

The Gospel According to Luke
Studies in the Third Gospel

By
Daniel J. Lewis

© Copyright 1999 by Diakonos, Inc
Troy, Michigan
USA

The Gospel According to Luke.....	1
Preface.....	6
Luke, the Historian and Theologian	7
Date and Addressee.....	8
Structure, Style and Sources	8
Theological Themes.....	10
Commentary on Luke.....	12
The Annunciations (1)	12
The Annunciation of John (1:5-25)	12
The Annunciation of Jesus (1:26-38)	13
Mary Visits Elizabeth (1:39-56)	13
The Birth of John (1:57-80).....	14
The Theology of the Annunciations	14
The Nativity (2).....	15
The Birth of Jesus (2:1-7)	15
The Bethlehem Shepherds (2:8-20)	16
The Temple Ritual (2:21-40)	16
Jesus Visits the Temple at the Age of Twelve (2:41-52).....	17
Baptism, Temptation And Rejection (3-4)	18
The Preaching of John (3:1-20)	18
The Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22).....	19
The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38).....	20
The Temptation in the Desert (4:1-13)	20
The Rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30)	20
Healings, Exorcisms and Preaching (4:31-44)	21
The Sermon on the Plain (5-6).....	21
Calling Disciples (5:1-11, 27-32; 6:12-16).....	22
The Lordship and Authority of Jesus (5:12-26, 33-39; 6:1-11)	23
Authority Over Sickness (5:12-16).....	23
Authority Over Sin (5:17-26)	23
Authority Over Religion (5:33-39; 6:1-11)	24
The Great Sermon (6:17-49).....	25
The Blessings and Woes (6:17-26).....	25
Loving Others (6:27-36)	25
Judging Others: (6:37-42).....	25
Bearing Fruit (6:43-45).....	26
The Parable of the Builders (6:46-49)	26

The Anointing (7:1-8:39).....	26
Miracles (7:1-17; 8:22-39).....	26
The Centurion's Slave (7:1-10)	26
The Widow's Son (7:11-17)	27
The Storm (8:22-25)	27
The Demoniac at Gerasa (8:26-39).....	27
Two Parables (8:1-18)	28
The Sower (8:1-15).....	29
The Lamp (8:16-18).....	29
Encounters and Relationships (7:18-50; 8:1-3. 19-21).....	29
Jesus and John (7:18-35).....	29
The Anointing by a Sinful Woman (7:36-50).....	30
Women Disciples (8:1-3).....	30
Jesus' Family (8:19-21)	30
The Transfiguration (8:40--9:62).....	31
Further Miracles (8:40-56; 9:10-17, 37-43a).....	32
Jairus' Daughter and the Woman with the Hemorrhage (8:40-56).....	32
Feeding the 5000 (9:10-17).....	32
The Messianic Identity (9:7-9, 18-22, 28-43a).....	33
Peter's Great Confession (9:7-9, 18-22).....	33
The Transfiguration (9:28-36)	33
An Exorcism (9:37-43a)	34
The Disciples and the Messianic Mission (9:1-6, 23-27, 43b-62)	34
The Sending of the Twelve (9:1-6).....	34
The Cost of Discipleship (9:23-27, 43b-45, 57-62).....	34
Who is Greatest? (9:46-56).....	35
The Beginning of the Travelogue (9:51)	35
The Lord's Prayer (10-11).....	36
The Mission of the Seventy (10:1-23).....	36
The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37).....	36
Mary and Martha (10:38-42)	37
Teaching on Prayer (11:1-13).....	37
The Strong Man and the Stronger Man (11:14-28)	38
The Sign of Jonah (11:29-36)	38
Religious Hypocrisy (11:37-53)	39
The Mustard Seed (12-13)	39
True and False Security (12:1-12)	40
Materialism (12:13-34)	40

Watchfulness (12:35-48).....	41
The Immediate Crisis (12:49--13:8)	41
The Presence of the Kingdom (13:10-21).....	42
Reception and Rejection (13:22-35)	43
The Prodigal Son (14-15)	44
At a Pharisee's House (14:1-24)	44
Healing on the Sabbath (14:1-6).....	45
On Giving Banquets (14:7-14)	45
The Parable of the Great Banquet (14:15-24).....	45
Along the Road (14:25-35)	46
To the Scribes and Pharisees (15).....	47
The Lost Sheep (15:3-7)	47
The Lost Drachma (15:8-10)	47
The Lost Son (15:11-32).....	47
Teachings (16-17)	48
Two Parables on Wealth (16:1-9, 19-31)	48
The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (16:1-9)	48
The Parable of Lazarus and Dives (16:19-31).....	49
The Healing of the Ten Lepers (17:11-19)	50
Various Teachings (16:10-18; 17:1-10, 20-37)	50
On Stewardship (16:10-15).....	50
On the Epochs of Salvation-History (16:16)	51
On Torah's Enduring Value (16:17)	51
On Divorce (16:18).....	51
On Offenses and Forgiveness (17:1-4)	51
On Faith (17:5-6)	51
On Duty (17:7-10).....	52
On the Appearing of the Kingdom (17:20-21)	52
On the Coming of the Son of Man (17:22-37)	52
Entry into Jericho (18:1--19:28)	53
The Closing Events of the Travelogue (18:31-34; 19:28).....	53
More Parables (18:1-14; 19:11-27)	54
The Parable of the Persistent Widow (18:1-8)	54
The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector (18:9-14).....	55
The Parable of the Ten Minas (19:11-27).....	55
Encounters Along the Way (18:15-30, 35-43; 19:1-10).....	56
The Children (18:15-17)	56
The Rich Young Man (18:18-30)	56

The Blind Beggar (18:35-43).....	56
Zacchaeus, the Reclaimed Tax-Collector (19:1-10).....	57
Jerusalem (19:29--20:47).....	57
The Triumphant Entry (19:29-44).....	57
Cleansing the Temple (19:45-48).....	58
The Days of Controversy (20).....	59
The Question About Authority (20:1-19).....	59
The Question About Tribute (20:20-26).....	59
The Question About Resurrection (20:27-40).....	60
The Question About the Son of David (20:41-47).....	60
The Last Supper (21-22).....	61
The Widow's Lepta (21:1-4).....	61
The Sermon Against the Temple (21:5-37).....	61
The Course of the Present Age (21:8-11).....	62
The Persecution of the Disciples (21:12-19).....	62
The Siege of Jerusalem (21:20-24).....	62
The Parousia (21:25-38).....	63
Judas' Treachery (22:1-6).....	64
The Last Supper (22:7-38).....	64
The Prayer on Mt. Olivet (22:39-46).....	65
The Arrest (22:47-53).....	65
Peter's Denial (22:54-62).....	65
The Sanhedrin's Verdict (22:63-71).....	66
The Crucifixion (23:1-49).....	66
Before Pilate (23:1-7).....	66
Before Herod (23:8-12).....	67
The Final Verdict (23:13-25).....	67
The Via Dolorosa (23:26-31).....	68
The Crucifixion (23:32-43).....	68
The Death (23:44-49).....	69
Resurrection and Ascension (23:50-24:53).....	70
The Burial (23:50-56).....	71
The Empty Tomb (24:1-12).....	71
The Appearance to Cleopas and His Companion (24:13-35).....	71
The Appearance to the Apostles (24:36-49).....	72
The Ascension (24:50-53).....	74

Preface

As all Christians know, there is one gospel of Jesus Christ but four documents in the New Testament called gospels. There is one central figure in Christianity, and his public ministry, death and resurrection combine as the central elements in the good news which is proclaimed. At the same time, our knowledge of Jesus comes to us in four portraits, none of them identical, yet each of them informing us about this same important person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

A gospel as a piece of literature is unique. It is not the same as an ancient biography, such as found in Plutarch's *Lives*, it is not merely a book of heroic deeds, and it is not a memoirs or a diary. Rather, it is an account of how the rule of God over humans lives -- a rule which was effected through the message and life of a humiliated and exalted Lord -- began in Galilee and Jerusalem.¹ The authors of the four gospels are properly called evangelists. They are not detached historians narrating in a disinterested and impartial way. Neither are they biographers who obtrude their own critical assessments and value judgments upon what they record in the sense of a modern writer. Instead, they straightforwardly wrote to convince their readers and to reaffirm "the certainty of the things...that have been surely believed among us" (Lk. 1:4b, 1b).

All the gospels have at their heart a single question, "Who is Jesus?" Of course, their answer is that he is the Messiah, God's unique Son. The birth, the stories, the miracles, the teachings, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus all converge in this single truth. Other questions also seem implicit, however, questions such as, "Why did Jesus die?" and "Where did he go?" and "Why has his return, which he promised, been seemingly delayed?" Equally important, particularly with the mushrooming of Christian congregations throughout the empire and the proliferation of various Christian teachers, is the implicit question, "What is Christian orthodoxy?" Too, each of the gospels was written within a particular community with

¹R. Martin, *New Testament Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 22.

its own unique questions and problems, and it may be safely assumed that the stories of Jesus which were selected by the evangelists reflect upon the situations in these localized Christian groups. Thus, it comes as no surprise to observe that each gospel has its own unique character, shaped by the needs of the community in which it was composed.

Luke, the Historian and Theologian

The Third Gospel, as are also the other three, is formally anonymous. We know from the prologue that the author is not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, but he depends upon others who were (1:2-3). He is a second generation Christian, identified in the late 2nd century as *Loukas*, the physician and companion of Paul (Col. 4:14).² As a writer, Luke is both a historian and a theologian. As a historian, he sets out to write "an orderly account" (1:1), though this does not necessarily mean that the work is strictly chronological. He provides a historical framework in which to place the events he narrates (1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2), and he draws from various sources, carefully investigating his data (1:3). At the same time, Luke is not only a historian. He is himself a Christian who writes to convince others. He offers a redemptive history. His concern is with the saving significance of the history he records rather than merely the bare facts. Drawing from the language available to him, Luke paints Jesus as the saving Benefactor of all Benefactors, calling him *Soter* (= Savior, Benefactor).³

Many scholars have also noted that there may be an apologetic motif in the Third Gospel, an attempt to demonstrate that the Christian movement was politically harmless to the Romans. In the latter half of the first century, Christians increasingly came under suspicion from the Roman government. The great fire in Rome of AD 64 was blamed on them, and Christianity lost its status as a *religio licita* (= legal religion) when it was distinguished from Judaism. Strictly speaking, Roman law only recognized its own national religion. On a practical level, however, foreign religions might be tolerated if they did not cause a breach of peace. Against this background, Luke-Acts might well have served as a cogent argument that Christianity was also to be tolerated. The dedication to the "Your Excellency, Theophilus,"⁴ the fact that Jesus

²In the Muratorian Canon (AD 170-190), the Third Gospel is identified with Luke, and Irenaeus (AD 185) agrees, V. Taylor, *IDB* (1962) III.180.

³Cf. 1:47; 2:11. In the Greco-Roman world, the title *soter* was an official designation for political leaders who established peace. It is significant that Luke is the only one of the synoptic gospels to use the title "Savior" and its cognate "salvation" as well as several other words which were culturally loaded, cf. F. Danker, *Luke [PC]* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 6-17. For a thorough treatment of Luke's emphasis on salvation-history, see I. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster, 1970) 77-215.

⁴Luke's prologue certainly is very similar to the genre of ancient prefaces to literary works which were intended to be published for reading by society at large, C. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 7-11.

and his followers were repeatedly pronounced innocent by Roman courts,⁵ the fact that Christianity is to be viewed as the true fulfillment of Judaism which already had been given legal status, and the fact that Jesus deliberately turned away from political activism all suggest that Luke's two-volume work may have had an underlying motive of justifying the Christian religion to the outside world.⁶

Date and Addressee

It is the general consensus of scholars that the Third Gospel was written between AD 70 and 90, probably in the mid-80s.⁷ It is the first of a two-volume work (Luke-Acts), both addressed to Theophilus [= God-lover] (Lk. 1:3; Ac. 1:1). Together, this two-volume work occupies more than 28% of the New Testament, slightly more than the works of Paul (25%). Other than his name, Theophilus is unknown, though it is not unlikely that he was either a patron who might have financed the formal publication of Luke's Gospel or perhaps he was a Roman official.⁸ Luke is a gentile writing to gentiles, and his Greek diction and style are among the best in the New Testament.

Structure, Style and Sources

The Third Gospel is easily subdivided into four major sections:

The Birth Narratives	(1-2)
The Galilean Ministry	(3:1-9:50)
The Travel Narratives	(9:51-19:44)
The Passion Narratives	(19:45-24:53)

Beyond this, however, there are other structural elements of importance. First, Luke has a clear geographical motif which is present in the entirety of Luke-Acts. In the gospel, the movement is toward Jerusalem,⁹ and it is particularly emphasized in

⁵The Roman Procurator, for instance, declared Jesus to be innocent at least three times (23:4, 13-16, 22). In Paul's encounters with Roman officials, he is consistently shown to be a law-abiding citizen.

⁶C. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 13-15.

⁷Some scholars would opt for a date as early as the 60s, but we cannot go into the various arguments here. The question of dating is only a guess based on indirect evidence, cf. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970) 110-115.

⁸Such compositions ordinarily bore the name of the patron, as does Luke-Acts, and they usually began with a formal prologue, as does the gospel, cf. T. Provenca, *ISBE* (1988) IV.831-832.

⁹This is to be seen in the infancy narratives which climax at Jerusalem, the temptation which reverses Matthew's order so as to climax at Jerusalem, the transfiguration which prepares for the fulfillment at Jerusalem (9:31), the Travel Narratives which obviously point toward Jerusalem (9:51), the post-resurrection appearances which all occur in Jerusalem, and the final instruction, "Stay in the city" (24:49, 53).

the travel section.¹⁰ In Acts the movement is away from Jerusalem.¹¹ Geographically, Jerusalem is the center of both works.¹²

Second, there is an emphasis on three distinguishable epochs in Luke-Acts:

The Period of Israel

The Period of Jesus' Ministry

The Period of the Church

Luke demarcates the Period of Israel from the Period of Jesus' Ministry when he records Jesus' words, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached" (16:16). Similarly, Luke demarcates the Period of Jesus' Ministry from the Period of the Church in Acts (1:1-2, 8).

In terms of style, it should be pointed out that in addition to Luke's excellent use of Greek, he also wrote convincingly in a variety of styles, a practice which follows an ancient ideal of *prosopopoeia* (= writing in character). He fits his style to the occasion. In the birth narratives, for instance, he uses Greek with a Semitic coloring. In other places, he writes in the style of the LXX.¹³

That there is a literary dependency between Luke and Mark, no one denies, though it is debated which was written first.¹⁴ The more popular view is that Mark was one of Luke's sources and that he also used a second major source, conveniently

¹⁰In the Travel Narratives, no matter where Jesus is or in which direction he is headed, Luke always depicts him as "on his way to Jerusalem" (9:51-53, 57; 10:1, 38; 13:22, 31-32; 14:25; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 28, 41).

¹¹The agenda for the movement away from Jerusalem is set in Ac. 1:8, and the remainder of the book follows this program.

¹²This literary device is called chiasmus, and it is a familiar stylistic element in biblical literature. In chiasmus, there is a parallelism developed in which a progression is marked and then reversed. In Luke, the geographical chiasmus works as follows, with the ascension in Jerusalem being the center, cf. K. Wolfe, "The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship," *SWJournTheol* 22 (2, 1980) 60-71.

Luke	Acts
GALILEE A	A' NATIONS
SAMARIA/JUDEA B	B' JUDEA/SAMARIA
JERUSALEM C	C' JERUSALEM
D	
ASCENSION	

¹³L. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 201.

¹⁴The discussion about literary relationships between the synoptic gospels is called "the synoptic problem." The classic statement of the more popular position was offered by B. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (New York: Macmillan, 1956). Other viewpoints, such as that Mark is an abridgement of Matthew and/or Luke, have also been offered, cf. C. Mann, *Mark [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986) 47-71.

called "Q" (for *Quelle* = source).¹⁵ Added to these sources were yet other materials from elsewhere. In any case, Luke contains some 300 verses of the 661 in Mark. Furthermore, we know from Luke's own admission that other narratives of the works and/or words of Jesus had been produced before he started to draw up his own account (1:1). It is not unlikely, since Luke knew they existed, that he made use of such collections.

Theological Themes

There are several theological emphases which are characteristic of the Third Gospel.¹⁶ Among these should be mentioned the theme of amazement. Luke uses a cluster of words to describe how awesome was the Christ event. People were amazed and astonished, they wondered and were awed, they were perplexed and afraid.¹⁷

There is also a marked emphasis on the Holy Spirit. In the birth narratives, Luke heralds the return of the quenched prophetic Spirit which had not been active since the last of the writing prophets (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:26-27). Jesus was himself full of the Spirit (3:22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21), and he was the one who would give the gift of the Spirit (3:16; cf. 11:13; 24:49; Ac. 2:33).¹⁸

Finally, there is an emphasis on prayer, particularly the prayers of Jesus. It is Luke who tells us that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism occurred as he was praying (3:21). It is Luke who describes Jesus as often withdrawing to lonely places for prayer (5:16), sometimes in the mountains (9:28), sometimes all night long (6:12), often in private places (9:18). It is Luke who provides us with Jesus' parables about prayer (11:5-13; 18:1; cf. 10:2). It is Luke who tells us that Jesus prayed for Peter in his time of great trial (22:32). Luke's account of Jesus' travail in Gethsemane is the most graphic of the gospels, and in it he details Jesus' exhaustion and anguish (22:39-44) as well as his urgent plea to the disciples to pray (22:46). Luke even

¹⁵The source "Q" is hypothetical, and it is thought to have been either an oral or written source containing largely logia (= sayings) of Jesus, cf. D. Rowlingson, *IDB* (1962) III.973; F. Neiryneck, *IDBSup* (1976) 715-716. The sections of Luke and Matthew that parallel each other but which are missing from Mark are roughly equivalent to Q.

¹⁶We shall not treat them all here, but a thorough survey may be found in J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 143-258.

¹⁷The cluster of "amazement" words are as follows:

Thaumazo (= to marvel): 1:21, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14, 38; 20:26; 24:12, 41

Ekplesso (= to be overwhelmed): 2:48; 4:32; 9:43

Existemi (= to be astounded): 2:47; 8:56; 24:22

Ekstasis (= bewilderment): 5:26

Thambos (= astonishment): 4:36; 5:9

Phobeo (= to be afraid): 2:9; 8:25, 35; 9:34, 45

Phobos (= fear): 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37

Aporeo (= to be perplexed): 24:4

¹⁸D. Lewis, *The Holy Spirit in the Third Gospel* (unpublished Masters Thesis: University of Detroit, 1986) 39-48.

describes Jesus as praying on the cross (23:46). The prayers of Jesus were so striking to the disciples that on one occasion, when they were with Jesus while he was praying, they asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (11:1). He responded with what we know as The Lord's Prayer.¹⁹

¹⁹In addition to the prayers of Jesus, it may be noted that Luke describes John the Baptist teaching his disciples to pray (11:1; 5:33). The annunciation to Zechariah occurred during the prayers of the people, and the appearance of Gabriel was in answer to Zechariah's prayer (1:10, 13). Anna, who witnessed the dedication of Jesus, was a woman of constant prayer (2:36-38).

Commentary on Luke

The Annunciations (1)

The first two chapters of Luke set the stage for the entire Third Gospel. Like Matthew, they contain birth narratives of Jesus, but unlike Matthew, they tell the story from the standpoint of the women rather than the men, Mary rather than Joseph. Even more to the point, Luke does not immediately introduce the reader to Jesus, but begins first with the birth of John. This serves to lead the reader into the story of Jesus gradually.²⁰ The underlying theme of the birth narratives is the renewal of God's redemptive work in the history of salvation. The first two chapters are pervaded by the sense of a new beginning. God, who had been silent in prophetic speech for four centuries, was now taking an active role in the chain of human events. So Luke begins his gospel by explaining that he is drawing up an account of "the things that have been fulfilled among us" (1:1).²¹ At the same time, there is an emphatic connection with what God had done previously in the history of salvation. The birth narratives vibrate with the language of the Old Testament, and if one did not know any differently, it might be thought that one was hearing stories from the most ancient writings of the Jews.

The Annunciation of John (1:5-25)

In the Hebrew Bible, there is a stereotyped pattern for annunciations as may be seen in the annunciations of the births of Ishmael, Isaac and Samson (Ge. 16:7-12; 17:1-3, 15-21; 18:1-2, 9-15; Jg. 13:2-21). The pattern is reproduced here by Luke in both the annunciations of John and Jesus:²²

- 1) The appearance of an angel
- 2) The person is saluted by name
- 3) The person is urged not to be afraid
- 4) A pregnancy is announced and explained
- 5) The child is named in advance
- 6) The significance of the name is explained

²⁰As Drury points out, only after 85 verses is Jesus, who is the subject of the book, born, whereas by contrast, Mark, Matthew and John begin with Jesus at the outset, cf. J. Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977) 46.

²¹The verb *plerophoreo* carries the idea of something which fills out or completes or satisfies a demand, cf. *BAG* (1979) 670.

²²R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1977) 156.

7) The future accomplishments of the child are indicated

Throughout the birth narratives, John and Jesus are placed beside each other in a set of intentional parallelisms. Both of them are divinely ordained, yet Jesus is clearly the superior of the two.

