonic forces throughout Luke's Gospel. Though at points, like the crucifixion, it looks as if Satan wins, Luke tells us not to be fooled about who is the stronger force.

Finally, Jesus' numerous quotes from Deuteronomy in response to these wilderness temptations recall another time and place where temptation and God's chosen met in the wilderness. During the exodus, the Israelite nation failed this test. Jesus succeeds where Israel failed.

What is more, the genealogy immediately preceding this account has named Jesus as Son of Adam and Son of God. The echo of Genesis 3 cannot be missed. What Adam failed to do as representative of all humanity, Jesus succeeds in doing. Jesus' success is the first of many TKOs Jesus will deliver against Satan; the victory serves to reverse a string of defeats humanity has suffered at the hands of this deceptive, elusive enemy. Jesus shows that spirituality does not always take the easiest road; it trusts God's word and remains faithful to his way.

The temptation recorded here is paralleled in Matthew 4:1-11 and Mark 1:12-13. Mark simply mentions Jesus' successful response, while Matthew narrates the same three temptations as Luke but in a different order. Matthew's second temptation is Luke's third (at the temple in Jerusalem), while Luke's second temptation is Matthew's third (the offering of all the kingdoms on the earth). This is a case where one Gospel writer has rearranged the order, and either writer could be responsible. But it is more likely that Luke has placed the Jerusalem scene last, as the climactic encounter, for literary reasons. Luke will highlight Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44), the nation's central city, as the place Jesus is fated to go and suffer death. So Satan's offer to circumvent that suffering is a truly sinister effort to thwart God's plan. The placement of this temptation last foreshadows the strategic role Jerusalem will have in Luke's story.

As significant, threatening and testing as this event is, Luke leaves no doubt that Jesus is directed to the desert. He mentions that Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit and is led by the Spirit. Tests of character are divinely wrought, even when they place us at risk. One need only think of Job. In Jesus' case the tests come after forty days of fasting. The circumstances could not be worse for Jesus to deal with the offer of food in verse 3. Jesus' circumstances could provide him a ready rationalization for giving in. The contrast of this temptation to that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden could not be greater. Adam and Eve had everything they needed to eat, but Jesus meets Satan in the midst of hunger and deprivation.

The first temptation raises questions of God's care and provision. Jesus' reply in terms of Deuteronomy 8:3 makes the issue God's goodness in providing for and protecting those who are his, just as the original setting suggested for Israel. Satan's words "if you are the Son of God" are a subtle appeal to Jesus' power, presenting the

premise as if it were true. The assumption is that Jesus can act on his own here. But for Jesus to take action independent of God would have represented a lack of faith in God's goodness. Jesus' reply from Deuteronomy, "man does not live on bread alone," reveals that one's well-being is not limited to being well fed. As necessary as food is, it is not as important as being sustained by the Word of God. For Jesus, truth is living in awareness of God's promise of care and relying on him even when God leads him into the wilderness. If Jesus is God's beloved Son, as was declared at the baptism, God will care for him. Such trust is exemplary.

The second temptation is Satan's invitation to engage in false worship. It represents a challenge to the first commandment to worship God alone (Ex 20:3). Apparently Jesus is given some type of visionary experience of the kingdoms of the earth and is offered total authority by Satan. As Satan makes the offer in verse 6, he places you (soi) in the emphatic position as if to say, "Look what can be yours!" This effort to entice recalls James's remarks about how sin emerges when our desires lure and ensnare us into sin (Jas 1:14-15). Satan is trying to lure Jesus through an appeal to power. The Greek reads, "To you I will give all this authority and glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, I will give it to you." The devil's offer is deception at its best, a half-truth. Though he has great power (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; Rev 13:2-pictured as a dragon), he does not have authority to offer Jesus everything. The offer itself reflects extreme self-delusion on Satan's part, or else it is a ruse to get Jesus into the same predicament Satan now lives in as a result of his unfaithfulness and rebellion.

Here is an opportunity to grab power, but to do so and renounce God would be to possess destructive power-and ultimately would mean not possessing power at all. Satan is not worthy of worship. So Jesus' reply rejects the offer totally: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." The quote is from Deuteronomy 6:13, which follows closely on a passage recited daily by Jews, the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4. Jesus is certain that only One deserves his service. It is not self or Satan, but God. By putting worship and service together in the verse, Jesus makes it clear that both words and life are meant to honor God.

The third temptation is also probably visionary in character. Jesus is placed on a high point of the temple and is urged to jump, to experience the joy of God's certain protection. The exact location at the temple is uncertain; two locales are possible. Some suggest the high temple gate, but more likely is the "royal porch" on the temple's southeast corner, since it loomed over a cliff and the Kidron Valley, some 450 feet below (Josephus Antiquities 15.11.5 410-12). Satan now quotes Scripture himself (Ps 91:11-12) to make it appear that taking a leap would be perfectly orthodox. And again the request is made in terms of Jesus' being the Son, as it was in verse 3. Satan plans a private test of God's faithfulness: "Jesus, before you venture out on this ministry, you had better be sure God will care for you. The psalm guarantees your protection, so jump. If you are the Son, God will rescue you; if you trust God, you will jump. Just let go and let God care for you!"

We can guess at what Satan really has in mind as we consider the destructive effects of demonic possession described in other texts (8:33; 9:39). But Jesus refuses to test God's provision by insisting on a miracle. He will not presume upon God and put a mask on unbelief by seeking to confirm God's trust. So Jesus cites Deuteronomy 6:16: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." The Old Testament background is significant. Israel had presumed about God's goodness, doubting why he had sent them out into the desert and promised them the Promised Land. They had tested God at Massah (Ex 17:1-7). Jesus refuses to demand God's protection on his own terms. Such a demand is neither faith nor loyalty; it is sin.

Having failed, the devil departs for a time. This does not mean he leaves the story until Luke 22:3, when he reappears to influence Judas. Rather, he works behind the scenes in the various demonic encounters Jesus experiences throughout his ministry (as in 10:18; 11:19-23). The wilderness temptation is only the first round in Jesus' victory, but it is the first of many victorious rounds. Jesus' success reveals that he is qualified for ministry. The key to Jesus' triumph is his faithfulness in walking with God wherever God leads him, even in the midst of testing times. Here is a loyal and beloved Son who requites God's love. To love God is to be faithful to him, worshiping and serving only him.

Chapter 6

Jesus' Inaugural Appearance at Nazareth

Luke summarizes Jesus' activity by juxtaposing teaching (4:16-30) with miraculous activity (4:31-44). Jesus' teaching evokes both wonder and rejection, two reactions that continue in our contemporary world. This passage's events take place mostly on one day; only the introductory overview, the synagogue speech and the concluding verses move outside this narrow time frame. The section could be summarized by the title "A Few Days in the Life of Jesus." While up to this point the Gospel's events have moved quickly, jumping months and years at a time, now the pace winds down to give us a slow-motion look at Jesus. Those who study narrative tell us that when time decelerates in the presentation of an account, important events are being related. That is certainly the case here.

In the midst of people's rejection, there is also cosmic struggle as Jesus encounters hostile spiritual forces in 4:40-41. Jesus is always dealing with the reality behind the scenes of everyday life. The passage closes with reflection about Jesus' mission in Luke 4:42-44. He must preach God's kingdom. Jesus must explain how his rule

and God's promises come in stages and how he overcomes forces hostile to humanity and to God (10:9, 18; 11:14-23; 17:20-21; 24:44-49; Acts 2:16-38; 3:14-26; 10:34-43). Jesus' Galilean Ministry (4:14-15)

This short summary makes two simple points. First, Jesus is still led by the Spirit (Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit). Second, he is drawing attention to himself through his teaching, as he taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

God had promised the decisive demonstration of his salvation for his people for a long time. Now Jesus turns to declare the day has come; opportunity is present. After almost two thousand years of promise, stretching all the way back to Abraham, Jesus claims that the promises of a prophet like Isaiah are now being decisively realized.

But as in many great moments, questions arise. Is this really it? Have we moved from the days of promise to the time of the beginning of realization? Is God at work to fulfill his promise? Jesus' synagogue declaration brings a moment of decision for those who hear his claims. A snapshot of his entire ministry flashes in this brief exchange. Jesus offers much, but the crowd questions what is on offer. In the tension of the contrast, Luke's readers are left to choose sides.

The piety of Jesus' parents continues in Jesus, as on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. Unfortunately this is the first of several sabbath events that will end in controversy (4:31-37; 6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-5). Jesus' piety is not like that of the Jewish leadership. The controversies raise the question who represents God and his way—a major thematic concern in Luke's portrayal of Jesus. Yet despite the tension, Jesus does not attempt to separate himself from Judaism. Rather, he presents his mission as the natural extension and realization of Israel's hope. As Jesus hopes to show, the time of fulfillment has come. The opportunity to share in and experience release according to God's promise has come this very day (v. 21).

To appreciate the account, it helps to understand the order of an ancient synagogue service (m. Megilla 3-4; m. Berakot 2). To have a synagogue service required the presence of ten adult males. At the service, the Shema was recited (Deut 6:4-9), followed by prayers, including some set prayers like the Tephillah and the Eighteen

Benedictions (m. Berakot 2:2). After this the Scripture was read, beginning with a portion from the Torah (Gen-Deut) and moving next to a section from the Prophets. Instruction then followed. Often the speaker linked the texts together through appeal to other passages. The service then closed with a benediction.

Jesus appears to speak during the reading of the Prophets. He reads from Isaiah 61:1-2, a passage that promises the coming of God's salvation. His commentary, unlike most sermons, is brief, declaring simply, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The claim is so great that we need to work through the elements of the Old Testament passage carefully.

The passage starts with Jesus' claim that the Spirit of the Lord is on me. Jesus claims to be directed by God to minister and preach. The details follow, but interestingly, the reader of Luke's Gospel knows more about what this means than Jesus' original synagogue audience would have known at the time. The first hearers would have heard a claim for a divinely directed ministry, but they may not have realized that at his baptism Jesus had been anointed not just for a prophetic ministry but as Messiah. Readers of Luke have the memory of the anointing fresh in their recall. Jesus' remark recalls 3:21-22. His statement, along with what follows, shows that he is both an anointed Son and a prophetic figure. He reveals

God's will and brings God's promise

In the synagogue speech, the next line gives the goal of the anointing: to preach good news to the poor. This theme has already received attention in Mary's hymnic burst of praise in 1:51-53. Theologians today debate the significance of what Jesus said. Does this verse and those that surround it resonate with themes of political liberation for the oppressed? Is Jesus supporting class struggle? Luke's use of the term poor in chapter 1 and beyond makes it clear this is not only a socioeconomic reference. On the other hand, neither is class excluded from Jesus' concerns. In 1:50-53, the reference to "the humble" is surrounded by descriptions that indicate the spiritually sensitive character of the poor. Luke 6:20-23, too, compares the trouble the poor face in this world to the experience the prophets of old faced. So the text Jesus reads is not a carte blanche endorsement of the poor, nor is it a political manifesto. This hope extends only to

the spiritually sensitive poor, to the responsive. The passage recognizes that often it is the poor who respond to God's message and embrace it with humility (1 Cor 1:26-29; Jas 2:5). They tend to sense their need and have no delusions of power, control and independence. They are what the Old Testament called the "anauim" the pious poor," also called "the afflicted" (2 Sam 22:28; Ps 14:6; 22:24; 25:16; 34:6; 40:17; 69:29; Is 3:14-15; Amos 8:4).

For those looking to God for hope, Jesus was the answer. To respond to God, one must be open to him. For those in need of God, Jesus has a message of good news. Luke loves to emphasize that a potential audience for this message can be found among the poor. His social concern expresses itself fully through the details of what Jesus said at the synagogue-details the other Gospels lack. But this social concern is concerned with spiritual realities, not political ideologies.

So Jesus is sent to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed. Luke 4:31-44 makes clear that the oppression in view here is mainly spiritual. Forces stand opposed to humanity that pull down and bring sin, pain and pressure. Being under demonic oppression is like being trapped in a prison of pain and despair. Jesus offers release from such pain and dark despair. That is what his miracles picture and point to, the reality beyond the act of the miracle (11:14-23).

Jesus' words, then, work at two levels simultaneously. He will heal the blind, but that also pictures the coming of light to those in darkness (1:78-79). The healing of the blind man in 18:35-43 also pictures what Jesus does for Zacchaeus in 19:1-10. Jesus is the physician who comes to heal the sick (5:31-32). Eventually the ministry of Jesus will bring total restoration and release to the creation (Rom 8:18-39; Rev 21-22), but in the meantime, deliverance means release into forgiveness and relationship with God.

Jesus' statement that he liberates the oppressed makes it clear that he is more than a prophet; he effects salvation. The allusion here is to Isaiah 58:6. Isaiah 58 calls on Israel to respond to God by fasting with a life of ethical honor to God (esp. 58:13-14). The prophet rebukes the nation for having failed to live up to the call of its sabbath worship. What Jesus promises here is a release that will result in his providing

what the nation had failed to provide. In fact, many of the sabbath controversies in Luke have to do with Jesus' providing such release despite complaints about the sabbath timing of his healings. But Jesus replies that no time is more appropriate than the sabbath for such healings (and what they picture; 13:16).

This is why Jesus has come to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Here the allusion is to the jubilee, the year of cancellation of debts (Lev 25:8-17; Sloan 1977:39-41). What happened in that year, when debts were canceled and slaves were freed, pictures what Jesus brings for those who respond to his message of hope. Jesus builds on the picture of Isaiah's ministry, which also proclaimed such hope, and notes that what the prophet had proclaimed Jesus is fulfilling.

In sum, Jesus makes three points: (1) Jesus is anointed with the Spirit. (2) He is the prophet of fulfillment who declares good news. This office is what theologians have called "the eschatological prophet" or "the prophet like Moses," because Jesus proclaims the arrival of a new era of salvation, functioning as a prophet-leader. (3) Jesus is the one who brings release as well as the one who proclaims it. He is Messiah. This final idea helps to explain the blind man's insight into what he has been hearing about Jesus when in 18:35-43 he calls out to the Son of David for healing. The Son of David brings not only a future rule but also present release from sin and a reversal of the effects of Satan's presence in the world (11:14-23). In short, this is the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise, and Jesus is the source of that fulfillment.

