

Luke

It is widely accepted among scholars that Luke is the author of this book. Luke was a Greek doctor who was not one of Jesus' disciples, nor did he follow Jesus during His ministry. Luke acquired his knowledge of Jesus' life and ministry from research rather than from his own eyewitness observations (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke addressed this book to the Greek official Theophilus, a Greek name meaning "friend of God." Theophilus may have been a fairly recent convert to Christianity from Greek paganism. Luke's main focus is presenting to a Gentile, Greco-Roman audience Jesus as the perfect and wise human. The audience is the Gentiles, which can be seen in the fact that many of the places and customs are explained and there is little mention of fulfilled prophecy. There are Jewish words that are substituted: *zealot* used for *Canaanite*, *teacher* substituted for *rabbi*, *lawyer* used instead of *scribe*. Also the woes and charges of hypocrisy against the Jews are not as numerous since the Jews were not his audience.

Practically all scholars believe that Luke wrote this book before he wrote the book of Acts. Many scholars believe that Luke wrote the book of Acts during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, during which the book ends (60–62 AD). This would put the date of the book of Luke between 57 and 59 AD.

Setting

The First Testament ends with Israel's continual failure to live in obedience to Yahweh, enjoy His blessings in the Promised Land, and be a blessing to the world. As a result of their idolatry and lack of justice, Yahweh took them into exile under the oppression of foreign powers. Before and during their exile Yahweh sent many prophets to prophecy the coming of a messiah who would restore Israel back to the Promised Land, save them from their sins and rebellion, and establish the Kingdom of Yahweh on earth. Eventually they returned from exile, but it was clear from their continued lack of obedience that the exile had not changed them. And though they had returned to the Promised Land, their exile was not over, for they were still under the oppression of foreign powers. Eventually Yahweh stopped sending His prophets to the people. Empire after empire continued to oppress them in the four hundred years between the First and Second Testaments.¹ By the time Rome came into power, many of the Jews had lost hope that anything would change and had made moral and religious compromises with Roman culture. But the faithful remnant awaited the promised Messiah and the restoration of Israel.

Purpose

Luke's primary purpose is to explain how Yahweh, through His Son, will accomplish the decisive act of the deliverance and redemption of all humanity and how this good news will spread throughout the world through His witnesses with the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit.² Luke immediately begins the book with the point that the redemption of humanity through Jesus is not a new plan but a continuation and climax of what Yahweh began in the First Testament, starting with Genesis. Even though Jesus is a new revelation in Yahweh's plan and

¹ For a more thorough understanding of the time leading up to the Gospels, see *The Intertestamental History* at www.knowingthebible.net.

² See Francois Bovon. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, p. 5.

has come to replace the old covenant, Jesus is also what all the historical books and the prophets have spoken about (Luke 24:27), and His work on the cross and His New Covenant are firmly rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant and the plan of Yahweh in the First Testament.

The second purpose is to demonstrate how the Gentiles are a part of the New Covenant people that Jesus established through His death and resurrection. Although Jesus' act of redemption was initially for Israel, the efficiency of the cross would extend redemption to all people and include the Gentiles in the New Covenant. The real tragedy of the story is not the death of Jesus but rather that Israel, Yahweh's chosen people, respond with a total lack of comprehension and reject their Messiah. Despite this, Yahweh will bring them back into the New Covenant one day.

Themes

Three major theological themes are developed throughout the book of Luke: Christology and salvation, self-justification versus justification, and the new community.

Christology and Salvation

In Luke the Holy Spirit is the central figure of redemption who moves from being promised (Luke 3:15-18) to being a testifier-enabler for Jesus (Luke 3:21; 4:16-18). He also brings the hope of the new era and the covenant of Jesus as He draws humans into a covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Luke 1–2 reveal Jesus as the long-awaited Messianic King of the Jews who had come to usher in the Kingdom of Yahweh. In the understanding of the Jews, this Messiah was supposed to come and destroy the foreign powers, in their case Rome, destroying all evil on earth and establishing Israel as the ruling nation over the world (Amos 9:11-12; Hos. 3:4; Mic. 5:1-5; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3; Jer. 23:5; 30:9, 21; 33:14-22; Ezek. 17:22-24; 34:23-24; 37:24-28; Hag. 2:20-23; Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13; 9:9-13; Mal. 3:1). When Jesus began His ministry, He validated that He was the Messiah through His baptism, temptation, and many healing miracles (Luke 4:14-21).

As Jesus' ministry continued, it also became clear that He was more than just the King of Israel—He was the incarnation of Yahweh Himself. Jesus began to refer to Himself as the Son of Man from Dan. 7:13-14. This passage portrays a human figure who approaches the throne of Yahweh and is riding the clouds. The fact that He approaches the throne without dying communicates that He is a sinless human. As well, the only beings that ride clouds are Yahweh and angels. This figure is portrayed as being both human and divine. In Daniel, Yahweh then hands this Son of Man all authority, power, and honor over all of creation. Jesus claimed to be this Son of Man and proved this claim and appointment of Yahweh by doing what only Yahweh could do—forgiving sins and healing people—which Yahweh would not have allowed Him to do if His claims were false (Luke 5:21-26). Throughout His ministry He continually claimed and validated His claim to be the God-man who sits at the right hand of Yahweh and rules over creation (Luke 20:42; 22:69).

Though the aspect of the Messiah as the conquering and ruling king was clearly prophesied in the First Testament, so was the idea of the Messiah coming to suffer for the sins of the world (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12). However, after being under the oppression of foreign powers for so many years, the Jews reinterpreted the passages of the suffering Messiah as applying to their own suffering rather than to that of the Messiah; in doing so, they stripped this

aspect from their theological concept of the Messiah. Therefore, the Jews did not have a category for a suffering Messiah, only a conquering and ruling Messiah. Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that He had come to suffer and die for the sins of the world, but they could not even grasp this concept let alone accept it (Luke 9:21-22, 44-45; 18:31-34; 22:).

Though Jesus had come to conquer and destroy the evil nations and establish the Kingdom of Yahweh on earth for His covenant people, He first had to conquer sin, the devil, and death, which was the penalty for humanity's inability to live righteously under the requirements of the Law. These were the true enemies of humanity, which had thoroughly corrupted humanity and prevented them from ever entering into the Kingdom of Yahweh. This was accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which are what everything in Luke is pushing towards and what only the God-man could accomplish. Jesus had to be the God-man in order to redeem the world, for only a human can represent humanity, which is guilty of sin and death under the Law, and only a human can die for humanity because God cannot die. However, humans in their finiteness can die only for their own sins, and they remain dead under the Law forever. This is why Jesus had to be God as well, because only God is without sin and therefore is innocent under the judgment of the Law. And only God can conquer sin and overcome death through His self-resurrection, bringing eternal life to all others.

One finds in the message of Jesus a call to respond, along with Yahweh's enabling of that response. As one discovers who Jesus is and the nature of His message, they are not only required to know Him but are also responsible and accountable to Him.

Self-Justification Versus Justification

Self-justification is when humans try to justify themselves based on what they have or have not done and on how much of it they have done.

Justification through Yahweh is when He declares the ungodly to be just under the requirements of the Law. He looks at everything, including the death of His Son, and declares a person to be just. Jesus bore humanity's sin on the cross, and so Yahweh has reckoned their sin to Jesus, allowing for Jesus' righteousness to be reckoned to them. Yahweh looks at them and, even though they are sinners, declares them to be not guilty under the penalty of the Law. It is the grace of Yahweh and the faith of the believers that allow the work of Jesus on the cross to transfer this justification to the believers.

In the time of Jesus, the Jews did not believe that salvation was found in obeying the Law or in their works, for it was obvious through Israel's constant failure to obey Yahweh, seen in the stories of the First Testament and their eventual exile, that no one could perfectly meet the requirements of the Law and earn their salvation (Deut. 31:24-30; 2 Kgs. 17:7-23; Jer. 7:21-34). After the exile, the Jews over time developed a belief that their salvation was found in the fact that they were descendants of Abraham and were chosen by Yahweh as His covenant people (Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:3-6; Luke 3:8; Rom. 9:6-9) and that they were given the Law to hold and maintain (Ex. 19-20; 24). The Gentiles, who were everyone else and were not the biological descendants of Abraham, were not chosen by Yahweh and therefore were not saved. This is why the Jewish leaders were angry with Jesus for accepting the Gentiles (Luke 4:16-30). The question then was what it meant to be a true Jew because the history of Israel had shown that many ethnic Jews had been judged by Yahweh and because the nation was sent into exile. In the words of the expert in the Law who tested Jesus (Luke 10:29), "Who is my neighbor?"

First, one had to be circumcised into the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:9-14). This is why the early Jewish Christians argued passionately that the Gentile Christians had to be circumcised (Acts 10:45; 11:1-18; 15:1-35). The purer your bloodline, the more Jewish you were. Even Jewish women had a lower status than Jewish men, though Yahweh never communicated this in the First Testament.

Second, because the Law had emphasized that obedience brought blessings and abundant life and disobedience brought judgment and exile, this became the basis for being Jewish. Those who were blessed with health, wealth, prosperity, and good social standing were the ones who were blessed by Yahweh and therefore would inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of Yahweh (Luke 5:30-32; 7:34; 15:2). This is why in Jesus' day they rejected so many of the crippled and sick, even asking Jesus whether the blind man was blind because of his parents' sin or his own sin (John 9:2).

They believed that they were already right with Yahweh through their chosen-ness and that they then had to keep the Law in order to remain saved. There was still a "works and self-sufficiency" mentality, but it was not in order to earn Yahweh's favor and salvation; rather, it was to maintain what had already been given to them, to live up the expectations placed on them as people of the Abrahamic Covenant.

This thinking was partly born out of the fact that they went into exile because they failed to obey the Law, so when they returned to the Promised Land, they became determined to never go back into exile. Thus, obedience to Law became essential to their identity as Jews and maintaining a right standing with Yahweh. Over time they added to the Law more regulations of their own making in order to more narrowly define what was obedience and what was Jewish. This theology became so toxic that the Law in itself became paramount and the primary way one connected with Yahweh to the point that it became more important than Yahweh Himself. They missed the huge part of the First Testament that emphasized the love of Yahweh for all and His compassion and grace for sinners, and especially for the nation of Israel.

As a result, the Jewish religious leaders became very proud in their self-sufficiency and found their identity in keeping score when it came to knowledge of and obedience to the Law, blessings, and their social standing. Their religion became a game of self-justification in what they were doing.

When Jesus came and taught a salvation based on faith and a grace motivated by empathy and compassion that accepted everyone regardless of merit or status, they became enraged. Jesus' interpretation of the First Testament challenged everything on which they had built their identity and power structure, and He had come to topple it. Over and over again, the religious leaders challenged who had the right to interpret Scripture as they sought to justify themselves in the face of the truth of Yahweh's Word (Luke 16:16; 18:9).

The New Community

For Jesus, the message of salvation was more than ethics; it was a new way of relating to Yahweh by turning to Jesus and repenting, thus receiving Yahweh's spiritual blessings. Jesus desired to reconstruct His followers' understanding of Yahweh as their Father who desires to embrace them with gracious blessings. Luke demonstrates this through Jesus' teachings that focus on who Yahweh is and what it means to be a part of His kingdom. This new community was meant not just to behave rightly, as seen with the Pharisees, but to truly love others because

of one's love for Yahweh. The key themes that describe this new community are faith and dependence, total commitment, love for Yahweh and one's neighbor, commitment to the lost, prayer, persistence in suffering, and joy and praise.

Jesus also showed through His deeds that he had come to preach the good news to the needy (Luke 4:18-19), to heal the sick (Luke 5:30-32), and to seek the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus was the one who came for the social outcasts of society, the women, and the Gentiles. Luke has the spiritually and materially poor in mind. Jesus' desire was to include all in the new community of Yahweh based on their faith and not their nationality, gender, or social status. This means that Jesus came for the socially elite as well as the poor. Yahweh seeks to redeem Israel and somehow include the Gentiles. Yet Israel constantly rejected Yahweh, as they had always done.

The power of Jesus' message and being a part of the covenant people of Yahweh is not about self and power; it asks whom you love and whether you know Yahweh intimately. It is not about your position, what you can do, and how others see you, but about knowing Yahweh, experiencing His love and trust, feeling the same love for others that He does, and joining Him in the work He is doing to redeem creation.

Structure

Luke is written in three major divisions. The first division (Luke 1:1-9:50) includes the births of Jesus and John and the ministry of Jesus in Galilee in the northern part of Israel. This section ends with Jesus revealing Himself to be the divine Glory of Yahweh (Luke 9:28-36) and declaring that He must go to Jerusalem in order to die (Luke 9:21-22, 43a-45).

The second division (Luke 9:51-19:48) begins with Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in order to die (Luke 18:31-34). It is in His return that He reveals He is the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt temple and the return of the Glory of Yahweh (Ezek. 40-47), which will be discussed in Luke 19:28-44.

In the third division (Luke 20:1-24:53), Jesus dies in Jerusalem in fulfillment with what the prophets had predicted. This final division ends with His resurrection and ascension into heaven to sit at the right side of Yahweh.

Outline

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 - B. Jerusalem's Destruction and the End (21:5-38)
 - C. Betrayal and Farewell (22:1-38)
 - D. Trails and Death of Jesus (22:39–23:56)
 - E. Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus (24:1-53)



I. Birth and Childhood of John and Jesus (1:1–4:13)

Although Luke 1–2 introduces a narrative centered above all on Yahweh and the fullness of salvation that He will bring in Jesus, the story of Jesus’ birth does not really introduce this God or this salvation. The events of Jesus’ birth are linked to Yahweh’s past salvific acts. The First Testament quotations in Luke’s book show that the proper beginning for Yahweh’s story of redemption of humanity and creation does not begin with the birth or ministry of Jesus but rather in the First Testament, “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1). In Luke 1–2, Luke is more interested in showing that the events of Jesus’ life are not a new story or plan of redemption but a continuation of the original one that Yahweh began in the First Testament. The God who was at work long ago is still at work now, specifically through Jesus.³

The dominant feature of the literary structure of Luke 1:5–2:52 is the parallelism between John and Jesus and the juxtaposition of their birth announcements and births.