Zechariah, a priest serving in the eighth of the twenty-four orders of priestly rosters which were designated to function at the temple twice per year (1 Chr. 24:1-19), had been assigned by lot to burn incense. While performing his service, the annunciation of the birth of John was given to him by the angel Gabriel. John, the promised son, would be the Elijah-like prophet who would herald the coming of the Lord (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5). As a sign of the prediction's certainty, Zechariah would be mute until the birth. This meant that Zechariah was unable to pronounce the customary priestly benediction upon the congregation praying in the courtyard when he emerged from the Holy Place of the temple (cf. Sirach 50:19-24).

The Annunciation of Jesus (1:26-38)

Six months later and many miles to the north of Judah, in the rural province of Galilee, Gabriel again appeared to announce a birth, this time to a peasant virgin named Mary. Mary was betrothed to a man named Joseph. This in turn meant that according to Jewish marriage customs, she was legally bound to him and had begun the transition which would move her from the power of her father to the power of her husband. She had not completed the home-taking, however, and in fact was hardly more than a girl.²³

The miraculous birth of Mary's child would occur through the power of the Holy Spirit so that he would be known as the Son of the Most High, the Son of God. He would be called *Yeshua* (Jesus in Greek; Joshua in Hebrew). As the long hoped for Davidic king, he would reign upon the throne of David forever. The promises about David's throne succession, and the promises about Jesus, are clearly parallel (cf. 2 Sa. 7:9, 13-14, 16; Lk. 1:32-33). Mary responded to this annunciation with deep humility and faith.

Mary Visits Elizabeth (1:39-56)

Quickly traveling southward, Mary soon arrived at the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth to discover that what the angel had told her was in fact the truth. When the two women met, there was a joyful movement of the unborn John in Elizabeth's womb. This reaction of the unborn John to the unborn Jesus, not to mention

²³Betrothal was usually completed in Jewish circles by the time a girl was a teenager, cf. E. Blair, *IDB* (1962) II.980.

Elizabeth's words, "Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord²⁴ should come to me?", reinforces the superiority of Jesus over John. Mary, for her part, responded with an exaltation recorded by Luke in the structure of Hebrew poetry. This hymn, traditionally called the Magnificat,²⁵ draws deeply from the well of the Old Testament.²⁶ The time of divine intervention promised by the prophets long ago had arrived. "He [God] has helped...even as he said to our fathers" (1:54-55). Mary apparently stayed with Elizabeth until the birth of John (1:56).

The Birth of John (1:57-80)

All during the time of his wife's pregnancy, Zechariah remained mute. When Elizabeth's pregnancy had come to term, the baby boy was born and named John at his circumcision on the eighth day (cf. Ge. 17:10-14; Lv. 12:3). At the naming of the child, Zechariah's speech returned, and filled with the Holy Spirit, he uttered a prophetic praise regarding God's redemptive action. As the boy grew, he spent his days in the desert, the traditional home of Moses and Elijah.²⁷

The Theology of the Annunciations

In the stories of the annunciations, Luke initiates some important theological themes which will surface again in his story of Jesus. One of these is the filling of women and men with the Holy Spirit. John was to be filled from his mother's womb (1:15), Mary was overshadowed by the Spirit in the virginal conception (1:35), Elizabeth was Spirit-filled when she met Mary (1:41), and Zechariah was Spirit-filled when his tongue was loosed in prophetic speech (1:67). Luke's record of this charismatic activity is unparalleled in the other gospels. As Luke describes it, the work of the Spirit is prophetic, issuing in songs of exaltation, predictions concerning God's redemptive work, and announcements of prophetic mission. Since in Judaism the Spirit is almost always the Spirit of prophecy which had been silenced until the coming of messiah, Luke's accounts of Spirit-infillings point to the arrival of the messianic age.²⁸

A second important theological theme, closely related to the one just mentioned, is that of the redemption of Israel. No less than eight times does Luke explain that the events surrounding the births of John and Jesus were the beginnings

²⁴The title *Kyrios* (= Lord) is Luke's favorite for Jesus, and he uses it some 219 times in Luke-Acts.

²⁵The title comes from the Latin Vulgate and means "praise" or "magnify."

²⁶The hymn draws from the Song of Hannah (1 Sa. 2:1-10) in particular as well as from the Hebrew Psalter and the Prophets.

²⁷Whether or not John came into contact with the Essenes in the Qumran community is unknown, though it is not impossible.

²⁸R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) 38.

of the long awaited redemptive revival of the nation Israel (1:16, 32-33, 54-55, 68-75, 77; 2:25-26, 32-34, 38). Luke, of course, does not make this fulfillment exclusive to ethnic Israel, but he does emphasize that the prophetic promises given by the Old Testament prophets to the Jewish nation have their fulfillment in the Christ-child born at Bethlehem. In Jesus, the messianic age has dawned!

Finally, there are significant titles with which Jesus is bestowed. The title *Kyrios*, already mentioned as Luke's favorite, was widely used in the Greco-Roman world as a name of respect for the Roman Emperor, who was considered to be divine, as well as to other deities. Furthermore, it was the LXX title for Yahweh (cf. 1:6, 9, 11, etc.). In applying this title to Jesus, Luke boldly proclaims Jesus' exalted status (1:43; 2:11). Similarly, the names Son of the Most High and Son of God point to Jesus' uniqueness. On the one hand, the term Son of God was a Jewish title for the Davidic king (cf. 1:32), and on the other, Luke uses it as a designation for one uniquely created by God (cf. 3:38).

The Nativity (2)

The story of Jesus' birth is an interweaving of three elements, prophecy, history and symbolism. The nativity scene in Bethlehem surely recalls the prophecy of Micah 5:2, while the fact that Mary and Joseph were Galileans may reflect upon Isaiah 9:1. In terms of history, Luke carefully frames his narrative by the events of secular Roman history, naming the various rulers and explaining the trip from Galilee to Bethlehem as due to the Roman census. Finally, Luke's stories become paradigms for others. Mary's humble willingness, the difficulty of finding a reception in Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth, the adoration of the shepherds, and the wondering surprise of those who heard Jesus speak in the temple when he was but a youth -- all these narratives combine to become symbols of the ways in which people later were to receive Jesus in his public ministry, and beyond that, the way in which people would continue to respond to the carpenter from Nazareth, even after his departure.

The Birth of Jesus (2:1-7)

The question of the year and date of Jesus' birth is a well-known controversy. The general consensus of scholars is that Jesus was born in about 4 or 5 BC. The tradition of December 25th goes back as far as the 2nd century, though it cannot be verified further. Mary and Joseph were obliged to return to their family city, Bethlehem, for registration in the Roman census. While there, Mary began her labor, and Jesus was born in a manger.

Whether the inn keeper turned them away outright, or perhaps allowed them shelter with the animals since there was no place else, is unclear. Equally unclear is

whether or not Jesus was born in a cave, as early traditions assert.²⁹ In any case, the birthing process was made doubly awkward by the fact that the young couple were away from their family and home, situated in far less than adequate lodgings, and forced to deal with the birth without the help of a midwife.³⁰

The Bethlehem Shepherds (2:8-20)

Typical of the peasants who would later throng Jesus in his public ministry, nearby shepherds were informed of the birth of Jesus by a company of angels. They were approached with "good news," another one of Luke's loaded expressions. The verb *euangelizo* (= to announce good news) corresponds to the noun *euangelion* (= good news), a word used to announce the birthday of Caesar, his coming of age, his enthronement, and his various speeches in official proclamations.³¹ Further, the title *soter* (= savior, benefactor) was widely used in the Roman world as a title for the Roman Emperor. The title *kyrios* (= lord) was also a familiar title for Roman officials, not to mention the standard LXX rendering of the Hebrew name of God, Yahweh. Finally, the title *mashiah* (= messiah, Christ, the anointed) was the ancient designation for the kings of David's dynasty who ruled in Jerusalem and the eschatological title for the leader who would arise in the end to reverse the misfortunes of the Jewish nation. By coupling these titles together in the announcement to the shepherds, Luke demonstrates the universal royal significance of the birth of Jesus. No wonder the angels praised God by saying, "Glory to God in the highest!"³² The new ruler would bring genuine peace on earth, not merely the *pax Romana* (= Roman peace) established by Caesar's armies!

Hurrying to Bethlehem, the shepherds found the baby and worshiped him.

The Temple Ritual (2:21-40)

In their careful observance of Torah, Mary and Joseph had Jesus circumcised after eight days (cf. Lv. 12:3), and at the end of 40 days, they brought the infant to the temple for the ritual presentation of the firstborn (cf. Lv. 12:1-8). All firstborn males were presented to Yahweh, because they symbolized the firstborn males who were saved during the final plague of death which occurred in the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 13:1-2, 12, 15; Nu. 18:15-16). On this occasion during the presentation, two devout elderly people, a man and a woman, came to bless the child. Once again, Luke's account points to the return of the quenched prophetic Spirit and the theme of the

²⁹*Protevangelium of James*, 18-19; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, LXXVII.

³⁰The fact that Mary wrapped the infant herself in strips of cloth implies that she was without assistance other than Joseph.

³¹U. Becker, *NIDNTT* (1976) II.108.

³²Traditionally, *gloria in excelsis Deo* (from the Latin Vulgate)

redemption of Israel.³³ Simeon had been promised by God that he would not die until he had seen the messiah. In his prophetic oracle, he speaks of the universal mission of this Christ-child, an emphasis also found in the ancient scroll of Isaiah (cf. Is. 42:6; 49:6; 52:10). He also spoke of the rejection and catastrophe which would be accomplished in the future life of the child, even providing an aside to Mary that she would not escape this tragedy.

Just as Simeon finished his oracle, Anna, a prophetess from the northern tribe of Asher, again called attention to the fulfillment of the Jewish hope in the newborn baby. After the presentation was finished, Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth in Galilee to rear their wonderful child.³⁴

Jesus Visits the Temple at the Age of Twelve (2:41-52)

The story of Jesus' youthful visit to the temple at Jerusalem is the only canonical account of the years between his birth and the beginning of his public ministry at the age of about thirty (cf. Lk. 3:23).³⁵ Passover was one of the three annual festivals to be celebrated by all Jewish males at Jerusalem (Dt. 16:16), and Jesus was allowed to participate, as was customary, a year or two before he entered into the full responsibilities of adulthood at the age of thirteen.³⁶ On the return trip, Joseph and Mary missed Jesus at the end of the first day of travel, and when they had retraced their journey to Jerusalem, they found him in the temple, posing questions to the rabbis, intently listening to their responses, and apparently offering a few opinions of his own. His insight and intelligence was remarkable, and though Mary rebuked him for causing them worry, Luke obviously intends his answer concerning "my

³³The expression "consolation of Israel" is drawn from the prophecy of Isaiah 40:1-2 (cf. Is. 52:9; 66:12-13).

³⁴The harmonization of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke is not certain, but the probable order of events is as follows:

- 1) The annunciation regarding John (Lk. 1:5-25)
- 2) The annunciation regarding Jesus (Lk. 1:26-38)
- 3) Mary's visit to Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39-56)
- 4) Joseph discovers Mary's pregnancy (Mt. 1:18-25)
- 5) The birth of John (Lk. 1:57-80)
- 6) The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1-7)
- 7) The visit of the shepherds (Lk. 2:8-20)
- 8) The temple ritual (Lk. 2:21-40)
- 9) The visit of the magi (Mt. 2:1-12)
- 10) The flight to Egypt (Mt. 2:13-18)
- 11) The return to Nazareth (Mt. 2:19-23)
- 12) Jesus visits the temple at the age of 12 (Lk. 2:41-52)

³⁵There are, however, some other ancient accounts to be found in The Infancy Gospel of Thomas. These additional stories seems to be heavily influenced by Hellenistic concepts about magic men, and their historical worth is to be seriously doubted, cf. D. Cartlidge and D. Dungan, *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 92-97.

³⁶A. Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 105; 'Abot, 5.21; Yoma, 82a.

Father" to have the maximum impact. Jesus was already, even at the age of twelve, developing a self-consciousness of his divine origin and mission.

Baptism, Temptation And Rejection (3-4)

Chapters 3 and 4 of Luke describe to the reader the initiation of Jesus' public ministry before he called his first disciples. As is true in all four of the gospels, the initiation of Jesus' ministry comes in connection with the preaching of John the Baptist. Jesus' baptism is followed by his temptation in the desert, also to be found in Matthew and Mark, and this in turn is succeeded by an account of his first public preaching in Nazareth as well as the beginning of his preaching tours throughout the villages of Galilee.

The Preaching of John (3:1-20)

Luke carefully places the preaching of John the Baptist in the context of Greco-Roman as well as Jewish history, since he is writing to educated gentiles (3:1-2)³⁷. The preaching of John the Baptist is introduced with the Old Testament formula familiar from the prophets, "The word of God came to John" (cf. Je. 1:2; J1. 1:1; Jon. 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Zep. 1:1; Zec. 1:1). Like the fact that John was Spirit-filled from conception (1:15), this formula also places him squarely in the role of a prophet. Yet John was more than just a prophet (7:24-28); he was the eschatological prophet predicted by Isaiah who would prepare the way for the messianic age (Cf. Is. 40:3-5). Like the prophets before him, John preached that his hearers should, "Turn to God!"³⁸

Baptism was not unknown to the Jews, since ritual immersion baths were practiced for purification before entering the Temple Mount as well as for other similar religious purposes. Also, the Jews practiced proselyte baptisms for those who converted to Judaism.³⁹ Thus, when John began preaching baptism as a sign of repentance with a view toward forgiveness, many of his hearers responded eagerly (3:21a).

Luke also provides his readers with a sample of John's preaching, and he gives more detail than the other synoptics. In addition to warning his Jewish listeners not to

³⁷ The internal coherence of the lengthy formula is not to be questioned, cf. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1963) 166-167. However, there are still some difficulties in fixing the date precisely, depending upon which calendar and method is used, and the dates vary from about AD 25 through AD 29, Cf. H. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) 29-38; Caird, 71.

³⁸ The word group derived from *metanoeo* (= turn, repent, change one's way of thinking) is closely related to the Hebrew *shuv* (= to turn, return, go back), the commonest Hebrew verb for repentance in the OT, cf. W. Quanbeck, *IDB* (1962) IV.33. In John's preaching, to repent meant to turn from sin and to turn toward God, Cf. G. Snyder, *IDBSup* (1976) 738.

³⁹ see the very informative archaeological evidence for Jewish baptismal practices in W. La Sor, "Discovering What Jewish Miqva'ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism," *BAR* (Jan./Feb. 1987 XIII.1) 52-59.

put too much weight upon their Jewishness (3:7-9), John also proclaimed a social message of benevolence, honesty, and fairness (3:10-14). Some even wondered if perhaps John himself was the promised messiah (3:15). But as is consistent in all four gospels, John was careful to disclaim himself as the one who was promised. John was a baptizer with water, but the one yet to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (3:15-16). This good news of the promised Holy Spirit was a way of talking about the advent of the Messianic Age. In the visions of the prophets, the messianic activity of the Spirit was to be concentrated upon a unique, charismatic leader (i.e., Is. 11:1; 42:1; 48:16; 61:1), and beyond that, upon the messianic community (Jl. 2:28-29). In Luke's account, Jesus is shown to be this leader in a sequence of narratives which are connected by the common element of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ He was both the bearer and dispenser of the Spirit.

- 1) John predicts that the bearer of the Spirit is coming (3:16).
- 2) The Spirit descends upon Jesus at his baptism (3:22)
- 3) Jesus' public ministry is empowered by the Spirit (4:1, 14, 18).

Luke will later show that the baptism with the Spirit had its historical fulfilment on the Day of Pentecost (Ac.1:4-5; 2:1-4, 33).

In Luke, John's preaching career ends with his imprisonment by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, after John had denounced Herod's famous marriage to Herodias, the wife of his brother (cf. Lk. 18:16).⁴¹

The Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22)

The baptism of Jesus receives a rather different emphasis in Luke than in the other gospels.⁴² Luke's emphasis is upon Jesus' prayer. The descent of the Spirit while he was praying empowered him to be the messiah (3:22; Ps. 2:7) and the Isaianic Servant of Yahweh (3:22; Is. 42:1; cf. Lk.4:18)⁴³

⁴⁰ Stronstad, 24-27, 39.

⁴¹ According to Josephus, Herod had originally married the daughter of Aretas from Arabia, but on a visit to Rome he had stayed with his half-brother and became enamored with Herodias, his half-brother's wife, whom he persuaded to leave her husband and come to him, Cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII.v.l.

⁴² Matthew is concerned with why Jesus was baptized, since he was sinless (Mt. 3:15); Mark is concerned with the empowering of Jesus to do battle with Satan, and it is in the baptism and temptation that Jesus "binds the strong man" (cf. Mk. 3:22-27); John uses the baptism and descent of the Spirit to confirm to the Baptist that Jesus was the messiah (1:31-34), cf. Talbert, 39-40.

⁴³ The divine voice which spoke at Jesus' baptism uttered a composite quotation of Ps. 2:7 and Is. 42:1, and in so doing, it tied together the coronation formula of the Davidic messiah and the ordination formula of the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah, cf. A. Hunter, *The Work and Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950) 37.

The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38)

Jesus began his public ministry at about thirty years of age, possibly an indication of his maturity for ministry (cf. Nu. 4:1-3, 47; 8:23-24; 2 Sa. 5:4). His descent was traced back through David, Abraham and Adam, a genealogy which would effectively relate Jesus to the royal line of the kings of Judah, the Jewish family, and the entire human race.⁴⁴ The designation of Adam as the son of God (3:38) implies his direct creation by God, and it connects the First Adam, who was the universal father of the human race, with Jesus, the Second Adam, whose coming would have universal significance.⁴⁵

The Temptation in the Desert (4:1-13)

As is well known, Luke puts the order of the temptations differently than Matthew, probably so as to have them climax at Jerusalem in keeping with his emphasis on the geographical significance of the city.⁴⁶ Luke makes the reader conscious of the fact that while temptation comes from the Slanderer,⁴⁷ it is also allowed by God, for Jesus was led “by the Spirit into the desert” where he was tempted, and after the temptation, he returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk. 4:1, 14).

Several things should be noted about the temptations. The first and third challenge Jesus’ identity as the Son of God (4:3, 9). All three entice him to succumb to the illicit use of power. The proper interpretation of Scripture is important, for even the devil can parrot passages to buttress his temptations. Even more important, all three temptations are unified by the three quotations from Deuteronomy, each derived from passages which describe the Israelites in the desert who were put to the test and failed (Dt. 8:3; 6:13; 6:16). But where the old Israel failed in the desert, Jesus did not! He was the embodiment of all that the old Israel was meant to be.⁴⁸ When the temptations were finished, the Slanderer left Jesus temporarily, though this implies that he would be back in the future (4:13).

The Rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30)

After the temptation, Jesus left Jerusalem and returned to his home province of

⁴⁴ Attempts to harmonize the genealogy between Matthew and Luke suffer from insufficient data. The most probable line is that Luke provides Jesus’ human ancestry while Matthew Jesus’ legal ancestry of heirs to the throne of David, but it is only fair to say that the lack of evidence makes all solutions tentative, cf. I. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke [NIGTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 157-165

⁴⁵ N. Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 153.

⁴⁶ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (rpt. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 27. In Matthew, the order is stones, temple, kingdoms; in Luke it is stones, kingdoms, temple.

⁴⁷ Luke consistently uses the term *diabolos* (= slanderer) for the devil.

⁴⁸ Fitzmyer, 510-511.

Galilee. Here, the bulk of Jesus' public ministry would be carried out, and Luke emphasizes Jesus' many preaching excursions into the Galilean villages (4:15, 31, 43-44) as well as his increasing fame (4:15b, 32, 36-37, 42).

At his home synagogue, Jesus was selected as a Sabbath reader.⁴⁹ Unrolling the scroll of Isaiah, he found the passages in 61:1-2a and 58:6b and read the words concerning the Servant of Yahweh, the eschatological figure who dominates Isaiah 40-66. It is noteworthy that the reading stopped in mid-sentence, omitting the saying about judgment. Then Jesus sat down for the exposition.⁵⁰ Up to this point, he had not departed from customary procedure. The congregation sat expectantly, awaiting his comments on the passage, when Jesus exclaimed, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!" It was obvious that Jesus was speaking about himself! Amazement was followed by incredulity, doubt and then rejection. In the end, they tried to destroy him for blasphemy, but for reasons not explained, Jesus walked calmly away.

Healings, Exorcisms and Preaching (4:31-44)

Luke now sketches in Jesus' early ministry. From Nazareth, he went to the fishing village of Capernaum, where he exorcised a demon on the sabbath. While there, he healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law of a severe fever, and in the evening, healed a crowd of various sick folk who had gathered. Those who were demonized were forbidden to publicly recognize him (4:35, 41), for like Mark (Mk. 1:25, 34, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26; 9:9), Luke shows that Jesus was at pains to keep his messianic identity a secret, probably due to the popular conception of messiahship as a political venture, a conception which did not at all fit with Jesus' mission. Though many attempted to monopolize his ministry, Jesus would not be deterred from preaching in a wide range of synagogues.

The Sermon on the Plain (5-6)

The close of Luke 4, which provides a sketch of the early ministry of Jesus, flows directly into the narratives of Luke 5-6, which continue this same theme. There are three general groupings of stories within Luke 5-6, stories about the calling of disciples, stories which point toward the lordship and authority of Jesus, and the account of the sermon on the plain.

⁴⁹ There were two readings in the synagogue service, one from Torah and the other from the Prophets. Since the readings were in Hebrew (which was imperfectly understood by most lay persons who spoke either Greek or Aramaic), a running translation was provided with an accompanying sermon, of. E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 461.

⁵⁰ The reading of Scripture in the synagogue service was performed while standing, but the exposition/exhortation was performed while seated, cf. Fitzmyer, 533.