Jesus' claim that "today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" places both listeners and readers in the position of having to make a choice. No fence-sitting is possible. Jesus' teaching is not some ethical instruction detached from his person. He is the promise of God. Either he brings God's promise or he does not.

The crowd does reflect on the claim; they are amazed and perplexed simultaneously. They spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. They recognized a persuasive speaker in their midst, but his pedigree gave them pause. Isn't this Joseph's son? How could he be the promised one of God? Knowing their thoughts, Jesus responds. In the Gospels, when

someone thinks and then Jesus speaks, his words usually carry rebuke (7:39, 49-50; 11:38-39).

Jesus replies in three ways. First, he cites a proverb that indicates they want him to prove it. "Show me" is their basic response to his claim. Yet after the evidence is produced, there will still be doubt. Miracles, as powerful a testimony as they are to Jesus, in the end never convince one who does not want to come to God (16:31). People must be willing to hear the Word of God and receive it before they will see anything as God's work.

Second, Jesus quotes the proverb that a prophet is not honored in his home. This remark reveals Jesus' understanding of Old Testament history. He knows how repeatedly God's messengers were rejected. This theme will also surface continually in Luke (11:49-52; 13:32-35; 20:10-12; Acts 7:51-53). God's message is often met with rejection. The proverb also serves as a prediction that for many in Israel Jesus' ministry will fit into this tragic mold.

Third, Jesus recalls the history of Israel in the period of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17-18; 2 Kings 5:1-14). The history lesson is a warning. That period was a low point in the nation's life, when rejection of God was at an all-time high and idolatry and unfaithfulness ran rampant. So God moved his works of mercy outside the nation into Gentile regions, as only a widow in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian experienced God's healing. The price of rejecting God's message is severe: mercy moves on to other locales. It is quite risky to walk away from God's offer of deliverance. This exchange reveals the basic challenge of Jesus' ministry: the choice he presents carries high stakes.

The crowd does not seize the opportunity. Rather, Jesus' warning angers them. The suggestion that Gentiles might be blessed while Israel reaps nothing leaves them fuming. Such displeasure at the accountability implicit in the gospel message is echoed in Acts (7:51-59; 13:46, 50; 22:20-22). Many respond similarly today when they realize that the gospel is a matter of "take it or you will be responsible to God for the consequences."

Jesus departs, despite the crowd's efforts to seize him and remove him from the scene. People can try to turn their back on Jesus and do away with him, but he always will be sojourning in their midst.

Opportunities for God's work are also opportunities for tragedy. That is what is pictured in Jesus' synagogue visit. The promise's arrival was a great, historic moment, an occasion to enter into God's rich blessing. But blessing refused is tragic. The crowd's response is the first of many moments of opportunity lost in the Gospel. It is another step in a paradise lost. The gospel brings a choice-and choice has consequences. Examples of Jesus' Ministry (4:31-44)

These verses contain several quick snapshots of Jesus' public ministry during one day in the Capernaum region. The sequence highlights his miraculous activity, the most distinctive aspect of his ministry. Since these are the first miracles Jesus performs in Luke's Gospel, here we should stop to look at how miracles function for Jesus.

First, miracles are real events that evidence Jesus' authority. Since the Enlightenment it has been popular to question the possibility of miracles, because nature has been viewed as a closed world of cause and effect. But the most difficult miracle of all was the resurrection, yet its reality is the only way to explain how the disciples who were so distraught at the cross became bold proclaimers of Jesus' vindication after the third day. In sum, if a resurrection is possible, the other miracles are a piece of cake. Can God actively intervene in his creation? The testimony of the resurrection and the other miracles is that he can and does with sovereign exercise of his power. And Jesus' consistent exercise of such power testifies to his unique access to God. As Jesus will note, if his power is not from Satan, then it must represent the presence of the "finger of God" (11:14-23).

Second, miracles are audiovisuals of deeper realities. In other words, they are not merely events for events' sake, they picture something more important. This point can be seen in two key miracles. In 5:1-11 Jesus leads four fishermen into a great catch of fish. Yet immediately Jesus makes the point that from now on they will be fishers of persons. The miracle pictures ministry. Another example comes in 11:20, where Jesus says that if he casts out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon his audience. Here he is not speaking merely about the miracle of 11:14, but about all of his activity. The miracles picture a deeper reality about Jesus' authority.

In all the debate about whether miracles are real (or even whether they still occur through spiritual gifts within the church today), those in the West have lost their pictorial value, which is their major point. Those who live in the industrialized, philosophically sophisticated West might profit from listening to the testimony of many in the Two-Thirds World who appreciate the symbolism that these texts contain. Numerous passages show Jesus discouraging people from focusing too much on his miraculous activity (Mt 12:39; Mk 8:12; Jn 6:26-27). Sometimes he performs a miracle and asks that it not be divulged (Lk 8:56). Why does he do this? Possibly because he knows the meaning of the miracle will be lost if people focus on the event itself. In the rush to take and experience what Jesus has to offer, people can easily forget the One all the miracles point to.

Third, miracles unveil the deep cosmic struggle between the forces of evil and Jesus. If we ask what the miracles show, it is Jesus' sweeping authority. These events, especially those involving demonic forces, reveal hand-to-hand combat (Eph 6:10-12). The miracles pull back a curtain, as it were, so we can glimpse the behind-the-scenes battle within creation.

Casting of the Demons (4:31-44)

Armed with these three observations about miracles, we can appreciate even more what Luke 4:31-44 represents. Jesus tackles demons and disease to show he possesses the key to life. That authority and exercise of cosmic power is why he can speak of his mission being about the kingdom of God in 4:43. Jesus' authority shows the presence and concern of the rule of God on behalf of those who turn to God in a time of need.

This introductory summary of Jesus' ministry begins in verses 31-32 highlighting his teaching in Capernaum-his message had authority. As Jesus teaches in a city that will become his headquarters, the masses are aware that rather than citing what the rabbis had said in the past, Jesus speaks directly about God and his will. The following verses make an additional point: there is more to Jesus' authority than his ability to preach the Word; he can show the presence of God's power.

Jesus' first miracle involves a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. Demons are mentioned twenty-three times in the Gospel of

Luke, but most of the references (fourteen) occur between here and 9:50, in the discussion of Jesus' Galilean ministry. It is clear that the man is threatened directly by this possessive force. Some in Judaism believed that demonic control of humans would end on the Day of the Lord (1QM 1:10-14; 14:10-11; Fitzmyer 1981:545-46). Judaism taught that demonic power would be crushed in the messianic age (Testament of Zebulon 9:8; Assumption of Moses 10:1), and Jesus says as much in 7:22-23. Here is the second face-off in the battle between Jesus and the forces of evil. With Satan already defeated in the first encounter (4:1-11), his underlings are the opponents here. Both the nature of the times and the victor are revealed in the battle.

Given the descriptions of this condition in the Gospels, it seems clear that demon possession, whatever one calls it, is the direct exercise of demonic power from within a person. If something is "exorcised" or asked to depart (v. 35), then something was present that needed removal. Mark 5:1-20 indicates how such possession can become very self-destructive. The New Testament suggests that one can distinguish between possession and sickness (Mt 4:24; Lk 4:40-41; 7:21; 9:1; 13:32), yet some overlap in terms of external manifestations can exist (Lk 8:29; 9:39; 11:14; 13:11, 16). By appearances, then, it can be hard to distinguish certain kinds of sickness from possession. Possession tends to manifest itself in very erratic behavior or physical impairment (Mk 5:1-20; Lk 8:29; 9:39, 42; 11:14; 13:10-17). The concept of possession itself (or, better perhaps, having an unclean demonic spirit, as the Greek of v. 33 puts it) indicates that the destructive and hostile force in control of the person lies inside the person and takes control of him or her from within.

Another way the New Testament lifts the veil on spiritual forces is through the dialogue that accompanies miracles. In this first miracle in Luke, the demon asks whether Jesus of Nazareth has come to destroy us. Who is meant here—all demons, or the demon's complete influence over the man so the two are tied together? If it is the former, then the point is Jesus' authority over all evil spirits, a significant admission early in Jesus' ministry. If it is the demon's strong connection to the man, then the demon thinks Jesus cannot destroy him without destroying the human he possesses. In effect, the remark, though it is posed as a question, poses a challenge.

Given the note in the next verse about the man emerging from the exorcism unharmed, the latter sense seems slightly better here: the demon does not think he can be challenged without the man's being harmed as well.

But why does the demon name Jesus and call him the Holy One of God? Possibly the naming of Jesus is an attempt to gain the advantage by uttering his true name in the midst of the approaching supernatural confrontation. On a literary level, the naming serves to make clear who the combatants are—an interesting recognition by the forces opposed to Jesus that he is on the side of God. The naming makes it obvious that a battle of cosmic proportions is under way. Though it is hard to be certain about the demon's motive in naming Jesus, his remark serves to identify the significance of the battle. Jesus meets the challenge and removes the presence and power of evil on the man without destroying the man himself. What a picture of Jesus' power!

So the confession by the demon is very important. Jesus is the Holy One of God. In the Old Testament, this title or one similar to it was given to Aaron (Ps 106:16), Samson (Judg 13:7) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:9). In the context of Luke's story we know that Jesus is holy because of his regal authority (1:31-35), a point reinforced in 4:41, when the Son is called the Christ. As James 2:19 suggests, demons have knowledge about God but fail to respond to that knowledge. Here is a case of evil having great angst in the presence of active righteousness. Evil cannot stand up to righteousness when righteousness takes a firm stand. Any victory it may appear to have is fleeting.

Jesus rebukes the spirit and prevails. The term used here may well reflect Semitic terms for calling evil into submission (Fitzmyer 1981:546). In addition, Jesus silences the demonic spirit. Why does he do so? Does he want to avoid any suggestion that he is a revolutionary against Rome (Stein 1992:163)? Does he simply want his works to speak for themselves (7:18-23)? Were only certain types of proclamation appropriate for Messiah? So Longenecker (1970:71-74), who notes similar hesitations in the claims of the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness and Simeon ben Kosebah suggesting a Jewish expectation on this question.

Of all the options, the most likely is that Judaism taught that Messiah should only engage in certain types of self-proclamation. Perhaps also there is concern that the title Messiah would be understood with too political a force (Stein's view noted above). More than one reason may lie behind Jesus' command.

Regardless of the exact reason, Jesus' authority prevails, even though the demon tries to injure the man upon departing by throwing him down (Mk 1:26 mentions convulsions).

The story of this healing closes as the crowd asks, "What is this teaching?" In their amazement they recognize that something very unusual has occurred. They see that Jesus approaches evil forces with authority and power. A hierarchy of power is being displayed-what could it mean, and where does such power come from? Luke leaves the miracle as an event to ponder. The demon's confession suggests the answer, as do subsequent events: this Jesus is the Holy One of God, and his power exceeds that of the forces of evil. Needless to say, news of the event spreads far and wide.

Jesus' power over evil is not limited to spiritual forces. His healing of Peter's mother-in-law shows his authority over disease, and thus by implication his authority over life. The story is told simply. Jesus merely rebuked the fever-a verb that almost personifies the illness. Luke's unique use of the phrase he rebuked (*epetimesen*) parallels verses 35 and 41, linking the events of the day around the theme of Jesus' power (both verses use the same Greek verb). Immediately the woman's health returns. Again, Jesus' actions reveal special authority.

As the sabbath passes, Jesus continues to heal. People with all sorts of maladies show up. Both sick and possessed come. The healings described earlier are not one-time coincidences. Jesus possesses the power to heal consistently. Note that the order in verses 40-41 (healing, then exorcism) reverses the order of verses 31-39. The pairing shows how Luke wishes Jesus' ministry to be seen. It is a ministry of mercy to those in need, fighting to overcome evil with compassion. Jesus' compassion is pictured by his laying on of hands. In his touch are power and presence. People flock to him because they sense that compassionate element in his work. By the way Jesus reaches out to them, they know he cares.

The exorcised demons recognize his authority. They confess Jesus to be the Son of God. Luke explains that this means they knew he was the Christ. Only Luke makes this comment. Jesus' regal, anointed authority extends to overcoming the forces of evil.

When at the break of day Jesus departs, the crowd follows and tries to keep him in Capernaum. Yet again Jesus speaks of his mission: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns." This is why Jesus has been sent. The content of this kingdom message is seen in what Luke has already supplied (4:16-30): Jesus fulfills the promise. When John the Baptist raises the question again later, Jesus' answer points to such fulfillment (7:18-23). Jesus does not proclaim who he is; he lets events explain who he is. For him, actions speak louder than words. He is more than an ethical instructor or a psychologist; he has power to overcome the forces of evil that plague humanity. His ministry is not designed for a little corner, but it extends far and wide to take the message out to others. So Jesus takes his message and ministry to the other synagogues of Galilee.

Chapter 7

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son (Luke 7:11-17)

Jesus performed many miracles during His earthly ministry. While these miracles did extend a benefit to their recipients, and thus demonstrated Jesus's compassion on mankind, their main purpose was to confirm His claim to being the divine Son of God. He showed power over nature by stilling the tempest and feeding the 5000. He also showed power over disease by healing all kinds of sicknesses and other abnormal physical conditions. He even showed power over Satan by casting out demons. However, some of the most poignant scenes among the miracles of our Lord are where He showed His power over death by raising people to life again.

On such incident is recorded in Luke 7:11-17, where Jesus raised the son of a widow who lived in the city of Nain. Nain was a city of Galilee, on the northwest slope of the Hill of Moreh, the same place where Gideon attacked the Midianites, who had invaded Israel and encamped near there. It is about six miles south of

Nazareth, and the name still adheres to the modern village of Nein. We can probably picture this event or at least feel the emotion of it because we have all lost someone to death; not an only son as this woman, but a parent, sibling, other dear relative, or perhaps a close friend. What can we learn from this account of Jesus and the widow's son?

First, we see death in verses 11-12, where the body of a young man who had died was being carried out of the city on a bier or open coffin. Physical death is an appointment that God has made for all mankind, result from the introduction of sin into the world (Genesis 3:17-19). Physical death is not so much a punishment for sin but rather a consequence of the fact that sin exists. It is "appointed for men to die once" (Hebrews 9:27). What is this death? It is more than just a cessation of life, and it is certainly not annihilation or extinction, as some claim. Rather, the basic meaning of the word is "separation." At death, the body and the spirit separate, the body going downward and the spirit returning to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Man is a dual being; the body is dead when the spirit is separated from it (James 2:26).