John		Jesus
1:5-7	Introduction of Parents	1:26-27
1:8-23	Annunciation	1:28-38
1:24-25	Mother’s Response	1:39-56
1:57-58	Birth	2:1-20
1:59-66	Circumcision and Naming	2:21-24
1:67-79	Prophetic Response	2:25-39
1:80	Growth of the Child	2:40-52

However, this does not communicate equality between John and Jesus. This is seen, first, in the fact that the events of Jesus’ life receive twice the amount of space as those of John. Second, two prophetic responses attend to Jesus’ presentation at the temple, whereas there is only one for John. Third, when the stories of John and Jesus converge in Luke 1:39–56, the focus is on Mary and her unborn child. Fourth is that John is to be the “prophet of the Most High” (Luke 1:76), whereas Jesus is to be the “Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32).⁴

Luke demonstrates that the birth of Jesus is rooted in the salvation hopes of the First Testament by Mary and Zechariah’s specifically mentioning “our ancestor Abraham” and the promises of the covenant in Luke 1:55, 73 and wrapping the birth and childhood of Jesus in the framework of the Abraham story.

Several observations can be made in looking at this parallel. First, the annunciations of birth are very similar between the two stories. Second, there is the common idea of barrenness. Third is that Luke portrays Zechariah and Mary as a type of Abraham; Zechariah and Elizabeth are a type of Sarah; and John is a type of Ishmael and Isaac.⁵

³ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 52.

⁴ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 51

⁵ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 55–56.

This First Testament connection can be seen with Gen. 27–43 and Dan. 7–10 throughout Luke 1:5–2:52; Zeph. 3:14–17 in Luke 1:26–33; 2 Sam. 7:12–16 in Luke 1:32–33; and Mic. 4:7–5:5 in Luke 2:1–114.

“The Story of Jesus’ birth and childhood is a celebration of God’s love for Israel, and, indeed, for all humanity. This love is manifest most brilliantly in the repeated declaration of the eschatological fulfillment of God’s promise of redemption. One of the primary features of this section is its elegant intertwining of the stories of John and Jesus, presenting the two in parallel fashion.”⁶

This division ends with John becoming the last prophet of the old Mosaic Covenant, announcing and preparing the way for Jesus, the prophet of the New Covenant. Jesus’ anointing, genealogy, and testing show that He is the true Son of God who has come to fulfill the promises of Yahweh as spoken through the prophets. Luke sees the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower Jesus for His coming battle with Satan and the demonic powers, beginning in His temptation.

It was common in stories of heroes in the Greco-Roman world to have a section that preceded the public life of the hero, which introduced his family background and told of omens, prophecies, and dreams of his future greatness. An example of this can be seen in “The Life of Augustus,” where omens, prophecies, and dreams foretold him as the savior of the Roman Empire. This is exactly what is found in Luke 1:5–4:14, which is what Luke’s Greco-Roman readers would have expected in the life of a hero-savior. This section then foretells and foreshadows the public career of Jesus and what type of person He would be.⁷

A. Explanatory Preface (1:1–4)

Luke states that he has set out to write a careful and orderly account of the life of Jesus. It is clear from a reading of the synoptic gospels that Luke did not use the word *orderly* to communicate a chronological order of events, for the events in his account are not in chronological order. For the people of the ancient Near East, the chronology of events was not as important as ideas and themes that tie the events together. Even today many biographies are organized by themes that run through a person’s life, as with the use of flashbacks, and are not communicated in a strict chronological order. This is not an act of deception if one makes no claim to have put the events in chronological order. The verb *carefully* communicates the idea of investigation, and the verb *orderly* communicates the idea of accuracy.⁸ Luke claims that he has done careful and accurate research, consulting many accounts and witnesses to the life of Jesus, in order to communicate an accurate and persuasive account of Jesus. The fact that there are very few socio-political issues in Luke’s account shows that his desire is to develop a theological narrative of who Jesus is and what His mission was to both the Jews and the Greeks.

The name Theophilus means “dear to God.” Because it is unclear who Theophilus is, many have suggested it is merely a metaphorical title for Luke’s audience. However, this name is most likely not symbolic due to its being a common name in the Greco-Roman world. Addressing the audience as “most excellent” would have been pointless since this designation was used of people of authority or high status. Likewise, the use of a symbolic title for a person or the

⁶ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 47.

⁷ See Talbert, pp. 16–17.

⁸ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 42.

audience has no parallel in Luke's literary culture.⁹ It could be that Luke is writing to Theophilus, a Roman official, with the purpose of persuading him of Jesus' genuine and salvific purpose, thus deeming Christianity as worthy of legal status in the Greco-Roman world. "Concerning the things about which you were instructed" indicates that Theophilus knows something about Jesus.

⁹ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 44.

B. The Birth Announcement of John (1:5-25)

This section records the birth announcement of John, which brings an end to the 400-hundred-year absence of Yahweh’s prophets. With the birth of John Yahweh was announcing that the time had come to unfold His promises in the prophets to free Israel from spiritual exile and make them into a new people.

The birth announcements of John (Luke 1:5-25) and Jesus (Luke 1:26-56) develop the themes of promise moving to fulfillment and then to a praise response.¹⁰

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

1:5-7 “During the time of Herod” roots the birth of John and Jesus in a real historical time period with very real political tensions. Herod the Great ruled over Judea, the large Roman province that included all of Israel, from 37 to 4 BC.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were both Levites—the priestly line that was in charge of maintaining the temple and atoning for the sins of Israel. Zechariah’s name means “Yahweh remembers.” Elizabeth’s name means “God’s oath” or “God’s covenant.” Their names are a testament to Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness even though it seems He has not been taking care of them, childless and living in the time of the Roman Empire.

Three times through repetition Luke states that Zachariah and Elizabeth “were righteous,” “keeping the commandments and regulations” (Deut. 4:40; Num. 36:13), and “were blameless” (Gen. 15:6; 17:1; 18:19; 26:5). This does not mean they were sinless but that they were devoted to Yahweh, strove to live rightly before Him, and dealt with their sin quickly. The Greek word *blameless* (*amemptos*) is equivalent to the Hebrew word *tam*, which describes Noah (Gen. 6:9) and Job (Job 1:8). The emphasis on their righteousness lets the reader know that Elizabeth’s barrenness is not the result of sin (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127; 128). Whenever the First Testament states that a woman had no child, it is immediately followed by Yahweh miraculously providing them a child (Gen. 17:16-17; 25:21; 29:31; 30:22; Judg. 13:2-3; 1 Sam. 1:2-20). Therefore, this statement prepares the reader for a miracle, demonstrating that Yahweh was still with His people and ready to do something amazing in Israel.

1:8-10 Luke 1:8-23 forms a chiasmic parallelism that emphasizes Yahweh’s announcement of good news to Zechariah.

A Service, sanctuary, and people (1:8-10)

B Angel’s appearance and Zechariah’s response (1:11-12)

X Announcement of “good news” (1:13-17)

B’ Zechariah’s objection and the angel’s response (1:18-20)

A’ People, sanctuary, and service (1:21-23)

¹⁰ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 48.

King David had organized the priesthood into twenty-four divisions and had placed the leader of one priestly family at the head of each group (1 Chr. 23–24). In Zechariah’s day, each division served for one week twice a year and during the major festivals. The priests chose by lot who would have the privilege of offering incense on the golden incense altar in the temple during their division’s week of service. There were so many priests in each division that one was lucky to be able to even do this once in his lifetime. On this day Yahweh had chosen Zechariah through the lot.

1:11-15 While Zechariah was physically as close to Yahweh as anyone could get, an angel of Yahweh appeared before Zechariah, filling him with fear. His reaction was typical of other people who encounter supernatural beings (Ex. 15:16; Jud. 6:22-23; 13:6, 22; 2 Sam. 6:9; Isa. 6:5; Dan. 8:16-17; 10:10-11; cf. Luke 1:29-30, 65; 2:9; 5:8-10; 9:34; Acts 5:5, 11). The angel told him not to be afraid, for he was approved before Yahweh and his prayer for a child had been answered. Elizabeth was going to have a child, and they were to name him John, which means “Yahweh has been gracious.”

The child would bring joy not only to them but to others as well because he would be great in the sight of Yahweh. The phrase “in the sight of the Lord” indicates Yahweh’s choice and approval. John’s restriction from drinking wine may suggest he was to be a Nazarite (Num. 6:1-12). There are no other specific indications that John was a Nazarite, though his ascetic lifestyle was similar to that of many prophets, particularly Elijah (v. 17; 2 Kgs. 1:8; Matt. 3:4). The strongest First Testament parallel is 1 Sam. 1:11, an allusion to Samuel, who was presented as Israel’s first prophet. By this parallel John’s office is implicitly affirmed. There is a direct contrast between the absence of wine and the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The Holy Spirit’s influence in John’s life was unusual for someone living in First Testament times. Normally the Holy Spirit empowered people selectively and temporarily (1 Sam. 10:10; 2 Kgs. 2:9-16), but with John it seems he would be filled with the Holy Spirit for his entire life. The idea of one being filled with the Holy Spirit does not appear again until the book of Acts.

1:16-17 The main purpose of John’s ministry would be to bring many of the people of Israel back to Yahweh.

First, he would do this in the spirit of Elijah. Malachi foretold of the coming of Elijah, who would proclaim the coming judgment of Yahweh (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). The multiple allusions to Malachi (Mal. 2:6-7; 3:1, 18; 4:5-6) in combination with John being anointed with the spirit and power of Elijah identify John as the promised prophet.¹¹ John came, not as Elijah but in the spirit of Elijah, which means John’s ministry would parallel Elijah’s call to repentance, not his life of miracles.

Second, John would turn the hearts of fathers to their children, an allusion to Mal. 4:6, which talks about the prophets restoring the relationship of the father and child both ways. The point is that John’s ministry would bring families together.

Third, John’s ministry would restore the disobedient, the people of Israel (Isa. 30:9; Jer. 5:23), back to the wisdom of righteousness, which is Israel fulfilling the requirements of the Law (Prov. 1:2-3; 10:23-24; Mal. 2:6; 3:18). The second and third are parallel to each other and represent the horizontal and vertical restoration of relationships.

¹¹ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 76–77.

Fourth, John would make ready for Yahweh a prepared people. This is a combination of Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3; 43:7; and 2 Sam. 7:24. The people were to be a prepared and responding people, ready to follow Yahweh's way of salvation; they were the remnant.

“John's greatness is not found in his choice of lifestyle, but in the fact that in understanding his calling, he pursues it fully and carries out God's will faithfully. John's style will be different from that of Jesus. God does not make all people to minister in the same way. That diversity allows different types of ministry to impact different kinds of people.”¹²

1:18-25 The angel rebuked Zechariah for asking for proof of this because Zechariah doubted the ability he and his wife had to conceive a child in their old age. Perhaps Zechariah's request for a sign received a rebuke and Abraham's did not because Zechariah had the advantage of the First Testament record, whereas Abraham did not. As a consequence, he would lose the ability to talk, specifically the ability to announce to everyone the exciting news. After the priest offered the incense, four other priests would join him, and they would stand at the door of the temple and give a benediction from Num. 6:24-26. Zechariah missed out on this blessing due to being mute and deaf as a result of his unbelief.

When Zechariah returned to the priests waiting outside the temple, they could tell he had had a vision, but he could not talk to them, in fulfillment of the angel's judgment. When Elizabeth became pregnant, she praised Yahweh for the child and for taking away their public shame in the community.

“...Zechariah and Elizabeth represent two different kinds of righteous people. Zechariah raises doubts about the angel's message, for the prospective parents are now beyond normal childbearing age (v. 18). Sometimes even good people have doubts about God's promise... Elizabeth pictures the righteous saint who takes her burden to God and rejoices when that burden is lifted.”¹³

¹² Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 53–54.

¹³ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 50.

C. The Birth Announcement of Jesus (1:26-56)

Luke first shows continuity between John and Jesus by paralleling their birth announcements, then he shows how Jesus is superior to John. Whereas John would go before Yahweh “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), Jesus “will reign over the house of Jacob forever” as the Davidic King (Luke 1:32-33).

The similarities between the two birth announcements are the introduction of the parents—John (Luke 1:5-7), Jesus (Luke 1:26-27); the appearance of an angel—John (Luke 1:8-23), Jesus (Luke 1:28-30); the giving of a sign—John (Luke 1:18-20), Jesus (Luke 1:34-38); and the pregnancy of a childless woman—John (Luke 1:24-25), Jesus (Luke 1:42).

The birth announcement of John and Jesus are closely paralleled with the reference to six months (Luke 1:24, 26, 36, 56), the appearance of the angel, and the structure of the two stories.

Luke 1:11-20

“he was troubled” (1:12)

“the angel said to him” (1:13)

“Do not be afraid” (1:13)

“will bear you a son” (1:13)

“and you will name him” (1:13)

“he will be great” (1:15)

“said to the angel” (1:18)

and replying to the angel said to him” (1:19)

“Gabriel... God... sent” (1:19)

“and now” (1:20)

Luke 1:28-30

“she was troubled” (1:29)

“the angel said to her” (1:30)

“Do not be afraid” (1:30)

“you will... bear a son” (1:31)

“and you will name him” (1:31)

“he will be great” (1:32)

“said to the angel” (1:34)

and replying to the angel said to her” (1:35)

“Gabriel... God... sent” (1:26)

“and now” (1:36)

The differences between the two birth announcements are that Elizabeth has a need but Mary has no need. Mary’s virginity is not seen as an obstacle. The real need is that of Israel for its Messiah. Jesus’ conception is the result of the activity of the Spirit of Yahweh. The angel comes to Zechariah at the temple where he comes to Mary in an insignificant town. Zachariah responds in disbelief, but Mary embraces Yahweh’s plan. Jesus is born from a virgin birth versus John’s birth out of barrenness. John is “great before the Lord” (Luke 1:15), while Jesus is simply “great” (Luke 1:32); his position before the Lord is unqualified. Jesus is seen as superior to John, for John is called the prophet of the Most High (Luke 1:76), while Jesus is the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:35). John will prepare the way for the Lord and give knowledge of salvation (Luke 1:76-77), while Jesus is said to be the savior (Luke 2:11).