Calling Disciples (5:1-11, 27-32; 6:12-16)

Early in his ministry, Jesus began choosing special individuals from among the listening crowd in order for them to be attached to him more closely. Luke's favorite description for Jesus, *epistates* (= master), suggests that these chosen followers were to be in a teacher-learner relationship⁵¹ as does the term *mathetes* (= disciple, pupil, learner).⁵² Contrary to popular belief, the term disciple is much broader than the term apostle, and this is evident in that Jesus called Simon, James, John and Levi to follow him (5:10-11, 27-28) before he ever commissioned them as apostles (6:14-15).⁵³ In fact, the Twelve Apostles were chosen out of the larger company of disciples (6:13).

The calling of Jesus' first disciples occurred just following a public teaching session (5:1-3). After finishing, Jesus demonstrated his authority and power by assisting some fishermen in a miraculous catch of fish.⁵⁴ He called upon some of them to follow him as evangelists (5:4-11). Similarly, Jesus chose a toll collector named Levi⁵⁵ and attended a great banquet at his house where he emphasized that his mission was toward sinners, such as the guests who were there (5:27-32).⁵⁶ Still later, after a full night of prayer, Jesus designated twelve of his disciples to be apostles (6:12-16), a relationship that was closer yet than that of the other disciples.⁵⁷ The number twelve was highly significant, and it is probable that it carried a symbolic value, since these men functioned as a nucleus for the new community of faith, just as did the twelve sons of Jacob for the old community of Israel.⁵⁸

⁵¹Luke is the only evangelist to use the title *epistates* (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13), and he uses it as an alternative to the Hebrew-Aramaic *rhabbi* (= rabbi, teacher), probably since the term was more understandable to his gentile readers, *TDNT* (1964) II.622-623.

⁵²In rabbinic Judaism, a disciple was one who devoted himself to learning Scripture and the religious tradition passed on through his teacher. A disciple would eventually himself become a teacher after the proper period of listening and learning, cf. R. Meye, *ISBE* (1979) I. 947. The term *mathetes* (= disciple), used more than 260 times in the gospels and Acts, has various usages. Luke seems to use the term primarily to refer to adherents to a leader (in this case, Jesus) and/or believers in Jesus (so used 22 times in Acts), cf. P. Parker, *IDB* (1962) I.845.

⁵³Only Matthew of the four evangelists uses the expression "the 12 disciples" (10:1; 11:1; 20:17).

⁵⁴The hull of a 2000 year-old fishing boat was discovered in Galilee in 1986 by archaeologists. It is probably the type used by Jesus and his disciples in their many crossings of the Galilean lake, cf. S. Wachsmann, "The Galilee Boat -- 2000-Year-Old Hull Recovered Intact," *BAR* (Sept./Oct. 1988 XIV.5) 18-33.

⁵⁵Levi is probably the same as Matthew inasmuch as the parallel account reads Matthew rather than Levi (Mt. 9:9; 10:3).

⁵⁶The expression "tax collectors and sinners" (5:30) was intended to be a stigma. Tax collectors were considered to be collaborators with Rome and traitors to the Jewish national cause. Sinners were the *'am ha-erets*, the people of the land, who generally failed to uphold the narrow Pharisaic and tight definitions of Torah and the Oral Law.

⁵⁷The term *apostolos*, an adjectival noun from a verb meaning "to send off," denotes a commissioned messenger or ambassador. Luke uses the term to refer to these specific 12 men that Jesus chose to represent him (cf. 22:14; Ac. 1:26), and later, he also uses it to refer to missionaries who were not part of this group (cf. Ac. 14:14).

⁵⁸J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1971) 234.

The Lordship and Authority of Jesus (5:12-26, 33-39; 6:1-11)

The idea of lordship in the ancient world denoted authority, and depending upon how it was used, could mean "owner" (as used by a slave), "sir" (as used by an inferior to a superior), or "deity" (as a title added to a deity's name). When Jesus claimed to be lord of the sabbath (6:5), he was in effect claiming to have authority over the divine institution of the sabbath. Similarly, when Peter addressed Jesus as lord, he was showing deference because he recognized Jesus as a superior. This was also true of the leper (5:12).⁵⁹ In several narratives, Luke demonstrates that Jesus held authority over sickness, sin, and religion. In particular, he challenged his followers to recognize his lordship by obeying him (6:46).

Authority Over Sickness (5:12-16)

Leprosy⁶⁰ was a dreaded disease in the ancient world. In one of the villages, Jesus healed a leper who begged for his help. He touched him, a gesture that is in itself a significant act, given the normal isolation of lepers.⁶¹ Though Jesus instructed the leper not to spread around the news about his cure,⁶² the fame of Jesus' power spread rapidly so that crowds of sick people came to him for healing. Jesus, for his part, often prayed in lonely places away from the crowds.

Authority Over Sin (5:17-26)

On another occasion, some men brought a paralyzed friend to Jesus by the ingenious method of lowering him through the tiling on the roof so as to avoid the masses of people. According to the rabbis, no sick person was healed until his sins were forgiven.⁶³ Jesus' opening words were, "Your sins are forgiven!" To the professional clergy, this was tantamount to blasphemy. C. S. Lewis is quite correct when he remarks that unless the speaker is God, such a claim is really so preposterous as to be comic.⁶⁴

To the objections of the onlookers, Jesus posed a simple but double-edged question. Is it easier to pronounce forgiveness or to put your reputation on the line by

⁵⁹The title *kyrie* (= lord) in the vocative mood (5:8) is roughly equivalent to the title "sir."

⁶⁰The term leprosy refers to a fairly extensive class of skin diseases for which those who were afflicted were banished from society (Lv. 13:45-46), cf. R. Harrison, *NIDNTT* (1976) II.463-466. Since lepers were not allowed to enter Jerusalem (and probably other cities as well), they obtained shelter from the weather under the city gates, cf. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 117.

⁶¹W. Liefeld, "Luke," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) VIII.878.

⁶²The instruction to see a priest is in keeping with the ancient laws of health inspection in Torah (Lv. 13:1-46; 14:1-32).

⁶³E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 104.

⁶⁴C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952) 55.

calling for a healing? The answer, of course, is that it is much easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," than to say, "Get up and walk." In forgiveness there is no external factor that can be tangibly verified, but for healing, if the sick person does not get up, then the purported healer is a fraud. Jesus, of course, was able to both heal and forgive. His authority extended over both sin and sickness.

Authority Over Religion (5:33-39; 6:1-11)

The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish theologians only deepened as his ministry continued. Not only did Jesus assume the divine authority to forgive sins, he assumed authority over religious practice. Pharisaic Judaism had built a fence around Torah by adding cautionary rules so that a person would be halted before he/she was even close to a breach of the law.⁶⁵ Since Torah restricted work on the sabbath, labor such as harvesting, and in this case even the act of plucking heads of grain and rubbing them in one's hands, was forbidden.⁶⁶ Jesus, however, defended his disciples' actions by pointing out that even the law must be allowed some flexibility (cf. Lv. 24:5-9; 1 Sa. 21:3-6). In any case, he was the lord of the sabbath -- another stupendous claim, particularly since the sabbath had been instituted by Yahweh.

On another occasion, when confronted on the sabbath by a man with a crippled hand, he foiled his enemies' efforts to accuse him by asking a simple question (6:9). Is it legal to do good or evil on the sabbath? Without so much as touching the man (possibly so that he could not be accused of "working" on the sabbath), he simply said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." Such a statement could have been made to anyone for any number of reasons, but in this case, the man was immediately healed, much to the chagrin of Jesus' enemies.

Jesus gave a striking parable⁶⁷ of the rigidity of Pharisaic religion (5:33-39). The traditional religion was like an old garment or an old wineskin. If a new patch of unshrunk cloth had been sewed onto an old piece of clothing, it would make the problem even worse when it shrunk, for it would make the tear worse. If fresh wine was poured into brittle skins, they would burst. Similarly, Jesus' new approach to religion would not fit into the old forms of traditionalism, and in fact, people are rarely open to change. "The old is better," they say.

⁶⁵D. Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965) 65.

⁶⁶Marshall, *Commentary*, 231.

⁶⁷A parable, at its simplest level, is a metaphor or a simile drawn from nature or common life. Jesus used parables to arrest his hearers and to tease their minds into active thought, cf. C. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1936) 16.

The Great Sermon (6:17-49)⁶⁸

Luke's sermon on the plain is paralleled by Matthew's sermon on the mount (Mt. 5-7), though Luke's version is shorter and contains some variations. Besides curing illnesses and exorcising evil spirits, Jesus taught his audience about life under the reign of God.

The Blessings and Woes (6:17-26)

The sermon begins with a series of blessings and woes. God's favor will be shown toward the poor, the powerless and the persecuted. Warning is issued for the rich and the prominent. These statements take the accepted values of the world and reverse them. What would normally be called wretched, Jesus calls happy! The point of this reversal is that the present life is not to be considered as final. Instead, it is only the first phase of existence. There is a future existence in which the rewards will be great (6:23).

Loving Others (6:27-36)

The reversal of values in the kingdom of God must not be limited to merely one's physical circumstances in life. It must also be extended to one's actions in life. Love for others must be shown to those who hate you, curse you, mistreat you, accuse you,⁶⁹ and defraud you. Generosity to those who do not deserve it, and kindness toward those who are ungrateful and antagonistic is a reflection of God's grace toward all people (6:35b-36).

Judging Others: (6:37-42)

Judgmentalism and condemnation must give place to forgiveness. Just as Jesus offered forgiveness to sinners and compassion to the untouchables, so his followers, if they were to be good learners, must follow the pattern of their teacher (6:40). Critical attitudes must be turned inward toward self-examination, not outward toward the faults of others (6:41-42).

⁶⁸The question is often posed, "Did Jesus preach his great sermon on a mountain or on a plain?" (Mt. 5:1; Lk. 6:17). It is certainly plausible that he had earlier been higher up in the mountains (Lk. 6:12) and came down into a plateau, cf. C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1987) 149. It is equally plausible that the sermon, besides describing what Jesus said on a particular occasion, collects together various sayings of the Lord which he made on other occasions and in more than one sermon, A. Hunter, *A Pattern for Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) 11. John Calvin thought as much, cf. J. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1978) 22. Finally, it would not be unlikely for Jesus to have preached more than one sermon with approximately the same content.

⁶⁹The striking of a person on the cheek (6:29) -- a back-handed blow -- was more than a simple insult. It was the insulting blow given to persons who were charged with heresy, cf. J. Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, trans. N. Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963) 28-29.

Bearing Fruit (6:43-45)

The essential goodness of a person will be demonstrated by his/her speech patterns. Harsh judgments and antagonistic attitudes, like rotten fruit, come from bad trees and bad lives. The inverse is true as well.

The Parable of the Builders (6:46-49)

The real test of life will be God's judgment at the end which will come upon every person like a deluge. The person who only hears but does nothing to implement Jesus' pattern for living will be like a fool who builds his house in the sand of a desert wadi. His life will be destroyed by a flashflood. The wise person, on the other hand, builds against the storm with a foundation in bedrock. He/she is the one who not only hears the words of the Teacher but also puts them into practice.

The Anointing (7:1-8:39)

In the second document of Luke-Acts, Luke records a sermon by Peter in which the big fisherman described the ministry of Jesus as follows: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and...he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him" (Ac. 10:38). The cluster of stories in Luke 7 and 8 closely fit this description. They describe more of Jesus' miracles, some of his parables, and several encounters and relationships he had with others during the course of his public preaching.

Miracles (7:1-17; 8:22-39)

The miracles of Jesus should not be detached from his teaching, for his miracles were often enough an expression of his ideals, and in particular, they called attention to his identity as the messiah. In Luke, the miracles of Jesus generated profound awe and amazement, and they implicitly or explicitly raised the question, "Who is this?" (8:25b).

The Centurion's Slave (7:1-10)

The healing of the Roman officer's slave⁷⁰ provided a great lesson on lordship and faith, and it expresses well the universality of Jesus' message as well as the Lukan desire to put the Romans in a favorable light. That the centurion was recommended to Jesus by Jewish elders is remarkable, because although he was not a Jew, he was benevolent toward the Jewish people. This rare quality is similar to that of Cornelius (Ac. 10:1-2). That Jesus was not hesitant to minister to gentiles also

⁷⁰ A centurion was a Roman commander of a hundred men (a "century") within the larger unit of a legion. He drilled his men, inspected their arms, food, and clothing, and generally commanded them in the camp and in the field, cf. T. Nicol, *ISBE* (1979) 1.629.

suggests the international scope of his mission. Finally, just as remarkable as the centurion's love for the Jewish people was his respect for the authority of Jesus, and this recognition of Jesus' lordship by a gentile is defined as "great faith."

The Widow's Son (7:11-17)

There are only three persons whom Jesus is described as raising from the dead, Lazarus (Jn. 11), Jairus' daughter (the synoptics), and the widow's son at Nain (Lk. 7). The latter two are both in Luke, and prominent in both narratives is the compassion of Jesus. Jesus' concern throughout is for the mother, and the miracle is an act of mercy as much as an act of power. For the observers, it was another occasion for profound awe.

It is of interest to note that the phrase "gave him back to his mother" is identical to a phrase in 1 Kg. 17:23, where Elijah raised to life another widow's son. The response of the people, "A great prophet has appeared among us" reinforces the parallelism of the two accounts.⁷¹

The Storm (8:22-25)

The geographical character of the Sea of Galilee, with its elevation of 696' below sea level rising to mountains of 2000' and more, makes it susceptible to squalls and violent storms. Cold air is funneled downward through the mountain gorges where it reacts with the hot air on the lake's surface.⁷² Such a storm occurred just as Jesus and his disciples were crossing the lake. The miracle of the calming of the storm again leads to the response of deep amazement and the fundamental question of all the gospels, this time explicit rather than implicit, "Who is this?"

The Demoniac at Gerasa (8:26-39)

It is not unlikely that the stories of the calming of the storm and the healing of the demoniac are thematically connected in the sense that they both describe Jesus' authority over chaos, the one being chaos within nature and the other being chaos within human life. The site of the exorcism is on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee in the predominantly gentile region known as the Decapolis.⁷³ Characterized by

⁷¹ E. Tinsley, *The Gospel According to Luke [CBC]* (London: Cambridge, 1965) 75.

⁷² W. Buehler, *ISBE* (1982) 11.392.

⁷³ The textual problem between "the Gerasenes" (p75, Vaticanus), "the Gergesenes" (Sinaiticus), "the Gadarenes" (Alexandrinus), and the fact that these variations also appear in the other synoptics makes this a complex but well-known problem. Both the cities of Gerasa and Gadara lie east of Galilee, but too far from the lake for this narrative (about 30 and 5 miles respectively). It is not unlikely that there is a spelling problem which, while clear enough to the original writers, became ambiguous to later scribes, cf. Blomberg, 149-150.

The trip to the Decapolis, the area named after the federation of 10 Greek cities in the area, was yet another overture of Jesus toward gentiles. That there were swine herders in the area reinforces the fact of a non-Jewish

violence and insanity, the demoniac lived naked among the tombs. But he immediately recognized Jesus!⁷⁴

This recognition of Jesus by demon spirits (cf. 4:34) suggests that in the realm of spiritual truth, the demons were far more perceptive than humans. Jesus had come out of the invisible, eternal, divine realm in order to invade the forces of evil (11:21-22). His powers of exorcism were visible signs of the inauguration of the kingdom of God (11:20). It may even be that demon possession was a phenomena that occurred on a much greater scale during the public ministry of Jesus than at other times, precisely because Jesus had come to destroy the works of the devil (cf. 1 Jn. 3:8).⁷⁵

At their request, Jesus allowed the demons to go into a herd of pigs which subsequently destroyed themselves in the lake. Whether or not this implies that demons seek bodily possession is a moot question,⁷⁶ but it is clear that the intent of the Evil One is to destroy (of. Jn. 10:10). When the curious came to see, they found the former demoniac clothed and sane. The people of the area were so frightened by what had happened that they asked Jesus to leave. Breaking his normal pattern of calling for the restored man to keep his recovery to himself, a pattern that Jesus consistently followed in the regions of Jewry, Jesus instructed the man to witness to his own people about his recovery. It is likely that there was less chance of an incorrect messianic misunderstanding in non-Jewish areas.

Two Parables (8:1-18)

The importance of parables may be gauged by the fact that more than a third of Jesus' recorded teaching is to be found in this genre.⁷⁷ The word *parabole* (= parable) means a comparison, an analogy or a figurative saying. It could be in the form of a simile (i.e., "be wise as serpents"), a metaphor (i.e., "beware of the yeast of the Pharisees"), or the expansion of either into a full story (i.e., "the kingdom is like a man who..." or "there was a certain man who..."). Jesus' parables were drawn from daily life in Palestine, and they were intended to enlighten Jesus' followers as to the true nature of the kingdom of God while at the same time hide this truth from those who were determined to reject him (8:9-10).

population.

⁷⁴ The name Legion idiomatically means a very large number, and in the Roman army, a Legion was a main division comprising between 4000 and 6000 soldiers, R. Gordon, *NBD* (1982) 692.

⁷⁵ N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 174.

⁷⁶ Actually, the modern distinction between being "possessed" and "oppressed" has no basis in the Greek NT. The Greek word is *daimonizomai* (= to be demonized) or *echein daimonion* (= to have a demon), cf. M. Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 130-131.

⁷⁷ In Luke this is especially true, where some 52% of Jesus' teaching is parabolic, of. A. Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 7.

The Sower (8:1-15)

Typical of farming in Palestine, where sowing precedes plowing, Jesus told the story of a farmer who sowed seed in various kinds of soil. The underlying limestone, thinly covered with soil, is hardly visible until the plow jars against it. The farmer intentionally sowed among the withered thorns in the fallow as well as along the path, since they too would be plowed up.⁷⁸ The various kinds of soil yielded various kinds of results. The good ground, however, brought forth a bumper crop, since normally even a 10% yield was considered good.⁷⁹

This parable allows the reader to hear Jesus thinking out loud about the ups and downs of his Galilean ministry. Different people responded in different ways. Nonetheless, the message of the kingdom was eagerly received, and in the end, it would produce a great harvest!⁸⁰

The Lamp (8:16-18)

It may well be that this parable has an element of the tongue-in-cheek with its statement, “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a pot or puts it under a bed!”⁸¹ As this parable demonstrates, the kingdom is to be preached boldly, and when it is, it convicts those who listen from their hearts. To those who reject it, the refusal to receive the truth mars what little spiritual discernment they possess.

Encounters and Relationships (7:18-50; 8:1-3. 19-21)

In two lengthy and two short pericopes, Luke describes Jesus’ encounters with people during his preaching tours. Each narrative helps to round out the picture of Jesus and his message.

Jesus and John (7:18-35)

The Baptist had been languishing in Herod’s prison for some time now (3:19-20). In sending his disciples to Jesus, John was concerned that he had not been mistaken about his endorsement of Jesus. If Jesus was truly the messiah, might he not do something for his faithful colleague? But Jesus’ response was that John must take no offense. The poor were privileged to receive miracles, but for John there was to be no miracle. He must be content to rejoice in the blessing of others. His ministry, like that of the Old Testament prophets, went unheeded by those in power. As the last

⁷⁸ J. Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (New York: Scribners, 1966) 9-10.

⁷⁹ Hunter, *Interpreting*, 47.

⁸⁰ It is of interest to note that the parable of the sower is also to be found in the gnostic *Gospel According to Thomas*, 9.

⁸¹ Luke has used the general term *skeuos* (= vessel), so he may have in mind a pot or a jar or some other such utensil.

envoy of the old era, he could not participate fully in the new one (7:28). Still, though John belonged to the old era and Jesus to the new, they had in common the fact that the religious leaders rejected them both (7:30-32), John because he was too rigorous (7:24-25, 33) and Jesus because he was not rigorous enough (7:34). In the end, the wisdom of those who accepted John and Jesus would be shown to be justified (7:35)!

The Anointing by a Sinful Woman (7:36-50)

The wealthier village homes in Palestine were built around a courtyard, and in warmer weather, meals were taken there. Even if meals were taken inside, the doors were left open. All sorts of people were apt to come and go, some to beg food and others to listen to the wisdom of the learned.⁸² On one occasion during the course of a meal with a Pharisee, while they were reclining in oriental fashion, a woman stood behind Jesus, wetting his feet with her tears and then wiping them dry with her hair. She kissed his feet and perfumed them. Simon the Pharisee was indignant. In his mind, he criticized Jesus for not knowing that the woman was a sinner.⁸³ Jesus responded with a parable of two debtors, one who owed a considerable sum and the other who owed a modest sum. Both had their debts cancelled.

The parable is particularly lucid in its demonstration that the person who has experienced the greater forgiveness is the one who expresses the greater gratitude. Simon certainly had no gratitude. He had not even bestowed upon Jesus the customs appropriate for an honored guest, and his callousness betrayed the poverty of his love. To the woman, Jesus spoke the astounding words, “Your sins are forgiven” (of. 5:20), words that, like the miracles, led to the fundamental question, “Who is this?”

Women Disciples (8:1-3)

Only Luke informs us that several women disciples also traveled with Jesus during his preaching tours. Though he violated no proprieties, this practice was a radical breaking of the barriers of tradition and custom regarding the social position of women, who were allowed no participation in public life.⁸⁴ It is doubtless that only Jesus’ uncompromising stand for chastity made possible such a practice without grave suspicion. But while Jesus’ detractors were willing to accuse him of drunkenness, gluttony, and sabbath violations, they never once accused him of immorality.