As undesirable and fearful as physical death can be, there is something worse, which is spiritual death, to be "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). What is this spiritual death? Like physical death, it is a separation, though not of body and spirit but of the soul from God because of sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). It is a problem that all responsible human beings face because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Yet, there is something even still worse, and that is the fact that if something is not done about this condition of spiritual death, it will result in eternal death-separation from God in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8). Thus, while we certainly need to make preparations for the time of physical death, we need to be more concerned about the problem of spiritual death. Physical death ends only this life, but spiritual death has consequences for all eternity.

Second, we see sorrow in verse 13 where the mother, a widow, was weeping for her only son. We recognize that physical death brings sorrow because when we lose someone we love, it makes us sad.

Many of Solomon's statements in Ecclesiastes (3:1-2, 5:13-16, 7:2-4) emphasize the sadness brought about by death. Even Jesus felt the sorrow of losing a loved one. After Lazarus died, when Jesus saw all the mourning by Martha, Mary, and the others, "Jesus wept" (John 11:32-35). That is why death is referred to as an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). However, Jesus, by His death, freed us from the fear of death and the bondage that it brings (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Yet, for the Christian, there is another side to death. Yes, we sorrow, but not as others (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Why is our sorrowing different? We know that if one dies in the Lord, it is not just the end of earthly life, but the beginning of something far better (Revelation 14:13). So in such instances, our sorrow is tempered with joy. Just as physical death brings about sorrow, there should be sorrow for spiritual death. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). Jesus is not talking about just mourning for lost loved ones but mourning for sins. It is this godly sorrow that produces repentance unto salvation (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). When we mourn because people are lost to physical death, there is not much else we can do. But when we mourn because of being in a state of spiritual death, it can lead to repentance unto salvation.

Third, we see a resurrection in verses 14-17 where Jesus commanded the young man to arise and he sat up. Why did Jesus raise this individual from the dead? In John 20:30-31 we are told that all of Jesus' miracles that are recorded were written so that we might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. Again, this demonstration of Jesus' power certainly brought great comfort to the grieving mother and it also showed Jesus's compassion, but it had a much greater purpose than that. Notice the reaction of the people-they rightly concluded from this event that a great prophet had arisen.

We have these instances in scripture of physical resurrections, and in like manner God has made it possible for those who are spiritually dead to undergo a spiritual resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). If those who are dead in sin follow the pattern of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection by dying to sin and being buried in baptism, they can rise to walk in newness of life. This gives Christians the hope of a future resurrection from the dead that will result in eternal life. Of

course, all, both righteous and wicked, will be raised when the Lord returns (John 5:28-29). However, those who have been raised to walk in newness of life can look forward at the end of time to being raised to be with the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:50-57, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, 1 John 2:25). Just as Jesus raised this widow's son, someday He will return to raise all the dead and take His people home to be with Him forever.

Funerals are always sad occasions, but Jesus turned this one into a time of joy. We need to be prepared for death, not only in making provisions for our own funeral and burial, but also in making provisions for our souls to escape spiritual death and walk in newness of life, so that when our bodies are raised from the dead, we can have eternal life with Christ in heaven. In order to do this, those who are not yet Christians need to be buried with Christ by baptism into death, and those who have become Christians need to make sure that they walk in newness of life.

Chapter 8

Wordless Worship of an Unnamed Woman (Luke 7:36-50)

The story of the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and her hair is one of the most moving accounts in the New Testament. My fear in teaching this passage is that I (we) will over-analyze it, and in the process lose the thrust of this great text. It is something like telling a joke, which is not immediately understood. The more we seek to clarify the details, the more we lose the impact of the joke.

In the laboratory, one must often kill the object being studied in the process of seeing its parts. Frogs, for example, do not come to or from the lab living and jumping. So, too, I fear that as we look at the parts of this very moving story we might miss the thrust of it for having considered its details. In biblical words, I fear that we might “strain the gnats” of this text, but “swallow its camels.” Let us open our hearts as well as our minds to the message of this text for us.

There are three principle characters in this story, all of which are relevant to us. The Lord Jesus is, of course, the star of the story. He, unlike the others, deals with

this woman in love and forgiveness. The woman, who is never named, is the recipient of our Lord’s forgiveness. She represents the “sinners” who are strangely attracted to Jesus. The host, Simon, was a Pharisee, and as such he represents at least the perception which many “sinners” have of the church and of Christians. It is from these characters and their relationship with each other that the message of our story is to be found.

The Structure of the Text

The structure of our text can be outlined as follows:

- (1) The Setting-vv. 36-38
- (2) Simon’s Thoughts and Jesus’ Response-vv. 39-47
- (3) Jesus’ Response to the woman-vv. 48-50

The Uniqueness of this Foot Washing in the Gospels

Each of the gospels has an account of the washing of Jesus’ feet by a woman. Let us briefly consider these other accounts:

Matthew 26:6-13: While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. 8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.” 10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

Mark 14:3-9: While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly. 6

“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

John 12:1-8: Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

The accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John might be dealing with the same washing, but that Luke’s account is a unique incident, recorded only in his gospel. John’s account initially seems to differ from those of Matthew and Mark, primarily due to the fact that the dinner appears to happen at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. While John’s account tells us that Martha served, it does not specifically indicate that the meal was served at her home. If the home of Mary and Martha was too small to entertain a large group, then Simon the leper (a former leper, healed by Jesus, I assume) may well have volunteered his home. Martha would likely have insisted that she serve.

The similarities between the three gospel accounts and that of Luke are superficial. The name Simon is as common in the ancient world as “Smith” is in our phone books. “Simon the leper” is

hardly synonymous with “Simon the Pharisee.” In fact, a link between the two would be unthinkable to a Pharisee. Luke’s incident appears to occur much earlier in Jesus’ ministry than that of the others, which occurs just prior to our Lord’s death (thus serving as a preparation for His burial). In Luke’s account, “Simon” silently protests; in the others’ accounts, the disciples protest (John narrows the protest down to Judas). Simon the Pharisee could not grasp how Jesus could let such a sinful woman touch Him, while the disciples were troubled by the waste of the perfume, which could have been sold so that the money could help the poor.

All things considered, one may believe that the incident described by Luke in his gospel is different from that described by Matthew, Mark, and John. Let us seek to learn from Luke what it was about this event which made it worthy of so much attention.

The Setting (7:36-39)

We are not told precisely when this incident occurred, nor the name of the city. The principle characters are Jesus, Simon the Pharisee, and the woman with a soiled reputation. It is interesting that Luke gives us the name of the host, but not of the woman. Omitting her name is, in my opinion, a gracious act, purposely done.

At first look it would seem that there are two people equally zealous to see Jesus: Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman. Simon could easily converse with Jesus in the comfort of his home, around a meal. For the woman, getting close to Jesus was no easy matter. Her sinful life, known to all who lived in her town, made it difficult for her, a woman, to seek out Jesus, a man. If she owned a home, she could not invite Jesus there, for this would be inappropriate, especially if she were a harlot, for this would be her place of business.

Reports of Jesus’ ministry and teaching had somehow reached this woman, and she was most eager to see the Savior. When she learned that Jesus was to have dinner at the house of Simon, the woman knew it was her opportunity to see Jesus. From our Lord’s words, it would seem that she arrived at Simon’s house before Jesus: “You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet” (Luke 7:45).

If the dinner were to begin at 7:00 P. M., the woman seems to have arrived at 6:45. She was there, ready and waiting. With her, she brought a container of perfume. It is my opinion that this woman came prepared to anoint the feet of Jesus, the humble task usually delegated to the lowest servant. Perhaps she would be permitted to do this.

The washing of Jesus' feet can best be understood in the light of our Lord's words of rebuke to Simon, and when compared to the Lord's washing of His disciples' feet as recorded in John chapter 13. As the Lord entered the house of Simon, custom and normal hospitality would have it that Jesus would have been greeted with a kiss, His feet would have been washed, and His head anointed with oil.

The woman no doubt waited near the door for Jesus to arrive. She probably expected that Jesus' feet would have been washed by one of Simon's servants. After His feet were washed, the woman would then likely have planned to anoint His feet with the perfume she had brought. Imagine the look on her face when she realized that Jesus' feet were not going to be washed. She did not let the dirty feet of our Lord keep her from what she had intended to do. She dared not kiss Jesus on the face, as Simon should have done, but she could kiss His feet, His dirty feet. She had come with no basin, no water, and no towel. Nevertheless, as she began to kiss His feet, the tears began to flow, something most unusual for a woman of her profession. As the tears began to flow, the woman must have noted that the little streams of tears carried the dirt of the road as well. She used the water of her tears to wash His feet, something she could hardly have planned in advance. Since there was no towel available to her, she used her hair to dry Jesus' feet. Imagine this, the woman used her hair, the most glorious part of her body (cf. 1 Cor. 11:15), to dry the feet of Jesus, the most ignoble part of one's body! She did not do her duty quickly, so as to quickly finish an unpleasant task. She persisted at kissing the feet of our Lord (cf. v. 45).

This woman's worship of Jesus was at a great cost to her. It cost her the expensive vial of perfume, and the humility to kiss, wash, and dry the dirty feet of the Lord Jesus. But there was a higher price than this paid by the woman. In my opinion, the greatest price which she paid was facing the scorn and rejection of the self-righteous

Pharisees and other dinner guests at that meal. Jesus did not give her a "dirty look," but it is inconceivable to think that all of the others did not. Simon's disdain, revealed by his inner thoughts, must also have been evident in his eyes, and so too for the other guests. "What in the world are you doing here?" must have been etched on the faces of the guests. It could hardly be otherwise for a Pharisee, whose holiness was primarily a matter of physical separation from sin and from "sinners." The woman's desire to see and to worship Jesus was greater than her fear of these guests. Their scorn was a high price to pay, but to the woman it was worth it.

Simon's Thoughts and Jesus' Teaching (7:39-43)

No doubt a great part of Simon's motivation was to "check out" Jesus. Was this man really a prophet? Was His message to be believed? And how did His message compare with that of the Pharisees? Was He a threat, or an ally? Just who did Jesus claim to be and what was to be done about Him? Should He be resisted, opposed, put to death, or should be ignored? Could He be recruited to their side? These may have been some of the questions in Simon's mind, suggesting some of his motivation for having Jesus over to dinner.

Simon's reasoning is most illuminating. It went something like this:

Premises: If Jesus were a prophet, he would know people's character. If Jesus knew this woman was a sinner, He would have nothing to do with her

Conclusions:

Since Jesus has accepted this woman, He does not know her character. Since Jesus does not know this woman is a sinner, He cannot be a prophet. Since Jesus is not a prophet, I/we can reject Him, His message & ministry

Simon, like many of us, was being very logical about his thinking and his response to the Lord Jesus. The problem with logic is the same as the problem with computers: your output is only as reliable as your input. To put it differently, there was nothing wrong with Simon's logic, other than the fact that he based his conclusions on a faulty premise. His first premise-If Jesus were a prophet, He would be able to discern the character of those around Him-was correct.

Jesus, in fact, went beyond Simon's expectations. Jesus was not only able to detect the woman's character ("... her sins, which are many," v. 47), He was also able to know the thoughts of Simon, His host (v. 39). By conveying to Simon that He knew His thoughts, Jesus proved that He was at least a prophet.

Simon's second premise was entirely wrong, a reflection of his erroneous thinking as a Pharisee. Simon, like his fellow-Pharisees (remember that the word Pharisee means "separate"), assumed that holiness was primarily a matter of separation. Holiness was achieved by keeping oneself separate from sin and from sinners. According to this view, Jesus would have to shun this sinful woman in order to remain holy. Simon concluded that either (1) Jesus didn't know this woman's character, or (2) that whether or not He knew about her sinfulness, He was physically contaminated by her, and thus could not be holy.

Our Lord knew exactly what Simon was thinking, as well as why his thinking was wrong. Jesus' words to Simon in verses 40-47 expose the error of Pharisaical thinking, and explain why the "Holy One of Israel" would draw near to sinners, even to the point of touching them and being touched by them.

A Story for Simon (40-42)

The question which best expresses the issue which caused the Pharisees to draw back from Jesus is found early in the gospel accounts: "Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?" (Luke 5:30; cf. Matt. 9:11; Mark 2:16).

Simon could not conceive of Jesus knowingly allowing this woman to touch Him by washing His feet. Why would Jesus possibly associate with sinners? Jesus gave the answer by telling a story and then extracting a principle.

The story was a simple one. A money-lender loaned money to two different individuals, neither of which were able to repay their loan. The one had borrowed ten times more money than the other. The money-lender forgave the debt of both men. "Which of the two," Jesus asked Simon, "would love the money-lender more?" Simon's cautious answer was that the one who owed the most would love the man the most. Jesus confirmed the truth of his response.

Underlying it was the principle, those who are forgiven most love most.

Jesus now takes the principle and applies it to Simon and the sinful woman. Simon shunned the woman because she was a sinner, and expected Jesus to do likewise. Jesus rebukes Simon by showing that in every respect the woman has outdone Simon in her acts of love and devotion. Simon did not show Jesus even the minimum courtesy of washing His feet. This woman not only washed His feet, she did it with her tears and her hair. Simon did not bestow a kiss on Jesus' face; the woman did not cease to kiss the feet of Jesus, which, at first, were dirty feet. Simon did not anoint the head of Jesus with oil; the woman anointed His feet with expensive perfume. The woman outdid Simon in showing love to the Lord. The woman was, at least in Simon's mind, a greater sinner. The woman was, as Jesus pointed out, the greater lover as well. From both the story which Jesus told and from the supper which Simon held, the one who was forgiven more loved more.

There is a problem here, which has troubled theologians and Bible students over the years. In verse 47 it would appear that Jesus is telling the woman that she is forgiven because she loved much. It is not difficult to accept the statement that those who are forgiven much, as a result love much. It is difficult to accept the statement that those who love much are forgiven much. To love because you are forgiven is a natural response to grace. To be forgiven because you love is works. There are thus some who would teach that on the basis of this text we must love in order to be forgiven. This makes forgiveness the product of our works, rather than a gift of God's grace.

It may be over-simplistic, but I think that the problem can be resolved by taking note of who Jesus is speaking to, and the issue which He is addressing. In verse 47, Jesus is speaking to Simon the Pharisee. He is answering the question, "Why does Jesus seek out and associate with sinners?" The Lord's answer is found in His response to Simon:

"Simon, I seek out sinners and associate with them because they love me more than 'saints' like you Pharisees do."