1:26-28 Six months later Yahweh sent His angel to Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of David. Thus he is of the royal line of the kings of Israel. Mary’s name probably means “excellence” (Mariam). The phrase “favored one” means she is the recipient of Yahweh’s grace due to no merit of her own. The fact that Zechariah was not greeted this way and that the phrase is repeated twice with Mary (Luke 1:28, 30) shows her favored position.

1:29-33 Mary was more troubled by the greeting of the angel and her favored status than she was by the angel's appearance, like Zechariah was. The angel announced that she was going to conceive and give birth to a son who was to be named Jesus. Jesus was a common name of the time and was the Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means "Yahweh saves." This son would be great and be called "Son of the Most High," which is synonymous with "Son of God" and alludes to 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chr. 22:9-10; Ps. 2:7; 89:26, referring to the Davidic king and his line as anointed by Yahweh. In the context of the First Testament, the phrase is not a reference to deity; rather, it describes one who has a special relationship to Yahweh. (Ps. 2:7-9; 89:26-29; Luke 1:35). In this context, this term could be being used to identify Jesus at His birth as the True Man, the Second Adam (this will be made clear in 3:38).

The angel goes on to state that her son would take the throne of David and rule over the descendants of Jacob (the nation of Israel) forever and over a kingdom that would never end. This alludes to Yahweh's promise to David (2 Sam. 7:11-16) connected to the hints of Isa. 9:7 and Dan. 7:14. Luke has in mind a single ruler who will reign forever rather than an enduring ruling dynasty.¹⁴ The language makes it clear that the anticipated redemption is the nationalistic restoration of Israel in alignment with the vision of the prophets. The point is that Jesus would be the long-awaited king whom the prophets had predicted would establish the New Jerusalem (Mic. 4:1-2; Isa. 2:2-4; Ezek. 40:1-48:35; Hag. 2:6-9; Zech. 8:3; 14:20-21).

1:34-38 Mary, unlike Zechariah, did not ask for proof *that* what the angel had predicted would happen. Instead, she asked *how* it would happen. This was not an expression of a lack of faith but of confusion. There were plenty of stories in the First Testament of Yahweh enabling women who were barren of becoming pregnant by their husbands but no examples of women becoming pregnant without sex with a man. Consequently, Gabriel did not rebuke her as he had Zechariah.

The angel stated that it would be the work of the Holy Spirit. This is emphasized by the parallel of the first two clauses of Luke 1:35

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

This consequently leads to the birth of Jesus, who would be called "the Son of God."¹⁵

Previously, in Luke 1:32-33, "Son of God" (Son of Most High) referred directly to Jesus' role as king (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7). Now, in the context of Luke 1:35-36, the Son of God title refers to divine sonship and a special and unique relationship with Yahweh that gives Jesus the right to be Yahweh's representation on earth. Thus, Jesus is the Son of God not as a result of assuming the throne of David but as a result of His conception through the divine power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

Even though Mary had not requested a sign, Yahweh gave her one, namely the pregnancy of Elizabeth. Mary submits to the Lord with the attitude of "do with me whatever you please." This is truly remarkable, given the social conditions and the problems it would bring her.

¹⁴ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 88.

¹⁵ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 90.

¹⁶ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 90.

“On a theological point it must be understood that “...Jesus is not the entire Godhead. Jesus is God, but not all of God is Jesus. Consequently the Bible never ascribes the title ‘Mother of God’ to Mary. She was the mother of Jesus...”¹⁷

1:39-45 Mary then went to visit Elizabeth in order to validate the sign the angel had given her. Someone from Mary’s family would have traveled with her, for a young unmarried woman would not have traveled alone, especially seventy miles. Until a young woman was married, she lived at home in seclusion. The unborn baby John’s response to Mary and Elizabeth’s blessing of Mary indicated the superior importance of Jesus in the narrative. Elizabeth’s referring to Mary’s child as her Lord meant she understood Him to have authority over her; it was too early for Elizabeth to have an understanding of Jesus as fully divine. She saw Jesus as superior to her in her belief that He was the messiah and her king, and so called Him “my Lord” out of respect.

1:46-56 The verbs in Mary’s song underscore the grace and power of Yahweh and His active redemptive work of humanity and creation. Her song proclaims that Jesus’ conception has set the eschatological work of Yahweh into motion, yet it is happening now in the present as well.

“One of the important functions of the Magnificat is to provide an initial characterization of the God whose purpose shapes the following story.”¹⁸

There are four sections to Mary’s hymn of praise.

In the first stanza (Luke 1:46-48), Mary praised Yahweh for what He had done for her. The fact that Mary recognized that she was in need of a savior shows that she was not without sin in her life or being. At the least it shows her as humble and submitted before Yahweh.

In the second stanza (Luke 1:49-50), Mary praised Yahweh for being her covenantal God who in His grace chose her to fulfill His promises. The way Yahweh has blessed her will be remembered throughout all generations to come.

In the third stanza (Luke 1:51-53), Mary portrayed Yahweh as a divine warrior who executes His judgment on the wicked (Deut. 10:17-18; Ps. 24:8; Isa. 10:20-27; Zeph. 3:17). This is done in the way He reverses certain social conditions by bringing down the mighty and lifting up the lowly. But He is not simply destroying the powerful and making the lowly powerful; rather, Yahweh is at work in the lives of the individuals in order to subvert the social order that supports and perpetuates these distinctions.¹⁹

In the fourth stanza (Luke 1:54-55), the corporate implications of Yahweh’s redemption for Israel comes into view. Mary recalled Yahweh’s mercy to Israel by bringing their long-awaited king and deliverer (Isa. 41:8-9; 42:1; 44:21).

“It is clear that Jesus is going to overturn and change the world’s cultural values and structures. Yet He did not do it by going to Rome and entering politics nor did He join the zealots in revolution. He did it by going to the poor, the outcast, and the sinners and offering them forgiveness and deliverance into a community whose life was embodied in the will of God. Only God and Jesus in the Last Days can achieve a just society on earth. Jesus and His disciples will change society not by being a political powerhouse but by being an example, a creative minority, and witness of God’s character, love, and mercy. The Church does not

¹⁷ Thomas Constable. *Notes on Luke*, p. 29.

¹⁸ Robert C. Tannehill. *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, p. 1:29.

¹⁹ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 105.

fulfill its social responsibility by directly attacking societies' structures but by simply modeling and living the social structure of the kingdom of God.”²⁰

“This passage suggests four other important lessons: (1) the certainty that God will perform his promise, since nothing is impossible with him, (2) Mary's example as one chosen to serve God, an example that extends even beyond the willingness to be used to trust God to take us beyond our limitations, (3) the significance of the Virgin Birth of our Savior, and (4) the importance of sexual faithfulness throughout our lives.”²¹

²⁰ Talbert, pp. 27–28.

²¹ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 60.

D. The Birth of John the Baptizer (1:57-80)

In Mark's book, John the Baptizer is viewed as Elijah, who has come to restore the Kingdom of Yahweh. This is seen in Mark 1:6, where John is described as wearing the same clothes as Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), and in Mark 9:11-13, where John is said to be Elijah. In John's book, John the Baptizer denies that he is the Messiah, Elijah, or a prophet (John 1:20-21), stating that he is merely a witness to the one who is to come (John 1:7, 8, 32, 34). In Luke's book, John is the Spirit-filled prophet who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah as the forerunner to the Messiah (Luke 1:17, 76; 3:1-2; 7:26) who preaches repentance and forgiveness. He is not Elijah since the description of John's clothing is omitted.²²

1:57-66 Elizabeth gave birth, and her community surrounded her with joy and praise. Traditionally, boys were named after a family ancestor. So when Elizabeth wanted to name the boy John, the community protested since they had no ancestor by the name of John. The minute Zechariah wrote the name John to the community, he was able to speak. Zechariah was obedient to Yahweh despite tradition, for he had learned to trust Yahweh in his period of silence, and Yahweh responded by restoring him. This was so revolutionary that the people were filled with fear and wonder at the realization that Yahweh was present and working in their lives.

1:67-80 Whereas Mary praised Yahweh for meeting her personal needs, Zechariah praised Yahweh for raising up the Messiah for the nation of Israel. Zechariah's praise of Yahweh is rooted in the exodus typology and metaphors of light and darkness of Ps. 106. His song portrays two conflicting images of salvation—one socio-political and the other spiritual.²³

Zechariah shows that he understands the Messiah is coming for more than establishing his reign. The proper understanding is "to give a knowledge of salvation in the forgiveness of sins." This is a precondition to peace with Yahweh. The "horn" (Ps. 89:17; 132:17) is symbolic of authority and power and refers to Jesus as the Davidic king and savior who would deliver His people as Yahweh had promised through the prophets. Zechariah sees Jesus as a political king who would rescue them from their enemies, Rome, and the surrounding nations, not as one who would die for their sins. This is rooted in the prophets' foretelling of the coming Messiah as a warrior king who would defeat the enemies of Israel and establish the New Jerusalem (Mic. 4:1-2; Isa. 2:2-4; Ezek. 40:1-48:35; Hag. 2:6-9; Zech. 8:3; 14:20-21). Zechariah asks Yahweh to enable Israel to repent, turn to Yahweh, and serve the Messiah without fear and in righteousness.

Zechariah's praise of Yahweh shifts to more of a focus on how Yahweh has begun to bring His redemption to fruition in the present rather than on what He has done or will do. Zechariah sees his son John as the prophet of Yahweh who would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3; 43:7; 2 Sam. 7:24). John would prepare Israel for the New Jerusalem that the Messiah/King would bring by calling Israel to repent of their sins and receive the atonement and forgiveness of Yahweh (1 Chr. 7:13-15). Yahweh in His mercy would then bring the light of the sun upon the nation in order to drive away the darkness of sin, political oppression, and social injustice.

²² See Talbert, pp. 29–30.

²³ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 113–14.

E. The Birth and Childhood of Jesus (2:1-52)

The birth narrative of Jesus reveals that Jesus truly is unique as Yahweh's Son. This is the first mention of Messiah (Luke 2:11) in the book of Luke, revealing that He has finally arrived but not in the way everyone had anticipated Him.

2:1-3 This opening statement roots the birth of Jesus in a real historical time period with very real political tensions. Caesar Augustus (17 BC – 14 AD) was known as a great emperor who had brought peace to the Roman Empire through conquest and maintained this peace through taxation of his conquered people. Augustus was recognized as “the king of kings and lord of lords” and “the divine savior who brought peace to the world.” When he became emperor, he sent heralds throughout the world announcing the “good news” (gospel) of his ascension to the throne. This is significant since it is in this context that Jesus is presented as a savior who would bring peace to the world (Luke 2:11, 14) and who would have an everlasting kingdom on the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33). Luke uses exodus language to portray Jesus as one who would bring socio-political changes, wherein the politically powerful would be brought low and the poor lifted up (Luke 1:52), and who would deliver Israel from their enemies (Luke 1:71, 73). The idea is that the nation of Israel will be renewed not under Caesar but under Yahweh and Jesus.²⁴ Ironically, Luke portrays Augustus as the unknowing agent of Yahweh and whose decree leads to the fulfillment of the promised ruler of Yahweh (Mic. 5:1-2).

Some have argued that this census is not rooted in history because there is no historical record of an empire-wide census during the time of Augustus and that Quirinius could not have been governor of a census at the time of Jesus' birth, since the governor's records of this period are well known and he is not mentioned. Likewise, Roman censuses did not require people to return to their hometowns. This issue is considered the most significant historical problem in the entire book of Luke. Following are the three common objections to the accuracy of the census in Luke 2:1-2.

First, Augustus is known to have instituted three censuses in this period. Though there was never one census that encompassed the whole empire at once, periodic censuses cycled through regions such as Syria, Gaul, and Spain. It would not be unlikely to see a similar one in Palestine. Luke's description that such a census was empire-wide may reflect the ongoing censuses of this period.

Second, though Quirinius was not the Roman legate of Syria at the time of the census of Luke 2:1-2, he could have been legate at the completion of the census. It is possible that the previous legate of Syria, Varus, began the census but that the results of the taxation came later under Quirinius, historically attaching his name to the census. Such a census would have taken time and could have overlapped administrations. Also a coin has been found with Quirinius' name on it, which places him as proconsul of Syria and Cilicia from 11 BC until after Herod's death, suggesting that he was legate of Syria on two separate occasions. Another option is that it is possible grammatically to take the word *prote* to mean “prior to” or “before” the census of Quirinius in 6 AD.

Third, Joseph's return to Bethlehem may be explained by the fact that sometimes the Romans, under the *pax romana*, allowed a census to be taken on the basis of local customs. The Jewish culture would, in fact, require an ancestral registration. There are examples of this in other regions of the empire, such as this official governmental order dated 104 AD.

²⁴ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 59.

“Gaius Vibius Maximus, Prefect of Egypt [says]: Seeing that the time has come for the house-to-house census, it is necessary to compel all those who for any cause whatsoever are residing out of their provinces to *return to their own homes*, that they may both carry out the regular order of the census and may also attend diligently to the cultivation of their allotments.”²⁵

Though the solutions to the census of Luke 1:1-2 are not definite, it is clear that the objections are not as absolute as they would seem. There are explanations within history to how Luke’s account is historically accurate.²⁶

2:4-7 Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, ninety miles from Nazareth if they bypassed Samaria and almost seven miles southwest of Jerusalem. Luke’s purpose in including the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was first to connect Bethlehem with David in order to show that Jesus qualified as the Messiah. Second, he presented Jesus’ humble beginnings and so introduced the themes of Jesus’ identification with the poor and of His rejection.