Jesus’ Family (8:19-21)

In all three synoptics, the account is recorded of Jesus’ mother and brothers

⁸² W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 94; Caird, 114.

⁸³ It is popular to assume that the woman was a prostitute, and while this is not unlikely, the text does not say so.

⁸⁴ See the discussion on the social position of women and the implications of Jesus’ attitude, of. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 359-376.

(Mk. 6:3) who came to speak with him. Mark even adds the sinister charge that they thought he might have become mentally deranged (Mk. 3:21). But similar to the Johannine account of the marriage at Cana, Jesus makes clear that his family had no part in directing his ministry (Jn. 2:4). His true family were his disciples.

The Transfiguration (8:40--9:62)

Luke now reaches a critical juncture in his recounting of the life and ministry of Jesus. As pointed out earlier, there is a single, fundamental question that lies behind all the gospels, the question, "Who is Jesus?" Luke has repeatedly pointed the way to the answer, though so far in his narrative, he has not explicitly developed a response, at least on the lips of Jesus' followers. The question has been posed many times, however. Most of the occasions have been implicit, but in a few instances it has been explicit. It has been suggested by:

- 1) The prenatal response of John and his mother Elizabeth to Jesus (1:41-43)
- 2) The angelic annunciation to shepherds at the nativity (2:8-14)
- 3) Mary's deep meditation regarding the events surrounding the birth and youth of her child (1:46-49; 2:19, 51)
- 4) The descent of the dove and the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism (3:22)
- 5) The immediate recognition of Jesus by demons (4:3, 9, 34, 41; 8:28)
- 6) The boldness of Jesus to pronounce forgiveness for sins (5:20; 7:48)
- 7) The power of Jesus to heal and even to raise the dead (7:14-15)
- 8) The control of Jesus over nature (8:24-25)

All these events and more suggest to the reader that he/she is being exposed to not merely a wonder worker, not to another *theios aner* (= divine man) of the sort which were already plentiful enough in the ancient world,⁸⁵ but to someone far greater. In this next section of stories, Luke intends to give the reader a climactic answer to the fundamental question, "Who is Jesus?" In this section, there will appear added miracle stories, but more important, an explicit declaration of Jesus' messianic identity. Further, it will not only be important to know that Jesus is the Messiah, it will be profoundly important to know the nature and character of his messiahship, particularly since it cuts across the more popular conceptions among Jewry.

⁸⁵In the Greco-Roman world, there were various wandering *theioi andres* (= divine men) who, at least according to popular thought, exhibited transcendent power by which they performed miracles, healings and exorcisms, cf. Johnson, 29-30.

Further Miracles (8:40-56; 9:10-17, 37-43a)

Jairus' Daughter and the Woman with the Hemorrhage (8:40-56)

In all three synoptics, the miracles of the raising of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman with the chronic hemorrhage are described together. Like Mark and Matthew, Luke has begun the first narrative and then "sandwiched" the second narrative so that the first narrative frames the second which is within it. This technique serves to magnify both events. Caird is certainly correct when he says that, given the antagonism against Jesus by the larger body of religious leaders, for one of their number to profess faith in Jesus' power must have taken tremendous courage.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Jairus, a synagogue elder, pleaded with Jesus to cure his dying daughter. By the time Jesus arrived at the house, the girl was dead. The professional mourners were already wailing with full vigor,⁸⁷ so Jesus shut them out and took with him only his inner circle (Peter, James and John) and the child's parents. After he had raised her to life, Jesus forbade the witnesses to tell what they had seen.

Interjected into the above narrative is yet a second healing, this time for a woman who pressed through the crowd to merely touch Jesus' robe. In doing so, she was cured of her twelve year malady.⁸⁸ Her touch, like Jesus' willingness to make physical contact with lepers and the dead, was ceremonially defiling to him. Nevertheless, Jesus did not rebuke her. Of interest is the fact that the cures which Jesus performed seemed to cost him something in spiritual energy, so much so that he was acutely aware when his resources of power had been tapped.⁸⁹

Feeding the 5000 (9:10-17)

The miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes has the rare distinction of being recorded in all four gospels. In Jewish theology, one of the symbols for the messianic age was the Great Banquet, the coronation feast of God (Is. 25:6-9).⁹⁰ Now, once more outside the region of Herod Antipas (Bethsaida was in the jurisdiction of Herod Philip), Jesus anticipated the Great Messianic Banquet by miraculously feeding

⁸⁶Caird, 123.

⁸⁷Lamentation and other funeral rites were as imperative as burial. Professional mourners, who mourned for pay, were experts in the rituals of lamentation, and probably due to their greater sensitivity, women mourners predominated, cf. E. Jacob, *IDB* (1962) III.452-545.

⁸⁸It is probable that her illness was menorrhagia, a continuous menstration, and according to Torah, this would leave her perpetually unclean and ostracize her from her own people (cf. Lv. 15:25-31).

⁸⁹Caird, 124.

⁹⁰Sometimes the Jews even speculated about the menu, suggesting that it might include meat (from the bodies of Behemoth and Leviathan), fruit, manna, grapes and wine (2 Baruch 29:48; 4 Ezra 6:52).

the huge crowd.⁹¹

The Messianic Identity (9:7-9, 18-22, 28-43a)

Peter's Great Confession (9:7-9, 18-22)

Herod, who had heard of Jesus' public ministry and was fascinated to the point of trying to see him, posed the same question as everyone else, "Who is this?" (9:9). Finally the question that has been hinted at in virtually every story recounted so far is directly put forward by Jesus to his disciples. "Who do the crowds say I am?" and of course even more important, "But what about you, who do you say I am?" Demons recognized Jesus immediately, but the crowds still speculated that Jesus might be an ancient prophet or even John the Baptist, none of which were strictly messianic identifications. This lack of perception, of course, was augmented by Jesus' persistent refusal to sensationalize his ministry. Peter, as a spokesman for the group, responded with the great confession, "[You are] the Messiah of God!" It is obvious that Luke invites his readers to concur. At the same time, it is extremely significant that Jesus, once the correct answer had been given, immediately began to distance himself from the more popular concepts of messiahship.⁹² Once the confession was made, he directed the disciples toward the nature and character of his messiahship which would climax with suffering, rejection, death and resurrection.

The Transfiguration (9:28-36)

The transfiguration, which occurred some eight days later, reinforced Peter's conclusion. Once more taking with him the inner circle, Jesus ascended a mountain to pray.⁹³ During his prayer, his appearance changed and his clothes became radiant. Moses and Elijah, the two most prominent Old Testament representatives of the law and the prophets, appeared and spoke with Jesus about his exodus.⁹⁴ Peter,

⁹¹If Luke is following the order of Mark's Gospel, which many scholars think, he passes over some nine stories found in Mk. 6:45--8:26, a feature that has earned the label "the great omission." Why Luke omitted this material, which features a circular tour cutting further into Gentile territory, can only be guessed at. For discussions, see Drury, 96-102; Fitzmyer, 770-771.

⁹²A variety of messianic pretenders had come and gone in the decades previous to Jesus, most of them political and materialistic in outlook. While there is certainly continuity between the messianic ideals of the OT and Jewish thought, it is also fair to say that Jesus shattered almost every popular messianic expectation in his renunciation of power, and particularly, in his suffering and death, cf. R. Klein, "Aspects of Intertestamental Messianism," *The Bible in Its Literary Milieu*, ed. J. Maier and V. Tollers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 191-203.

⁹³From Mark's Gospel, which puts Jesus in the region of Caesarea Philippi, it is usually concluded that the mountain is Mt. Hermon.

⁹⁴It is likely that Luke has deliberately spoken of Jesus' departure as an *exodos* (= the LXX word for exodus) so as to intentionally parallel the two liberating events of salvation-history. At Jerusalem, Jesus would fulfil a new exodus.

overwhelmed and disoriented by the sight, offered to lead the group in erecting three booths in which to enshrine the glory of the moment, similar to the Tent in the Desert which housed the glory of Yahweh. But he was interrupted by a voice from heaven which repeated the words that had been said at Jesus' baptism. Here the messiahship of Jesus is qualified. Yes, Jesus is the Messiah, but he is also God's Son, the Chosen One! To understand his messiahship on any other grounds is to misunderstand it!

An Exorcism (9:37-43a)

Upon descending the mountain, Jesus and the inner circle discovered a demonized boy whose father had brought him to the other disciples for deliverance. Though this is also a miracle story, the central point of the story is Jesus' declaration, "How long shall I stay with you?"⁹⁵ The ministry of Jesus must now escalate, for the interval before his arrival at Jerusalem would be short.

The Disciples and the Messianic Mission (9:1-6, 23-27, 43b-62)

If Jesus was the Messiah, and if he had chosen the Twelve Apostles to form the nucleus of a new people of God, his disciples were then expected to participate in the messianic mission. Several stories explain the nature of this mission and the character Jesus expected from his missionaries.

The Sending of the Twelve (9:1-6)

Jesus sent the apostles out to preach the good news of God's reign, and he gave them authority to cure the sick and to exorcise demons. It is axiomatic that this tour in Galilee was a prelude to their mission to the world, which would be detailed in the Book of Acts. During their tour, they were to avoid being mercenary, entrusting their sustenance to those to whom they preached. At the same time, they were to act out a symbol of judgment against those who rejected their message by shaking the dust from their sandals, a gesture that usually was reserved as a rebuke against pagans and which was repeated later by Christian missionaries (cf. Ac. 13:51).

The Cost of Discipleship (9:23-27, 43b-45, 57-62)

If Jesus' messiahship was to be clearly distinguished from the popular ideas, the discipleship of those who followed him must also bear a different character than might have been supposed. Luke emphasizes this factor repeatedly. If Jesus was destined to suffer (9:22), those who followed him must commit themselves to a daily sacrificial life.

⁹⁵Many of the stories about Jesus are called "Pronouncement Stories," because the central issue revolves around a significant saying of Jesus, cf. H. Kee et al., *Understanding the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 83.

Jesus certainly knew what a cross was,⁹⁶ and when he uttered the saying about daily taking up the cross, he intended it to convey the total resolution and self-denial which was necessary. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has well said, when Christ bids a man to follow, he bids him come and die! The call to follow Jesus must take precedence over all other loyalties (9:59-61), and there must be no turning back (9:62). And yet there was really no other choice, for not to follow Jesus meant to lose one's life, the very essence of one's self, and to be rejected at the great judgment (9:24-26). Discipleship and death to one's own desires were inseparably connected.

The disciples' difficulty in understanding the nature of discipleship paralleled their difficulty in understanding Jesus' future. The approaching death of Jesus in Jerusalem was something they did not clearly grasp (9:45), though Jesus reaffirmed to them more than once that it must be so (9:22, 44). It would not be until after the resurrection that they would see clearly the necessity of this traumatizing event (24:25-27, 32).

Who is Greatest? (9:46-56)

The failure of the disciples to adequately grasp the nature of the kingdom and the discipleship to which Christ called them is blatantly evident in their argument over who was to be greatest. Those who contend for positions of greatness surely have not committed themselves to suffering and self-denial! In three short examples, Jesus corrected his followers' will to power. First, a true disciple is to be as unassuming as a child. Second, true disciples must not seek to dominate others, and so long as they are working toward the same end, they must be permitted to share in the kingdom ministry. Finally, even those normally considered to be outsiders, people like the Samaritans who were antagonistic and unreceptive, must not be treated with ruthless power.

The Beginning of the Travelogue (9:51)

From 9:51 through 19:44 Luke will depict Jesus as enroute to Jerusalem for his passion. It is quite true that this extensive section must not be thought of as a direct trip. Jesus begins heading south from Galilee through Samaria by the shorter route (9:52), arrives in Jericho by a longer route (18:35), and in between is first in Bethany near Jerusalem (10:38) and later on the northern border of Samaria (17:11). Nevertheless, whether he is headed north, south, east or west, the ultimate goal is Jerusalem (see Footnote 10).

⁹⁶When Jesus was about eleven years old, Judas the Galilean had raided the Roman armory at Sepphoris, just four miles from Nazareth. Roman retribution was quick and vicious. Sepphoris was burned to the ground, its citizens sold into slavery, and 2000 rebels crucified on crosses in lines along the public roads, cf. Barclay, 121.

The Lord's Prayer (10-11)

The various events and teachings in this section occur as Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. Such didactic material, given in the context of a journey, fits well Luke's conception of the life of faith as a pilgrimage.⁹⁷

The Mission of the Seventy (10:1-23)

Just as he had sent the Twelve Apostles throughout Galilee to preach (9:1ff.), Jesus now sends out seventy of his disciples⁹⁸ as advance witnesses on the trip to Jerusalem. He gave them no illusions of grandeur; in fact, he frankly warned them that they would be like sheep among wolves. As with the Twelve earlier, they were to trust the people in the villages for their sustenance. Their message was Jesus' message -- the reign of God was near (10:11). The response of the villagers was absolutely critical, for to receive one of the disciples was to receive Jesus, and to receive Jesus was to receive God (10:16).

Upon their return, the disciples were overjoyed at their success and power, particularly their power over demons. The reign of God had indeed broken into the world! Satan, who in the Old Testament is pictured as a prosecuting attorney against the people of God (Job 2:1ff.; Zec. 3:1ff.), was effectively being thrown from heaven in the mission of the seventy.⁹⁹ But power to heal and exorcise evil spirits, in and of itself, was not the highest value. Salvation was the most important thing. Suddenly, Jesus broke into a spontaneous, joyful prayer of thanksgiving which contains a very Johannine-sounding statement (10:22; cf. Jn. 3:35; 6:65; 7:29; 13:3; 14:7, 9-11; 17:25).

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)

As is well known, a long-standing tension between Jews and Samaritans had created a mutual contempt. A century or so earlier, one Jewish leader, John

⁹⁷Later, in Acts, Luke will repeatedly describe the Christian life as "the Way" (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22), cf. Talbert, 113.

⁹⁸There is a textual discrepancy in the manuscripts between the numbers 70 and 72 with the evidence about evenly divided, B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: UBS, 1971) 150-151. The number 70 was a well known entity in Jewish and Christian traditions (70 souls in the family of Jacob, Ex. 1:5; 70 elders of Israel, Ex. 24:1; 70 years of exile, Je. 25:12; traditionally, 70 translators of the LXX). Perhaps even more important is the fact that the table of nations in Genesis 10 is composed of 70 names in the Hebrew text and 72 in the LXX. It may well be that whichever number is textually correct, the number of emissaries bears a symbolic significance in that they suggest the future mission of the disciples to the world, cf. D. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1967) 104-105.

⁹⁹There is some discussion, of course, as to what Jesus meant when he said, "I saw Satan fall...." Some prefer that this refers to Satan's original fall, others that it recalls Jesus' victory over Satan in the desert temptations, and still others that this is a prolepsis of the cross and/or the end of the age. None of these options fit the context as well as the interpretation stated above, however, cf. W. Hendriksen, *Luke [NTC]* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 580-581.

Hyrcanus, had seized the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim and destroyed it. On another occasion, some Samaritans had strewn human bones in the sanctuary of the Jerusalem temple in the middle of the night.¹⁰⁰ It is this utter contempt of each group for the other that gives the parable its impact. If Jesus had been speaking to Samaritans, he might well have told the story of the Good Jew, but since he was speaking to a Jewish theologian who wished to justify himself with regard to the keeping of Torah, he made the hero a half-breed heretic.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends some 3300 feet in just 17 miles. An uninhabited, barren region, its peculiar dangers had earned it the nickname "the path of blood."¹⁰¹ On this road, a victim of bandits was deliberately ignored by two Jewish holy men, but aided by a hated Samaritan. In the end of the story, Jesus took the question of the Jewish lawyer and reversed it. The lawyer wished to ask, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus turned it around into, "To whom am *I* a neighbor?"¹⁰²

Mary and Martha (10:38-42)

The home of Martha and Mary, in Bethany near Jerusalem, was open to Jesus due to their close friendship (cf. Jn. 11:1-5). The point of this little scenario is to emphasize that the most important element in Christian service is to listen to the Lord.

Teaching on Prayer (11:1-13)

As observed in the introduction, one of Luke's primary themes is prayer, and in particular, the prayers of Jesus. While we know only a little of the content of Jesus' prayers from the few striking examples (Mt. 11:25ff./Lk. 10:21ff.; Mk. 14:36 and par.; Jn. 11:41f.; 12:27f.; 17:1-26), we also know that Jesus was reared in a devout home, and from this it may be inferred that he recited the morning and evening *shema* as well as participated in the three daily hours of prayer.¹⁰³ Beyond the normal prayers for Jews, however, Jesus also prayed frequently on other occasions as well, as Luke takes pains to demonstrate.

When Jesus' disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray," it was not that they had never learned to pray. Rather, since the various religious streams of Judaism each had characteristic prayers, the disciples wanted to know the kind of prayer that should characterize them. It is out of this request that Jesus taught them what is commonly called "the Lord's prayer."¹⁰⁴ It begins with the unusual address to God as *Abba*, the

¹⁰⁰Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 352ff.

¹⁰¹S. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 167-168.

¹⁰²H. Thielicke, *The Waiting Father* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 168.

¹⁰³J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 66-75.

¹⁰⁴Jeremias, *Prayers*, 76-77.

child's Aramaic word for father roughly equivalent to our word "Daddy."¹⁰⁵ It is a corporate prayer, using plural pronouns throughout (i.e., us, we). It includes reverence for God, a petition for the coming of his kingdom, a petition for daily sustenance, a request for God's forgiveness contingent upon a forgiving attitude toward others, and a plea for preservation in the great eschatological trial.¹⁰⁶

Along with this model prayer, Jesus included the parable of the Friend at Midnight. The point of the parable is not to suggest that one can badger God into action by a sheer quantity of prayer (cf. Mt. 6:7), but rather, that if a churlish homeowner can be aroused who does not really care about the needs of his neighbor, how much more will God, who is truly concerned, respond to the needs of his own children.¹⁰⁷ He stands ready to give good gifts to his own, particularly the gift of the Holy Spirit, the greatest gift of all!

The Strong Man and the Stronger Man (11:14-28)

The Beelzebul¹⁰⁸ controversy fits well within the opposition narratives of the synoptic gospels in which Jesus faced stiff resistance from various special interest groups.¹⁰⁹ His power over demons by the "finger of God" (cf. Ex. 8:19) was evidence of the arrival of God's reign (11:20). If Satan was the fully armed strong man, Jesus, God's agent of the kingdom, was the even stronger and more powerful one, attacking and overpowering him (11:21-22). Still, exorcism alone was not sufficient. The spiritual world, like the natural, abhors a vacuum, and if deliverance from the powers of evil does not result in a spiritual allegiance to God, the demon-squatters would return in full force, as Jesus pointed out in the parable of the Empty House.¹¹⁰ The most important thing of all, even more important than being freed from the power of demons, is to hear the word of God and to obey it (11:28)!

The Sign of Jonah (11:29-36)

There is an inclusion¹¹¹ between 11:16 and 11:29 which shows that the

¹⁰⁵Jeremias, *Prayers*, 54-65.

¹⁰⁶The phrase, "Lead us not into temptation," should not be taken to imply that God entices with sin (cf. Ja. 1:13). Rather, it is idiomatic for the idea, "Do not allow us to succumb in the great trial," cf. Jeremias, *Prayers*, 104-107.

¹⁰⁷Hunter, *Interpreting*, 69.

¹⁰⁸Beelzebul (= Lord of the Divine Abode or Baal the Prince) was the chief god of the Philistine city Ekron, and the Israelites mockingly changed the name to Beelzebub (= Lord of the Flies), C. Stuhlmueller, "The Gospel According to Luke," *JBC* (1968) II.145.

¹⁰⁹Jesus experienced opposition from major Jewish sects, such as the Pharisees and lawyers (5:20-25, 29-32; 6:1-11; 7:36-39; 10:25), from those closer to him, such as the Nazarenes, John's disciples and his family (4:14, 28-30; 5:33-35; 8:19-21), and from the common people as well (8:37, 51-53; 9:5, 51-56; 10:11, cf. D. Lewis, "The Eternal Sin," (unpublished paper, University of Detroit: n.p., 1985) 21-23.

¹¹⁰Caird, 155.

¹¹¹An inclusion is a literary device in which a passage is framed by a reference at its beginning which parallels an

accusations against Jesus in the Beelzebul controversy are directly related to the question of a sign from heaven. Some of the crowd wanted a sign from heaven to authenticate Jesus' ministry, and the deliverance of a mute demoniac did not satisfy them (11:14-16). Jesus replied that the only proof of his credentials was the same proof Jonah gave to Nineveh -- the call to repent. Those who demand signs are in the same category as those who attribute the good works of God to the powers of evil. Though a greater preacher than Jonah and a greater wise man than Solomon was in their midst, they were oblivious to him, and they were not likely to be convinced by any other sort of evidence. The lamp of convicting truth was shining brightly, but for those who refused to allow it's gleam into their lives, there was no darkness so dark as that of the person who refused to see (11:33-36).

Religious Hypocrisy (11:37-53)

At a dinner with another Pharisee (cf. 7:36), at which Jesus surprised his host by refusing to observe the ceremonial pouring of water over the hands,¹¹² Jesus used the occasion to comment on the hypocrisy of the practice of external religion which had no inward counterpart. External adherence to traditions might appear to be holy, but such adherence could also be very deceptive. Holiness codes, careful tithing, status, rigorous demands, and religious memorials all have the appearance of true religion, but in reality, they may merely hide greed, wickedness and the hidden corruption of death. Those who seem to be the most religious are often the most intolerant and become the murderers of God's prophets. They do not listen themselves, and they obscure the message of God for those who might try to hear it. From the murder of Abel (Ge. 4:8) to the murder of Zechariah (2 Chr. 24:20-22),¹¹³ the accumulated guilt of repeated rejections would climax in the generation that listened to Jesus. And so it did, when they rejected him! Small wonder, then, that with this scathing rebuke, the Pharisees and scribes began to double their efforts of opposition, trying to publicly trap Jesus in his teaching so as to discredit him.