Think about it for a moment. If God's purpose for the incarnation was to be loved by men, whom would you expect the Lord Jesus to associate with if it were true that "he who is forgiven much loves much"? If the principle is true, then we would expect our Lord to seek out those who were the greatest sinners (and in the minds of the Pharisees, this woman qualified as one of the city's great sinners).

Jesus is therefore addressing the question, "Why does Jesus seek out sinners?" rather than the question, "How is one saved?" The relationship between forgiveness and love is the basis for our Lord's actions in seeking and receiving sinners.

The body language of our Lord in verses 44-47 is most significant. All through the dinner, Jesus' back was to the woman, who was anointing and kissing His feet. He was, at the same time, facing His host, Simon. Now, once Simon's rejection of Jesus is revealed, in contrast to the woman's worship, Jesus turns His back on Simon and faces the woman, even though He is still addressing Simon (cf. v. 44). Jesus is, by His actions, rejecting Simon and accepting the sinful woman. What an incredible statement is being made here!

Jesus' Words to the Woman (7:48-50)

When Jesus speaks to the woman in the final verses of our passage, He now makes clear to her the basis for her forgiveness: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

Let there be no doubt as to the basis for one's forgiveness. It is not works. It is not the work of loving others, even God's Son. Forgiveness is the gift of God, granted to those who have faith.

The question is this: "What was it that the woman believed by faith?" If the woman's faith saved her, what was the substance of her faith? What did the woman believe that saved her? I believe that the text strongly implies the answer: the woman believed that if she came to Jesus as a repentant sinner, Jesus would not send her away.

The "bad news" of the Pharisees—"Jesus associates with sinners"—was good news to this woman, because she acknowledged that she was a sinner. The only people who will bristle at the thought that Jesus has come to seek and to save sinners are the self-righteous,

those who do not think they need saving. This woman did not dispute the fact that she was a sinner. She rejoiced at the reports that Jesus received sinners. She came to him as a sinner, believing by faith that He would not send her away—and she was right. Of all those who went to the dinner, only this woman is said to have left forgiven. Oh, the marvelous grace of God toward we sinners!

The first lesson of this incident is that Christ came to seek and to save sinners. A woman who was considered a great sinner by her peers was forgiven by our Lord, while those who thought themselves righteous went away unforgiven. There is a strange attraction to Christ for those who will admit they are sinners, and who wish to turn from their sins. Jesus is never more approachable than He is to sinners. In John's gospel we read these words of great encouragement to every sinner:

"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).

While it is true that Jesus is the sinless Son of God, who hates sin and who will ultimately judge sinners, the message of the gospel is that in His first coming Christ came to save, not to condemn. Jesus thus said to the woman caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more" (John 8:11).

This is because in His first advent, Jesus came to bear the penalty for man's sin Himself, and to save men from eternal damnation. All who come to Him for forgiveness and salvation will be saved. None will be turned away. But there is yet another coming of Christ, when He comes to judge. At that time, it will be too late. Those who come to Him then will tremble in fear of Him, and rightly so.

My admonition to you who have never come to Christ as this woman did is that you come now. Come, trusting that He will receive you, that He will forgive you, that He will save. No one is more accessible to sinners than Christ. No one is more repulsive to the self-righteous than Christ. May each of us be like this woman, rather than like Simon the Pharisee.

The second lesson which we can learn from our text is to recognize the characteristics of self-righteousness as evident in the life of Simon

the Pharisee. I cannot dwell on the evils of Pharisaism here, so suffice it to mention just a couple of characteristics of Simon which are evident in our text, which could be true of us as well. Simon was more interested in passing judgment on God than he was on God's judgment of him. Simon felt that his home would be more righteous by keeping sinners, like this woman, out, than by inviting sinners in. Many churches feel the same way. Simon was inclined to see some sins as greater than others in the eyes of God. Sexual sin was unforgivable, but pride was acceptable.

Simon thought of religion as something to be preserved; Jesus thought of true religion in terms of penetration. Simon wanted to keep sinners out, Jesus went out to sinners. Some of Simon's error is the failure to grasp the change from the old covenant to the new. The Old Testament dealt with sin as incurable, and thus the principle defense was simply to avoid contact with sin and sinners. The new covenant came with a solution for sin. The new covenant could change hard hearts to soft ones. Thus, Jesus did not feel compelled to deal with sinners the way the Old Testament taught—seek to destroy or to avoid them.

The Pharisee looked at sin something like the way we look at AIDS. It has no cure, and thus the best course of action is to avoid any and all contact. But, you see, the gospel teaches that Jesus is the cure for sin. Thus, Jesus did not need to avoid sinners, He could seek them out, just as we could aggressively attack AIDS if there was a foolproof cure.

Somehow Simon and the other Pharisees of the New Testament found it difficult to be "touched" by those they would not touch. In all of the New Testament I fail to see one incident in which a Pharisee was touched by the misery, the sin, the shame, the grief of another human being. It is little wonder that the Old Testament prophets had to speak so often about mercy and compassion. I see none of it in the Pharisees in the gospel accounts. To have compassion obligates one to minister to others. To lack compassion allows one to use others for one's own personal gain, at their expense. Jesus, who did not hesitate to touch or be touched by sinners, was constantly "touched" (emotionally) by them. May we be like Him.

The painful reality is that our churches often reflect the mood of Simon's house than they do of Jesus Himself. We ought to welcome sinners, if they acknowledge themselves as sinners, and if they seek to be saved from their sins. All too often, sinners are shunned by the church, more than they are sought by it. May we learn from our Lord to be more like Him and less like Simon.

Lastly, we learn a great deal about worship from this woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears. It is true that we do not have the opportunity to wash the feet of Jesus, as the woman in our text did, but we can learn a number of principles pertaining to worship from her actions.

Chapter 9

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

A certain seminary conducted a study with their student body. They asked each of the students to prepare a message on the “Good Samaritan” for a radio broadcast. The seminary then arranged for a man to feign a heart attack on the sidewalk in front of the students, as they were on their way to preach the sermon. In every instance the seminary student stepped around the “dying” victim to hasten on to deliver his sermon on the “Good Samaritan.”

Background

The story of the Good Samaritan is told by our Lord. It is meant to be understood in the context of what has already been said in Luke chapter 10. You may remember that in praising the Father, Jesus has just said:

“I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent [the scholars] and didst reveal them to babes” (Luke 10:21b).

In the story of the Good Samaritan, it is the scholars- the “wise and intelligent”-who are exposed for what they are (or are not). It will become clear that “these things”- the gospel, the truths of the kingdom of God-

are hidden from them. The Samaritan is no scholar at all, but he is the hero of our text. What is the difference between “Samaritans” and “scholars,” in our text, so that the good Samaritan is really “good,” while the religious scholars of our Lord’s day are not? The story of the Good Samaritan helps us to see the difference.

Our text has two basic structural divisions, each of which is prompted by a question. The first part of the story is in answer to the question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The second part deals the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

These are the two major divisions then: (1) “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (verses 25-28), and (2) “Who is my neighbor?” (verses 29-37). We shall ponder the answer to these two questions in our study of this text.

The First Question

Let us look then at the first question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The man who comes to Jesus is a lawyer. He is not the kind of lawyer who goes to court with us for a traffic ticket or to bail someone out of jail. This “lawyer” is an expert in the Old Testament law, in particular, the Law of Moses, which is contained in the first five books of the Bible. We might say that this person is an Old Testament scholar, specializing in the Law of Moses. This term “lawyer” is not used very frequently in the Bible. We find it only in the Gospels, in Luke 10 and Matthew 22:35.

Our text tells us that this “lawyer” comes to our Lord, asking this question to put Jesus to the test. It is a hypocritical question, because he appears to be a seeker, but he is not. He is not really seeking to be taught by Jesus, nor is he interested in finding the way to eternal life. He believes he understands all these things. He does not believe that Jesus, an uneducated man (so far as Judaism viewed Him-see John 1:46; 7:44-49; Acts 4:13), could possibly teach him anything. He feigns respect for Jesus as a teacher of the law, but he is only seeking to test Jesus by questioning Him so that he can then say, “Your teaching is not consistent with the law.” When the lawyer asks, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life,” this phraseology is not that of the Old Testament. The Old Testament law says, “Do this and live.” The lawyer is using Jesus’ terminology, and is asking, “What is the essence of your teaching?” He wants to take the bottom line of Jesus’ system

and compare it with the bottom line of Judaism so that he can then say, “Your system is wrong.” That is his intention.

The lawyer’s question implies that he does not expect Jesus to respond with a sequence of acts, but rather with one decisive act. Much like the rich young ruler in the Gospel of Matthew, he seems to be saying, “What good thing must I do in order to have eternal life?” Notice now how Jesus responds to this man’s question. First of all, Jesus does not relinquish His claim to authority. Jesus does not respond with the kind of false humility that says, “Well, of course, you’re the scholar.” He says to the scholar, “You have answered correctly,” retaining His authority and dealing with him as the student and He the teacher. Jesus would not pretend to be other than Who He was—the Messiah. Our Lord is the Master; this man is not, even though he is commonly regarded as a scholar. So what does Jesus immediately do? He does not answer his question. I must tell you that this is the great temptation for anybody who is a teacher: Don’t just stand there, teach something. Do you notice that Jesus restrains Himself from giving the man an answer and instead says, “You know the law, how does it read to you?”

It is surprising that Jesus asks the lawyer what the law teaches, because when we come to the Gospels we come from the perspective of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus often says, “You have heard it said, but I say to you...” In other words, “Here is what Judaism teaches about the law, but here is what the law really means.” I come, therefore, expecting that Judaism is wrong when it teaches the law, but it is not always wrong. You may remember what Jesus says in Matthew 23 (which is not a bad commentary on this individual in particular or on Judaism in general). Matthew 23:1-2 is part of our Lord’s criticism of the Jewish religious leaders: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.” Had the lawyer in our text not “seated himself in the chair of Moses?” That is, had he not come to Jesus as the one in authority, who had the right to teach others the meaning of what Moses wrote? That is why we are told that he is a lawyer; he is an Old Testament scholar and thus a teacher of the law. One would expect Jesus to say, “Don’t listen to anything they say; they’re wrong”. But He says, “Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them” (Matthew 23:3).

Is this not an amazing thing to hear from our Lord? He is saying, “Their teaching is not wrong, but their practice is wrong because it is hypocritical. Listen to what they say; do what they say, but don’t do what they do because they are hypocrites. They say one thing, and they do something else.” Therefore, Jesus is willing to say to the lawyer in our text, “How does the law read to you? You tell me.” We see this elsewhere in the Gospels when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus and asks, “What shall I do... ?” When another lawyer asks Jesus, “What is the great commandment,” Jesus tells him the answer. In our text, when the lawyer asks the question, Jesus says, “You tell Me the answer.” (What is interesting is that both answers are virtually the same.) Jesus refrains from giving an answer to his question. Instead, He asks a question, and the lawyer responds. His answer to our Lord’s question draws together two of the great Old Testament texts: (1) “loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,” a citation of Deuteronomy 6:5; and, (2) a citation from Leviticus 19:18: “You are to love your neighbor as yourself.”

The answer the lawyer gives Jesus is absolutely correct, and it is also identical with the answer our Lord gave when He was asked a similar question. There is no difference of opinion about what the law teaches in terms of the essence of the law. Jesus asks the question; the man gives the answer. Jesus then responds, “Good answer; now do it. If you really want to know the answer to the question, ‘How does a man attain (that is, earn) eternal life,’ the law says, ‘Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, and do it habitually.’”

Our Lord’s reply, “Do this and you will live,” is a quotation from Scripture as well. Unfortunately, the New International Version does not indicate this, but you will notice the capital letters in the New American Standard Version, which indicate that it is a citation from Leviticus 18:5. The answer of the law is, “If you would attain to eternal life by the keeping of the law, then keep the law. Do it and live. Keep on doing it and live.”

The words of the law, cited by the lawyer, go even further. They not only require that one keep the law; they require that one keep the whole law perfectly. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. You must not only love your neighbour, you must

love him as yourself. The law must be kept, all of it, without any omissions or failures. In other words, in order to be justified under the law, one must be perfect. This is certainly not what this lawyer wanted to hear. If the lawyer believed that Jesus was making eternal life too easy, by requiring only one thing, he just fell into the trap of saying (by the words he quoted) that his system made eternal life impossible, for no one could possibly keep the whole law perfectly. And this is exactly what the law required. Listen to what the apostle Paul writes on this point:

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them (Galatians 3:10).

It is at this point that our expert in the law becomes downright uneasy. Here is where beads of sweat must have started to form on his brow. Jesus has not yet told this man anything new. He simply asks the man how he reads the law, and the man reads the law exactly as Jesus does. Then Jesus says, “All right, you know what the law says; do it.” This is where it gets uncomfortable for us too, isn’t it? The law commands us to do what we cannot and persistently do not do. If you want to be saved by your works, by law keeping, then you must be saved by keeping the whole law; not most of the time, but all of the time; not in most of its commands, but in all of its commands. This is when beads of sweat should begin to form on all of our brows as well.

It is very important that we understand this: Jesus is not teaching works as a means of salvation here; He is actually teaching that doing good works (law keeping) cannot save anyone, because no one can keep the law perfectly. This man asks the question, “How can I be saved?” Jesus answers, “You tell Me, according to the law.” He responds, “One can be saved by perfectly and persistently obeying the whole law, with one’s whole heart, soul, mind and strength.” The lawyer is now on the spot. The system he is seeking to defend, is a system that cannot save anyone. In seeking to condemn Jesus, the lawyer has just condemned himself and the whole world.

The Second Question

Our lawyer tried to put Jesus on the defensive, to force Him to justify Himself. And now, suddenly and unexpectedly, it is the lawyer

who is on the spot. He now feels obligated to justify himself. And he attempts to do this by asking Jesus a second question. Some people never learn! Our text says, “trying to justify himself, he asked, “Who is my neighbor?”