Luke’s statement that “Mary, who was engaged to him” comes from the Greek word *emnhsteumenh*, which suggests not that they were not married yet, rather that they have not consummated their marriage. The point is that Jesus is not the product of Joseph but of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was born in the manger because there was no room for them in the guest room of the house. The Greek word for “inn” (*katalyma*) can mean “guest room, house, inn” (Luke 22:11 and 1 Sam. 1:18 in the LXX). It is doubtful there were many inns in Bethlehem since it was not on any major roads, where inns were found, especially Roman roads. When Luke refers to commercial inns, he uses the Greek word *pandocheion* (Luke 10:34). Archeology has shown that houses were divided into three sections. The front room was the living and sleeping space, the middle was the storage room for food and tools, and the manger was either in the back or slightly under the house in order to provide warmth at night from the body heat of the animals.²⁷ When guests came to visit, they were placed in the storage room. But because so many people had returned to Bethlehem for the census, Joseph and Mary had to stay in the manger in the back of someone’s house. That means when the shepherds came to visit, they would have walked through the house to get to Jesus.

The phrase “wrapped Him in strips of cloth, and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:7) is the same structure as the phrase in Luke 23:53: “wrapped [Jesus’ body] in a linen cloth, and laid it in a... tomb.” Thus, the birth and death of Jesus are connected to each other, emphasizing why He came into the world.

2:8-12 The idea that shepherds were hated and the outcasts of society comes from rabbinic Judaism.²⁸ The problem with maintaining this view is that it comes much later than the time of these writings. Also, First Testament figures like Abraham, Moses, and David were all shepherds at some point in their lives. Likewise, the Second Testament portrays shepherds in a positive light, even calling church leaders to be like shepherds (Matt. 18:12; Luke 15:4; John 10; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:20). The birth of Jesus is not made known to kings but to the shepherds. According to Jewish custom in the Mishnah, the shepherds hired to keep sheep in

²⁵ John McRay. *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 155.

²⁶ For a further discussion, see Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 903–09 and Ben Witherington. *New Testament History*, pp. 65–66.

²⁷ See Ben Witherington III. *New Testament History*, p. 66; see also Green, p. 128.

²⁸ See SB 2:113–14; *b. Sanh.* 25b; Midr. Ps. 23.2 on 23:1.

Bethlehem were those who raised them at a place called Migdal Eder, the tower of the shepherds. They birthed them and prepped them there for sacrifice in Jerusalem. So, this will be a sign: You shepherds who keep sheep destined for Passover, you are going to find a baby wrapped in fabric that was used for the birth of animals and the burial of dead bodies, lying in a manger. Luke, in using the shepherds, pictures the lowly and humble who respond to Yahweh's message.

An angel of Yahweh appeared before the shepherds and proclaimed the good news that their Messiah and Savior had been born to them in Bethlehem, the city of David. In the Greco-Roman world, "good news" referred to victory in battle.²⁹ The qualities of Augustus are now given to Jesus, calling into question the peace Augustus had provided. The word *Savior* (Luke 1:47, 69) describes a deliverer from enemies, such as a judge (Jud. 3:9, 15; 12:3; Neh. 9:27). The word *Christ*, taken from the Hebrew word *Messiah* (Luke 1:31-25, 69), has regal, Davidic, and messianic connotations. The word *Lord* in the infancy material (Luke 1:16, 46, 68, 76) is used of Yahweh as sovereign deity, which fits its predominantly First Testament usage (the exception is Luke 1:43.). For Luke it will become the key Christological term to describe Jesus (Luke 20:41-44; Acts 2:33-36). The term will come to refer to the absolute sovereignty and divine relationship Jesus possesses as the bringer of salvation. The concept of the Messianic Savior is taken from Isa. 40–66, which describes Him as a king who will destroy the enemies of Israel, destroy evil, and rule over the New Jerusalem, which will be filled with peace and prosperity and include all the nations. Luke uses the socio-political language of both cultures and applies it to a message given to peasants about a baby in a manger. The sign or proof of the Messiah being in Bethlehem is that they will find a boy wrapped in strips of cloth in a manger.

2:13-20 Then the heavenly army of Yahweh appeared before the shepherds. The word *host* refers to an army, not a choir of angels. The picture here is of the heavenly army of Yahweh declaring, not singing, that Yahweh the king's heir has been born to the world. As a result, this new king will bring peace to those with whom He is pleased. The phrase "On earth peace among people with whom He is pleased" does not mean Jesus will bring world peace; rather, it is a technical phrase in first-century Judaism for those on whom Yahweh has poured out His favor. In this context, they are the God-fearers of Luke 1:50-53, who will respond to Jesus' coming. The contrast is between the fact that Jesus comes for all people in Luke 2:10, but only those who respond to Him (Luke 2:14) will experience His blessing. Favor is used in Luke of Jesus' baptism and in Luke 12:32 of the disciples. So it is among Jesus and His disciples that there is peace among humans.

The shepherds responded in faith by seeking out the child, then, like priests, they went out and proclaimed to others what they have heard and witnessed, and they glorified and praised Yahweh.

2:21-24 In obedience to Yahweh, Jesus was circumcised and made a part of the Abrahamic Covenant. And Joseph and Mary named Him Jesus, just as the angel had told them to do.

The events in Luke 2:22-24 involve three separate ceremonies that have been summarized together. First is the purification of the woman, forty days after birth (Lev. 12:2-4, 6). The law stated that the mother of a male boy was unclean for seven days and then had to be confined for thirty-three days, after which she would journey to the temple to offer a lamb as a burnt offering and offer a turtledove as a sin offering. If she could not afford a lamb, then two turtledoves or

²⁹ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 133.

pigeons were to be offered (Lev. 12:8). Second was the presentation of the firstborn to the Lord (Ex. 13:2, 12, 15), and he was later allowed to be redeemed for five shekels (Ex. 34:19; Num. 18:15-16). Third is the dedication of the firstborn to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:24-28). This is suggested in Luke 2:22-24 by the absence of a reference to the redeeming of Jesus at his presentation (Ex. 34:19; Num. 18:15-16). Thus, what Joseph and Mary did was above what the Law instructed for a firstborn. Jesus' family was pious and obedient without hesitation. Luke does not emphasize what they did but why they did it and the results of their actions. Even during Mary's purification, the focus is on Jesus.

2:25-35 The prophecy of Simeon and the testimony of Anna were a part of Luke's purpose of assuring his readers that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. He used the testimony of credible people to do this. Through these accounts Yahweh reminds His people, despite years of silence, that He is the God who remembers His people. He exalts those who humble themselves in fear before Him, and He casts down the rulers.

“They represent the long history of an expectant people, nourished by God's promise. Zachariah and Elizabeth also fit this character type. They, too, are righteous, careful observers of the law (1:6), old (1:7), and filled with the prophetic Spirit when they recognize the fulfillment of God's promise (1:41, 67). These people represent their faith at its best, according to the values of the implied author, even though Zachariah has temporary doubts. To them the coming of the long-awaited salvation is revealed.”³⁰

Simeon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, praised Yahweh that he was able to see the Messiah before he died and then prophesied that this Messiah had come for both the Gentiles and the Jews, that the Gentiles would come to know the revelation of Yahweh, and that Israel would receive the glory of Yahweh embodied in the Messiah. The Messiah had come to the entire world.

At the same time, Simeon foresaw that the Messiah would bring division among the Jews to the point that many would turn against Him. Jesus would expose the true motivations of the hearts of His people. And Mary, as His mother, would experience great pain in what was coming. Deliverance cannot come without pain.

2:36-38 Anna was a prophet of Yahweh who had dedicated herself completely to Yahweh after the death of her husband. She praised Yahweh for the joy and redemption of Israel the Messiah would bring.

2:39-40 Throughout His life Jesus grew in size and wisdom as Yahweh's grace was upon Him. Even though He was God, He gave up the right to exercise His Godhood and grew in wisdom and understanding as any human does in order to be able to identify as a human and relate to us in our own lives (Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 4:14-16).

“Luke notes Jesus' physical (*euxanen*, he grew) and his spiritual (*ekrataiouto*, he became strong) growth. The spiritual focus of the remarks is shown by the qualifying participial phrase, (*pleroumenon sphia*, being filled with wisdom), which shows that Jesus grew in his perception of God's will. Luke's description emphasizes Jesus' humanity.”³¹

³⁰ Robert C. Tannehill. *The Literary Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, p. 1:39.

³¹ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 254.

2:41-52 In the Greco-Roman world, it was not uncommon to portray significant figures as a child prodigy. The First Testament required that Jewish men come to Jerusalem for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22-23; Deut. 16:16). But due to the nation's scattering, the pious who lived a good distance away would come once a year. The journey did not require women or boys under the age of thirteen to make the journey. They would travel in groups due to highway robbers. The trip would take three or four days. Joseph and Mary probably assumed that Jesus was with the other since men travel in one group and the women and children in another, and Jesus was at the transitioning age into adulthood that he could have been in either.

Eventually they found him back in Jerusalem, in the temple courts conversing with the teachers, who were greatly impressed with His understanding. At Mary's rebuke Jesus stated that they should have known He would be in His Father's house. Jesus' response to Mary and Joseph showed that He regarded His duty to His heavenly Father and His Father's house as taking precedence over His duty to His earthly father and house. Since Jesus had been dedicated to Yahweh and not redeemed back, He would have seen Himself as belonging to Yahweh in the same way as Samuel (1 Sam. 2-3). This may be why He expected His parents to know that He was in His Father's house, since they were the ones who had dedicated Him to Yahweh. He is there under divine compulsion and must align Himself with Yahweh's purpose even if it means compromising His relationship with His family. He is the active agent in the story, set on the work of Yahweh regardless of the consequences.³²

“Jesus' reply, though gentle in manner, suggests the establishment of a break between himself and his parents, although this will be modified in v. 51. There is thus a tension between the necessity felt by Jesus to enter into closer relationship with his Father and the obedience which he continued to render to his parents.”³³

Jesus' repeatedly referring to Yahweh as Father is unique to Him. The Jews never called Yahweh father and would have seen this as an inappropriate title for the sovereign God of creation. “My Father” suggests the mystery that is a part of Jesus' person. Jesus has a strong sense of identity with the Father and is committed to the mission Yahweh sent him to do. Jesus shows that He knows who His true father is.

Whereas John grew in spirit, Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor. The reference to *wisdom* has to do with growth in insight, while *favor* has to do with moral growth and favorable perception. Once again, Jesus is shown as superior to John.

³² See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 157.

³³ Howard I. Marshall. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 128.

F. John, the One Who Goes Before (3:1-20)

The outcome of John's ministry takes two forms. First, he attracts hostility, leading to his imprisonment, and second, he paves the way for Jesus' ministry by provoking a crisis and directing the people's hopes toward the coming deliverer.³⁴ John becomes a pattern that will be continued in Jesus' ministry.

3:1-2 Tiberius (14–37 AD) succeeded Caesar Augustus as emperor of the Roman Empire. Pontius Pilate, Herod of Galilee, and the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas play major roles in the crucifixion of Jesus at the end of the book. These verses are reminiscent of the beginning of several prophetic books (Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:11; Micah 1:1), showing that the prophetic ministry of John begins in a similar way as the First Testament prophets.³⁵

“The Word of God came” continues to emphasize that Yahweh is the story's primary character who will carry forward His plan. Though the spotlight is on John and Jesus, this is not their story as much as it is Yahweh's story.

John's ministry is associated with the wilderness and the Jordan River, associating him with the exodus, the conquest, and the formation of the people under the Mosaic Covenant. It also separates him from the urban and national influence of the powerful elite. The wilderness is a symbol of the loss of the lush life of the garden and the one place Yahweh works His salvation. Israel received the law there, John received his call there, and Jesus often retreated there (Luke 3:2; 4:42; 5:16).

Luke emphasizes John's message more than his ministry of baptism. John's message was calling Israel to repent of their sins so that they could receive Yahweh's forgiveness and enjoy the blessings of His kingdom.

“The Greek verb [*metanoeo*, translated “to repent”] means ‘to change one's mind,’ but in its Lucan usage it comes very close to the Hebrew verb for *repent* which literally means ‘to turn or turn around’ (*sub*)... A change of perspective, involving the total person's point of view, is called for by this term. In fact, John called for the Israelites to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance (3:8). This passage is significant for it separates repentance from what it produces, and also expresses a link between repentance and fruit. One leads to the other... In summary, Luke saw repentance as a change of perspective that transforms a person's thinking and approach to life.”³⁶

3:4-6 Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, which refers to Yahweh's glorious and sovereign entrance into Israel and going before the exiles and allowing them to return to the land following the Babylonian captivity (Isa. 35:8; 62:10; 57:14). Isaiah discusses how Yahweh repeatedly saves His people in a pattern like the exodus, yet this passage looks to a more complete vindication and thus has a more spiritual significance. The path that is to be cleared is that of a purified heart preparing for Yahweh's salvation. The geographic obstacles are a picture of Yahweh's powerful coming without obstruction.³⁷ John is the voice in the wilderness calling others to prepare the

³⁴ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 161.

³⁵ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 48.

³⁶ Darrell L. Bock. *A Theology of Luke–Acts*, pp. 129–30.

³⁷ See Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 290–96.

road. The heart that turns in repentance is the one ready for the salvation that Yahweh is bringing.

3:7-9 The message of John begins with his condemnation of the people of Israel. John called them a brood of vipers and warned them of the coming wrath of Yahweh. In Matt. 3:7 the Pharisees specifically are called vipers, which refers to Yahweh's enemies (Isa. 14:29 of Philistines; Isa. 59:5 of Israel; Jer. 46:22 of Egypt). The serpent is an image of chaos that threatens Yahweh's created order. Rather than calling his audience the chosen people he called them children of chaos.