The Mustard Seed (12-13)

The next two chapters of Luke continue the accounts of Jesus' teaching while he was on his way to Jerusalem. Any astute reader of the synoptic gospels will immediately notice that Luke's arrangement of materials is quite different than

analogous reference at its close. In this case, the inclusion is the question about a sign from heaven (11:16) and the answer to the question somewhat later (11:29). As such, all the intervening discussion surrounding the Beelzebul controversy is related to this issue of a sign.

¹¹²The ritual washing of hands before a meal was not required by Torah, but it was honored from antiquity as a practice called for by Jewish oral tradition, Mann, 312.

¹¹³It should be remembered that in the Hebrew canon, Genesis and 2 Chronicles were respectively the first and last books. As such, then, Jesus was implying a reference to the murder of all the prophets within the canonical books.

Matthew or Mark throughout the whole travelogue section.¹¹⁴ This need not be taken as an argument against the historical value of the gospels inasmuch as nowhere do the gospels indicate that they intend a strict itinerary per se of events and teachings in Jesus' life. For the most part, the gospels simply do not provide enough information about time and place to fit the teachings and events into a precise chronology,¹¹⁵ and though attempts have been made, they are only marginally successful and frequently come across as artificial.¹¹⁶

The majority of Luke 12 and 13 are teachings and warnings, and they have apparently been collected by Luke and put together because of their similarity in tone and content.

True and False Security (12:1-12)

Jesus seemed to detect hypocrisy more in the Pharisees than in any other group, that is, their propensity to hide the truth by an external veneer. He warned the disciples to carefully guard themselves against this vice. In time, the truth will always come out. More than fearing public opinion, or even those who have the power to kill, one should fear God who has the power of eternal judgment.¹¹⁷ Yet at the same time, the attitude of the disciples toward God should not be terror, for if he cares for even the sparrows, he surely cares for his people. The real test is neither the public's opinion nor those who can do bodily harm; rather, the real test is one's loyalty to Jesus as the bearer of the Holy Spirit. To reject him is to reject one's entire future with God. To acknowledge him, even in the face of the most severe opposition, is to be accepted eternally by God.

Materialism (12:13-34)

Greed was another vice that Jesus frequently warned against. Here, the occasion was an individual who approached Jesus seeking to secure a financial split of the family inheritance with his brother. Instead, Jesus warned him against greed

¹¹⁴ This variance is easy to observe by merely looking at the parallelisms in any standard harmony of the gospels, such as, K. Aland, ed., *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (USA: UBS, 1982) 348-349.

¹¹⁵ Blomberg, 127-130.

¹¹⁶ Perhaps the best effort of this latter sort is A. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950). Yet even here, Robertson, in the effort to provide a tight chronology, does not show the parallelisms, for instance, between Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's teaching discourses that occur in other contexts (cf. Mt. 6:25-34; Lk. 12:22-32).

¹¹⁷ The term *gehenna* (= hell; Greek counterpart to the Hebrew "Valley of *ben-Hinnom*") referred to a ravine to the south of Jerusalem, used during the ancient monarchy as a place for cultic child sacrifice (Je. 7:31; 32:35; 2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6). By the time of Jesus, the term *gehenna* was used in a metaphorical sense to denote a place of fiery torment believed to be preserved for the wicked after their death and judgment, cf. T. Gaster, *IDB* (1962) II.361. Hence, it is either untranslated (NAB, Weymouth, Rotherham) or rendered as "hell" (KJV, RSV, ASV, NEB, NASB, JB, TEV, TCNT).

with the parable of the rich fool, a story that brings home the transitory nature of material wealth. The meaning and value of life are not possessions (12:15) nor food and clothing (12:23) nor even a longer life-span (12:25). At the end of life, none of these things matter. Jesus counseled his disciples against anxiety about material things. God cares for crows (12:24) and flowers (12:27-28) in the natural order of things, and in fact, it is the faithless pagan who spends time worrying about creature comforts (12:29-30). What disciples should seek as the highest priority is the reign of God (12:31). Material possessions can simply be sold and the proceeds given away to the poor (12:33a). But the reign of God, which he gives freely to his flock, is an eternal treasure (12:32, 33b). The areas in which people invest their highest resources are what they consider to be the most important (12:34).

Watchfulness (12:35-48)

In this teaching, Jesus prepares his disciples for a coming crisis, the crisis of the interval between his departure from the earth back to the Father and his return to the earth at the end. At the transfiguration, Jesus had already been pictured as aware of his coming departure or exodus through death (cf. 9:31). As yet, he had not fully informed the disciples of the interval before his return, and in fact, in Matthew's Gospel, this teaching appears much later and in a quite different context (the Olivet Discourse). Luke seems to have included it here because, along with the other teachings, it figures in the character of the life of true discipleship.

The sayings fall into three sections, each of which calls for watchfulness and fidelity. In the parable of the master returning from the wedding banquet, the theme is the watchful attitude of the servants who know that their master is returning although they do not know when (13:35-38). In the parable of the house-owner, the theme is the watchful attitude of the master himself who has been forewarned that he might be burglarized and so keeps a constant vigil (12:39-40). In the parable of the supervisor, the theme is the behavior of a supervisor during the master's absence. If there is a delay in the master's return, will the supervisor be responsible and keep his master's trust, or will he take advantage of the master's absence to abuse this trust (12:42-48)? Obviously, the central teaching here is that the disciples must be faithful to their tasks even though the time of the Lord's return is unknown.

The Immediate Crisis (12:49--13:8)

Turning from the ultimate crisis of the return of the Lord, Jesus now addressed the immediate crisis of his coming passion in Jerusalem. This crisis would involve his baptism of death. Intertestamental Jewish literature was full of descriptions of the "woes of messiah," that is, the terrible afflictions and judgments through which the world would pass just prior to the rise of the messianic age (cf. 2 Esdras 4:51--5:13, 18, etc.; 2 Baruch 24:; 27:1--29:8; 1 Enoch 80:1, etc.; 94:6, etc.; 99:11, etc.). John the

Baptist had also predicted that the messiah would baptize the world with the fires of judgment (3:16-17). However, it never dawned upon them that the messiah himself would pass through these deep waters.¹¹⁸ Yet Jesus looked resolutely ahead to his passion (12:49-50), and in the coming crisis, the followers of Jesus would be severely polarized, even within their families (12:51-53).

The crisis for Jesus would also be a crisis for the nation, and unfortunately, the nation was oblivious. The people could assess the weather (12:54-55), but they could not assess the present crisis (12:56). In the parable of the insolvent debtor, Jesus warned the nation to come to terms with God before it was too late (12:57-59). No defendant in his senses would go all the way to court fully knowing he was going to lose. He would settle out of court, and do so as quickly as possible. The Israelite nation was, in its own way, being dragged to court by the crisis preaching of the reign of God. The preaching of the kingdom was a crisis message. To listen to Jesus was to listen to God (cf. 10:16). To reject Jesus was to accept a fate worse than Sodom and Gohmorrah (cf. 10:13-15). Using two local incidents, one of a butchery performed by Pilate upon some Galilean zealots¹¹⁹ and the other of a local tragedy in which eighteen died when they were crushed by a falling tower, Jesus sternly warned the crowd, "If you do not turn to God, you will perish just as surely as they!" (13:1-5). This crisis of the nation was vividly portrayed in the parable of the fig tree's final year. Three years was long enough to wait for fruit, while a fourth was surely undeserved. But this was the last chance; if the nation did not bear fruit, just as John the Baptizer had said (cf. 3:9), it would be cut down and destroyed (13:6-9).

The Presence of the Kingdom (13:10-21)

Earlier, Jesus said that if he overpowered Satan by the finger of God, the reign of God had come (11:20). Here, that same theme is highlighted in a healing and two parables.

The cure was performed for a woman who had suffered a debilitating spinal disorder and had remained crippled for eighteen years. Jesus healed her on the Sabbath, for which he received outspoken criticism (cf. 6:1-11). But Jesus knew that the institution of the Sabbath was itself an anticipation of God's reign, an idea found elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Col. 2:16-17; He. 4:9), and his query, "Is it not necessary [for her] to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"¹²⁰ suggests that

¹¹⁸Caird, 167.

¹¹⁹This massacre is not reported in any other literature of the period, but we know that Galileans tended toward zealotry and that such a severe action by Pilate fits with other aspects of his known character. It is not impossible that a particular police action ordered by Pilate against a violent demonstration over his appropriation of temple funds, funds which he used to finance a water supply project, might figure in the background of this passage, cf. A. Sherwin-White, *ISBE* (1986) III.868.

¹²⁰My translation

the healing of the woman on the Sabbath was actually fulfilling the divine purpose of the Sabbath (13:16).¹²¹ So the eschatological Sabbath had begun, and the reign of God was spreading. Its growth was as remarkable as the growth of a mustard seed into a large shrub, suitable even for the shelter of the birds (13:18-19; cf. Da. 4:10-12; Eze. 31:2-9).¹²² It spread silently but thoroughly, just like yeast in flour (13:20-21).¹²³

Reception and Rejection (13:22-35)

The question as to whether there would be many or few saved in the end was not new (cf. 4 Ezra 7:45-9:22), and it probably arose out of the common conception that all Israelites had a share in the world to come (13:22-23).¹²⁴ However, Jesus did not answer the question directly. Instead, he urged his listeners to enter the narrow door of the kingdom, for the time was short and the day would come when there would be no more opportunity (13:24-27). This saying should be added to the other crisis sayings given earlier (cf. 12:49--13:9), and they probably apply to the approaching crisis in Jerusalem. The national crisis for the Israelite people was upon them in the preaching of Jesus the Messiah, and if they did not respond to him, they would be bitterly disappointed when the good gifts of the kingdom were given to outsiders, particularly Gentile outsiders.¹²⁵ The Gentiles, who were normally considered to be "last" in the Jewish struggle for racial purity and certainly considered to be outside the boundaries of the messianic feast, would end up being admitted. Those Jews who did not respond to the message, Jews who considered themselves to be "first," would be shut out! The warning was clear; no one has a monopoly on God's salvation. There will be many surprises!

Whether the Pharisees who warned Jesus to leave Galilee were sincere or were

¹²¹So Caird, 171. The impersonal verb *dei* (= it is necessary) is a strong expression.

¹²²A mustard seed, about the size of a pin head, grows in Galilee to a mass of some 8 to 10 feet in height, cf. Jeremias, *Rediscovering*, 117.

¹²³The early dispensational notion is that the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are actually symbols of the external growth of false Christendom. For a full exegesis from this viewpoint, see A. Pink, *The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13* (Covington, KY: Calvary Book Room, n.d.) 36-51. The interpretation was popularized in the *Scofield Reference Bible* and has almost become standard within American fundamentalism, largely in the exegesis of Matthew 13 as the primary text. However, the interpretation is hardly correct, and no scholars outside dispensationalism concur. Even some noted dispensationalists are now abandoning this view as evidenced by the early treatment of the two parables by Dwight Pentecost (1958), where he speaks of the mustard tree as a monstrosity and an abnormality and the leaven as a false religious system, as compared with his later treatment (1981) where such expressions are notably absent and he interprets the mustard tree as a blessing for the nations and the leaven as the internal, irreversible power of the kingdom of God, cf. D. Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) 147-148; D. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 217-218, 321.

¹²⁴Fitzmyer, II.1022.

¹²⁵The directions north, south, east and west must certainly refer to the Gentiles who, in the preaching mission of the early church, would hear and accept the good news of the reign of God.

merely trying to intimidate him is unclear. Whatever the case, Jesus used the occasion to make a pronouncement about his messianic purpose, and it clearly involved Jerusalem. It is Jerusalem which symbolized the rejection and death of the long succession of prophets, and Jerusalem was his goal. The entire force of the travel narratives press continually toward the holy city (9:51, 53; 13:22, 34; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28, 41). Jerusalem, representing the people of Israel, would remain true to her historical pattern of rejecting her prophets. She would not truly welcome Jesus until his second advent when, in the words of the Egyptian Hallel, they would "bless the one who comes in the name of Yahweh" (Ps. 118:26; cf. Ro. 11:26-31). In the meantime, the house of Jewry would be desolate.¹²⁶

The Prodigal Son (14-15)

These two chapters continue the travelogue which began at 9:51, and during the trip, Jesus was accompanied by large crowds (14:25). There are three settings for the materials presented here. First, Jesus accepted the invitation to dine with a prominent Pharisee, and at the meal, he gave several teachings (14:1). The second setting was apparently along the roadway itself as Jesus was traveling and talking (14:25). In the third, Jesus addressed a company of Pharisees who were chagrined that he gave time to tax collectors and those who were non-observers of the technical points of Jewish oral tradition, hence "sinners" (15:1-2; cf. 5:30).

At a Pharisee's House (14:1-24)

Of all the sects in Jewry, Jesus was probably theologically closer to the Pharisees than any other. He agreed with them on the canon of Scripture,¹²⁷ and he agreed with them on the doctrines of angels and resurrection.¹²⁸ Still, their fastidious reliance upon oral tradition and their nit-picking exegesis came in for some heavy criticism from him. Jesus had apparently accepted the invitation to eat at a noted Pharisee's home on a sabbath, though as Luke points out, the apparent hospitality was probably an attempt to catch him violating the traditions (14:1b; 5:21, 30; 6:2, 7; 7:39; 10:25; 11:37-38, 53-54). While there, Jesus healed a victim of dropsy¹²⁹ and used the

¹²⁶It is not clear here whether the "house" refers to the temple or to the Jewish commonwealth, but as Ladd says, the sense is the same, for the temple and the Jewish commonwealth stand or fall together, cf. G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 89. Desolation to both occurred in the Roman Wars around AD 70.

¹²⁷The Pharisees accepted the full authority of all three sections of the Hebrew Bible, Torah, Nebiim and Kethubim, while the Saducees did not recognize the Nebiim and Kethubim as authoritative commentaries on the law, cf. A. Sundberg, *IDB* (1962) I.162. Jesus seems to have accepted the fuller canon (Lk. 24:44).

¹²⁸The Pharisees believed in a future world where people would be rewarded or punished, and they held a highly developed doctrine of angels, cf. M. Black, *IDB* (1962) III.778. The Saducees rejected both of these doctrines, though Jesus accepted them (Mt. 22:23-33).

¹²⁹*Hydropikos* (= suffering from dropsy) refers to a condition of swelling, probably from water retention in the

occasion to give three discourses.

Healing on the Sabbath (14:1-6)

The whole issue of healing on the Sabbath arose out of the debate as to just what could legitimately be performed on the sabbath without violating Torah's command for total cessation from labor (i.e., Ex. 35:2-3). There were different interpretations with respect to what was permissible,¹³⁰ but apparently there was some consensus that Jesus' acts of healing were a form of physical labor. It is out of this context that Jesus posed the double-edged question, "Is it lawful or not to heal on the Sabbath?" If his listeners said, "Yes," they would be approving of Jesus' action. If they said, "No," they would appear harsh and unsympathetic toward human suffering. By giving no answer at all, they forfeited their right to criticize, but in their view it was at least safer than the alternatives. When they remained silent, Jesus healed the man. He further pointed out to them that mercy should take precedence over sabbath regulations.¹³¹

On Giving Banquets (14:7-14)

Jesus' parable on giving banquets stemmed from his observation that the guests tried to select for themselves the most honorable seating positions.¹³² His advice is very similar to an ancient proverb (Pro. 25:6-7), and he advised against seeking such positions of prominence out of concern for humility. Furthermore, he counseled his audience to avoid the common practice of inviting friends and socially important people to festal meals. Instead, they should invite the disadvantaged, since such people could not repay the favor and the highest reward could then be deferred until the great judgment.

The Parable of the Great Banquet (14:15-24)

When one of the guests remarked upon the happiness of anyone who was privileged to share in the messianic banquet, Jesus addressed a parable to the subject, a parable that said, in effect, that while the religious elite of the Jews were refusing the call to salvation issued by Jesus, the poor and despised were being urged to

tissues, and more familiarly known as edema. In popular lore, edema was thought to be a venereal disease, Ellis, 193.

¹³⁰J. Morgenstern, *IDB* (1962) IV.140.

¹³¹Jesus' ruling on sabbatical law was considerably more lenient than was allowed in the Qumran community, which strictly forbade helping an animal out of a cistern or pit on the sabbath, Fitzmyer, II.1040.

¹³²The middle position was the place of highest honor, cf. W. Michaelis, *TDNT* (1968) VI.871. At this period, precedence probably depended upon rank and distinction. The more important guests were also apt to arrive late so as to emphasize their seats of prominence, cf. Marshall, *Commentary*, 581.

come.¹³³ In the parable, the invited guests declined to attend for various personal reasons. Consequently, beggars and the homeless were invited from the street. It would not have been difficult for the hearers of the parable to identify themselves as the reluctant guests, for beginning with the preaching of John, the religious elite had consistently resisted (cf. 7:30; 11:52).

In this parable, there are several elements which are typical of Palestine in the ancient Near East. The wealthy status of the farmer who bought five yoke of oxen is clear from the fact that farmers usually owned only enough land for one or two yoke of oxen. A farmer buying five yoke was therefore a large landowner. The guest who refused to come due to his recent marriage did so in order to avoid leaving his young wife alone (only men were invited to such a banquet). The act of compelling people to attend is typical of oriental courtesy, where the first invitation is politely resisted until the second one comes more insistently. It is also interesting to note that Jesus' parable parallels a well known story of a rich tax collector, a poor scholar, and the staging of a great banquet, a story known to us from the Palestinian Talmud, and it is not unlikely that Jesus deliberately used elements from this famous tale because of its familiarity.¹³⁴

Along the Road (14:25-35)

The next body of teachings occurred along the way toward Jerusalem and was addressed to the large crowds accompanying Jesus. The theme was the cost of discipleship. Though Jesus remained popular with the crowds, they did not truly understand his mission in Jerusalem. They went with him on what they perceived to be a victory march of the Messiah, but Jesus knew that his mission in Jerusalem would culminate with the same fate as the prophets before him (cf. 9:44; 12:50; 13:33).¹³⁵

In this context, Jesus warned his followers about the cost of discipleship. To follow Jesus meant that he must have first priority over family.¹³⁶ It meant that one must not respond on a superficial, emotional level, but only on the basis of complete commitment. The parables of the tower-builder and the king going to war point toward the total resolution necessary if one was to follow Jesus. Insuperb followers, like salt cut with gypsum, were worthless.¹³⁷

¹³³Matthew's version of the parable (22:1-14) has been extended to include the scene of a guest who shows up without a wedding garment, but Luke's version, as also the version in the *Gospel of Thomas* (64), omits this part.

¹³⁴Jeremias, *Rediscovering*, 139-142.

¹³⁵Caird, 178.

¹³⁶The idea of "hating" family members is a typical Semitic hyperbole, Caird, cf. 178-179.

¹³⁷Sodium chloride is very stable and by itself will not lose its saltiness. However, salt was not refined, and it was sometimes mixed with a white powder which looked like salt but was in reality only road dust, cf. Stott, *Christian*

To the Scribes and Pharisees (15)

As had occurred before (cf. 5:30; 7:34), Jesus came under criticism for his openness to tax collectors and those who were indifferent toward the oral traditions. In response to this criticism, he told a trilogy of parables, each driving home the point of how important it was to God that the lost should be found.

The Lost Sheep (15:3-7)

In the first parable, Jesus explained his attitude toward those ostracized from religious society by showing that God's love takes the initiative. It does not merely wait for the sinner to come to his senses, but rather, it drives the shepherd to seek out the lost sheep. God rejoices more over sinners who repent than over righteous persons who do not. It is likely that there is a touch of irony in the final statement concerning the righteous who do not need to repent, for who is there who is without need of turning to God for forgiveness?

The Lost Drachma (15:8-10)

In the ancient Near East, a woman's headdress was decorated with coins which were part of her dowry and represented her most cherished possession. These were not to be laid aside even for sleep. When one of her coins was lost, a woman would search carefully, lighting a lamp so as to see into the dark corners of her windowless house and sweeping the floor carefully with her palm-twig broom.¹³⁸ When the lost coin was found, it was cause for rejoicing, and so it is with God who rejoices in the company of his angels over sinners who turn to him.

The Lost Son (15:11-32)

The final parable in the trilogy is by most accounts the most famous of all Jesus' parables. While traditionally it has been called the parable of the Prodigal Son, several scholars are quite correct in pointing out that this title is misleading, since the focus of the story is not on a son's waywardness, but rather, on a father's love.

The father had two sons, both of whom were selfish and both of whom he lost, though in different ways. The oldest son stayed home, but distanced himself from his father due to self-righteousness. The youngest son recklessly wasted his father's money, choosing the immediate option of gaining his share of the inheritance as a gift.¹³⁹ Emigrating to a distant country, he soon worked his way through the money

Counter-Culture, 60. Impure rock salt which has been long exposed can become savorless, since the actual salt content washes out, leaving the tasteless residue, cf. J. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* (rpt. Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1972) 335. Even worse, salt-sellers were apt to cut salt with gypsum so as to get more quantity.

¹³⁸Jeremias, *Rediscovering*, 106-107.