The passage which the lawyer just quoted says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” You’d think this guy would be real uneasy about his ability to do this, but instead he seems more worried about the command to love his neighbor. Why? My theory (which is only theory) is that it is difficult to test one’s love for God. How do you assess one’s attitudes, one’s devotion, one’s meditation, one’s relationship with God? You can’t. But if you want to find some way to measure one’s love for God, you can look at his love for his neighbor. Isn’t that what the Book of James is saying to us (and 1 John too)? James says that a man who professes that he has faith and yet doesn’t show love for his neighbor is a man with a false profession. I find it interesting that the title of one of Chuck Colson’s books is *Loving God*, but the subject matter of that book is about loving man. When you read this book, you find that the love men have for God is expressed by their love for their fellow man. I suspect that the reason this lawyer is so uneasy about the command to love his neighbor is because he knows his love for his neighbor is deficient.

The lawyer of the Old Testament law now begins to do what some lawyers do so well—look for a technicality in the law itself. He is seeking to find some excuse from the law that gets him off the hook. He goes into his scholarly mode, as it were, and asks this very deep theological question, “And who is my neighbour?” I love what Jesus does, or rather, what He does not do. Jesus does not say, “Oh, that is a profound question.” He does not pull out His Hebrew lexicon (dictionary) and say, “Oh, that’s a very interesting Hebrew word.” Preachers sometimes appeal to the more technical elements of the original languages in which the Bible was written, but Jesus does not do this.

Neither will Jesus allow Himself to be drawn into a debate with this lawyer. (How fortunate for the lawyer!) Jesus could have argued with this lawyer, and won! Let’s play out a possible argument for just a moment. If on the surface, you ask the question, “And who is my neighbor,” what would the answer be? We know what the Jewish

answer was: “My neighbor is my fellow Israelite.” There is a way in which this looks like the right answer. Look with me at Leviticus 19:18, the command to love your neighbor as yourself. I want you to look at this verse for a moment:

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).

Now answer this question on the basis of this verse alone, “Who is my neighbour?” Do you know his answer? The Jew would say, “One of my fellow Jews.”

On the surface, it looks like the inquisitive lawyer is safe on the basis of this verse alone. But let’s look further than this one verse. Here is where Jesus could really take this lawyer apart, and it is amazing that He doesn’t. First, we are told elsewhere in the law (in the study of which this man is regarded as a scholar) that God loves the alien; that is, God loves the non-Israelite (Deuteronomy 10:18). God defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and He loves the alien. God loves the non-Israelite as well as the Israelite. In the Jewish mind, the law belonged to the Jews and no one else. God says, “The law applies equally to Jews and non-Jews, and you’d better not interpret it differently.” Look at these verses with me.

“You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 24:22). There are not two sets of laws, one for Israelites and one for the Gentiles: “The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the Lord.” 16 The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you (Numbers 15:15,16, NIV).

And I charged your judges at that time, [These are the men who apply the laws.] “Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien” (Deuteronomy 1:16, NIV).

If I were to ask you the question, “Does the Old Testament teach that there is one set of laws for the Jews, and another set of laws for the Gentiles?” I would hope you knew that the answer is, “No!” The clincher text is in Leviticus 19:34 right down the road from Leviticus

19:18: “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34a, NIV).

1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NASB)

Wouldn’t you love to have been in a debate with this lawyer, sitting there casually with your hands in your pockets, and then to turn and ask him, “Haven’t you read the law?” Oh, what a delight it would have been! He’s absolutely wrong, and Jesus knew it better than any of us. But Jesus doesn’t take this man apart, even though it would have been easy for Him to do so. Jesus simply responds to the lawyer’s second question by telling a story, the story of the Good Samaritan.

What Our Text Does and Does Not Say

Let us take note of what our text does not say, and then consider what it says. In this story, we can be tempted to assume things that are not said. For example, Jesus says, “A man was going down from Jerusalem” (The New American Standard Version says, “A certain man was going down from Jerusalem.”). While Jesus makes it clear that the two travelers (the priest and the Levite) are Jewish, and that the hero is a Samaritan, we are not told the racial origins of the victim. The reason is simple-it doesn’t matter. And if it mattered to the first two travelers, it should not matter to us. The only thing that matters about that man is the one thing we are told about him-that he is badly hurt and in need of help! The man had been mugged. Robbers overtook him, beating him badly and stripping him of his clothes, and then leaving him lying by the road, half-dead. This man needed help, badly. That’s what matters; and that’s what the text tells us. It isn’t matter whether it is a Jew who needs help or a Gentile. There is a human being lying by the road, who is seriously wounded and who desperately needs help.

We are told that two of Judaism’s finest specimens come upon the injured man as they make their way along the same road. These two men seem to be there by chance (see verses 31 & 32). This

means they did not have any pressing business, which might have hindered them from stopping to render aid. These two men—the priest and the Levite—belonged to an elite Jewish class; both of them were religious professionals. In today’s vocabulary, we might say that one was a prominent pastor and the other a well-known televangelist. If anybody was expected to carry out the Old Testament law, it would be these men.

The priest came upon the injured victim first. He could see the man lying by the side of the road as he approached. Rather than to get involved, the priest deliberately walked on the other side of the road, so as not to get too close to the battered victim. I suspect that the priest carefully focused his eyes straight ahead or in the opposite direction of the injured man, so that he would not see his suffering. He did not check to see if the man was alive or dead. He did not ask the man if he needed help. He did nothing that would enlighten him about this man’s condition, and thus his need. For this priest, ignorance was indeed bliss.

The Levite was no different than the priest. He came upon the injured man some time after the priest. His actions were a virtual replay of the scene with the priest. He passed by the suffering traveler on the other side, so that he would not feel obligated to do anything to help him. If the priest and the Levite felt any emotion at the sight of this man, it was probably revulsion at the sight of his injuries and deplorable condition.

The critical difference between the Samaritan, the priest, and the Levite is their compassion, or lack of it. So far as the attitude of the three travelers toward this man and his condition this is the only difference the text indicates. The text tells us that the priest comes along and says (so to speak), “Yuk!” and he turns away. The text says virtually the same thing about the Levite. He comes along; he looks briefly, and then he turns aside. He doesn’t get too close. He doesn’t say, “Are you still alive?” He doesn’t listen for a heartbeat, or try to get a pulse. He doesn’t say, “I’ll send an ambulance.” He does not say, “I’d like to help you, but if I touch you, I may be ceremonially defiled.” He looks, and he says to himself, “How disgusting,” and he walks away. It is the opposite of compassion. It is repulsion. He doesn’t want to know any more about this man.

Have you ever seen somebody back into a car, hear the crunch and feel the cars bump, and then not even get out of their car to see what damage they might have done? They don’t want to know, because if they see the damage, they will feel more responsible for it. So they put their car in drive and move on. That is exactly what these two men do. They do not look; they do not know the extent of the need. All they see is a tragedy and a need, and that is enough to turn their stomachs and their heads. They go all the way around this man to avoid seeing, much less doing, anything about his need.

The Samaritan Comes on the Scene

At this point in the story, the Samaritan comes upon the same scene. Before we consider his response to the injured traveler, we need to review a little concerning the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. When the Assyrians defeated Israel, they dispersed the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom among the Gentile nations. They also brought foreigners into the land of Israel to repopulate the land. The result was a half-breed race (half Jewish, half Gentile) that populated the Northern Kingdom of Israel from then on. When the Babylonians took the southern kingdom of Judah captive, they did not intermingle the races but kept the Jews separate, and so “pure” Jews returned to Judah. The “Jews” of Judah came to disdain the half-breed Samaritans, and not without reason, since the Samaritans gave those who returned from their Babylonian captivity much grief and opposition as they attempted to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, its walls, and the temple (see Ezra 4:10, 17; Nehemiah 4:2).

That same hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans is very evident in the New Testament. Perhaps the most enlightening text is found in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John. When Jesus (deliberately) passed through Samaria, He became thirsty and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. The woman was surprised and asked Jesus why He, a Jew, would ask her, a Samaritan, for a drink, since Jews and Samaritans did not associate with each other. This woman went on to discuss with Jesus some of the theological differences between the Jews and the Samaritans, but Jesus would not allow her to sidetrack Him from His presentation of the heart of the Gospel. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 9, we read that the Lord’s

disciples went ahead of Jesus, into a Samaritan village, to make arrangements for the Lord's arrival. When the Samaritans learned that Jesus was headed for Jerusalem, they would not allow Him to enter their village, and so the disciples asked Jesus for permission to call down fire from heaven to destroy the place, but were forbidden and rebuked by Him (9:51-55).

You can imagine the response of the Jewish lawyer, when Jesus introduces the Good Samaritan into his story. Two Jews, holding the most esteemed religious positions in Israel, have deliberately ignored the needs of a helpless, half-dead robbery victim. Rather than to help him they simply chose to look the other way. And now, approaching the same crime scene, comes a Samaritan, the lowest possible rung on the Jewish social ladder. This Samaritan, unlike the priest and the Levite, has a reason for his journey. He is on a trip. If anyone could excuse himself from getting involved, it was this Samaritan. But when he saw the man lying by the road, he reacted in a very different manner. The Samaritan, unlike the two religious Jews, felt compassion for the victim (verse 33).

He drew near to the victim, rather than to veer to the far side of the road. He treated the man's wounds and bandaged him. The Samaritan does not seem to have had a first aid kit in his saddle bag; rather the wine, the oil, and perhaps even the cloth he used to bind the wounds came from his own food supplies and clothing. He placed the wounded man on his own mount, and brought him to an inn, where he spent the night caring for the man. The Samaritan had to continue his journey, but he did not let this keep him from providing care for the injured traveler. He paid for the victim's room in advance, and saw to it that the innkeeper looked in on the recovering victim. He promised to return, and to fully reimburse the innkeeper for any additional expenses. There is nothing more the Samaritan could have done to minister to the man on whom he had compassion.

Jesus Concludes His Story

At the conclusion of His story Jesus asks the Jewish lawyer a final question: "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" The lawyer really chokes on his words here. He cannot find it in himself to even pronounce the word "Samaritan," and so he answers, "The one who showed mercy toward him."

Twice now, Jesus has been asked a question by the lawyer. Twice, Jesus asked the lawyer a question in response. And twice, Jesus then responded to the lawyer's answer by telling him to "do" that which he had just said. The lawyer asked Jesus what one must do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus asked him what the law required, the lawyer responded with the two-fold command to love God and to love one's neighbour. Our Lord then told the lawyer to do this. When the lawyer asked Jesus who his neighbor was, Jesus told this story of the Good Samaritan, and then asked the lawyer to identify who was a neighbor to the man in need. And when the lawyer reluctantly identified the Samaritan as the "good neighbour," the Lord told the lawyer to imitate the Samaritan.

Why does Jesus twice tell this lawyer to "do" something in order to "inherit eternal life"? Why would Jesus tell a man to do something when He Himself taught that a man cannot be saved by his works? Here is the answer: because he is talking to a man who believes and teaches that a person is saved by his works, by his law keeping. If law keeping is the way to eternal life, no wonder this man is a lawyer! Jesus tells this man, "Do what the law requires and live," because he has really asked Jesus this question: "Based upon the law, what shall I do to have eternal life?" The answer of our Lord is this: "You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." Now we see why Jesus doesn't go any farther with this man than he does; it is because this man first has to see the inadequacy of the law keeping system he embraces as the only means to obtaining eternal life. This man will not turn to Christ as the Messiah until he first turns from his dependence on law keeping to save him.

When a man like our lawyer friend in this text reaches this point, he has a fundamental decision to make: (1) Because he is condemned by the law, he must look for justification before God in some other way than keeping the law; or, (2) He must attempt to avoid being condemned by the law by finding (or creating) some technicality, which appears to get him off the hook. No wonder this man had become an expert in the law.

Chapter 10

The Rich Fool (12:13-21)

In chapter 12 of Luke we have divers excellent discourses of our Saviour upon various occasions, many of which are to the same purport with what we had in Matthew upon other the like occasions; for we may suppose that our Lord Jesus preached the same doctrines, and pressed the same duties, at several times, in several companies, and that one of the evangelists took them as he delivered them at one time and another at another time; and we need thus to have precept upon precept, line upon line. Here,

- * Christ warns his disciples to take heed of hypocrisy, and of cowardice in professing Christianity and preaching the gospel (v. 1-12).
- * He gives a caution against covetousness, upon occasion of a covetous motion made to him, and illustrates that caution by a parable of a rich man suddenly cut off by death in the midst of his worldly projects and hopes (v. 13-21).
- * He encourages his disciples to cast all their care upon God, and to live easy in a dependence upon his providence, and exhorts them to make religion their main business (v. 22-34).

- * He stirs them up to watchfulness for their Master's coming, from the consideration of the reward of those who are then found faithful, and the punishment of those who are found unfaithful (v. 35-48). V. He bids them expect trouble and persecution (v. 49-53).
- * He warns the people to observe and improve the day of their opportunities and to make their peace with God in time (v. 54-59).

Verses 13-21 We have in these verses, I. The application that was made to Christ, very unseasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose between him and his brother in a matter that concerned the estate of the family (v. 13): "Master, speak to my brother; speak as a prophet, speak as a king, speak with authority; he is one that will have regard to what thou sayest; speak to him, that he divide the inheritance with me." Now, 1. Some think that his brother did him wrong, and that he appealed to Christ to right him, because he knew the law was costly. His brother was such a one as the Jews called Ben-hamesen -a son of violence, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all either of natural equity or natural affection, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so wronged have God to go to, who will execute judgment and justice for those that are oppressed.

2. Others think that he had a mind to do his brother wrong, and would have Christ to assist him; that, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule (Deut, 21:16, 17), he would have Christ to alter that law, and oblige his brother, who perhaps was a follower of Christ at large, to divide the inheritance equally with him, in gavel-kind, share and share alike, and to allot him as much as his elder brother. we may suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against covetousness, pleonexia -a desire of having more, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a sinful desire of getting more than his own.II. Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter (v. 14): Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? In matters of this nature, Christ will not assume either a legislative power to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a judicial power to determine controversies concerning them. He could

have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission: Who made me a judge? Probably he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, with which Stephen upbraided the Jews, Acts. 7:27, Acts. 7:35. "If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, Who made thee a judge or a divider?" He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal (it was coram non iudice-not before the proper judge), and so dismisses his bill.

If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuit of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do: Who made me a judge? Note, Jesus Christ was no usurper; he took no honour, no power, to himself, but what was given him, Heb. 5:5. Whatever he did, he could tell by what authority he did it, and who gave him that authority. Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world. It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power.