John then called them to repent and produce fruit in keeping with who they were called to be—the children of Yahweh. He told them to not depend on their being descendants of Abraham to save them. The Jews believed they were saved merely because they were the chosen descendants of Abraham who were given the Mosaic Covenant. John states that Yahweh can make anything, including lifeless rocks, into descendants of Abraham; their ancestry does not make them special or guarantee their salvation. Only their repentance from sin and turning to Yahweh can save them. Children of Abraham are not identified by birth into the covenant community but rather those who respond by faith to Yahweh's gracious covenant. The crowd was like the empty and unproductive wilderness generation of Israel. If they do not repent, then Yahweh was ready to use a foreign nation as His axe to cut them down like he used the Assyrian and Babylonian empires to cut Israel and Judah down and take them into exile for their sins (Hosea 10:1-2; Jer. 2:21-22; Isa. 10:33-34). The fruitless trees are also thrown into the fire—a First Testament image of judgment (Jer. 11:16; Ezek. 15:6-7; cf. Isa. 66:15-16, 24; Amos 1-2; Nah. 1:6; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8). Once the axe falls, there is no hope. John is looking for personal decisions that will determine their fate. The implication is that the judgment was far nearer than the crowds may have thought it was.

3:10-14 The three groups that respond were the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers. These are groups one would not expect to come forward—or at least to be led by the religious leaders. John's advice was very practical in that he told them they must meet the needs of others and not take advantage of others for their own gain. He did not call them to his ascetic lifestyle or to rituals or the Mosaic Law. He called them to a life of loving others. John's primary purpose was to call the people out of their normal social life in order to align themselves with Yahweh's eschatological and redemptive purpose. Through submitting themselves to Yahweh through a baptism of repentance baptism, they would move from their passive roles and renew themselves to Yahweh to be His active agents in His purpose.³⁸

3:15-18 Now the crowd asked if John was the Messiah. John answered that he was the one who prepared the way for the Messiah, who was far greater than he. The duty of untying of one's sandals was considered so degrading that it was the job of the master's slave to do it. John stated that he baptized only with water, but the coming Messiah would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. It is debated whether "with the Holy Spirit and fire" refers to two separate baptisms or to one baptism, for there is no consensus view in scholarship at this time. Those who see it as two see *the Holy Spirit* as salvation and the *fire* as the judgment of Jesus' second coming. Those who see it as one see *the Holy Spirit and fire* as referring to the cleansing, purifying work of the Spirit in the individual believer through salvation and consecration. A decision is not easy on either issue. The image of fire refers to both eternal judgment (Matt.

³⁸ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 164.

25:41) and the power of the Lord's presence to purge and cleanse his people (Isa. 4:4-5). The best option seems to be the one baptism view since *Holy Spirit and fire* are governed by a single preposition in Greek. The Spirit is seen as one who purges the believer and then divides them from those who do not accept, as Luke 3:17 suggests. With acceptance comes the gift of the Spirit, who protects one from judgment (Acts 2:38-40).³⁹

The winnowing of grain is when the farmer would use a winnowing fork to separate the light, useless chaff, which would blow away and the heavier, useable grain, which would fall to the ground. It is thus an image of God judging by separating those who accept from those who do not. The Messiah is one who brings judgment on the people based on their response to John's baptism.

Jesus' baptism is not seen as an alternative but a continuation of John's baptism. John's baptism forces a distinction between the authentic children of Abraham and those outside the covenantal community. Jesus' baptism communicates images of eschatological blessing and destruction (Isa. 4:4; 11:15; 30:27-28; 32:11-20; 44:3; Mal. 3:2-4; 4:1).⁴⁰

3:19-20 John's ministry came to end when he rebuked Herod for his unlawful marriage. Herod Antipas and Herodias left other marriages in order to marry each other. Also Herodias had been married to a half-brother of Herod. Not only did they destroy two marriages, but Herod Antipas married a near blood relative in violation of Lev. 18:16; 20:21. The relationship of Luke 3:19-20 and 3:21-22 shows that John has been removed from the scene prematurely, in order to put the spotlight on Jesus.

³⁹ See Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 321–24.

⁴⁰ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 165.

G. Jesus, the One who Comes After (3:21–4:13)

Jesus' baptism, genealogy, and temptation are linked by the repetition of the expression "Son of God" (Luke 3:22; 3:38; 4:3, 9). The baptism and temptation are also linked by the reference to the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:1; 4:14). Central to Jesus' preparation is His identity as the Son of God (Luke 3:22, 28; 4:3, 9) and presence of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 9). These two are inseparably linked (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit is the foundation for Jesus as the Son of God, for the Spirit certifies and makes sonship possible.

3:21-22 The phrase "all the people" does not mean literally all the people. It is a hyperbolic expression that shows the popularity of John's baptism by picturing a vast number of people responding to his call.

Luke is less interested in the baptism of Jesus and more concerned with Yahweh and the Spirit's affirmation of His sonship. This is emphasized by the three infinitive clauses: "the heavens were opened," "the Holy Spirit descended," and "a voice came." Luke reports that this happened not in connection to the baptism but rather in connection to Jesus praying.

The context shows that the descent of the Holy Spirit is not when Jesus became the Son of God, for this was already made clear through His conception by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Rather, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Jesus for ministry as Yahweh's Messiah and servant. This is emphasized in Luke 4:16-21, which is the formal beginning of Jesus' ministry. The Holy Spirit is given for the empowering of ministry to Yahweh (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:33). The language of Yahweh's approval of Jesus as His Son alludes to Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1, making the statement a regal announcement and looking ideally to the king's total rule.

There are three major reasons Jesus got baptized. First, the baptism represents an endorsement of John's ministry and message (20:1-8); he links his cause to John's. Second, it shows how Jesus identified himself with the people. Third, in the descending of Spirit, Jesus emerges as the Coming One to whom John pointed. The baptism of Jesus signifies the end of John's ministry and the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

3:23-38 Genealogies served to determine membership in a given kingship group (Luke 1:5, 27, 55, 69, 73; 2:4; 3:8). It is important to note that Jesus, not John, receives a genealogy, thus indicating the superiority of Jesus. The genealogy is framed with the references to "Son of God" in Luke 3:22, 38 and Jesus' solidarity with humanity in Luke 3:21, 38.

The repetition of "son of..." is rare in biblical genealogies (1 Chr. 3:10-24; 6:16-30) but sets up a crescendo of Yahweh as the author of Jesus' ancestral line and Jesus as "the Son of God." Jesus is thus rooted in the past of Yahweh's covenantal people and has the credentials as Yahweh's present agent of redemption. The reference to Adam establishes the divine origin of the human race and emphasizes Jesus' solidarity with all humanity.⁴¹

The age of thirty is important because this connects Jesus to other First Testament figures (Gen. 41:46; 2 Sam. 5:4; Ezek. 1:1). Jesus' sonship to Joseph comes with a remark showing that this sonship is strictly a legal one. There are eleven groups of seven names.

Concerning Matthew's genealogy, it seems that his point is to portray Jesus as a true Israelite in the line of David, while Luke wishes to stress that Jesus is a true human being.⁴² On this

⁴¹ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 189.

⁴² See Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 918-23. And Ben Witherington. *New Testament History*, pp. 70-72.

difference some have suggested that Matthew gives the genealogy through Joseph while Luke gives the one through Mary. The problem is that Mary is not mentioned in Luke, and the virgin birth does not prevent legal paternity from passing through the father. Some valid suggestions are that Matthew provided the natural line while Luke provided the royal line or that Matthew traced Jesus' line through Joseph's maternal grandfather, while Luke traced His line through Joseph's father. However, the point still remains that Jesus has claim to the throne of David.

4:1-2 After Jesus' baptism, He was filled with the Spirit and then led into the wilderness by the Spirit. This shows that Jesus was obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit and that it was the will of Yahweh for Him to be tested in the wilderness. Jesus did not eat anything during his forty days in the wilderness, becoming physically weak; in contrast, He was filled with the Holy Spirit, being spiritually strong.

The baptism of Jesus before the genealogy account serves to authenticate Jesus as one appointed by Yahweh in order to redeem His people. The genealogy serves to take the reader back to creation and the test in the garden. The reader then sees Jesus as the second Adam in the wilderness for His own testing. In addition, Jesus is portrayed as a second Israel, who, after the exodus, was led into the wilderness to be tested and yet failed to trust and follow Yahweh (Ps. 95:10; Acts 7:36).

The wilderness is often portrayed as a region of demonic activity and a haven for the demons (Luke 8:29; 11:24). In other settings the wilderness is a place to retreat and find Yahweh (Luke 1:80; 3:2; 5:16; 7:24). It is here that Jesus goes to commune with Yahweh and then to face the devil in spiritual battle. This scene reveals that the devil is the true agent behind all the forces that will oppose Jesus throughout His ministry and mission. Yet the Holy Spirit is the one empowering Jesus.

4:3-4 The devil's statement "If you are the son of God" is not a good translation. In the Greek this a first-class conditional statement, which assumes that the "if" of the statement is true. A better translation would be "since you are the Son of God." The question is not *whether* Jesus was the Son of God but what *kind* of Son of God He was. Will He be another failed son of God like Adam and Israel, or would He align himself with the will of the Spirit that has filled Him?

Since Jesus has not been eating and is hungry, the devil wants Jesus to use His power to turn the stones around Him into bread so that He can eat. The devil implies that Yahweh has not been taking care of Jesus, so Jesus should take matters into His own hands and feed Himself. The devil reinterprets "Son of God" to mean asserting your power for your own means, which is the opposite of faithful obedience to Yahweh's will and purpose. The satisfaction of hunger through miraculous means brings into question Yahweh's provision for and protection of Jesus, and it questions the way Yahweh is leading Him by the Spirit; were Jesus to do this, He would be operating independently of Yahweh.

Jesus responds by quoting from Deut. 8:3. The context of Deut. 8:3 is of Moses telling the people of Israel that Yahweh had led them into the wilderness to test them and teach them that they were to trust not in the physical bread for their survival but in Yahweh to sustain them. Deut. 8:3 does not argue against the need for food but emphasizes the need to trust in Yahweh's provision (Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 33:18-19; 34:10).

4:5-8 The devil then showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth and offered Him dominion over them all if Jesus would submit to the authority of the devil. The assumption of the devil's offer is

that until the earth is redeemed by Yahweh's power, it lies in the hands of the evil one. Satan's influence is still significantly present in the world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Rom. 8:18-30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 13:2). Ultimately, Rome was not the power over Israel; rather, the devil and his legions had power over Rome.

Though Yahweh's ultimate goal was to give Jesus dominion over all the nations (Ps. 2:8 and Dan. 7:14), He must first go through the suffering and rejection of the cross. The devil was offering Jesus an easier route to the same conclusion. Yet this would mean Jesus would have to deny His identity as God's Son.

Jesus responded by quoting from Deut. 6:13, where Moses was telling Israel that the only way they could enjoy a long life of rich blessings in the Promised Land was if they worshiped and served Yahweh alone.

4:9-12 Since Jesus has made it clear that He trusts in Yahweh alone as His provider, the devil required proof that Yahweh would provide for Him. The devil took Him to the top of the temple and told Jesus to throw Himself off the edge to prove that Yahweh would save Him. The devil quoted from Ps. 91:11-12, where Yahweh had promised that He would lift His chosen up and not allow him to be harmed. The devil takes this out of context, however, for Ps. 91 is addressed to those who through their loyal obedience to Yahweh dwell in His presence and thus are under His protection (Ps. 91:1). Also, the greater context of the Bible shows that divine rescue may come through suffering and not before. Jesus doing this would show that He did not really believe Yahweh was true to His promises, for He would be demanding proof despite the fact Yahweh had proven Himself countless times throughout the history of Israel as recorded in the First Testament.

Jesus responded by quoting Deut. 6:16, which is a reminder to Israel as it entered the land, not to test Yahweh as it had done at Massah (Ex. 17:1-7). Freedom and bread were not enough for the people, and they tested Yahweh in His ability and desire to take care of them—even though He had already fully revealed Himself to them. Jesus did not deny the validity of Yahweh's promises quoted by the devil; rather, He denied the accurate application of their truths to this specific time and experience. The devil was implying that the promises of Scripture apply to all people at all times, regardless of the circumstances.⁴³

4:13 "He departed from Him until a more opportune time" does not refer to a specific time in the in the book of Luke, but the satanic pressure does intensify in Luke 22 (Luke 22:3, 28, 31, 53). Now that the reader has learned that the devil is the power behind the scenes, one can then see all of Jesus' ministry as testing.

Jesus' resistance of the devil reveals that He is the true and unique Son of God. Jesus' victory is possible because He is the second Adam and the culmination of Israel's history. Now He has the right and authority to begin His ministry because He has proven that He is approved by Yahweh, dependent upon the Holy Spirit, and obedient to Yahweh.

"Jesus has demonstrated unequivocally His faithful obedience to God and thus His competence to engage in ministry publicly as God's Son. As in similar scenes in roughly

⁴³ See Talbert, p. 48.

contemporaneous Jewish texts, the devil's departure from Jesus signals the devil's concession of defeat and concomitant shameful withdrawal."⁴⁴

In Matthew the temptation is told in a way as to emphasize the great kingship of Jesus. Mark tells the temptation of Jesus in order to explain how Jesus in His public ministry has the power to bind up the demons (Mark 3:27). Hebrews 4:15 explains the temptation in such a way that Jesus bore the weight of temptation to such an extent that He can relate to and give victory in our resistance. In Luke the temptation emphasizes Jesus' physicality and serves as an example of how one is to resist temptation. The Holy Spirit does not keep Jesus from being tempted but rather empowers Jesus to overcome the temptation and be victorious. The victory of Jesus is won through His wise use of the Scriptures.

⁴⁴ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 196.

II. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (4:14–9:50)

This section begins His ministry in the Galilee region in the northern part of Israel. This division is largely shaped by the Servant of Yahweh described in Isaiah (Isaiah 42:16-21), from which Jesus reads in Luke 4:16-21. Luke connects the empowering of Jesus more with His prayer than with the descent of the Holy Spirit like Matthew and Mark do. Luke emphasizes the prayer life of Jesus (Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1; 22:32, 39-46; 23:34, 46).