¹³⁹There were two ways in which legal property might pass to a son, by a will or as a gift during the father's lifetime.

and found himself reduced to the lowest ebb. For a Jew to be reduced to feeding pigs was the ultimate shame. Coming to his senses, he returned home to his waiting father where he was received with great honor, much to his older brother's chagrin, who was jealous and self-righteous.

In the parable, Jesus does two things. First of all, he justifies his mission to sinners, for clearly he means to say that God is like the father in the story, always waiting and always ready to receive the wayward child. Secondly, and in this case more to the point of the context, he rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for their heartless pride (cf. 15:2). They would have had little trouble discovering themselves in the mean-spirited elder brother! So in the end, the parable tells much about what God is like, and it also tells much about what religious people are apt to be like. While God rejoices over a single sinner who repents, joy is not frequently the response of the pious. They are jealous of grace for others, because they assume that they do not need it for themselves.

Teachings (16-17)

Chapters 16 and 17 of Luke record two famous parables of Jesus, a healing, and a cluster of sayings presented in didactic fashion. All of these are still in the setting of the travelogue (17:11).

Two Parables on Wealth (16:1-9, 19-31)

The unity of Chapter 16 is apparent in that a concern for material possessions clearly runs through most of the section, both in the parables and in the didactic material.

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (16:1-9)

This parable has long been problematic for interpreters. That Jesus would use a dishonest manager as a model creates an ethical question.

The story concerns a steward who was accused of swindling his master. Upon receiving notice of his termination, and because he was not strong enough for manual labor and too proud to beg, he sought another route to secure his future. There are two alternatives in reading the parable. First, it may be that as an agent with full power of attorney, the steward was entitled to certain commissions, or else he held legitimate control of the interest on borrowed amounts. Since he knew he was to be

In the latter case, the beneficiary received the capital at once, though of course, he could not normally dispose of his father's property until his father died. In this case, however, he wanted not only the capital but also his share of the property so that he could liquidate all assets, cf. Jeremias, *Rediscovering*, 101. By such a request, he in effect said to his father, "I wish you were dead!"

dismissed, he decided to forego these commissions and/or change the interest rates in order to endear himself to his master's debtors. If such is the case, then the steward's action was not so much dishonest as it was shrewd.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, the steward may in fact have changed the bills for the debtors without authorization, but since the debtors did not know of the man's imminent termination, they assumed that he was acting responsibly. Consequently, they would praise their creditor for his great generosity, who in turn would be inclined to overlook the matter in order to save face.¹⁴¹ Either way, the manager had saved his future by his action. Though it cost him dearly, the master¹⁴² could not help but admire the ingenuity of his former employee.

Jesus' application of the parable is both immediate and eschatological. On the one hand, he challenges his followers to be as resourceful as the sacked manager. They really ought to use their money for the sake of others so that in the end they might gain God's favor. At the same time, those who heard Jesus preach faced a crisis far more critical than merely losing their employment. They were confronted with the message of the reign of God, and the time of reckoning was near. Like the resourceful manager, they must act quickly, for the challenge of the hour meant that everything was at stake.¹⁴³

The Parable of Lazarus and Dives (16:19-31)¹⁴⁴

There are good grounds for supposing that the story of Lazarus and Dives was an intentional adaptation of another famous story in the ancient Near East, the tale of Si-Osiris, a tale brought from Egypt to Palestine by Alexandrian Jews. In this folk tale, a rich man had a sumptuous funeral but ended up in a state of torment after death, while a poor man, who had been buried without fanfare, was rewarded in the afterlife with luxury. This story found its way into Jewish folklore and was currently circulating in the time of Jesus.¹⁴⁵ If there is such a connection, then the reader of the parable must be careful about over-interpretation.¹⁴⁶ The point of the parable is not the

¹⁴⁰S. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 228-232; Talbert, 154.

¹⁴¹Talbert, 154.

¹⁴²There is some ambiguity in the Greek text of 16:8 as to whether the term *kyrios* (= lord, master) refers directly to Jesus or to the creditor in the parable.

¹⁴³Jeremias, *Rediscovering*, 145.

¹⁴⁴The traditional name for the rich man, Dives, comes from a misunderstanding of the Latin Vulgate, *Homo quidam erat dives* (= there was a certain rich man), the word *dives* being a Latin adjective for the word "rich," cf. Fitzmyer, II.1130; Kistemaker, 237. However, it may be pointed out that even in some of the early Greek versions, the rich man is given a name (Nineveh, Phineas, Amenophis), cf. Metzger, *Textual*, 165-166.

¹⁴⁵Marshall, *Commentary*, 633-634.

¹⁴⁶Liefeld is quite correct in pointing out that to take the story literally introduces an anachronism in light of Rv. 20:14, where the consignment to punishment is reserved to the last judgment, not the moment of death. It is better, as Liefeld also points out, to take the story as parabolic and didactic, not doctrinal, cf. Liefeld, *EBC*, VIII.993.

nature of the afterlife *per se* but the fact that for those who refuse to believe Moses and the Prophets, even a resurrection will not convince them to repent. The rich folk of Jesus' day continued their pursuit of wealth, ignoring the fact that in the end they would be held accountable for their inhumanity to the disadvantaged.

The imagery of the parable, the great gulf between the place of comfort and torment in the afterlife, and the agony of fire are drawn from Jewish apocalyptic literature. There, the place of the righteous is a paradise guarded by angels where the deceased holy ones sing continually in worship toward God (2 Enoch 9). The place of torture is filled with perpetual blazes and rivers of fire (2 Enoch 10).

The Healing of the Ten Lepers (17:11-19)

There are two remarkable elements in the cure of the ten lepers near the border of Samaria and Galilee. The lepers themselves, in conformity to social customs, kept their distance as they pitifully called for help (cf. Lv. 13:45-46). As Torah commanded (Lv. 14), Jesus instructed them to go to the priests in Jerusalem for examination after their healing. The first remarkable thing is that the only one who turned back to give thanks was a Samaritan (and presumably the others were not thankful). Thus, it was the racial outcast who was the most appreciative of his blessing. The other remarkable thing is that Jesus told the Samaritan his faith had saved him, even though the others also had been healed and had demonstrated no particular level of faith. It is helpful to understand that there is most likely a play upon the verb *sozo* (= to save, heal). This word can be used of both physical healings as well as spiritual healings.¹⁴⁷ The point in the wordplay is that the Samaritan who returned was not only healed, he was saved! And it was his faith that was effective for salvation.

Various Teachings (16:10-18; 17:1-10, 20-37)

The various teachings in this section have little context surrounding them. For the most part, they seem to be independent sayings of Jesus which Luke has grouped together. Some of the same sayings are found in other contexts in Matthew and Mark.

On Stewardship (16:10-15)

Integrity or the lack of it in the normal affairs of life often affects one's spiritual life. Patterns in non-religious life tend to repeat themselves in religious life. No person can honor more than a single highest priority. One cannot serve God as Lord

¹⁴⁷For instance, in 8:50 Jesus says of Jairus' daughter, "Just believe, and she will be healed (*sozo*)," an obvious reference to physical restoration. Yet in 9:24, where Jesus says, "Whoever wants to save (*sozo*) his life will lose it," he obviously intends a spiritual meaning.

and money as master at the same time.

On the Epochs of Salvation-History (16:16)

Jesus clearly divided the old order from the new order in terms of John the Baptist and himself. John belonged to the old order, the law and prophets. He may have anticipated the new order, but he was anchored firmly in the old. Jesus, with the inauguration of the reign of God, belonged to the new order.¹⁴⁸ In the new order, people of determination and faith (rather than people who relied upon their natural advantages) were pressing into the kingdom.

On Torah's Enduring Value (16:17)

In Matthew's gospel, this saying is in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:18). Though in a different context here, it still yields the same idea, that is, that since not even a serif (the small mark which distinguishes between Hebrew letters) will drop from Torah, it remains of enduring value. Of course, this enduring value assumes that Jesus is the correct interpreter of Torah as opposed to the Scribes and Pharisees.

On Divorce (16:18)

In the other synoptics, this saying was given in the context of Jesus' ruling on a point of law as it was commonly debated in Jewish schools (cf. Mk. 10:1-12; Mt. 19:3-12; cf. 5:31-32). Here it lacks such a context, but the meaning is much the same, that is, that while due to the hardness of human hearts divorce was allowed by Moses, God's higher pattern was the original ideal of one man for one woman for life. To divorce and remarry was to violate that ideal.¹⁴⁹

On Offenses and Forgiveness (17:1-4)

Disciples are often like children (little ones), and Jesus viewed as particularly reprehensible the act of leading a disciple into sin. When someone does give offense, however, Christ calls for generous forgiveness.

On Faith (17:5-6)

Perhaps the parable on faith is connected to the previous teaching. At least it is understandable how the disciples might say, "Increase our faith," after Jesus had advised forgiveness to an offender who repeated the same crime seven times in a single day. The point of the saying is that faith is not quantitative. It is not that one

¹⁴⁸Especially since the work of Hans Conzelmann, it has generally been accepted that there are three epochs in Luke's view of salvation-history, the Period of Israel, the Period of Jesus, and the Period of the Church, though see the critique in W. Robinson, Jr., *IDBSup* (1976) 559-560.

¹⁴⁹See the instructive discussion in F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983) 56-62.

must have huge amounts of the precious material, but that one must have the genuine article. Real faith, even the tiniest amount, will be sufficient. As is not uncommon for Jesus, he uses a humorous hyperbole to communicate his thought.

On Duty (17:7-10)

The point of this small parable is a warning against the attitude of thinking that one deserves special rewards for faithfulness. The saying was no doubt aimed at a religious community which kept careful tally of their righteous acts. God was not impressed! He has every right to expect, even demand, one's best. People are not doing him a favor by being faithful, they are only doing their duty.

On the Appearing of the Kingdom (17:20-21)

In Pharisaic theology the coming of the messianic kingdom involved the advent of Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, and the gift of the Spirit. Since Jesus was regularly preaching that the kingdom was near (10:9, 11; 11:20), the Pharisees wanted to know when it would appear. Jesus' answer must have been shocking, for contrary to popular belief that the reign of God would burst upon the world in apocalyptic fervor, Jesus announced that it would *not* come visibly in ways that could be externally observed. Instead, the reign of God was even then in their midst in the person of Jesus himself,¹⁵⁰ and they were not aware of it!

On the Coming of the Son of Man (17:22-37)

Even though the kingdom was already present in the person of Jesus, the kingdom was not fully realized. There was yet an eschatological aspect of the kingdom associated with the coming of the Son of Man at the end of the age.¹⁵¹ An intervening period between the first and second advents of Christ would leave believers longing for the presence of the Son of Man.¹⁵² Many voices would urge them to expect him here or there, as though his coming was to be a private, secretive event. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The return of Christ would be as abrupt and unmistakable as lightning which flashes across the sky. Still, the time for

¹⁵⁰The Greek expression *entos hymon* can be rendered either "within you" (so KJV, TEV, Phillips) or "among you" (RSV, NEB, JB, NASB, NAB, Moffat). The latter is probably to be preferred, for it is difficult to see how Jesus could say to the Pharisees, "The kingdom is within *you*," Ladd, *Theology*, 68. Better is the idea that the kingdom was present in the person of Jesus.

¹⁵¹The kingdom of God is in some sense both present and future, that is, it has already been inaugurated but will yet have its consummation at the conclusion of history, G. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 63-98.

¹⁵²It is probable that the phrase "one of the days of the Son of Man" is to be taken to refer to the bodily presence of Christ. It is unnecessary to debate whether "one of the days" refers to a nostalgia for the time of Jesus' public ministry on earth or an anticipation for the time of his return at the end of the age. The point is that believers will long for the presence of Christ, a presence which they had in the past and are anticipating in the future.

that climax would not come until after the passion (17:25).

Describing the closing period of history, Jesus indicated that life would proceed along normal lines, with celebrations and marriages, business and progress, just as in the period of Noah and Lot. No one suspected anything was amiss in these ancient communities, but the judgment of God came without warning and destroyed them all. It would be similar at the second advent of Christ. There would be no time for second thoughts, no time for packing valuables. The wheels of history would suddenly grind to a halt.

There is debate as to just what the phrase means, "One will be taken and the other left." Is the one "taken" snatched away in judgment and the one "left" given the gift of salvation?¹⁵³ Or is the one "taken" received by Christ at his coming, and the one "left" abandoned to destruction?¹⁵⁴ Either is possible, but since the phrase is so short, one must avoid hanging great theological weight on it one way or another. The main point is clear enough, that is, that there will be a separation.

The final statement, in answer to the disciples' question, "Where?", is equally ambiguous. On the one hand, it could be a reference to the apocalyptic judgment scene where the scavengers feed upon the corpses of the dead (cf. Eze. 39:17-20; cf. Re. 19:21). On the other, it could simply be a metaphor describing the people of God who have been gathered to the Messiah at his return, though in this case the metaphor would seem somewhat crass. The former meaning is probably to be preferred.

Entry into Jericho (18:1--19:28)

With this section of Luke's Gospel, the reader reaches the final leg in the journey to Jerusalem.

The Closing Events of the Travelogue (18:31-34; 19:28)

The lengthy narrative of the travelogue has long been puzzling to readers of the Third Gospel. Why has Luke gone to such extensive literary measures to depict Jesus on this long journey south, a trip that normally should take only three days? One possibility is that he wishes to demonstrate that Jesus is the prophet like Moses (Dt. 18:18-19). Just as Moses traveled with the ancient nation through the desert on the way to the promised land, a journey during which he taught them and disciplined them in the crucible of a "great and terrible wilderness" (Dt. 8:15), so Jesus led his disciples in a new exodus toward its consummation in the New Covenant and the Kingdom of God.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³So R. Summers, *Commentary on Luke* (Waco, TX: Word, 1972) 205.

¹⁵⁴So R. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 137-139.

¹⁵⁵This view is the thesis of D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the*

In any case, Jesus once more reminded the Twelve that the journey to Jerusalem would culminate in the fulfillment of the Old Testament predictions about the Son of Man -- he would be rejected, killed, and on the third day resurrected (18:31-34; cf. 9:22, 44-45; 12:50; 13:33; 17:25). It is unlikely that Luke has in mind any specific Old Testament passages. Rather, the entire complex of events in the life and death of Jesus was the culmination toward which the prophets pointed. The opening phrase of the gospel hints at this,¹⁵⁶ and the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration reinforces the idea (9:31). Finally, the post-resurrection explanation by Jesus of the Torah, the Prophets and the Psalms also points toward a totality of fulfillment rather than the fulfillment of some particular prediction (24:44-46).¹⁵⁷

The travel narrative ends in 19:28 when Jesus, after crossing at the Jericho fords (18:35; 19:1), began the ascent of 3300 feet from the Jordan Valley floor to the city of Jerusalem some 17 miles away.

More Parables (18:1-14; 19:11-27)

Three more parables appear in this section.

The Parable of the Persistent Widow (18:1-8)

Frequently enough, this parable is interpreted as a teaching on the persistency of prayer. While that is partly true (cf. 18:1), it is an incomplete assessment. Rather than merely prayer as a general practice, the final thrust of the parable focuses on God's eschatological justice as the divine response to the prayers of the powerless in society (18:7-8). Furthermore, it is important to note that this is a parable of contrast.

As in the parable of the Friend at Midnight (11:5-13), the reader is not to suppose that God is like an unjust magistrate who must be badgered into action. Rather, the point is that if even an unjust judge can be moved to action by persistency, how much more will God give them justice, who truly cares for the poor and powerless! To those who are praying, the wait must seem long (cf. Rv. 6:9-11). But when the time has come, God will respond quickly (cf. Rv. 8:2-5).

Lukan Travel Narrative (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), and see especially pp. 264-277.

¹⁵⁶It may be translated, "...the events that have come to fulfillment among us..."

¹⁵⁷It is also well to bear in mind that the idea of fulfillment is broader than merely prediction and verification. It can certainly include prediction/verification, but it also includes the clarification of enigmatic passages and ideas, the interchange between the individual and the corporate, and the recapitulation of OT patterns in NT events, cf. R. Longenecker, "'Who is the Prophet Talking About,' Some Reflections on the New Testament's Use of the Old," *Themelios* (Oct./Nov. 1987) 4-8.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector (18:9-14)

This is a parable of grace and faith, and while the genre is not Pauline, the content certainly anticipates his understanding of the gospel. The two men who went to the Jerusalem temple, presumably at the hour of prayer in mid-afternoon, could hardly have been farther apart in their religious status. The tax-collector was scorned as a collaborator.¹⁵⁸ The Pharisee prided himself on his punctilious holy acts. Yet it was the broken and contrite heart to which God responded with forgiveness and justification (cf. Ps. 51:17). Justification was not according to works; it was by God's grace through faith!

The Parable of the Ten Minas (19:11-27)

The introduction to this parable indicates that it was deliberately told because Jesus was now nearing Jerusalem and because the crowds anticipated the appearance of the kingdom of God almost immediately (19:11). Apparently, the popular opinion was that when Jesus arrived at the Holy City, things would begin to happen! And the triumphant entry some days later with the accompanying shouts of "Hosanna" seem to bear this out.

The sub-plot of the parable has its counterpart in an actual circumstance. When Herod the Great died in 4 BC, his son Archelaus had traveled to Rome in order to request Caesar Augustus to appoint him as king in Judea. Opposing him, a delegation of some 50 Jews also traveled to Rome to voice their complaints.¹⁵⁹ Since this occurrence was well known among the Jews, Jesus probably built his parable upon the memory of the event.

In the parable, during the nobleman's absence, he entrusted ten of his servants with a mina¹⁶⁰ each. Their evaluation upon his return was based upon their productivity with their master's investment. Those who invested wisely were rewarded with jurisdictions. The one who did nothing was stripped of his mina.

The parable is double-edged in that it can be applied both to the nation with whom God had entrusted his revelation as well as to the interval between the first and second advent of Christ. As to the first, instead of using God's investment to help others to God, the religious experts among the Jews smothered it and hid it from the

¹⁵⁸The term *Telones* (= tax-gatherer) probably refers to a collector of customs. Unlike the poll taxes and land-taxes, which were collected by state officials, the customs taxes were farmed out to the highest bidder. In public opinion such tax-collectors, because they were allowed to fix their own profits, were considered to be little better than officially sanctioned robbers, cf. Jeremias, *Rediscovering*, 112.

¹⁵⁹Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVII 9.1; 11.1-2.

¹⁶⁰A mina is a unit of measurement approximately equivalent to 60 shekels (cf. Eze. 45:12) or about a kilogram in weight, cf. M. MacLeod, *ISBE* (1986) III.362. As a Greek monetary unit, it equaled about 20 drachmas and was worth about \$18.00 to \$20.00, cf. *BAG* (1979) 524.

people (cf. 11:52). As to the second, God has entrusted the good news of the kingdom to his disciples who in turn are expected to invest it wisely during the interim before Christ's return. The return of the Lord is a crisis of judgment, and those who do nothing will be executed (19:27).

Encounters Along the Way (18:15-30, 35-43; 19:1-10)

The balance of Chapter 18 and 19 describes various encounters between Jesus and the people along the pilgrim's way to Jerusalem.

The Children (18:15-17)

Children were comfortable with Jesus, and though the disciples saw them as a nuisance, Jesus remarked that their innocence and receptivity was exactly what was needed for anyone to accept God's reign.

The Rich Young Man (18:18-30)¹⁶¹

The inquiry of the rich young man was typical of the common assumption that eternal life was to be gained by "doing." In response to the advice to keep the commandments, the young man perceptively asked, "Which?" Since there were 613 commandments in Torah according to rabbinic counts, it may be that his question, like the question, "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29), was an evasion. In any case, Jesus listed several commandments from the decalogue, being careful to present the ones which could be most easily tested. In effect, he was setting the young man up! When the rich young man explained that he had carefully kept all of those mentioned, Jesus implicitly redirected him to the first commandment by advising him to sell everything so as to gain treasure in heaven. If he really loved God with all his heart, he must take up the life of discipleship and follow Jesus!

Out of this discussion, Jesus commented upon the difficulty of entering the reign of God with riches. Yet however difficult, God, who could do the impossible, could save even the rich. And as for those who had left everything to follow Jesus, they would be repaid for their sacrifice both in the present age and in the age to come.

The Blind Beggar (18:35-43)

Luke's narrative now assumes that Jesus has been traveling southward through

¹⁶¹The discrepancy between the expression "good master" in Luke and Mark (10:17) and "what good thing" in the parallel account of Matthew's Gospel (19:16) is well known. For a possible harmonization, see D. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. Carson and J. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 135-137. Obviously at least one account is not attempting to report the *ipsissima verba* (actual words) though the substance is similar and the account trustworthy. For the implications of this passage in terms of the synoptic problem, see N. Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels: Some Basic Questions* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 93-112.

the transjordan, the common route for Jews coming from Galilee who wished to avoid Samaria. The Jordan could be forded at Jericho, and as Jesus was approaching the city, his attention fastened upon a blind beggar (Mark calls him the son of Timaeus, 10:46) who was calling out loudly for mercy. The blind man's address to Jesus as the "son of David" reflects the popular opinion that Jesus was the long-awaited king from David's dynasty, and it is probably this belief which also engendered the opinion that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once (19:11). Apparently accepting this messianic identification, Jesus healed the man, who followed along praising God with all the others.