It does not intermeddle with civil rights; it obliges all to do justly, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not founded in grace. It does not encourage our expectations of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that in consideration of this Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature. It does not encourage our contests with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather, for peace' sake, to recede from our right. It does not allow ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4), to leave the word of God to serve tables. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, Tractent fabrilia fabri -Each workman to his proper craft. The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from this to give to his hearers.

Though he came not to be a divider of men's estates, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harbouring that corrupt principle which they saw to be in others the root of so much evil. Here is, 1. The caution itself

(v. 15): Take heed and beware of covetousness; horate - "Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them; and phylassesthe-preserve yourselves, keep a strict band upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them." Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against. 2. The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution: For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; that is, "our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world."

1. The life of the soul, undoubtedly, does not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last so long as it will last. Nay,

2. Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an abundance of these things; for many live very contentedly and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it (a dinner of herbs with holy love is better than a feast of fat things); and, on the other hand, many live very miserably who have a great deal of the things of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they bereave their souls of good, Eccl. 4:8. Many who have abundance are discontented and fretful, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good does their abundance do them?

2. The illustration of this by a parable, the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul and another world, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to take heed of covetousness. The parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man.

1. Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance (v. 16): The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, chora - regio - the country. He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is

served by the field, Eccl. 5:9 . He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us.

2. Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, v. 17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for it. He is both a discernor and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are hid and thoughts are free. Let us here observe, What his cares and concerns were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. What shall I do now? The poorest beggar in the country, that did not know where to get a meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance.

The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have and to add to it, how to spare and how to spend; so that even the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep, for thinking what they shall do with what they have and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, What shall I do? And if you ask, Why, what is the matter? Truly he had abundance of wealth, and wants a place to put it in, that is all. What his projects and purposes were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish like them (v. 18): "This will I do, and it is the wisest course I can take, I will pull down my barns, for they are too little, and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and then I shall be at case." Now here,

First, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground his fruits and his goods. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that,

my fruits and my goods; whereas what we have is but lent us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is my corn (saith God) and my wine, Hos. 2:8, Hos. 2:9.

Secondly, It was folly for him to hoard up what he had, and then to think it well bestowed. There will I bestow it all; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn.

Thirdly, It was folly for him to let his mind rise with his condition; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty, as they did in Egypt; and therefore it were better to stack some of his corn for this once.

Fourthly, It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; those know this who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care is certainly successful, but the way of the world does but increase it. Besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that would still attend him; the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, Eccl. 5:10.

Fifthly, It was folly for him to contrive and resolve all this absolutely and without reserve. This I will do: I will pull down my barns and will build greater, yea, that I will; without so much as that necessary proviso, If the Lord will, I shall live, Jam. 4:13-15. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow. What his pleasing hopes and expectations were, when he should have made good these projects. "Then I will say to my soul, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, Soul, mark what I say, thou hast much goods laid up for many years in these barns; now take thine ease, enjoy thyself, eat, drink, and be merry," v. 19. Here also appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it.

First, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them (which will be a work of time), then he will take his ease; and might he not as well have done that now? Grotius here quotes the story of Pyrrhus, who was projecting to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places, in the prosecution of his victories. Well, says his friend Cyneas, and what must we do then? *Postea vivemus*, says he, Then we will live; *At hoc jam licet*, says Cyneas, We may live now if we please.

Secondly, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years, as if his bigger barns would be safer than those he had; whereas in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground and all that was laid up in them, perhaps by lightning, against which there is no defence. A few years may make a great change; moth and rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal.

Thirdly, It was folly for him to count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of their greatest abundance. One dead fly may spoil a whole pot of precious ointment; and one thorn a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world.

Fourthly, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to eat and drink, and to be merry; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and being put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation: as if we lived to eat, and did not eat to live, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasure ableness.

Fifthly, It was the greatest folly of all to say all this to his soul. if he had said, Body, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up for many years, there had been sense in it; but the soul, considered as an immortal spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn or a bag full of gold. If he had had the soul of a swine, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of eating

and drinking; but what is this to the soul of a man, that has exigencies and desires which these things will be no ways suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense.

Judgment

Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. He said to himself, said to his soul, Take thine ease. If God had said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses with the spirit of believers to make them easy. But God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 1 Co. 4:3, 1 Co. 4:4. His neighbours blessed him (Ps. 10:3), praised him as doing well for himself (Ps. 49:18); but God said he did ill for himself: *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, v. 20. God said to him, that is, decreed this concerning him, and let him know it, either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was in the fulness of his sufficiency (Job. 20:22), when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to answer the end, but by pulling them down and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought it to an issue, and then lulled himself asleep again with a pleasing dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said, The character he gave him: *Thou fool, thou Nabal*, alluding to the story of Nabal, that fool (Nabal is his name, and folly is with him) whose heart was struck dead as a stone while he was regaling himself in the abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, *Thou fool*, and they will call themselves so. The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee*; they shall require thy soul (so the words are), and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? He thought he had goods that should be his for many years, but he must part from them this night; he thought he should enjoy

them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

First, It is a force, an arrest; it is the requiring of the soul, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who canst use it no better? Thy soul shall be required; this intimates that he is loth to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has it torn from him with violence; it is a terror to him to think of leaving this world. They shall require thy soul. God shall require it; he shall require an account of it. "Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul. Give an account of that stewardship." They shall; that is, evil angels as the messengers of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall require it as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires thy soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

Secondly, It is a surprize, an unexpected force. It is in the night, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man; it is his morning. But it is night to a worldling, a dark night; he lies down in sorrow. It is this night, this present night, without delay; there is no giving bail, or begging a day. This pleasant night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment. Thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast; but, in the midst of all, here is an end of all, Isa. 21:4 .

Thirdly, It is the leaving of all those things behind which they have provided, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. Their pomp shall not descend after them (Ps. 49:17), but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit at all by what they have hoarded up either in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

Fourthly, It is leaving them to they know not who: "Then whose shall those things be? Not thine to be sure, and thou knowest not

what they will prove for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will bewise or fools (Eccl. 2:18, Eccl. 2:19), whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or a blemish, do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it or spend it; nay, thou knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may be turned to somebody else thou little thinkest of; nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, or into whose hand it will come at last." If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it than beautified it.

Fifthly, It is a demonstration of his folly. Carnal worldlings are fools while they live: this their way is their folly (Ps. 49:13); but their folly is made most evident when they die: at his end he shall be a fool (Jer. 17:11); for then it will appear that he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to.

Lastly, Here is the application of this parable (v. 21): So is he, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. This is the way and this is the end of such a man. Observe here, 1. The description of a worldly man: He lays up treasure for himself, for the body, for the world, for himself in opposition to God, for that self that is to be denied.

- * It is his error that he counts his flesh himself, as if the body were the man. If self be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true Christian that lays up treasure for himself, and is wise for himself, Prov. 9:12 .
- * It is his error that he makes it his business to lay up for the flesh, which he calls laying up for himself. All his labour is for his mouth (Eccl. 6:7), making provision for the flesh.
- * It is his error that he counts those things his treasure which are thus laid up for the world, and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections toward.

* The greatest error of all is that he is in no care to be rich towards God, rich in the account of God, whose accounting us rich makes us so (Rev. 2:9), rich in the things of God, rich in faith (Jam. 2:5), rich in good works, in the fruits of righteousness (1 Tim. 6:18), rich in graces, and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich towards God, rich for eternity. The folly and misery of a worldly man: So is he. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men to mind and pursue the wealth of this world more than the wealth of the other world, that which is merely for the body and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

Chapter 11

Divine Providence (12:22-40)

Our Lord Jesus is inculcating some needful useful lessons upon his disciples in Lk 12:22-40 which he had before taught them, and had occasion afterwards to press upon them; for they need to have precept upon precept, and line upon line: “Therefore, because there are so many that are ruined by covetousness, and an inordinate affection to the wealth of this world, I say unto you, my disciples, take heed of it.” Thou, O man of God, flee these things, as well as thou, O man of the world, 1 Tim. 6:11.

He charges them not to afflict themselves with disquieting perplexing cares about the necessary supports of life: Take no thought for your life, v. 22. In the foregoing parable he had given us warning against that branch of covetousness of which rich people are most in danger; and that is, a sensual complacency in the abundance of this world’s goods. Now his disciples might think they were in no danger of this, for they had no plenty or variety to glory in; and therefore he here warns them against another branch of covetousness, which they are most in temptation to that have but a

little of this world, which was the case of the disciples at best and much more now that they had left all to follow Christ, and that was, an anxious solicitude about the necessary supports of life: "Take no thought for your life, either for the preservation of it, if it be in danger, or for the provision that is to be made for it, either of food or clothing, what ye shall eat or what ye shall put on." This is the caution he had largely insisted upon, Mt. 6:25, etc.; and the arguments here used are much the same, designed for our encouragement to cast all our care upon God, which is the right way to ease ourselves of it. Consider then,

1. God, who has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the less. He has, without any care or forecast of our own, given us life and a body, and therefore we may cheerfully leave it to him to provide meat for the support of that life, and raiment for the defence of that body.

2. God, who provides for the inferior creatures, may be depended upon to provide for good Christians. "Trust God for meat, for he feeds the ravens (v. 24); they neither sow nor reap, they take neither care nor pains beforehand to provide for themselves, and yet they are fed, and never perish for want. Now consider how much better ye are than the fowls, than the ravens. Trust God for clothing, for he clothes the lilies (v. 27, v. 28); they make no preparation for their own clothing, they toil not, they spin not, the root in the ground is a naked thing, and without ornament, and yet, as the flower grows up, it appears wonderfully beautified. Now, if God has so clothed the flowers, which are fading perishing things, shall he not much more clothe you with such clothing as is fit for you, and with clothing suited to your nature, as theirs is?" When God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness, he also took care for their clothing; for though he did not furnish them with new clothes, yet (which came all to one) he provided that those they had should not wax old upon them, Deu. 8:4. Thus will he clothe his spiritual Israel; but then let them not be of little faith. Note, Our inordinate cares are owing to the weakness of our faith; for a powerful practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us as a Father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of these disquieting perplexing imaginations.

3. Our cares are fruitless, vain, and insignificant, and therefore it is folly to indulge them. They will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our repose (v. 25): "Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit, or one inch, can add to his age one year or one hour? Now if ye be not able to do that which is least, if it be not in your power to alter your statures, why should you perplex yourselves about other things, which are as much out of your power, and about which it is necessary that we refer ourselves to the providence of God?" Note, As in our stature, so in our state, it is our wisdom to take it as it is, and make the best of it; for fretting and vexing, carping and caring, will not mend it.

4. An inordinate anxious pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, very ill becomes the disciples of Christ (v. 29, v. 30): "Whatever others do, seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; do not you afflict yourselves with perplexing cares, nor weary yourselves with constant toils; do not hurry hither and thither with enquiries what you shall eat or drink, as David's enemies, that wandered up and down for meat (Ps. 59:15), or as the eagle that seeks the prey afar off, Job. 39:29. Let not the disciples of Christ thus seek their food, but ask it of God day by day; let them not be of doubtful mind; be not as meteors in the air, that are blown hither and thither with every wind; do not, like them, rise and fall, but maintain a consistency with yourselves; be even and steady, and have your hearts fixed; live not in careful suspense; let not your minds be continually perplexed between hope and fear, ever upon the rack." Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy; for

(1) This is to make themselves like the children of this world: "All these things do the nations of the world seek after, v. 30. They that take care for the body only, and not for the soul, for this world only, and not for the other, look no further than what they shall eat and drink; and, having no all-sufficient God to seek to and confide in, they burden themselves with anxious cares about those things. But it ill becomes you to do so. You, who are called out of the world, ought not to be thus conformed to the world, and to walk in the way of this people," Isa. 8:11, Isa. 8:12. When inordinate cares prevail over us, we should think, "What am I, a Christian or a heathen? Baptized or not baptized? If a Christian, if

baptized, shall I rank myself with Gentiles, and join with them in their pursuits?"

- (2) It is needless for them to disquiet themselves with care about the necessary supports of life; for they have a Father in heaven who does and will take care for them: "Your Father knows that you have need of these things, and considers it, and will supply your needs according to his riches in glory; for he is your Father, who made you subject to these necessities, and therefore will suit his compassions to them: your Father, who maintains you, educates you, and designs an inheritance for you, and therefore will take care that you want no good thing."
- (3) They have better things to mind and pursue (v. 31): "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and mind this, you, my disciples, who are to preach the kingdom of God; let your hearts be upon your work, and your great care how to do that well, and this will effectually divert your thoughts from inordinate care about things of the world. And let all that have souls to save seek the kingdom of God, in which only they can be safe. Seek admission into it, seek advancement in it; seek the kingdom of grace, to be subjects in that; the kingdom of glory, to be princes in that; and then all these things shall be added to you. Mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs."
- (4) They have better things to expect and hope for: Fear not, little flock, v. 32. For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed. When we frighten ourselves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination. Therefore fear not, little flock, but hope to the end; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This comfortable word we had not in Matthew. Note,
- * Christ's flock in this world is a little flock; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard, a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel (1Ki. 20:27), who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country.

- * Though it be a little flock, quite over-numbered, and therefore in danger of being overpowered, by its enemies, yet it is the will of Christ that they should not be afraid: "Fear not, little flock, but see yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy."
- * God has a kingdom in store for all that belong to Christ's little flock, a crown of glory (1 Pt. 5:4), a throne of power (Rev. 3:21), unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. The sheep on the right hand are called to come and inherit the kingdom; it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each.

Kingdom is Given by the Father

The kingdom is given according to the good pleasure of the Father; It is your Father's good pleasure; it is given not of debt, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace; even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee. The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own? [5.] The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. "Fear no trouble; for, though it should come, it shall not come between you and the kingdom, that is sure, it is near." (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of which cannot separate us from the love of God). "Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you; for, if it be your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, you need not question but he will bear your charges thither." II. He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, v. 33, v. 34. Those who have done this may be very easy as to all the events of time.

1. "Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it: Sell that ye have, and give alms," that is, "rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly necessitous, sell what you have that is superfluous, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the poor. Sell what you have, if you find it a hindrance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, thought they be the inheritance of your fathers. Do not sell to hoard up the money, or because you can make more of it by usury, but sell and

give alms; what is given in alms, in a right manner, is put out to the best interest, upon the best security.”

2. “Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not of gold, but of grace in the heart and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last.” Grace will go with us into another world, for it is woven in the soul; and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget them.