Whereas the birth narrative laid out *what* we might expect of Yahweh's visitation, this division explains *how* Yahweh's purpose will be achieved. First Luke provides a more definitive outworking of Jesus as the Son of God and His empowerment through a public ministry. Luke reveals the diabolic forces that are against the outworking of the ministry if Jesus through the demonic possessions, sickness, and human opposition. Juxtaposed to this idea is Jesus as Yahweh's agent "filled with the power of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:14-15; 5:17). Jesus' ministry is balanced between proclamation and miracle working. Both of these elements are a manifestation of the good news and thus demand a response, which is a prominent theme in this section.⁴⁵

A. Overview of Jesus' Ministry (4:14-44)

The scenes in this section demonstrate the activity that comes out of Jesus' obedience to and empowerment from Yahweh. They highlight four major ideas. First, Jesus' ministry is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Second, the inseparability of the teaching (Luke 4:15, 16-21, 31, 43-44) and miracles (Luke 4:16-21, 33-36, 38-41) is the basis of Jesus' ministry. Third, Luke 4:43 establishes the need for Jesus to move around Israel proclaiming the good news in order to grow the new community of Yahweh (Luke 4:18-19). Fourth, Luke highlights the importance of response to Jesus' ministry, whether positive (Luke 4:15, 39, 42) or negative (Luke 4:28).⁴⁶

4:14-15 Filled and led by the Holy Spirit, Jesus began His teaching and healing ministry in Galilee, in the northern part of Israel. Jesus demonstrated His faithfulness to Yahweh by aligning Himself to the impulse of Yahweh's Spirit. The uniqueness of His words and deeds caused news of him to spread through the land. And both in the synagogues and the streets people praised Him for who He was and what He did.

4:16-22 Jesus then went to the synagogue in His hometown, Nazareth. There He was invited to read from the scroll of Isaiah. In the synagogue, the Hebrew Scriptures would be read in a standing position in one- to three-verse units. Then the passage would be translated into Aramaic. The Torah was always read, and often a reading from the prophets followed. After the reading was an invitation for someone to instruct the audience. This could be done by any qualified male as long as there were ten other males present. Once the reading was done, the person would then sit down in the seat of instruction and begin to teach.

Jesus' citation comes from Isa. 61:1-2 and probably from Isa. 58:6. Jesus' reading makes two changes to the original text. First, Jesus omits the last part of Isa. 61:2, "and the day of vengeance of our God," probably to remove any negative connotation from the Isaiah passage for this particular connection to Jesus' ministry. Second, language from Isa. 58:6, "to send forth

⁴⁵ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 199.

⁴⁶ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 204.

the oppressed in release,” has been added to the end of the quotation in order to draw attention to the word “release.”

Three structural features are emphasized. First, the first three lines end with the pronoun “me” in order to emphasize the Holy Spirit’s anointing of Jesus as Yahweh’s agent to proclaim the good news. Second, the three following phrases flow out of proclaiming the good news to the poor. Third, the idea of “release” is repeated twice.⁴⁷

Spirit of Yahweh is upon *me*,
for He has anointed *me*;
to preach good news to the poor
He has sent *me*:
to proclaim for the captives **release**,
and to the blind sight;
to send forth the oppressed in **release**;
to proclaim the year of Yahweh’s favor.

The *poor* here should not be seen merely as the economically or spiritually poor. In the Greco-Roman world one’s status in a community was not so much based on economic wealth but rather on a number of factors like education, gender, family, religious purity, vocation, and economics. The poor here are those who would have been excluded from the normal stations of status or the socially privileged communities. By extending His good news to the poor, Jesus refuses to accept the normal social boundaries of a community.⁴⁸ The *blind* are not just the physically blind; the word is also used as a metaphor for the spiritually blind (Luke 1:78-79; 2:9, 29-32; 3:6).

The word *release* carries the idea of “forgiveness,” which is a “release from sins.” This can be used to mean a release from demonic possession, physical sickness, or social restrictions, which are all a result of sin taking hold of the world after the fall. The reference to the “favorable year of Yahweh” is an allusion to the year of jubilee, when all the enslaved in Israel received their freedom (Lev. 25). It is a picture of total forgiveness and salvation. It is a reference to the dawn of God’s new age and points to the messianic kingdom, but it is more general and includes Yahweh’s favor on individual Gentiles as well as on Israel nationally.

Jesus rolled up the scroll, sat down, and announced that this Scripture had been fulfilled in Him on this day. It would have been very clear to the people that He was announcing that He was the Messiah who had come to bring the kingdom of Yahweh. Everyone responded with amazement, especially since they knew Him as Joseph’s son. It is clear from the context and the people’s responses that Jesus had said more than what is recorded here.

4:23-30 It is also clear from the context that the people wanted proof of what Jesus claimed to be, and they wanted Him to do miracles for them like He had in the other cities around them. Jesus seems to think they already had enough proof and would reject Him no matter what. The people of Nazareth had not put all of this together; for them, the Messiah was to be a political deliverer. They wanted Jesus to act like one of them in accordance with what they thought the Messiah should be. The irony is that Jesus, who had come to bring Yahweh’s favor, would not receive favor from His own people.

⁴⁷ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 210.

⁴⁸ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 211.

The question is whether their rejection of Jesus negated His status, identity, and mission. The illustration of Elijah and Elisha refutes that idea. Jesus tells of how Elijah and Elisha were rejected by their own people and that it was the Gentiles, the “poor,” who responded to the prophets’ ministry. This is based on the idea that the majority of the prophets were rejected and killed (Neh. 9:26), foreshadowing the fate of Jesus. This is reinforced at the end of the scene by their attempt to throw Him off the cliff.

This parallelism emphasizes the neediness of Israel, the divine mandate and ministry of Elijah and Elisha, and the exceptional character of those who received the good news.

A There were many widows in Israel

B in the time of Elijah

C yet Elijah was sent to none of them

D except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.

A’ There were also many lepers in Israel,

B’ in the time of the prophet Elisha,

C’ and none of them were cleansed

D’ except Naaman the Syrian.

Elijah and Elisha’s ministries do not make the point that they were first programmatically oriented to the Gentiles nor that they had turned their backs on Israel. Rather, these examples make the point that the good news is for the poor and those of lowest status.

“...it is the poor in general who sense their need in the greatest way and, as a result, respond most directly and honestly to Jesus. They characterize concretely the person in need. Their material deprivation often translates into spiritual sensitivity, humility, and responsiveness to God’s message of hope. The message is offered to them, and they tend to be the most responsive to it.”⁴⁹

The point is that rejecting Yahweh’s prophet is risky business; one never knows what Yahweh will have him do or what other people Yahweh will send the prophet to as a result of their rejection. The threat is that they may miss out on Yahweh’s blessing. He warns them not to make the same mistake the Israelites made during the days of Elijah and Elisha, for there are others who will respond to Him.

The people were furious, for Jesus had just compared them to the wicked generation of Israel that had rejected Yahweh and His prophets and thus were taken into exile. They had already suffered in exile and had come out. They had eliminated idolatry from their land and were true to the Torah, but Jesus was saying they still were no different from the Israelites of Elijah and Elisha’s day. The irony is that they then tried to kill Jesus like the Israelites of Elijah and Elisha’s day had tried to kill the prophets. Deut. 13:1-11 gave them the right to stone someone making a false claim to be a prophet. This hostility foreshadows the end of His ministry. Yet Yahweh preserved Jesus just as He had taken care of Jesus in the wilderness. It was not yet time for Him to die.

⁴⁹ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 408.

4:31-37 The events of Luke 4:31-44 are tied together chronologically and geographically. Several motifs are developed. First, the framework of Jesus' quotation from Isaiah 61 begins to work itself out in Capernaum with the release of captives. Second, Jesus continues to minister in the synagogues, and the people continue to be impressed by Jesus' teaching but also continue to misunderstand His true mission. Third, though the people do not understand the full extent of Jesus' identity, the demons do and proclaim Him as "the Holy One of God" and "Son of God." However, the people's false understanding would lead to their resistance to Jesus. Fourth, the conflict Jesus comes against with the people is due to their lack of understanding of His true identity. They expect Him as Messiah to be something He has not come to be. Fifth, Luke continues to emphasize the importance of response to who Jesus is, both through the negative and positive responses of the people.⁵⁰

Luke combines the words *spirit*, *unclean*, and *demon* to make clear the nature of these beings. The word *spirit* has already been used of the Holy Spirit. In the Greco-Roman world, *demons* can refer neutrally to all kinds of divinities. Luke has thus created his own term for the Biblical definition of a demonic and unclean spirit.

By using Jesus' title the demon has tried to gain power over Him. His silencing of the demon demonstrates Jesus' sovereignty and control over the demon. It also prevents testimony from a demonic and unclean spirit of who Jesus is. Also, Jesus is in control of the rate at which he will be known in order to control the time of His inevitable crucifixion. Other exorcists would use rituals and incantations, yet Jesus rids the man of the demon merely by His word. Throwing the man down may appear to be an act of violence, but it can also be seen as an act of submission. The demon has no choice but to release the man over to Jesus. In attacking this demonic spirit, Jesus has launched an attack against all the demonic forces in order to "release" humanity from their captivity (Luke 3:16; 11:14-23; 13:16).

During this time, rabbis would speak from tradition or would quote what other rabbis had to say concerning the passage. Jesus, however, does not teach this way; he handles the text directly and independently. His word alone is sufficient.

4:38-39 Jesus now moves from the synagogue to the household, from the formal to the more intimate. The fact that Simon's mother-in-law is living with him suggests she is a widow without sons. Jesus bends over the woman, signifying authority over the sickness. Jesus' rebukes the fever just as He rebuked the demon, and the fever "departs" just as the demon "went out" of the man, showing that both of these events are diabolic in nature. Not only did Jesus heal the woman, but He restored her to her household. Her response is not one of wonder like those before her but of grateful hospitality and service to Him. Luke regards this as an authentic and correct response to the nature and identity of Jesus and His salvific ministry (Luke 7:36-50; 8:1-3; Acts 16:33-34).

4:40-44 Luke is slowly developing Jesus as the regal prophet whose salvific ministry fulfills the program laid out in Luke 4:18-19. The people do not understand His true identity and mission. Yet Jesus would attend to each person personally and often with touch, which shows his care for the people.

Even Jesus as the Son of God would go off for times of solitude and prayer with the Father. This will be a strong emphasis in Jesus' ministry, for He is filled with and led by the Spirit.

⁵⁰ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 220–21.

B. Mission and Controversy (5:1–6:11)

Immediately following the previous section are six scenes that illustrate the Jewish interaction with the nature of Jesus' ministry. Though this section begins with the call of the disciples, they are absent from the narrative or appear merely as undeveloped background characters. Their primary role is to watch and learn from Jesus, which is a major focus of Luke 6:12-49. The disciples will then become the major characters in the book of Acts. Here they are examples of an appropriate response to Jesus. First, one leaves everything to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11, 28), then they follow and learn, and finally they are sent out on mission into the world. The disciples respond to Jesus with openness while the religious leaders respond with suspicion and hostility (Luke 5:21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7, 11).

5:1-11 The Lake of Gennesaret is also known as the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16). It was named after a region south of Capernaum that was situated on a fertile and thickly populated plain. The lake is about 8 miles by 14 miles in size and is a popular location for fishing. The fishing boats that are used on the lake are between 20 and 30 feet in length.

Jesus used Simon's boat as a means to speak better to the crowds gathered on the shore. When Jesus was finished teaching, He told Peter to put down their nets to catch fish. Peter explained that they had caught nothing all night, implying that they would not catch any fish now. The fact that Peter addresses Jesus as master shows that he recognizes Jesus' authority, especially since Peter is in charge of the boat. Even though he does not think anything will happen, he still is obedient to Jesus. Jesus then miraculously provided such a large catch of fish that it required both boats to bring the catch in.

When Peter saw this, he fell before Jesus as Lord and declared himself to be a sinner. While Peter's use of "Lord" does not mean he understands Jesus as God, it is also more than a polite address to a superior. Peter is most likely using the term "Lord" as recognition of Jesus as the chosen agent of Yahweh. This is the first use of the word "sinner" in the book of Luke. It is hard to know how Peter is using it, but it carries the idea that he recognizes there is a great difference between him and Jesus. Luke will use the term *sinner* to refer to people who recognize themselves in need of divine redemption. Jesus is seen as the one who will cross the boundaries between them in order bring the good news to the unworthy.

Jesus called Peter to follow him and told him that from now on he would be catching people instead of fish. The word *catch*—more literally, "to capture alive"—was used in both the First Testament and Greek literature in terms of war and hunting with the idea of sparing one's life in hopes of liberating them. This incorporates the idea of spiritual warfare (Josh. 2:13) as well as a reversal for the disciples that they will no long catch dead fish in order to sell them but rather catch people in order to release them so that they may have liberty.⁵¹ The point of this scene is to illustrate the appropriate response to the ministry of Jesus.

"God in all His power is present and expressing Himself through Jesus. Jesus knows their vocation better than the fishermen. He knows their needs better, too. Even in the chaos and strain that following God often means, there will be opportunity if one depends on him."⁵²

5:12-16 The phrase "covered with" leprosy can be translated "full of," connecting it to the First Testament idea of skin diseases, which excluded the individual from the covenant community

⁵¹ Joel Green. *Gospel of Luke*, p. 234.

⁵² Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 457–58.

and worship in the tabernacle (Lev. 13-14). The Greek word *lepra* is a broad term for a whole series of skin diseases including psoriasis, lupus, ringworm, favus, and leprosy. To have leprosy was to face ostracism, which was commanded in Lev. 13:45-46 (2 Kgs. 7:3; Luke 17:12). The ostracism was not cruel; it was necessary because the condition was contagious. This condition also was associated with sinfulness by the Jews of Jesus' day, thus the disease was a form of "living death." They were the "poor," for they were the social outcasts. In the First Testament the priests were not expected to provide healing for a leper.