Zacchaeus, the Reclaimed Tax-Collector (19:1-10)

While Jesus was still passing through Jericho, Zacchaeus, a prominent and wealthy tax-collector,¹⁶² was eager enough to see Jesus that he climbed a road-side tree in order to gain some height advantage. Upon seeing this rather brave and humorous effort, Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' home, though as might be expected he was heavily criticized for doing so. But as Jesus had made clear earlier (cf. 5:31-32; 15:1, 7, 10, 32), his mission was not to help those who did not need it (or those who did not think they needed it, cf. 7:47), but he came to seek those who needed him badly (19:10). Zacchaeus not only repented, he announced his intentions to make restitution, which incidentally, was far in excess of the minimum required by Torah (cf. Lv. 6:1-5; Nu. 5:5-7; cf. Ex. 22:1, 4, 7). In his repentance, Zacchaeus had shown himself to be a true son of Abraham, for he was a person of faith (cf. 3:8).

Jerusalem (19:29--20:47)

The travelogue is now complete, and Luke will bring the reader to the climax of his gospel by detailing "the things that happened in Jerusalem" (cf. 24:18).

The Triumphant Entry (19:29-44)

At Bethphage and Bethany, the last two villages on the Jericho Road just before entering the Holy City, Jesus sent two disciples to secure for him an unbroken colt. His entry into the Holy City riding upon the colt recalled the oracle of Zechariah, who spoke of a future king of peace who would ride into Jerusalem in just such a way (Zec. 9:9-10). Also, it may well be that the story also recalls the blessing of Jacob upon Judah (Ge. 49:10-11). The crowds, for their part, chanted the Egyptian Hallel (Ps. 118), a processional psalm begun outside the gates and continuing within the city to the temple (used on festivals such as Passover or Booths).¹⁶³ The high point

¹⁶²The expression "chief tax-collector" is unknown elsewhere, but it may have meant that Zacchaeus was a contractor who bought the local taxation rights from the Roman government, cf. Caird, 207.

¹⁶³A. Weiser, *The Psalms [OTL]* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 724-725.

in the antiphony was the shout of *Hoshia-na* (= save now),¹⁶⁴ as recorded in Mark's Gospel (Mk. 11:9; cf. Ps. 118:25), and it was immediately followed by the announcement, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh" (Ps. 118:26).

The Pharisees were indignant, not so much that the psalm was chanted (which was normal), but that it was pointedly being chanted in honor of Jesus as though he were the coming messianic king. They called upon Jesus to rebuke his followers, but he refused. However dimly the crowds may have understood Jesus' messiahship, their praise was entirely appropriate!

As the city burst into view where the road turns around the base of Mt. Olivet, Jesus began to weep over Jerusalem. This had long been his goal (9:31, 51, 53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28), for Jerusalem symbolized the long history of the nation's rejection of her prophets (13:34). He would die in Jerusalem. The nature of his messiahship and the character of his kingdom were not understood, and within 40 years, the city would be razed and its people devastated by the Roman General Titus in AD 70.

Cleansing the Temple (19:45-48)

While the cleansing of the temple is recorded in all four canonical gospels, in John it appears near the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Jn. 2:13ff.) while in the synoptics it appears near the end, immediately following the triumphant entry. The traditional harmonization is that Jesus cleansed the temple twice, though such a solution is possibly unnecessary.¹⁶⁵ Quoting from Jeremiah's temple sermon (Je. 7:11), Jesus drove out the exchangers. The temple authorities had allowed exchangers to set up booths in the Court of the Gentiles in which the worshipers could exchange their common money for temple coinage, the coinage with which the annual temple tax was to be paid and with which unblemished animals could be purchased for sacrifice (cf. Lv. 1:3).¹⁶⁶ This action sealed the temple authorities' intention to privately execute Jesus.

¹⁶⁴In the Talmud, this psalm is described for the Feast of Booths, the seventh day of which was called the Great Hosanna. Even the willow branches waved as palms were called Hosannas, cf. F. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, trans. F. Bolton (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) III.224.

¹⁶⁵Older harmonies did not list the account of John as parallel with those in the synoptics, cf. A. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950) 25, 156-157. Older commentators speak of the "first" and "second" cleansing of the temple, cf. J. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 92ff., 483ff., and apparently this harmonization was common from the earliest periods of the church, cf. Blomberg, 172, Note #1. However, since there is considerable variation already between John and the synoptics, it seems that an insistence on strict chronology is not necessary and was probably not intended by the original writers in any case, cf. J. Green, *How to Read the Gospels and Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1987) 62-63.

¹⁶⁶Caird, 217.

The Days of Controversy (20)

Each of the synoptics details Jesus' last week in Jerusalem as a period of intense controversy. Sharp questions were posed by the religious establishment in the attempt to publicly embarrass Jesus, and if possible, goad him into committing a theological or political blunder worthy of arrest (19:47-48; 20:1-2, 19-22). Luke records the same four of these controversies as does Matthew and Mark.

The Question About Authority (20:1-19)

In the days following the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was challenged by the chief priests and scribes to verify his authority. If he claimed messiahship, they would be able to indict him before the Romans as an insurgent. If he claimed divine authority, they could indict him for blasphemy against God. If he claimed his own authority, they could seek to discredit him before his following. Jesus, however, turned the tables on them with a counter-question about John the Baptist. Because the people viewed John as a bonafide prophet, the priests and scribes could not afford to answer his question without a very predictable retort, so the challenge ended in a standstill.

But Jesus was not content to stop there. He told a parable about some wicked tenants based upon Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard (Is. 5:1-7). Clearly, the vineyard is the nation Israel, the owner is God, the messengers are the prophets, the son is Jesus, the punishment of the tenants is the crushing of the nation (presumably in AD 70), and the new tenants are the gentiles who would believe the gospel.¹⁶⁷ The priests and scribes had little trouble identifying that they were the tenants who would kill the son (20:19), and the common people were horrified at the thought that God would reject them outright, giving their heritage to pagans (20:16b). But Jesus knew that he was a crisis figure and that his message was a crisis message. If the Jews thought it impossible that they would reject God's son, the psalmist had even predicted it in the Egyptian Hallel (Ps. 118:22) as did Isaiah (Is. 8:13-15). So also did Simeon at the dedication of the infant Jesus in the temple (2:34), though this was known to only Joseph and Mary.

The Question About Tribute (20:20-26)

The second challenge was an obvious attempt to set Jesus at odds with the Romans. The Roman poll-tax, levied annually upon every adult male, was deeply resented by most Jews. If Jesus spoke in favor of it, his audience would be offended, but if he spoke against it, they could accuse him of speaking out against Rome. Once again, Jesus escaped their entrapment by showing to them a denarius with Caesar's

¹⁶⁷The same parable appears in the coptic *Gospel of Thomas*, 65-66, though slightly abbreviated.

stampage. His words were double-edged. If in the first half of the statement the image and superscription on the coin indicated that taxes are owed to Caesar, the second half of the statement infers that all men and women owe an even higher allegiance to God, since he has stamped them with his own image (cf. Ge. 1:26-27). Astonished, the chief priests and scribes lapsed into silence.

The Question About Resurrection (20:27-40)

Up to this time, Jesus had not experienced a major confrontation with the Sadducees.¹⁶⁸ This was to be expected, since the Sadducees were mostly priests who belonged to the wealthy aristocracy in Jerusalem. As such, it would be rare that they would travel northward to Galilee, though the Pharisees from the middle class were quite numerous in the north, and consequently Jesus encountered them there with some frequency.¹⁶⁹ As is well known, the Sadducees rejected the ideas of resurrection and angels.¹⁷⁰ Thus, their question was intended to goad Jesus into entering the debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees over this issue, and it may well be that this particular question was well-worn rhetoric in the Sadducees' theological bag of polemics. Their hypothetical example, based on the Deuteronomic Code (Dt. 25:5ff.), was more academic than anything else, since the practice had fallen into disuse.¹⁷¹ The question at the end, "Whose wife will she be in the resurrection," was probably intended to point out the absurdity of resurrection.

Jesus first answered their question by pointing out that marriage is an institution for the present age so that the human race can survive. In the future age, however, people will no longer die but will be like the angels (the final clause being a tongue-in-cheek sarcasm against the Sadducees' rejection of angels). Furthermore, Torah itself supports the notion of resurrection, since Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all dead, but Yahweh still speaks of himself as their God (cf. Ex. 3:6). Yahweh's statement, "I am the Elohim of Abraham," obviously implies that Abraham is still alive in some sense. Even the scribes were impressed with this exegesis, and no one dared pose any more challenges.

The Question About the Son of David (20:41-47)

The final question was posed, not by the Jewish theologians to Jesus, but by Jesus to them. His question was about the correct exegesis of Psalm 110, an ancient coronation psalm, in which Adonay¹⁷² was understood, at least in later Judaism, to

¹⁶⁸The lone exception is recorded by Matthew in 16:1.

¹⁶⁹Russell, 49-52.

¹⁷⁰See Footnote #127.

¹⁷¹Caird, 224.

¹⁷²There are three figures to be considered in Psalm 110: *Yahweh* who makes promises to *Adonay* (= lord or Lord),

refer to the coming messiah.¹⁷³ If Yahweh spoke to the messianic Adonay, who was himself superior to David, how then could messiah at the same time be David's son? The theologians were at a loss, for the obvious implication was that however great David was, he had yet a greater son whom he addressed as "my lord." The inference is that the one greater than David must be divine himself, for whom would David address as his lord in this fashion except deity?

In the face of their silence, Jesus again warned his followers against the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who practiced their religion for show. Their punishment would be severe!¹⁷⁴

The Last Supper (21-22)

The final events leading up to the death of Jesus now begin to occur in rapid succession. Jesus' teachings and actions had stirred up a formidable foe in the temple hierarchy, and its leaders would not rest until he had been silenced.

The Widow's Lepta (21:1-4)

While still teaching in the temple, Jesus observed a widow giving her last two coins¹⁷⁵ into the temple treasury. Jesus commented on the widow's gift, indicating that the true measure of a gift is not how much is given, but how much one keeps back. The widow kept back nothing. This short incident ties together both what precedes it as well as what follows it. Luke had just recorded Jesus' saying about the scribes who devour widows houses (20:47), and in 21:5 he begins recording Jesus' great discourse against the temple, a discourse that pronounced severe judgment upon the system which allowed such a widow to be stripped of everything.

The Sermon Against the Temple (21:5-37)

Reminiscent of Jeremiah's temple sermon (Je. 7, 26), a sermon from which the Lord had quoted when he drove out the exchangers (19:46), Jesus now launched into a lengthy discourse about the future of Jerusalem and its sacred shrine. The sermon is paralleled in both Mark and Matthew, where it mentions that the sermon was actually given on Mt. Olivet while overlooking the temple precincts (Mk. 13:3//Mt. 24:3).¹⁷⁶

and *David* who is considered to be the author of the psalm.

¹⁷³Weiser, 692-693.

¹⁷⁴It may be noted that the two passages in Luke 20:45-47 and 11:39-44 are grouped together by Matthew (Mt. 23).

¹⁷⁵Lepta were two of the smallest coins in use in Palestine at the time and were equivalent to about 1/100th of a denarius, cf. Fitzmyer, II.1322; Ellis, 239.

¹⁷⁶The problems associated with harmonizing the three accounts are much too complex to attempt here, but it may at least be said that the sermon stems from the question of the disciples, "When shall this destruction occur?" In Mark's version, Jesus does not directly answer the question, but moves ahead to describe the end of the age. In Matthew's account, the question is extended to include the *parousia* and the close of the age so that the discussion

As did Jeremiah in the seventh century BC, Jesus predicted the total destruction of the entire temple edifice (cf. Je. 7:12-14). In his discourse, he brings together both the events of the temple's destruction in AD 70 and the events of the end of the age. As one scholar has stated, this way of viewing the future expresses the perspective that "in the crises of history the eschatological is foreshadowed. The divine judgments in history are, so to speak, rehearsals of the last judgment, and the successive incarnations of antichrist are foreshadowings of the last supreme concentration of the rebelliousness of the devil before the End."¹⁷⁷

The Course of the Present Age (21:8-11)

Jesus does not immediately answer the question about the temple's destruction, but instead, he describes the future course of the present age. This was important, because it helped to clarify for the disciples that the final crisis of history would not be identical to the historical crisis for the Jerusalem temple. In fact, anyone who prophesied of the imminency of the end of the world and the appearance of messiah was to be considered a fraud. Wars, revolutions, earthquakes, droughts and the like were *not* signs of the end. They were simply elements to be expected in the normal course of the age.

The Persecution of the Disciples (21:12-19)

Even before all these traumatic events would occur in the normal course of the age, however, Jesus' followers could expect severe persecution, a persecution which Luke carefully detailed as occurring in the early years of the church and especially during the period immediately following Stephen's martyrdom (Ac. 4:1-3, 18; 5:17-18, 27-28, 33, 41; 6:8-14; 7:57-58; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 11:19; 12:1-5). Though Paul was not one of the original Twelve, it is likely that Luke has in mind his persecutions also, which are fully described in Acts.

The Siege of Jerusalem (21:20-24)

After the period of the disciples' persecution, the city of Jerusalem would itself suffer. It would be surrounded by armies which would destroy it. Those who were wise would not wait for the disaster; instead, they would flee into the surrounding countryside in order to escape.¹⁷⁸ This destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the

of the last times in fact embraces both events, the destruction of the temple in AD 70 and the close of the age. Matthew's focus is clearly on the latter. Luke, though he also includes both events, retains a stronger focus on the near event, the destruction of the temple in AD 70. This bringing together of two separate times and events in a single treatment is typical of apocalyptic, and in any case, the disciples almost certainly viewed the two as being simultaneous, even though in subsequent history they were not, cf. G. Ladd, *Theology*, 196-199.

¹⁷⁷C. Cranfield "Mark 13," *SJTh* 6 (1953) 300, as quoted in Ladd, *Theology*, 198-199.

¹⁷⁸According to Eusebius, many Christians did indeed flee the city of Jerusalem just prior to its fall and escaped to

Romans under Titus is well documented by Josephus.¹⁷⁹ The temple was destroyed, just as Jesus had predicted, 30,000 prisoners of war were sold at auction, and the Jews were scattered in a second great diaspora, similar to the one which occurred in 587 BC.¹⁸⁰

The final phrase, "Jerusalem shall be trampled until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," has created great speculation. At the simplest level, it may only mean that the Gentile devastation of Jerusalem would continue until the siege of AD 70 had been completed.¹⁸¹ Others, however, read the saying as a prediction of the domination of Jerusalem by Gentile political powers until the end of the age. This latter interpretation created intense speculation when the State of Israel was formed in 1948. Still others have connected Luke's phrase with the similar phrase in Paul, the "fulness of the Gentiles" (Ro. 11:25). It may well be that Jesus had in mind the idea that Jerusalem would be repossessed by Israel, but the passage is ambiguous enough to discourage dogmatism.

The Parousia (21:25-38)

Just as Jesus had described one "end," the end of Jerusalem in AD 70, he now describes another "end," the end of the age which climaxes with the second advent. There would be cosmic signs, turmoil among the nations, and great fear. Finally, the Son of Man would come with power to complete the redemption of his disciples.¹⁸² The language of the Son of Man's *parousia* (= coming) is drawn from Daniel's apocalyptic vision (Da. 7:13-14). All these cosmic signs herald the nearness of the consummation of the reign of God, just as spring leaves herald the nearness of summer.¹⁸³ The whole complex of endtime events will all occur within the space of a single generation.¹⁸⁴ The task of the disciples, therefore, was neither speculation,

Pella in the transjordan, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.5. Eusebius says that the Jerusalem church had been "commanded by a revelation," and it may be that he has specifically in mind this passage in Luke.

¹⁷⁹Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book V and Book VI.

¹⁸⁰M. Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World* (New York: Scribners, 1973) 203-205.

¹⁸¹As such, Fitzmyer translates the passage, "Jerusalem will be trampled upon by pagans, until the time of the pagans sees its fulfillment," Fitzmyer, II. 1342.

¹⁸²Those who espouse a pretribulation rapture assert that the redemption in 21:27-28 cannot be for the church, cf. J. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1957) 112. However, this is obviously a difficult passage for dispensationalists, and Dwight Pentecost, in his extensive treatment of dispensational theology, manages to avoid exegeting the passage altogether, cf. Pentecost, *Things*. For posttribulationists, on the other hand, the passage is taken to be directed to the Christian community, cf. Gundry, 34-35, 135.

¹⁸³The notion espoused by Hal Lindsey that the fig tree and the other trees are a symbol of the forming of the State of Israel and that the end of the world would occur within 40 years of 1948 is patently mistaken, H. Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) 53-54. The simile of the fig is just that, a simile.

¹⁸⁴The speculations about the length of a generation are largely futile. The meaning here is simply that the final generation, that is, the final set of people who will be alive at the end, will live to see everything consummated. In other words, the end will come relatively quickly and will not be drawn out.

apathy nor carelessness. Rather, the people of God must be watchful so that their faith will not be destroyed during the terrible cataclysms. When Christ comes, they can face the Great Judge with confidence.

Judas' Treachery (22:1-6)

It is unlikely that Judas decided to betray Jesus merely for the sake of the small amount of money promised him by the chief priests. He already had access to the common funds of the disciples, and was accustomed to helping himself (cf. Jn. 12:6). Neither is the suggestion very convincing that Judas really believed in Jesus, but from love-hate motives, he was simply trying to force Jesus' hand in declaring his messiahship.¹⁸⁵ Rather, it seems more likely that by this time Judas had become thoroughly disillusioned with Jesus, possibly out of a zealot's vision for the kingdom, a vision Jesus obviously did not share. In any case, Luke is quite clear that the betrayal was ultimately motivated by Satan.

The Last Supper (22:7-38)

All the synoptics agree that the last supper of Jesus with the Twelve was a passover seder.¹⁸⁶ Peter and John were sent to prepare the food and the facilities. They would have found it simple enough to follow a man with a water jar, particularly in a culture where only women carried water. A lamb had to be purchased, sacrificed, and roasted, and unleavened bread, bitter herbs and wine had to be procured.

The supper took on the character of a farewell meal, a meal which Jesus wished to share with the Twelve "before he suffered" (22:15). Even more important, Jesus' eucharistic words indicated that the meal symbolized his death, the matza representing his body and the wine his blood. The meal was to become a ritual which the disciples were expected to repeat in his memory (22:19-20). During the supper, Jesus also indicated that one of the Twelve would betray him, though he did not indicate which one. Also, a controversy arose between the disciples over which of them was the most important, a controversy that Jesus ended with a sound rebuke. In actual fact, the Twelve were to be characterized by servanthood as well as authority. Like Jesus, they should have the attitude of a servant, but in the end, they would also

¹⁸⁵S. Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, trans. R. Schuehert (New York: Paulist, 1978) 111-112.

¹⁸⁶There is the question, of course, as to why the Fourth Gospel puts the last supper and crucifixion events a day earlier than the synoptics (cf. Jn. 18:28), and various solutions have been suggested, cf. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. N. Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 16-84. However, the overwhelming evidence is that the last supper of Jesus was indeed a passover supper. It may simply be that the synoptics and the Fourth Gospel are using different paschal calendars, either one from the Pharisees and the other from the Sadducees or one from the Galileans and the other from the Judeans. If such is the case, then while the accounts appear to be in conflict, in actuality they are not, cf. I. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 57-75.

share in his regal glory and be given jurisdiction over the entire eschatological Israel.

Near the end of the supper, Jesus announced to Peter that the big fisherman would disown him, but that he had prayed for him. Peter, of course, found it hard to accept this prediction, but Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. In the end, though Peter would fail, his faith wouldn't! Finally, as the group started to leave the upper room, Jesus warned the disciples to go prepared. Earlier, when he had sent them out on their evangelistic tours, he had advised them not to make advance preparations. Now, however, they must prepare for a crisis.¹⁸⁷ The time of fulfillment had arrived!

The Prayer on Mt. Olivet (22:39-46)

From the upper room, the little band crossed the Kidron Valley to the Mt. of Olives, just to the east of the city wall. It was customary not to leave the city district during the passover celebration, and although Jesus and the Twelve usually spent the nights at Bethany (cf. Mk. 11:11), on this night they stayed within the extended city area.¹⁸⁸ Here, Jesus prayed with such intensity that his perspiration congealed until it was thick like blood, and an angel appeared in order to revive him. It may well be that the statement in Hebrews, which describes Jesus' "loud cries and tears" which were answered "because of his reverent submission," is a direct reflection upon this passage (He. 5:7). The disciples, for their part, were exhausted and fell into a heavy sleep while Jesus prayed.

The Arrest (22:47-53)

Judas suddenly appeared with a mob and greeted Jesus with a kiss. The sign of supreme affection became the mark of betrayal. The disciples who had brought the two swords made ready to defend Jesus, and one of them took a vicious swing at the nearest antagonist, severing his ear.¹⁸⁹ Jesus rebuked this show of force and healed the man's ear. His words to the chief priests, elders and temple guard mark the beginning of the actual passion, "This is your hour--when darkness reigns!"

Peter's Denial (22:54-62)

Peter, like the others, took to his heels (cf. Mk. 14:50-52), but he apparently circled around so as to follow the party from a distance. Gaining access into the courtyard with the assistance of John (cf. Jn. 18:15-16), he warmed himself at a

¹⁸⁷The saying about buying a sword is probably not to be taken literally but serves as a metaphor that the disciples should be prepared. As they often did, the Twelve misunderstood, and Jesus simply dismissed the incident with the irony, "That is enough," or even better, "Enough of that!" cf. Fitzmyer, II.1428.

¹⁸⁸Jeremias, *Eucharistic*, 55.