These will be treasures in heaven, that will enrich us to eternity.

(1) It is treasure that will not be exhausted; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it.

(2) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for no thief approaches near it; what is laid up in heaven is out of reach of enemies.

(3) It is treasure that will not spoil with keeping, any more than it will waste with spending; the moth does not corrupt it, as it does our garments which we now wear. Now by this it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven if our hearts be there while we are here (v. 34), if we think much of heaven and keep our eye upon it, if we quicken ourselves with the hopes of it and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But, if your hearts be set upon the earth and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it. He charges them to get ready, and to keep in a readiness for Christ’s coming, when all those who have laid up their treasure in heaven shall enter upon the enjoyment of it, v. 35, etc.

1. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants, not only working servants, but waiting servants, servants that are to do him honour, in waiting on him, and attending his motions: If any man serve me, let him follow me. Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. But that is not all: they must do him honour in waiting for him, and expecting his return. We must be as men that wait for their Lord, that sit up late while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him.

2. Christ our Master, though now gone from us, will return again, return from the wedding, from solemnizing the nuptials abroad,

to complete them at home. Christ’s servants are now in a state of expectation, looking for their Master’s glorious appearing, and doing every thing with an eye to that, and in order to that. He will come to take cognizance of his servants, and, that being a critical day, they shall either stay with him or be turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day.

3. The time of our Master’s return is uncertain; it will be in the night, it will be far in the night, when he has long deferred his coming, and when many have done looking for him; in the second watch, just before midnight, or in the third watch, next after midnight, v. 38. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour that ye think not (v. 40), without giving notice beforehand. This bespeaks not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are unthinking, and altogether regardless of the notices given them, so that, whenever he comes, it is in an hour that they think not.

4. That which he expects and requires from his servants is that they be ready to open to him immediately, whenever he comes (v. 36), that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or rather to be received by him; that they be found as his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their loins girded about, alluding to the servants that are ready to go whither their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up (which otherwise would hang about them, and hinder them), and their lights burning, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber.

5. Those servants will be happy who shall be found ready, and in a good frame, when their Lord shall come (v. 37): Blessed are those servants who, after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake and aware of his first approach, of his first knock; and again (v. 38): Blessed are those servants, for then will be the time of their preferment. Here is such an instance of honour done them as is scarcely to be found among men: He will make them sit down to meat, and will serve them. For the bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not the manner of men; yet

Jesus Christ was among his disciples as one that served, and did once, to show his condescension, gird himself, and serve them, when he washed their feet (Jn. 13:4, Jn. 13:5); it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before, to prepare for them, and has told them that his Father will honour them, Jn. 12:26.

6. We are therefore kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man to be ready for an attack, if he know beforehand just the time when it will be made: The good man of the house, if he had known what hour the thief would have come, though he were ever so careless a man, would yet have watched, and have frightened away the thieves, v. 39. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times, and never to be off our guard. Or this may intimate the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the good man of the house had had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he would have sat up, and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, as a thief in the night, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus watch. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls: Be ye therefore ready also, as ready as the good man of the house would be if he knew what hour the thief would come.

Chapter 12

Parable of the Prodigal Son (15:11-32)

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But

the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' "My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

First of all convinced of one thing: the parable of the prodigal son is not recorded in Scripture primarily as instruction to parents of wayward children. We understand this parable in its context as Jesus' response to the grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes because of Jesus' acceptance of and rejoicing with repentant sinners. If the first two parables reveal to us that the Pharisees did care (too) much about "lost possessions," this parable exposes why they are not concerned about lost people. In Luke 15, this parable serves as the Lord's final, forceful response to the grumbling of the Pharisees at His response to sinners.

There are really three persons in focus in this parable, not just one: the younger brother, the father, and the older brother. In order to understand and interpret this parable accurately, we will focus our attention briefly on each of these three characters. For us, this story may seem to be a very heart-warming incident, only slightly tarnished by the sulking older brother. For the Pharisees, this was a humiliating exposure of their sin and their hypocrisy. It did not produce "warm, fuzzy feelings," at least not for those Pharisees who understood what Jesus was saying to them. Let us concentrate, then, on each of the three central characters of this parable.

The Younger Brother

The younger of two brothers one day approached his father with the request that he allocate to him his share of the inheritance earlier than would be customary, although not altogether out of the question:

"A man might leave his goods to his heirs by last will and testament (cf. Heb. 9:16f.), in which case he was bound by the provisions of the Law. This meant that the first-born received two thirds of the whole (Dt. 21:17). But he could make gifts before he died and this gave him a freer hand (SB). The rules for disposing of property are given in the Mishnah (Baba Bathra 8). If a man decided to make gifts, he normally gave the capital but retained the income. He could then no longer dispose of the capital, only of his interest in the income. But the recipient could get nothing until the death of the giver. He could sell the capital if he chose, but the buyer could not gain possession until the death of the donor."

The father granted the son's request, and shortly thereafter the son left his father, his family, his country, and departed to a distant country, where he squandered his possessions in a sinful lifestyle. The money eventually ran out, and at the same time, a famine fell upon that part of the world, bringing this young man to desperate straits.

The young man was forced to hire himself out as a slave, and his job was the unpleasant task of caring for swine. Even the pigs, it would seem, were better cared for than he. It was in this state of want that the young man came to his senses. He recognized that he could live better as a slave of his father than as a slave in this foreign land. He knew that this would necessitate facing his father, and so he rehearsed his repentance speech, one that he was never allowed to finish.

The young man realized his folly and he returned to face his father. He had hoped only to be received as a slave; his father received him as a son. He had hoped, at best, for a little bread; his father provided a banquet. The young man did not gain all the material possessions he had lost, but he did regain the joy and privileges of his status as a son.

Let me emphasize two aspects of this story which relate to the younger brother. First, there is no attempt to minimize the seriousness

or the foolishness of the sins of the younger son. Jesus did receive sinners and eat with them, but He never minimized sin. The seriousness of the young brother's sins can only be understood in the light of his identity (I am assuming) as an Israelite. As an Israelite, this young man would understand several things about the blessings which God promised His chosen people. God was going to bless His people in the land. The young man left the land and went to a distant one. God was going to bless His people for obeying His law. This included the necessity of living a life that was very distinct (holy) from that of the heathen. This young man went and lived among the heathen as a heathen. Then Old Testament had very specific legislating to assure that the inheritance of each family was kept within the family, and that the children cared for their parents. This young man deserted his family, permanently lost his portion of the inheritance, and left his father in a potentially precarious position (he had just lost 1/3 of his father's resources, and had lost his ability to look after him). For an Israelite, nothing could be lower than to be the slave of a heathen, and to have as one's job the care of swine. This younger son, acted in a very wicked and foolish way. I can envision Jesus' audience sucking in their breath in shock and horror at what this man had done. I can see the Pharisees becoming bug-eyed and red-faced with anger at this man's sin. Jesus did not attempt to minimize this younger son's sin.

If the younger son's sins were great, so was his repentance. Second, let us look at the characteristics of the younger brother's repentance. The younger brother's repentance was required by his sin, he very great sin, as we have just emphasized. The process of repentance began, I believe, when the younger brother began to suffer the painful consequences of his sin. It was only when he ran out of money and friends, and when he began to suffer hunger pangs that the young man "came to his senses." Repentance begins, then, with seeing things straight, with seeing things as they really are. Repentance begins by seeing one's actions as sinful, first in the sight of God, and then in the sight of men. Thus, the words of the son to his father, "I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight" (v. 18, NASB). The son's repentance then led him to his father, whom he had offended, and to whom he acknowledged his guilt and sorrow. The son's repentant spirit is reflected in his deep sense of unworthiness. He does not speak of or claim any rights. He hopes only for mercy. There are no

demands. The son's repentance touched the heart of his loving father, and paved the way for his restoration and rejoicing.

The Father

While the sheep-owner and the housewife accurately depicted the concern of the Pharisees for their possessions, it is the loving father of this parable who depicts the heart of the loving Heavenly Father, who longs for the return of the sinner, who willingly grants forgiveness, and who rejoices in the return of the wayward. This father gave the son what he had asked for. He allowed the son to go his own way, even when he could have prevented it (at least he could have refused to finance the venture). The heart of that father never forgot the wayward son. It was no accident that the father saw the son coming "from a long way off" (v. 20). The father ran to meet the son. He did not force the son to grovel. He did not even allow the son to finish his confession. The father quickly restored the son to his position as a son. The father commanded that there be a celebration. And when the older brother refused to participate, the father sought him out and appealed to him to join in the celebration, which he saw not only as permissible, but as necessary.⁸ The father was as gracious to the older brother as he was to the younger. How great the love of this father. How much like the Heavenly Father he is.

The Older Brother

The older brother we know to be the one in the parable who represents the Pharisees and scribes, who grumble at Jesus' reception of sinners. Notice that the older brother is out in the fields working when the younger brother returns. The father, on the other hand, is apparently waiting and watching for the younger son's return. He does not know of the younger brother's return until his attention is aroused by the sounds of celebration coming from the house. He learns from a servant that his brother has returned, that the father has received him, and that a celebration has been called. The mention of the killing of the fatted calf is the "final straw" for the older brother. He became very angry and refused to go in to celebrate with the rest, even though this celebration was called for by the father.

When the father came out to his older son, to appeal to him to join in on the celebration, the older son refused. The words of the older son are the key to understanding his desires and attitudes. Give attention

to those things which this son mentioned to his father, which are the basis of his actions, his anger, and his protest:

(1) I have worked hard, but you gave me no banquet. The older brother was at work in the field when his younger brother returned home. It would seem that this older brother thought that the basis for obtaining his father's favor was his works. The father's answer suggests the opposite. As a son, the older brother possessed all that his father had. He did not need to work to win his father's approval or blessing, he need only be a son. This emphasis on works is the error of the Pharisees as well. They were "hard at work" with respect to keeping the law, as they interpreted it, supposing that this was what would win God's approval and blessing.

(2) You have given your other son a banquet, when all he did was to sin. This is, of course, the flip side of the first protest. The older brother expected to be rewarded on the basis of his works, and he would likewise have expected his younger brother to have been disowned due to his works (sins). It was not the younger brother's sins which resulted in the father's celebration, but in his repentance and return. The older brother not only failed to comprehend grace, but he resented it. There are many similarities between the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament and this older brother.

(3) I have never neglected a command of yours. Not only does this son think that his works should have merited his father's blessings, he also is so arrogant as to assume that he has never sinned. How could he say that he had never neglected a command of his father when, moments before, his father had commanded that there be a celebration, and the older brother had refused to take part? Is this not disobedience? The Pharisees, too, thought of themselves as having perfectly kept God's commandments.

The problem of the older brother, then, is self-righteousness. His self-righteousness is such that he expects, even demands God's approval and blessings. His self-righteousness is so strong that he resents the grace of God and refuses to rejoice in it. The older brother failed to see that he was a sinner, and he also failed to understand that God has provided salvation for all sinners who truly repent. What the older brother did not think he needed (repentance and salvation) he

resisted and resented in others, and thus he could not, he would not share in the celebration.

The father's words to this son are significant. He reminded this older brother of the blessings which he had in staying home. He had, during those years when the younger son only had the fellowship of pagans and pigs, the fellowship of his father. The father said, "My child, you have always been with me..." (v. 32a). This, for the older brother, was not enough, for he would have preferred to have been with his friends (v. 29). The father's second statement was to remind the older son that he possessed all that was his: "... and all that is mine is yours" (v. 31b). This, too, did not seem enough to this older son.

The Differences Between The Two Sons

How different these two sons were, in some ways:

- (1) The younger son left home; the older stayed home.
- (2) The younger son was prodigal (wasteful); the older son was productive (a worker).
- (3) The younger lost his inheritance; the older did not.
- (4) The younger did not any longer feel worthy of his father's blessings; the older did.
- (5) The younger realized his sins; the older felt righteous.
- (6) The younger repented; the older resented.

Similarities in the Sons

We have always thought of these two sons in terms of their differences. But we can also realize the many similarities in the two. Consider the similarities in these two sons with me for a moment.

(1) Both sons wanted a celebration—a banquet. The younger brother "partied" with the pagans in a foreign land. The older son protested to his father that he had not been given a party.

(2) Both sons wanted to celebrate without their father. The younger brother partied in a foreign land, with the wrong kinds of friends. The older brother refused to celebrate with his father (and younger brother), but he indicated a strong desire to have been allowed to have a banquet with his friends.

(3) Both sons seemed to feel that joy and celebration were not possible with their father. The younger brother left his father, his family, and even his nation to have a good time. Joy, to this fellow, was not possible in the confining environment of his faith and his family. The younger brother, too, seemed to feel that joy was not possible with his father, and thus he wanted to celebrate with his friends, not his father. Slaving seemed to be the principle governing him in his relationship with his father, not celebrating. I understand the “fatted calf” to have been the symbol of celebration. The father’s words to his older son seem to say, “The fatted calf (celebration and joy) were yours to enjoy at any time.” The older brother did not think so. Neither did the Pharisees, for their early protest to Jesus had to do with His celebrating (cf. Luke 5:27ff.).

(4) Neither son seems to have really appreciated or loved their father, even though he loved both of them. The younger son did not enjoy his father, so he left him. The older brother did not leave him, but did not enjoy him either. In response to the father’s words to the oldest son, “My child, you have always been with me,” the older son’s response, though unstated, seems to have been, “So what?” or, “Big deal!”

(5) Both sons were slaves. The younger son was first of all enslaved by his passions (sins), and also by a foreign employer. He returned to his father, hoping only to be received as a slave, but not dreaming that he could be a son again. The older brother was really a slave, too. Listen to his words to his father,

“But he answered his father, Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders” (Luke 15:29).

Because this brother thought he had to work for his father’s approval and blessings, he was no less a slave than his younger brother.

(6) Both sons were materialists. The younger son loved material things-money-more than his father or than his family, because he asked for his portion at the expense and risk of his family. The younger wanted his inheritance to spend on himself. The older brother, too was a materialist. His anger toward his brother and his unwillingness to receive him back was due to the fact that he had squandered part of his father’s possessions. If the younger brother wanted money to

spend, the old brother wanted it to save, and thus (it would seem) to make him feel secure. Both sons loved money; they only differed in what they wanted to do with it, and when.