This leper approaching Jesus was not just brave—his entire self-esteem was also at risk. Whatever hope he had of returning to a normal life was wrapped up in Jesus' power. Not only did the leper profess that He knew Jesus was capable of healing him, but he submitted himself to the will of Jesus.

Jesus healed the leper through touch, which shows Jesus' compassion for the man and that despite the man's uncleanness, he cannot defile Jesus. Jesus' touching of the man also put Him in violation of the Levitical Law. Yet Jesus, being God, cannot be made unclean; rather, he makes the unclean clean. Jesus was acting as more than a priest since was bringing healing, which was not the job of the priests. Therefore, His authority is greater than that the priesthood. Luke does not say that the leper was made clean but that the leprosy "left him."

The leprosy immediately left the man, and Jesus told him not to tell anyone but to go see a priest for inspection. Jesus wanted him to go to the priest so the spiritual leaders of the nation could verify the healing. He tells him to keep silent so this could take place and to keep undue popularity from surrounding Jesus this early in His ministry. Being declared ritually clean by a priest was a week-long process. First, a bird had to be sacrificed, and then a second bird would be released after being dipped in the blood of the first one. The person was then sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificed bird, and on the eighth day they were to sacrifice two lambs—or, if they were poor, a lamb and two doves. This was all done for the removal of sins.

Once again, as the crowds increased, Jesus withdrew in order to pray. Luke's constant reference to Jesus' life of isolation and prayer emphasizes how He is continually filled with and led by the spirit.

5:17-26 This is the first appearance of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. They were sitting, which is associated with teaching (Luke 4:20; 5:3). The Pharisees are responsible for monitoring legal observances. In contrast, the power of Yahweh was with Jesus to heal the people.

It is in this arena a group of people brought their paralyzed friend to be healed by Jesus. The crowd was so dense they could not get to Jesus. The text describes two obstacles: first, the crowds that separate them from Jesus, and second, the Pharisees, who scrutinize Jesus and His ministry. These people, however, are desperate enough to go to the roof of the house in order to lower their friend to Jesus right in the middle of His teaching.

It was the faith of these friends that Jesus noticed, and it was their faith that moved Him to heal the paralytic. It was not about man's need to be healed but the attitude and faith that he brought to Jesus for healing that caused Jesus to respond to him. Yet Jesus did not heal him right away; instead, He declared that the man's sins were forgiven. Jesus' statement communicates, first, that the man's sins were forgiven and, second, that Jesus was authorized by Yahweh to provide forgiveness. The irony is that the Pharisees see this as an encroachment on the authority of Yahweh, for only Yahweh has the power to forgive sins. It is one thing for a person to forgive

the sin that another personally committed against them. It is only Yahweh, however, who can forgive all of the sins a person has committed against all those they have encountered. Yahweh has had agents in the past who have communicated His forgiveness, but forgiveness itself is the work of Yahweh alone. The issue now is not just Jesus' power but the extent of his authority. For Luke, "power" is the ability to act, while "authority" is the right to act. It is Jesus who initiates the confrontation and has control over the events.

Jesus knew their thoughts, which is another sign of His power and authority. Jesus asked the Pharisees which was easier to say: "Your sins are forgiven" or "Get up and walk." In one sense, it is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," because it cannot be verified visually like a physical healing can be. Everyone would expect to see the healing, but no one would expect to see something happen after the forgiveness of sins. But in another sense, the forgiveness of sins is what only Yahweh can do; yet even doctors can heal people.

This is the first time in the book of Luke that Jesus refers to Himself with the "Son of Man" title—a reference to Dan. 7:13-14. This passage portrays a human figure who approaches the throne of Yahweh and is riding the clouds. The fact that He approaches the throne without dying communicates that he is a sinless human. And the only beings that ride clouds are Yahweh and angels. This figure is portrayed as being both human and divine. Then Yahweh hands this Son of Man all authority, power, and honor over all of creation. Jesus claimed to be this Son of Man and proved this claim by healing the paralytic, demonstrating that He had the power and authority of Yahweh.

If Jesus' claim to authority to forgive sins was false, then He would be committing blasphemy, and there is no way Yahweh would allow Him to have the power to heal the man. Yet to prove that Yahweh had, in fact, given Him the authority to forgive sins (the invisible), Jesus healed the man physically (the visible). Jesus' authority is emphasized even more by the fact that He spoke on behalf of Yahweh—there is no "thus says Yahweh." Jesus' healing provided restoration and verification of His authority at the same time. Again, the emphasis is not the miracle Jesus performed but rather His authority. The healing was immediate and total in that the man could use his legs immediately without going through the work of physical rehabilitation. The people responded by giving glory to Yahweh for what had just happened.

5:27-32 A tax collector was a Jewish person who collected taxes for Rome. The Jewish people saw this as a betrayal of their own people. Not only that, the tax collectors were often dishonest and would charge exorbitant fees or interest in order to make themselves far wealthier than the people from whom they were collecting the tax. Even though the job of tax collector was a politically important and extremely wealthy job, the Roman elite avoided this job because of the social stigma associated with it. Tax collectors were the "poor" in that they were the social outcast.

Jesus came to Levi and called him to follow Him, and Levi left everything to follow Jesus. The phrase "leaving everything" carries the idea of repentance from one's lifestyle of sin and making Jesus one's priority over all other values and things in life. It most likely does not mean that he literally left everything he had in order to follow Jesus, or he would not have had the means to throw the banquet described. Levi threw a party for all the other tax collectors, and Jesus ate with them. The Pharisees then questioned Jesus on His eating with such sinners. The Pharisees used the term *sinner* as a label for "those people" who were outcasts and unworthy of Yahweh's blessing. The word *complained* or *grumbled*, used here of the Pharisees, is the same term used in

the First Testament for the inappropriate grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 15:24; 16:7-8; Num. 14:2, 26-35; 16:11).

Jesus declared that He had come for the sick and the sinners, not for the healthy and righteous. He came to bring healing to all those who needed it spiritually; recovery, not quarantine, was the issue for Jesus. Jesus was not implying that the Pharisees were healthy but that they did not see themselves as sick and, therefore, He could not treat them. It is important to note that though Jesus associated with sinners, He also condemned all sin. Jesus would first accept them for who they were and form relationships with them; this would create the basis from which He would challenge them about their sinful lifestyle. Jesus' goal is repentance and transformation of the sinner's life and way of relating to Yahweh. He does not have time for those with closed hearts. The sinner becoming righteous makes the point that those one thought were outside the boundaries of community were the very people to whom Jesus had been sent. Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Luke 4:16-30).

5:33-35 The Pharisees then questioned Jesus on the fact that John and his disciples fasted whereas Jesus and His disciples did not. The First Testament required only one day of fasting, namely the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29). Zealous Jews were known to fast twice a week (on Monday and Thursday); sometimes they would go three days. Fasting had a major role in the Judaism during this time, so one can see why Jesus' lack of emphasis would raise questions.

Jesus answered that they did not need to fast, for He, as the bridegroom, was here with them, and only after He left would there be need for fasting. Jesus' reference to Himself as the bridegroom is imagery used by Yahweh to refer to His relationship with Israel (Isa. 54:5-8; 62:5; Jer. 2:2; Hos. 2:18, 21; Ezek. 16). Jesus was stating that the messianic times were upon them and that the Kingdom of Yahweh was coming and bringing a new era. The Pharisees used fasting as a means of self-justification and as a way to lift themselves up and exclude others by drawing boundaries.

5:36-39 Jesus then told two parables illustrating that the old and new are not compatible. First, no one stitches new fabric on old garments, for when the garment is washed, the new fabric shrinks and rips the old, destroying both. Second, no one puts new wine in old, stretched-out leather wineskin containers. For when the wine ferments, it will expand the already-expanded leather to the point of bursting. New wine must be poured into new wineskins so that they expand together.

Jesus was illustrating that the *old* is the old Mosaic Covenant and the *new* is the New Covenant that He would make at the end of His life (Luke 22:14-20). The first point is that the New Covenant cannot be contained within the Mosaic Covenant without destroying both. He did not come to fix or enforce the Mosaic Covenant but to replace it with the New Covenant. The second point is that Jesus' teachings would not survive by making them conform to old ways; they were too big for the Mosaic Covenant to contain them.

Jesus then referred to a Greek and Jewish axiom, "old wine is good," which means most people had become so content with the old ways that they had convinced themselves there could be nothing better—even if it destroyed them. Jesus stated that His actions, which were seen as questionable and new, were truly a part of Yahweh's ancient purpose coming to fruition in Himself, while the actions of the Pharisees were rejected as innovative and inconsistent with Yahweh's program.⁵³

⁵³ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 250.

6:1-5 The Pharisees questioned Jesus' disciples on why they were picking grain on the Sabbath. The issue was not *what* the disciples were doing but *when* they were doing it. Deut. 23:25 allowed for plucking grain. There is a distinction between plucking and harvesting with a sickle. The Pharisees were working not so much with the Mosaic Law as they were with their own interpretations and traditions.

“The Mishnah dedicates a whole unit to listing what is not allowed in terms of Sabbath activity: *m. Sab.* 7.2 (also *m. Pea* 8.7). These regulations are “forty save one,” as the Mishnah puts it, and prohibited thirty-nine tasks on the day of rest. According to this detailed and specific list, the disciples were reaping, threshing, winnowing, and preparing food—a quadruple violation! In an interesting twist, later Judaism would not have had a problem with their action as long as a tool was not used to prepare the food.”⁵⁴

They addressed their question to the disciples, but it was Jesus who answered them. Jesus gave an example from 2 Sam. 21:1-6, where the priest allowed David to eat the bread on the Table of Showbread in the Tabernacle because he was starving, yet the Law had forbidden non-priests eating the bread. Scripture never condemned this action, so the teachers believed that it was lawful, since the ultimate commands of the Law were to love Yahweh and love others, and it would not be loving to allow someone to starve. The legal observance was relaxed in order to provide for the human need. The point is that Jesus, like David—a man after Yahweh's own heart, who carries out Yahweh's will—appeared to be breaking the law even while being obedient to Yahweh. This is not a rejection of the Sabbath, but it does reject the Sabbath as a means of a boundary-keeping mechanism—a sign of faithfulness to Yahweh. The point is not to pit the alleged legalism of the Pharisees against the libertinism of Jesus. The question for Jesus was over who was interpreting Scripture (and Sabbath law) correctly, or who knew and represented Yahweh's will. Jesus' authority and interpretation of the Law were superior to those of the Pharisees, for it was He who determined what was appropriate on the Sabbath what was true faithfulness. Jesus was less concerned with enforcing Sabbath regulations and more concerned with bringing the grace of Yahweh to those who needed release.⁵⁵

6:6-11 “On another Sabbath” connects the two events. The word “Sabbath” is mentioned six times (Luke 6:1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9). The question of lawfulness is mentioned three times (Luke 6:2, 4, 9). Jesus is the only one who can determine what constitutes acceptable Sabbath observances. Now the Pharisees were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus of violating the Law. Despite knowing their hearts, Jesus was the one who brought up the issue. Jesus instructed the man with the shriveled hand to stand in the middle of the assembly for all to see. The man thus became an object lesson for teaching. Jesus was the one who then raised the topic of controversy.

The question was whether to do good or to do harm, to save or to destroy. Yahweh's fundamental purpose is to save those who are lost and to release them from bondage, not to keep them in place with rules. This is not incompatible with the Sabbath but, rather, was the whole point of the Sabbath. Luke uses the word “to save,” which in the Greco-Roman world meant “an act of generous concern for the well-being of others, with the intent of rescue from perilous circumstances.”⁵⁶ The Sabbath is the restoration of humans, who are a part of God's creation, into the image of God.

⁵⁴ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 522–23.

⁵⁵ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 252.

⁵⁶ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 256.

Jesus healed the man in order to make a point that helping people is more important than letting people suffer, even if it is on the Sabbath. Notice that Jesus only spoke; there was no labor involved. The result was that the Pharisees become enraged against him. Because of their excessive concern for the Sabbath, they would not allow a man to be healed. The Pharisees' "fury" was rage born out of incomprehension—they were "at their wits' end." From this point on there would be a battle between the Pharisees and Jesus over who had the right to interpret Scriptures.

C. Jesus Instructs His Disciples (6:12-49)

This section begins by noting that the three groups present for Jesus' teaching are the apostles ("them"), a crowd of disciples, and a crowd of people. The ideas of Jesus' message are, first, that it is a vision of an eschatological world but is not relegated to the future. Second, Jesus' wisdom literature is unconventional and designed to jolt his audience and get them thinking about a new perspective. Third, Jesus' message is words of hope to the poor, who have already experienced the beginning of release. Fourth, Jesus is not idealizing poverty but envisioning a world where it does not exist. Fifth, the new community will catch off guard those who measured their lives by the values of the old world.

6:12-16 Here Jesus is being portrayed as the second Moses, for He went up on the mountain to be with Yahweh like Moses did on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19–20), then He came down and chose twelve disciples, like the twelve tribes that were formed at the base of Mount Sinai. Finally, He would proceed to teach a new understanding on the Law, like Moses brought down the Law.

6:17-26 A large crowd gathered around Jesus, and He began to heal them and teach them. Now the crowds were not just the local Jews but people along the entire east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, for they were witnessing a great power at work through Jesus.

Hungry and *poor* are seen in parallel in the First Testament (Ps. 107:36, 41; Isa. 32:6-7; 58:7, 10). The poor are those who are in desperate need and are thus driven to a dependent relationship with Yahweh to meet their needs and bring them justice. The rich are those who are dependent on their materialism and see no need for Yahweh; thus they do not desire a relationship with Him. They are those with significant resources who refuse to consider the plight of others because they are concerned only with their inner circle. There is an arrogant self-security and self-justification about them. The comparison is between the blessed and accepted group, like the First Testament prophets of Yahweh, and the rejected group, like the First Testament false prophets.

At this time in Israel, the gap between the rich and everyone else was significant. A denarius was worth one day's wage for an agricultural laborer. To put these numbers in perspective, Cicero made 150,000 denarii per year; officeholders under Augustus made 2,500–10,000 denarii per year; and procurators like Pilate made 15,000–75,000 denarii per year.