¹⁸⁹The Fourth Gospel indicates that the swordsman was Peter, cf. Jn. 18:10).

brazier of coals, no doubt straining to hear any snatches of conversation from the inquisition being carried on inside. While there, he denied three times that he knew Jesus, just as had been predicted.¹⁹⁰ The third denial occurred where Peter was in full view of Jesus, and as he uttered his final disclaimer, their eyes locked. In that single glance, Peter suddenly remembered Jesus' earlier words and his own braggadocio, and he went outside sobbing deeply.

The Sanhedrin's Verdict (22:63-71)

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish supreme court, chaired by the high priest and composed of 70 members drawn from various groups (Sadducees, Pharisees, priests). It carried the authority to try cases that involved violations of religious law, and it served as a legislative and judicial body. For the most part, the Sanhedrin was an *ad hoc* committee assembled by the high priest whenever he needed advice on difficult cases, and the Romans apparently allowed the Sanhedrin a good deal of autonomy in matters of internal jurisdiction.¹⁹¹ However, their handling of the trial of Jesus was irregular if not actually illegal according to the terms of their own jurisprudence.¹⁹² Nevertheless, they determined that they had sufficient grounds to bring Jesus to the Roman Procurator for a death sentence.

The Crucifixion (23:1-49)

With the verdict of the Sanhedrin members that they had sufficient cause to seek a death penalty from the Romans, the drama of the trip to Jerusalem begins its climax. Jerusalem had been Jesus' goal, and rejection and death were to be expected.

Before Pilate (23:1-7)

In all four gospels, it is assumed that the Sanhedrin did not have the authority to carry out its verdict of execution, though only in the Fourth Gospel is this

¹⁹⁰It is unnecessary to posit that Peter denied Jesus six times in order to harmonize the gospel accounts, as does Lindsell, cf. H. Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 174-176. A much more plausible reconstruction is offered by G. Archer in *Inerrancy*, ed. N. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 65-67.

¹⁹¹S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, ed. W. Meeks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 107-108.

¹⁹²If the same rules of jurisprudence found in the Mishnah were in effect during the trial of Jesus, then the Sanhedrin certainly abrogated its legal proceedings. Capital cases were only to be tried in the regular meeting place, the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the temple precincts. The Sanhedrin was prohibited from meeting on sabbaths or feast days, and in capital cases, prohibited from meeting even on the evening before a sabbath or feast day. Capital sentences could not be pronounced until the day following the trial. Cases which had the potential for ending in a verdict of capital punishment were not to be handled at night. Finally, someone was required to speak in behalf of the accused, cf. A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (rpt. McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.) 590; Pentecost, *Words and Works*, 560.

assumption explicit (Jn. 18:31).¹⁹³ The charge of blasphemy (22:70-71) would not have held any weight with Pilate, of course, and it is the testimony of all four gospels that the charge was shifted to anti-Roman activities when the Sanhedrin presented Jesus to the Procurator. The accusation was that Jesus was encouraging rebellion against Rome, opposing the payment of taxes and claiming to be a rival king. These sorts of charges were obviously intended to lead Pilate into thinking that Jesus was a nationalistic zealot. Pilate, however, was shrewd enough to see through this facade, and when he had heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he passed the case over to Herod, the Galilean Tetrarch.

Before Herod (23:8-12)

Only Luke records the hearing before Herod.¹⁹⁴ Earlier, he had remarked that Herod had attempted to see Jesus while he was in Galilee, but had been unsuccessful (9:9). The Pharisees also had warned Jesus that Herod sought his life (13:31), though this may only have been an empty threat. In any case, Herod was delighted to see Jesus, and he questioned him closely, though Jesus did not give him the satisfaction of so much as a single word. Herod's soldiers mocked Jesus in much the same way as would Pilate's soldiers a short time later (cf. Jn. 19:2-3). The only certain thing that developed out of this hearing was a reconciliation between Herod and Pilate.

The Final Verdict (23:13-25)

Now the whole group returned to Pilate. For his part, Pilate wanted no part of an execution. His examination of Jesus did not warrant the charge of insurrection, and the inconclusiveness of the hearing before Herod only made the Sanhedrin's case that much weaker. As Procurator, Pilate held the authority to act autonomously, and there was no jury. His intention, then, was to placate the Jews by punishing Jesus (by scourging, according to the other gospels) and then releasing him. The Sanhedrin, however, would have none of that, and they called for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus.

The call for the release of Barabbas is explained in more detail in the other gospels. Apparently it was a tradition to give amnesty to one prisoner during Passover as an overture to the Jews. The Sanhedrin called for the release of Barabbas so that Jesus would not be set free on the grounds of this tradition. There is a subtle irony in the juxtaposition of Jesus and Barabbas. Both were accused of insurrection

¹⁹³The Mishnah refers to four kinds of executions which the Sanhedrin was empowered to inflict (stoning, burning, beheading, and strangling), but it is also clear that the power of capital punishment was at this time reserved for leading provincial officials and denied to local or even minor Roman authorities, cf. S. Smalley, "Jesus Christ, Arrest and Trial of," *ISBE* (1982) II.1052.

¹⁹⁴Luke also mentions the complicity of Herod and Pilate in Acts 4:26-27.

against Rome, and there is a probable word-play on their names. The surname Barabbas is an Aramaic construction, meaning "son of the father," a title which could equally apply to Jesus. Furthermore, some manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel as well as Origen, the ante-Nicene father, indicate that Barabbas' given name was also Jesus.¹⁹⁵

After three unsuccessful attempts to release Jesus, Pilate finally capitulated. Barabbas was released, and Jesus was given over for execution.

The Via Dolorosa (23:26-31)

The way of suffering, the *via dolorosa*, led from Pilate's court to the north side of the city, where the execution was to take place. It was customary for the prisoner to carry the *patibulum* (= crossbeam) of his cross, but whether Jesus was so weakened by his previous ordeals or for some other reason, the Roman soldiers, with their authority to requisition assistance from civilians, pressed Simon into service.¹⁹⁶ The spectators were numerous, and Jesus was followed by a large crowd which included many women, presumably also the women who had traveled with him in Galilee and who had joined him on the last trip to Jerusalem (cf. 23:55). Turning to them, Jesus once more prophesied of the coming doom on Jerusalem which would be accomplished in AD 70. In contrast to the usual stigma for barrenness, the day would come when the affliction on Jerusalem would be so severe that the childless woman would consider herself blessed rather than ashamed. The final saying in 23:31 is based on the fact that green wood does not burn easily. By analogy, if Jesus was executed by the Romans, even though he was innocent, what would happen to the Jewish nation, which was guilty?¹⁹⁷

The Crucifixion (23:32-43)

Tens of thousands of persons were crucified in the Roman Empire, and in Palestine alone, the figure runs into the thousands.¹⁹⁸ In 1968, the only victim of a

¹⁹⁵P. Parker, *IDB* (1962) I.353.

¹⁹⁶There is no biblical evidence that Jesus stumbled on the way to the cross and so had to be relieved of his burden, though this depiction is so familiar from Christian art that most assume the incident to be in the biblical narratives. Simon, who carried the cross, may have been a diaspora Jew who had traveled to Jerusalem for the festival, since many Jews lived in Cyrene, North Africa, cf. N. Opperwall-Galluch, *ISBE* (1988) IV.516. It is less likely, though still possible, that he was black, as depicted in the moving poem "The Crucifixion" by James Weldon Johnson (1927):

'And then they laid hold on Simon,
Black Simon, yes, black Simon;
They put the cross on Simon,
And Simon bore the cross.'

¹⁹⁷Marshall, *Commentary*, 865.

¹⁹⁸V. Tzaferis, "Crucifixion--the Archaeological Evidence," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 1985 XI.1) 44.

first century crucifixion thus far discovered was unearthed in a tomb northeast of Jerusalem. From his remains, it can be verified that his two heel bones were affixed by a single nail on their adjacent (medial) surfaces.¹⁹⁹ The man's right tibia had been shattered by a strong single blow, a blow with enough force to also fracture the left calf bones. The arms were nailed between the bones in the wrist.²⁰⁰ Normally, a crucified prisoner would die due to physical exhaustion leading to asphyxia, but Jewish tradition required burial on the day of execution, and the breaking of prisoners legs would hasten the death and permit a burial before nightfall.²⁰¹ All this evidence confirms the accuracy of the biblical description of Jesus' death.²⁰²

With Jesus were also crucified two others who had capital sentences. Two of Jesus' seven last sayings are recorded by Luke, the first a prayer for forgiveness for his executioners²⁰³ and the second a promise to one of the crucified victims of his immediate entrance into paradise.²⁰⁴ As Jesus hung suffering, the people stared, and the Jewish rulers sneered. The soldiers offered him wine vinegar (cf. Ps. 69:21), though whether this was in mockery or as an act of kindness is not clear. The written notice above his head was intended as a bitter sarcasm, "The King of the Jews."²⁰⁵

The Death (23:44-49)

From noon until mid-afternoon, the sun took on a judgment hemorrhage.²⁰⁶ Such a phenomenon is well-known in the Old Testament as a portent associated with the judgment day of Yahweh (Am. 8:9; Jl. 2:10, 31; 3:15), and it may well be that Peter later assumes this phenomenon at the cross to have been a sign that the last days had been inaugurated (Ac. 2:20).²⁰⁷ The great curtain in the temple which separated

¹⁹⁹The heel bones of the skeleton still had the nail transfixed through them when discovered, apparently because the nail had been driven into a knot and was so securely fastened that it could not be pulled out after the man died. Thus, the feet were amputated so that the body could be removed, and the corpse along with the feet which were still affixed to a fragment of the cross were buried together.

²⁰⁰Nailing only the palms is impossible because of the weight of the body, cf. Tzaferis, 52.

²⁰¹Tzaferis, 44-53.

²⁰²For further details regarding crucifixion and the interpretation of the gospel accounts, see H. Weber, *The Cross: Tradition and Interpretation*, trans. E. Jessett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²⁰³This prayer stands in sharp contrast to the prayer of Jeremiah against his tormentors, where he prayed, "Do not forgive their crimes or blot out their sins" (Je. 18:23).

²⁰⁴The term paradise (= garden, park) comes from the LXX account of the Garden of Eden, a place which in Jewish apocalyptic literature was identified as the abode for the righteous after death (see 1 Enoch 20:7; Psalms of Solomon 14:2; Testament of Levi 18:10; Sibylline Fragment 3:48; IV Ezra 3:6; 2 Enoch 8:1-6; 2 Baruch 4:2-7; 59:8 and repeatedly in the Apocalypse of Moses and the Books of Adam and Eve), cf. H. McArthur, *IDB* (1962) III.655.

²⁰⁵The common abbreviation INRI in Christian symbolism stands for the Latin *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum* (= Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews).

²⁰⁶Jewish time reckoning began at about 6:00 A.M. for the daylight hours.

²⁰⁷F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 69.

the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn downward through the middle, a phenomenon which indicates that the way into the intimate presence of God, an intimacy shared only by the High Priests, had been opened to all (cf. He. 9:24-28; 10:19-22).²⁰⁸ At the moment of Jesus' death, Luke records yet a third saying, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." The Roman officer in charge of the execution uttered an exclamation of Jesus' innocence, and the crowds dispersed slowly, deeply feeling the anguish of the event. Only Jesus' friends were left, a handful of his disciples²⁰⁹ and the women who had followed him from Galilee.

Resurrection and Ascension (23:50-24:53)

The Third Gospel closes with the resurrection narratives and the ascension of Christ. Luke also repeats a version of the resurrection/ascension narrative in the opening of Acts (1:1-11), so that this event forms the center of his two volume work. The other gospels are varied in their reporting. Matthew contains post-resurrection narratives, but no ascension narrative. Mark contains neither resurrection nor ascension in the shorter ending (which concludes at 16:8), but both in the longer ending (16:9-20). John contains resurrection narratives but no ascension narrative.²¹⁰

The biblical concept of resurrection is unique in religion,²¹¹ and the resurrection stories are of two kinds. The first kind reports the discovery of the empty tomb. This was, of course, essential. No stories of resurrection would ever have circulated if the corpse of Jesus could have been produced by the Sanhedrin! Yet the empty tomb stories did not in themselves produce faith in the resurrected Jesus. When the disciples discovered the empty tomb, they were merely puzzled and confused. Rather, it is the second kind of story that creates faith, that is, the post resurrection appearances of the Lord to his disciples.²¹²

²⁰⁸In the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a different meaning is given to the tearing of the temple veil. In the *Testament of Levi*, it represents the uncovering of Israel's shameful behavior (10:3), and in the *Testament of Benjamin*, it represents the release of the Holy Spirit upon the nations (9:3).

²⁰⁹Luke clearly uses a masculine gender to refer to the friends who knew Jesus (23:49). Though in Mark 15:40-41 only women are mentioned, and in Matthew the disciples are described as deserting Jesus (26:56), apparently some of them returned to be near him at the end.

²¹⁰The discussion about the formation of the resurrection narratives in the gospels has generated much scholarly material, but at least the two following works should be noted. For the historical-critical position, one should see R. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980). For a less severely critical approach and one that arises within evangelical scholarship, see G. Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²¹¹To be sure, in other Semitic and Hellenistic thought, there are notions of dying/rising gods who are reborn with the seasonal changes, but the biblical concept of resurrection has nothing to do with cosmic rebirth, cf. T. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 27.

²¹²It is belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that produces a distinctly Christian faith. The essence of the experience of Christian faith is uniquely mediated through the acceptance of the radical claim that Jesus arose from the dead, cf. D. Lewis, "The Experience of Christian Faith: A Phenomenological Exploration," *Bulletin of the*

The Burial (23:50-56)

Usually, executed criminals were buried without honor in a public field.²¹³ Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and a deeply pious Jew who had not agreed with the plot against Jesus, gained permission from Pilate to bury Jesus in a freshly carved burial cave. The interment was accomplished in the late evening, just before sundown,²¹⁴ and the women who had loyally stayed to witness the ordeal only departed after the tomb had been closed. They intended to return after the sabbath was over to perform the honors for the dead, which had not been completed due to the approaching holy day (Ex. 20:10).

The Empty Tomb (24:1-12)

Early Sunday morning, after having waited through the sabbath, the same group of women returned to the tomb. They found that the stone over the entrance had been removed, and the corpse of Jesus was gone. Their first impression was probably that the grave had been broken open by tomb robbers.²¹⁵ But two men in bright clothing (Matthew uses the term “angel,” cf. 28:2-7) appeared with the message that Jesus had risen from the dead, just as he had said when they were in Galilee (9:22; cf. 18:31-34). Returning to the Eleven Apostles and the other disciples, they reported their discovery. It was not readily believed. Peter went to see for himself (cf. Jn. 20:1-9), but though he verified their story, he could only speculate on what had happened.

The Appearance to Cleopas and His Companion (24:13-35)

Later on that same Sunday, probably in late afternoon inasmuch as the story climaxes near evening (24:29), the risen Jesus joined two of the disciples²¹⁶ who were walking to the village of Emmaus a few miles from Jerusalem. They did not immediately notice anything unusual about Jesus, and in fact, they did not even recognize him.²¹⁷ The discussion was about the recent events of Jesus’ passion. Their despair is evident in the expression “we had hoped that he was the one who was to

Evangelical Philosophical Society (Vol. 14:1, 1991), pp. 56-69.

²¹³ Ellis, 270.

²¹⁴The Jewish sabbath began at sundown on Friday evening, and this is the meaning of the phrase “and the Sabbath was about to begin” (23:54b).

²¹⁵ Tomb robbery was a problem at the time, as evidenced by an imperial edict against it, of. R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII--XXI [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) 984.

²¹⁶ Cleopas is named and his companion is not. Speculations range from Simon Peter to Cleopas’ wife as the unnamed partner, but there is no clear evidence one way or another, of. Fitzmyer, 11.1563.

²¹⁷ Lit., “their eyes were restrained.” This same phenomena occurred to Mary Magdalene in the garden encounter (Jn. 20:14-15), and the longer ending of Mark says that he “appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country” (Mk. 16:12-13), an obscure but obvious allusion to the Lukan account

redeem Israel” (24:21). The two were aware of the empty tomb, but they also discounted the notion that Jesus could possibly be alive. Jesus, however, explained that it was necessary for Messiah to suffer before entering his glory, and from both Torah and the Prophets²¹⁸ he explained how that this was so²¹⁹.

Nearing Emmaeus, the two disciples urged Jesus to spend the evening with them. While they shared a simple meal, they at last recognized him by his familiar gesture of breaking bread (24:30, 35), a gesture that vividly recalled his eucharistic actions at the Last Supper 22:19).²²⁰ Suddenly, Jesus disappeared.²²¹

Hurriedly, the two returned to their companions in Jerusalem to explain to them that Jesus was indeed alive! It is to be assumed that the appearance to Simon Peter (24:34), also mentioned by Paul (1 Co. 15:5), occurred shortly after Peter’s visit to the tomb on Easter morning (of. Jn. 20:3-7). This appearance is not described, but it does come first in Paul’s list and may even precede the appearance to the women, as recorded by Matthew (Mt. 28:9) and John (Jn. 20:10-16). On this basis, some argue that Peter was the first one to see Jesus alive after the resurrection. Against this is the passage in the longer ending of Mark which says he appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9). In any case, Peter was certainly among the first, if not actually the first, to see the risen Jesus.

The Appearance to the Apostles (24:36-49)

While Cleopas and his companion were still giving the report to the others, Jesus suddenly appeared standing among them. He allowed them to examine his hands and feet, sure evidences that it was really him and that he was not an apparition.²²² To add to this verification, he ate some fish with them and explained

²¹⁸ The expression “Moses and the Prophets” probably refers to the first two major sections of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah and the Nebiim. Later, Jesus would also implicitly include the third major section of the Hebrew Bible by mentioning the Psalms, the first book of the Kethubim (of. 24:44).

²¹⁹ In the OT, there are no passages which specifically describe a suffering Messiah. It is the combining of the messianic hope of the OT with the figure of the suffering Servant of Yahweh (Is. 42-53) which yields the concept that the Messiah would suffer, Cf. F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 83-99.

²²⁰ Mary Magdalene, in a similar way, recognized Jesus only when he spoke to her (of. Jn. 20:16). In neither of these cases was recognition based upon simple visual appearances.

²²¹ The ability of Jesus to appear and disappear at will as well as the nature of his resurrection body have been long discussed. One way of accounting for the biblical evidence is the suggestion that Jesus was exalted to heaven on Easter morning, that he returned for brief periods of time during the forty days before his final ascension, and that the final ascension was intended to be a visible, symbolic representation of the invisible ascension which had already taken place on Easter morning, of. P. Toon, *The Ascension of Our Lord* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 9-12, 125-126.

²²² This verification that Jesus had a tangible, resurrected body was important, because it keeps the concept of resurrection squarely within a Hebraic framework. It was possible for Greeks, but certainly not for Jews, to think that a person could exist without a body. The verification of Jesus’ resurrection life is established for the disciples

once more that all these events were the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets had predicted.

The later messianic interpretations of the Old Testament by the apostles surely derive from Jesus himself. F. F. Bruce has capsulized this Old Testament hope effectively in the following free verse:²²³

*In Jesus the promise is confirmed,
the covenant is renewed,
the prophecies are fulfilled,
the law is vindicated,
salvation is brought near,
sacred history has reached its climax,
the perfect sacrifice has been offered and accepted,
the great priest over the household of God
has taken his seat at God's right hand,
the Prophet like Moses has been raised up,
the Son of David reigns,
the kingdom of God has been inaugurated,
the Son of Man has received dominion
from the Ancient of Days,
the Servant of the Lord,
having been smitten to death
for his people's transgression
and borne the sin of many,
has accomplished the divine purpose,
has seen light after the travail of his soul
and is now exalted and extolled
and made very high.*

Luke's version of the great commission, unlike that in Matthew (Mt. 28:19)

by this tangible encounter with him, and it is because his resurrection is an historical event that it is possible also to claim that Jesus is truly the Son of God who died on the cross for human sins. The resurrection points to Jesus as the final revelation of God, and therefore, that he is God himself, of. W. Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" *Dialog 4* (1965) 135.

²²³Bruce, *New Testament Development*, (cover).

and Mark's longer ending (16:16), does not contain an explicit reference to Christian baptism.²²⁴ However, it is clear that the message about Jesus was to be preached to the nations, beginning with Jerusalem which is the geographical mid-point between the Books of Luke and Acts.²²⁵ Luke's emphasis is on the imminent bestowal of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit and the role of the apostles as witnesses of the passion and resurrection events. The disciples were not to leave Jerusalem, but they were to remain in the city until they had been empowered by God the Father (of. Ac. 1:4).

The Ascension (24:50-53)

If Luke had not given a calendar reference in Acts, one might assume that the ascension occurred on Easter evening. Later, however, Luke mentions that Jesus showed himself repeatedly for a period of some 40 days (Ac. 1:3). His final appearance ended in his being taken up into heaven, where as Peter would later say, he would remain until the consummation of the age (cf. Ac. 3:21). As the one in the heavens, Jesus would then be the dispenser of the gift of the Spirit upon his followers (Ac. 2:33). His ascension was the completion of his exaltation to the Father's right hand (Ac. 2:34-35), the position of full lordship (Ac. 2:36).

²²⁴ It may be noted, however, that baptism as well as various evangelistic actions occur in the Book of Acts "in the name of Jesus" (of. Ac. 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:17-18; 5:28, 40; etc.). This expression "in the name of Jesus" does not denote a magical incantation nor necessarily a verbal formula. Rather, it points toward participation in Christ's authority, acting on Christ's behalf, or relying upon Christ, of. R. Abba, *IDB* (1962) 111.507.

²²⁵ Geographically, the perspective in Luke moves toward Jerusalem; in Acts it moves away from Jerusalem (see footnote #12).