(7) Both sons were sinners. The Lord had left unchallenged, at the beginning of this chapter, the assumption on the part of the Pharisees that while others might be “sinners,” they themselves were righteous. But this final parable proves this assumption to be entirely false. The sins of these two sons were very different in their outward manifestations, but inwardly they had the same roots.

You see, we tend to appraise sin (and “sinners”) by merely external standards and criteria. Jesus always looked at the heart. We quickly grant that stealing, murder, rape, and violence are wrong, especially when they are perpetrated on us. But Jesus goes on to show us in the gospels that prayer, giving, preaching, or showing charity can be sinful, when the motive of the heart is wrong. We would look at the compliant, hard-working older brother and commend him. There is no outward rebellion here. No, there is not, at least not until the celebration. But the inward attitudes and motivations of this older brother as just as evil, indeed, they are more evil, for there is much self-righteousness concealed behind his outward conformity to his father’s will and to his hard work.

Chapter 13

Lukan Passion Narrative

In the C or third year of the liturgical cycle of the Latin rite, the Lucan Passion narrative is read on Palm/Passion Sunday; even as its Synoptic ‘brethren’, Matthew & Mark, have been read in A and B years, and before the Johannine passion is read on Good Friday. This ‘in-between’ setting is appropriate, for in many aspects of the passion, Luke stands between Mark/Matthew and John. Nowhere else, when there is common material, does Luke so differ from Mark – a fact that has prompted a debate whether Luke drew on a consecutive passion narrative other than Mark. In many of the differences from Mark, both factual and theological, Luke approaches John. Yet once again neither technical inter-Gospel comparisons nor corresponding historical issues are a major concern in this short book which concentrates on material for Holy Week reflection.

The Lucan passion narrative is read in the same liturgical year in which the Gospel of Luke has supplied the readings on the Sundays of the Ordinary Time; it will be followed immediately in the Easter Season by readings from the Acts of the Apostles, the other half

of the Lucan two-volume work. This total setting is necessary to understand the passion message, for the original author (conventionally but very uncertainly identified as Luke, the companion of Paul) is a consistent thinker and writer. The Jesus who is accused before Pilate by the chief priests and scribes of ‘perverting our nation’ (Luke 23:2) is one whose infancy and upbringing was totally in fidelity to the Law of Moses (2:22, 27, 39, 42). Similarly, the Jesus who is accused of ‘forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar’ is a Jesus who has only recently (20:25) declared concerning the tribute: ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s’. All of this casts light on the affirmation made by various dramatis personae in the passion that Jesus is innocent (23:4, 14, 22, 41, & 47). The Jesus who calmly faces death is one who had already set his face deliberately to go to Jerusalem (9:51), affirming that no prophet should perish away from Jerusalem (13:33). In the Lucan account of the ministry, Jesus showed tenderness to the stranger (the widow of Nain) and praised the mercy shown to the Prodigal Son and to the man beset by thieves on the road to Jericho; it is not surprising then that in his passion Jesus shows forgiveness to those who crucified him.

When one has been forewarned that the devil departed from Jesus after the temptation ‘until the opportune time’ (4:13), one is not surprised to find the devil returning in this hour of the passion which belongs to ‘the power of darkness’ (22:53) and entering into Judas the betrayer (22:3), while demanding to sift Simon Peter the denier (22:31).

Luke, who has described the disciples/apostles with extraordinary delicacy during the ministry (unlike Mark who dwells on their failures and weaknesses), continues a merciful portrayal of them during the passion, never mentioning that they fled. Indeed, he places male acquaintances of Jesus at Calvary (23:49). This fits with Luke’s unique post-resurrectional picture where all the appearances of Jesus are in Jerusalem area (as if the disciples had never fled back to Galilee), and where apostles like Peter and John will become chief actors in the Book of Acts. The Jesus of the passion, accused by chief priests before the Roman governor and the Herodian King, prepares the way for a Paul brought before the same case of adversaries (Acts 21:27 - 25:27). The innocent Jesus who dies asking forgiveness for the enemies and commending his soul to God the Father prepares the way for the first Christian martyr, Stephen, who

will perish uttering similar sentiments (Acts 7:59-60). Consistency from the Law and the Prophets to Jesus and ultimately to the Church is a Lucan theme in which the passion is a major component.

1. Mount of Olives - Prayer & Arrest (22:39-53)

The Lucan form of this scene is less suspenseful and dramatic in relation to the disciples than is the comparable account in Mark/Matthew. Jesus goes to a customary place, the Mount of Olives, so that Judas has no problem in finding him. No words of rebuke are spoken to the disciples who follow Jesus. After all, at the Last Supper (in Luke alone) Jesus has praised them by anticipation, 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials'; and he has assured them that they will have a kingdom, as well as a place at the eschatological table, and thrones of judgment (22:28, 29) - how can they then seriously fall away? Accordingly, Jesus does not separate himself from the body of the disciples and then from the three chosen ones, as he does in Mark/Matthew. He simply withdraws a stone's throw urging them to pray. If they sleep, it is 'for sorrow' (22:45); and they are found sleeping only once, not three times.

All the drama in the scene is centered in Luke's unique portrayal of Jesus. He is not one whose soul is sorrowful unto death or who lies prostrate in the dust. He has prayed often during the ministry; so now on his knees he utters a prayer to his Father prefaced and concluded by a subordination of his will to God's wish. The Son's prayer does not remain unanswered; rather God sends an angel to strengthen him.

This divine assistance brings Jesus to agony (whence the 'agony' in the garden), a Greek term describes the supreme tension of the athlete covered with sweat at the start of the contest. In that spirit Jesus rises from his prayer ready to enter the trial, even as he mercifully tells his disciples to pray that they be spared from that trial (22:46).

It is a mark of exquisite Lucan sensitivity that when the arresting party comes, led by Judas, the perverse kiss is forestalled. Jesus addresses his betrayer by name (the only time in all the Gospels) and shows a foreknowledge of the planned strategy (22:48). Sensitively, too, Luke adds a motif to the traditional cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave, namely, that Jesus who has so often healed in the ministry heals this opponent, even in the midst of his own peril. The figures

who come to arrest Jesus on the Mount of Olives are not simply emissaries of the Jewish authorities as in the other Gospels; rather, the high priests, the Temple officers, and the elders themselves come out against him. The scene of the arrest terminates with Jesus' dramatic announcement that it is their hour; with them the power of darkness has come (22:53).

2. Peter's Denial - Sanhedrin Interrogation (22:54-71)

As Jesus is arrested, he is taken to the high priest's house; but seemingly no judicial procedure occurs until day comes (22:66). The night activity is centered on the court yard. There, after three denials, what causes Peter to weep bitterly is not simply the remembrance of Jesus' prediction; it is the look given to him by Jesus who seemingly is present all the time that Peter is denying him! This dramatic look, peculiar to Luke, is an aspect of Jesus' continuing care for Peter promised at the Last Supper (22:32). The court yard is also the scene of the abuse of Jesus as a prophet, an action which ironically confirms his foreknowledge that he would die in Jerusalem as a prophet (13:33).

After the denials and the mockery of the night, when day has come, Jesus is led away to the Sanhedrin by the elders, the scribes, and the chief priests (presumably the priests Annas and Caiaphas mentioned so prominently by Luke at the beginning of the public ministry in 3:2). This collective leadership, and not a single high priest as in the other Gospels, poses to Jesus a series of separate questions about his identity as the Messiah and as the Son of God.

Jesus answers these questions ambiguously (even as he does during the ministry in John 10:22-39); he will die a martyr's death, but he does not foolishly force the hands of his captors. There are no witnesses and no condemnation at this Sanhedrin session, so that one gets the impression of an interrogation preparatory to the one and only trial conducted by the Roman Governor - an impression quite unlike that given by Mark/Matthew. One must not assume, however, that Luke does not hold the Jewish authorities responsible for the execution of Jesus, for numerous passages in Acts affirm such responsibility. The self-composure of Jesus throughout the sequence of Peter's denials, the mockery, and the questions is striking. It is not the majestic supremacy of the Johannine Jesus, but the God-given tranquility of one to whom the Father has delivered all things (Luke 10:22) and the human tranquility of one who is totally innocent.

3. The Trial Before Pilate & Herod (23:1–25)

Luke's staging of the Roman trial, almost as elaborate as John's, goes considerably beyond the picture in Mark/Matthew. Although some of the same basic material is included (the issue of the 'King of the Jews' and the alternative offered by Barabbas), the overall development is uniquely shaped by parallelism with the Roman trials of Paul in Acts 16:19-24; 17:6-9; 18:12-17; 23:23-30. There are clear similarities in such features as detailed charges involving violations of Roman law and of Caesar's majesty, indifference by Roman officials to the religious issues that are really involved, and the desire to let the prisoner go, or at most chastise him with a whipping.

The unique and fascinating Lucan contribution to the Pilate scene is the interspersed trial before Herod, the tetrarch or 'king' of Galilee, who is present in Jerusalem for the feast, and to whom Pilate sends Jesus upon learning that he is a Galilean. Christian memory has preserved a series of Herodian adversary images: a Herod (the Great) who with the chief priests and scribes conspired to kill the child Jesus (Matt 2); a Herod (Antipas) who killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-29; Matt 14:3-12), reputedly sought to kill Jesus (Luke 13:31), and would be remembered as aligned with Pilate against Jesus (Acts 4:27); a Herod (Agrippa I) who killed James, son of Zebedee, and sought to kill Peter (Acts 12:1-5); and a Herod (Agrippa II) who sat in judgment on Paul alongside a Roman governor (Acts 25:13-27).

These traditions have been woven together into the passion narrative in different ways in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter (where Herod becomes Jesus' chief adversary who crucifies him) and in Luke. Although annoyed by Jesus' silence and contemptuously mocking him - two details that the other Gospels relate to Jesus' appearance before Pilate - the Lucan Herod confirms Pilate's judgment that Jesus is innocent (Luke 23:14-15). In turn, contact with Jesus heals the enmity that had existed between the Galilean 'king' and the Roman, an enmity that may have been caused by Pilate's brutally killing Galileans (Luke 13:1). Once more Jesus has a healing effect even on those who maltreat him.

4. Crucifixion, Death & Burial (23:26-56)

In this section of the passion narrative, Luke is most individualistic. Since he narrates no mocking of Jesus by Roman soldiers after Pilate's sentence, the deliverance of Jesus 'up to their will' (23:25) creates

the impression that the ones who seize Jesus, take him to Calvary, and crucify him are the chief priests, the Jewish rulers, and the people - the last plural subject mentioned (23:13). Eventually, however, we hear of soldiers (23:36), presumably Roman: and the people are shown as following Jesus without hostility, lamenting. Thus Luke alone among the passion narrators portrays a segment of Jews who are not disciples of Jesus but who are touched by his suffering and death.

Jesus addresses these 'daughters of Jerusalem', not in reference to his own impending fate, but to the catastrophe that awaits them. They belong to a city that has killed the prophets and refused all Jesus' overtures of grace, a city already destined to be dashed to the ground and trodden by Gentiles (13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24). Elsewhere, Luke shows great reluctance in having Jesus speak harshly; if he permits that here in threatening words borrowed from Isaiah (54:1-4) and Hosea (10:8). Luke is probably constrained by the factuality of the destruction of Jerusalem that has already taken place at Roman hands by the time he writes.

The contrast in Jesus' attitudes is heightened by the first words he speaks upon coming to the place of the Skull: 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do'. This hints that the Jewish chief priest and scribes acted out of ignorance, which is reiterated in Acts (3:17), runs against the general NT judgment of deliberate blindness and malevolence on the part of the Jewish authorities involved in the crucifixion. It constitutes not only a more humane understanding of the complex responsibilities for the death of Jesus but also a directive for the gracious treatment of one's enemies that has often been simply called 'Christian'. There are many who would come after Jesus, beginning with Stephen (Acts 7:60), who would find hope in facing unjust brutality by repeating the prayer of the Lucan Jesus.

Three groups (but not the people) mock the crucified Jesus in response to his forgiving words: the rulers, the soldiers, and one of the two criminals crucified with him. In a major departure from the Synoptic tradition, the other criminal in Luke acknowledges the justice of his own sentence and confesses the innocence of one whom he addresses intimately as 'Jesus' - an address used elsewhere in the Gospels in a friendly manner only by the blind beggar of Jericho. And the suffering Jesus responds with greater generosity than the petitioner requests, for Jesus will not simply remember the man after entering into his Kingdom; he will take the man with him this very day. The

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oft-used observation that the 'good thief' ultimately stole the Kingdom is not too far from the truth.

In the last hours of Jesus' life (the sixth to the ninth hours), darkness comes over the earth (which Luke explains as a failing of the sun or as an eclipse, which technically is not possible at Passover time), but it does not obscure the confidence of the dying Jesus. His last words are not those of abandonment (Mark/Matthew) or those of triumph (John) but words of trust: 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'. Adapted from Psalm 31:5-6 (especially as phrased in the Greek Bible), these words, like those in which he forgave his enemies, have offered many a way of meeting death in peace. Once again, the first of the followers of Jesus on this path was the martyr, Stephen (Acts 7:59). Luke places the rending of the Temple veil before Jesus' death, not after (Mark/Matthew); for only acts of grace will follow the death of Jesus. The first is a final affirmation of the innocence of Jesus drawn from a centurion, so that time wise on either side of the cross a Roman governor and a Roman soldier have made the same declaration of not guilty. Then the Jewish multitude who followed Jesus to Calvary and looked on (Luke 23:27, 31) is moved to repentance, so that the people return home beating their breasts. A sign of goodness is evoked even from the midst of the Sanhedrin, as Joseph of Arimathea, a saintly member of that body who had not consented to the purpose or the deed of crucifying Jesus, asks for the body of Jesus in order to render the required burial service. If the daughters of Jerusalem wept over Jesus on the way to Calvary, providing the mourning required for burial, the women of Galilee (alongside Jesus' male acquaintances!) look on the burial from a distance (23:49,55) and prepare spices to complete the burial. The words that will ultimately be addressed to the Galilean women will not be words of warning such as those addressed to the Jerusalem women but words of joy - their burial ministrations will prove unnecessary, for Jesus is among the living, not among the dead (24:1, 5). It has often been critically observed that the cross bears for Luke none of the atoning value that it had for Paul. Lucan crucifixion, however, is clearly a moment of God's forgiveness and of healing grace through and by Jesus. The theological language may be different, but the atoning effects are the same.