The point is that we live in a corrupt and broken society where the self-absorbed and wicked live in great wealth and comfort while the humble and righteous have very little. The powers that be have built their system on marginalizing, rejecting, and oppressing those who do not measure up to their standards or are not willing to make moral compromises. Jesus can reject marginalization and expulsion because He first rejected the world it is based on. People who speak well of the old order are those who follow its routines and conform to its regulations; they will be judged and cast from the kingdom of Yahweh. Only those who reject the current system will experience the blessings in the Kingdom of Yahweh. A day is coming when the Kingdom of Yahweh will come and the current social order will be turned upside down. But the people of Yahweh should not simply anticipate this day; instead, they must actually work to make it happen now. The believers are to not only reject the current system but seek out the marginalized and make them a part of kingdom of Yahweh. This is what the coming ministry of Jesus is making possible. The eschatological promise of food (Isa. 49:10; 65:13) is often related to the future messianic banquet (Isa. 25:6-8; 49:10-13), an idea Luke will develop more later (Luke 12:37; 13:29; 14:14-24).

These are not just nice little ethical teachings. They declare that everyone is held accountable to Jesus as the Son of Man. It is not a blessing to be persecuted while behaving as a “good” person; rather, persecution is a blessing based on your connection to the Son of Man. These are not teachings on how to better oneself—the point of one’s commitment to Jesus is not to make your earthly life better but to intimately know Yahweh.

6:27-31 Jesus was rejecting the current way of thinking by which you do good to others because you believe they are worthy or deserve it or because you owe them a debt. Instead, you are to love them even when they do not deserve it because this aligns with the character of Yahweh, to whom you belong. Even if people attack you, mistreat you, insult you (e.g., a slap on the cheek, not a physical attack), or demand you serve them, you are to go out of your way to love them.

The idea is not “the way I want things done to me is the way I should do to others.” Rather, the idea is “as you wish to be treated with sensitivity according to your preferences, so treat others with sensitivity according to their preferences.” Jesus states the rule in the most empathetic and positive form. In other words, you are not to fight and demand your rights but seek to love others because they are the children of Yahweh.

“The teaching of the passage as a whole relates not so much to passivity in the face of evil as to concern for the other person.”⁵⁷

This is the mark of the children of Yahweh. To be the progeny of something is to bear the character of that person. Yahweh’s children act this way because Yahweh acts this way. You will be rewarded not because you do good and expect a reward but because Yahweh as a third party will reward you.

“The point is that love involves not defending one’s rights and accepting wrongs committed against one by being willing to forgive, with the additional proviso that one is willing to turn around a second time and still offer help—even if that means being mistreated yet again. Love is available, vulnerable, and subject to repeated mistreatment.”⁵⁸

6:32-35 It is easy to treat well those who are your friends; even the world does this. However, the believer is to go beyond this to the point of offering everything we have to all people and expecting nothing in return. One must believe that Yahweh is truly just and will reward those who live this way. Without this belief, the ethical teachings of Jesus are futile and foolish since there is no hope for justice. You must trust that Yahweh is able and willing to take care of you in the midst of your demonstrating such love. The reward is a relationship with the Father.

6:37-48 The judgment in view does not refer to the refusal to exercise appropriate ethical evaluations of others (Matt. 7:1-2, 6; Luke 11:42-44; 20:46-47; John 7:42, 51-53; Rom. 1:32; 1 Cor. 5:5, 11-13; Gal. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:2; Titus 3:2; 1 John 4:1). Rather, this speaks to an arrogant self-exaltation over others, holding them down in guilt and never seeking to encourage them toward Yahweh. What is commanded is an attitude that is hesitant to condemn and quick to forgive—the opposite of the attitude of the Pharisees. Yahweh promises to treat us the way we treat others.

6:39-40 The first point is that you are all blind in your sin, so the only one you should be following and making an authority over your life is Jesus. The second point is to be careful

⁵⁷ Walter L. Liefeld. “Luke” In *Matthew–Luke*, Vol. 8 of *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 893.

⁵⁸ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 591.

whom you are following, to not go after false teachers nor elevate yourself above Jesus' authority.

6:41-42 Jesus called His followers to take care of the problems in their own life before attempting to point out the problems in others' lives. The idea is self-examination, not examination of others (Ps. 139:23-24). The focus should be the self-examination of one's own heart not the examination of others behavior for acceptance.

“What is unconditionally demanded is that such evaluations should be subject to the certainty that God's judgment falls also on those who judge, so that superiority, hardness, and blindness to one's own faults are excluded, and a readiness to forgive and to intercede is safeguarded. The emphatic way in which Jesus extended the law of love in this direction has far-reaching consequences. It means that the Church cannot practice discipline with merciless severity (2 Cor. 11:24). It means that the Church cannot take up a hard, contemptuous, and supercilious attitude towards those whom it regards as sinners.”⁵⁹

6:43-45 Jesus called His audience to add obedience to the hearing of His message. “To do” appears five times (Luke 6:43 [2x], 46, 37, 49). Jesus does not demand right actions, but rather right actions flow out of the one who has a right heart for Yahweh—from one's character and commitment. Hearing and obedience are inseparable, and those who try to separate them are guilty of hypocrisy. Who a person is can be known by their social interactions. Like a tree, people are known by their fruit. True obedience that flows from faith can happen only by a repentance that leads to a reorientation around God's purpose and transforms one's mind and life through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

6:46-49 Why give Jesus a title of honor and respect and then ignore what He teaches? The point of the parable is not about depending on Jesus, as it is often thought, but rather putting Jesus' teachings into practice. *Lord* is a designation for someone being your patron, of giving and owing your allegiance to them. How can one speak of allegiance and not give it? Jesus can require this because He is the one and only holy and just Yahweh, and also He will demonstrate such love and forgiveness for us on the cross that we have no right to withhold it from others.

“Throughout this sermon Jesus was not contrasting believers and unbelievers but disciples who followed Him and people who did not. As we have observed, the Gospel writers were not too concerned about identifying the moment when a person placed saving faith in Jesus and passed from death unto life. This became a greater concern to the writers of the New Testament epistles. However, even they were not as interested in nailing down the moment of regeneration as some of us sometimes are. Jesus and the Gospel writers put more emphasis on the importance of people making decisions to follow Jesus, to learn from Him, and to become wholehearted participants with Him in His mission.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ A. Buchsel. TDNT, p. 3:939.

⁶⁰ Thomas L. Constable. *Notes on Luke*, pp. 89–90.

D. The Compassionate Ministry of Jesus (7:1-50)

This section marks a return to a geographical ministry whereby one will see Jesus live out in word and deed the way of thinking advocated in the previous section. Luke returns to the message he began in Luke 4:16-30. First, Jesus' ministry is about the "release" of the captives, articulated in Isa. 61:1-2; 58:6. Second, Jesus' prophetic ministry is also for the Gentiles, just like Elijah and Elisha went to the Gentiles (Luke 4:23-30). Third, Jesus will minister to a widow and her son just as Elijah and Elisha did. Jesus' identity will be developed among the people even more. He will be known as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:36-50).

7:1-10 Jesus had stated in Luke 4:23-30 that the Israelites in Elisha's day rejected Yahweh, yet it was the foreign military commander Naaman who put his faith in Yahweh; so now Luke records the story of another foreign soldier putting his faith in Yahweh. Both Naaman and the Roman centurion were well-respected Gentile officers (2 Kgs. 5:1; Luke 7:2, 4-5). There is the intercession of the Jews for the healing of both (2 Kgs. 5:2-3; 7:3-5). Neither Naaman nor the Roman centurion met the healing prophets (2 Kgs. 5:5-10; Luke 7:6-9). The healing of both Naaman and the Roman centurion took place at a distance (2 Kgs. 5:14; Luke 7:10).

The centurion believed he had no access to Jesus, so he sent a delegation. Were Jesus to enter his home, He would be violating Jewish regulations. Jesus did not care and moved to enter his home, praising the man for his faith (Luke 2:29-32). The Jews pleaded for the Roman centurion because he had built their synagogue, placing the Jewish town in his debt. Given the duplicity of the elders and the fact that the centurion was a Roman, one might be surprised that Jesus would go and offer healing. However, Jesus has outlined a new worldview wherein there are no distinctions between friend and enemy, deserving and undeserving.

In contrast, the centurion did not see himself as worthy for Jesus to come to him, and he pleaded with Jesus to help. Notice that he was doing all this for a servant. Jesus was amazed at such understanding and faith from this man, and He praised the faith of this Gentile as greater than that of all the Jews in Israel. This indicates that the Gentiles had not had the revelation given to the Jews, yet he demonstrated great faith with the little understanding he did have. Unlike the Jews, the centurion recognized Jesus' authority and trusted that Jesus would take care of and provide for him. In both word and deed, he had proclaimed Jesus as "Lord" (Luke 6:49). This story also shows that Jesus was interested in the rich and the oppressor as much as the poor and the oppressed.

7:11-17 There is a contrast between the procession of a funeral for a dead boy and the procession of Jesus and His followers. First, this woman had lost her husband and now her only son. In the eyes of the Jews, her family had been punished by Yahweh for their sins. Surprisingly, whereas a woman was typically known by her relationship to a male, the dead boy is identified here as "his mother's only son." For the remainder of the story the attention is on her, with the repetition of the pronouns *she* and *her*. This is the only time where someone did not approach Jesus for a miracle; rather, Jesus was moved by His compassion and went to the woman on His own initiative. Jesus first told the widow not to weep, then he touched the funeral bier, which would have made Him unclean (Num. 19:11, 16), and finally He spoke directly to the dead boy, commanding life to return. Once again, Jesus cannot be made unclean but makes those He touches clean. Jesus showed that He is the greater prophet by the fact that he merely had to speak to the boy, whereas Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:21) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:31-35) had to do rituals and appeal to Yahweh to raise the dead.

The people responded by praising God, which reminds us that the ministry of Jesus is primarily centered on the Father. Yet it is Christ centered as well because the people call Jesus “great” in fulfillment of Gabriel’s prophecy (Luke 1:32).

7:18-29 John was doubting Jesus as Messiah because Jesus’ ministry so far had not matched every way John thought it was going to be. Jesus did not seem to be bringing a ministry of wrath but of love and acceptance. Likewise, how could Yahweh’s agent experience such opposition from Yahweh’s people? Jesus pointed to His deeds as foretold through Isaiah 61 (Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:18; 43:8), from which He had read in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21).

Sensing the people’s possible doubt in John for his questions, Jesus addressed them sarcastically in order to point out that the people should not forget what led them to him and how important John was. Jesus asked them what they had originally gone into the wilderness to see? The reed was the emblem of Herod. The fact that it was being blown in the wind mocked Herod in his inability to rule as Yahweh’s true king. Jesus’ point is that they did not go out to see wealthy corrupt kings and leaders but to see Yahweh’s prophets. Jesus then quoted Mal. 3:1 with changing the pronouns to the pronoun *you*.

7:28-35 The first point Jesus made was that John was a great prophet, lest one mistake his doubt as diminishing the man of Yahweh he was. Second, the covenant Jesus was going to bring would be so much greater than the Mosaic Covenant, so that the least in the new kingdom would be greater than the greatest in the old kingdom. The people accepted what Jesus said, but the Pharisees rejected His points. By rejecting John’s baptism, the Pharisees refused to recognize their need for forgiveness or to allow Yahweh to enter their lives. The leaders did not wish to enter the game unless it was played by their rules. It was not just that they refused to cooperate; rather, they were rejecting Jesus completely.

Jesus made the point that the Pharisees were calling the rules for the game, but John and Jesus would not play by them. The irony was that the people were playing by rules called by the few religious elite but not sanctioned by Yahweh. John abstained from eating bread and drinking wine and the religious leaders were not pleased, while Jesus drank wine and enjoyed life and they still were not pleased. Even though Jesus lived without restrictions on His lifestyle (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37; 14:1; Matt. 11:19; John 2:1-11), He did not adopt the lifestyle of sin; rather, He related to sinners in order to bring them a message of forgiveness. The Pharisees were majoring on the minor issues of lifestyle rather than wrestling with the deeper issue of the message.

7:36-39 Simon the Pharisee showed that he had not made up his mind about Jesus and was somewhat positive towards Jesus by inviting Jesus to his house for dinner and calling Him prophet. Jesus did not cut off *all* the religious leaders when most of them rejected Him. Rather, He dealt with people as individuals. During the meal a woman came in and began to wash Jesus’ feet with her tears and perfume. Social custom allowed for needy people to visit meals and to partake of some of the leftovers. Likewise, it was not unusual for people to drop in when a rabbi was visiting. Luke narrated the woman’s behavior as if it was natural, but everything about her was wrong. Letting her hair down in this setting and fondling His feet would have been seen as erotic, and the fact that she had a history of being a sinful woman made her behavior extremely inappropriate and scandalous.

Simon was horrified by the fact that Jesus allowed her behavior. Jesus’ response did not fit into the Pharisees social status system. Jesus was certainly earning major demerits in their scorekeeping.

7:40:50 Jesus responded by telling a parable of two men who were both forgiven of their financial debt—one of a large sum and the other of a small sum. A denarius was worth one day’s wage for an agricultural laborer. Jesus asked Simon who would love the moneylender most. Simon reluctantly answered, “The one with the greater debt.” Jesus then pointed out the fact that Simon had done nothing to truly honor Jesus. He had not welcomed Jesus correctly by having His feet washed, and he had not defended his honored guest against the accusations of others at the meal. If Simon had performed these acts, it would have been done by one of his slaves. Simon, who was so quick to condemn Jesus for not following the social conventions, had himself failed to follow them.

In contrast, the woman had come solely to show respect and love to Jesus. She wanted merely to be in His presence, showering affection on Him. As a wealthy man, Simon would have been a part of the debt-and-obligation culture. The mere fact of Jesus being invited to his house for a meal would have indebted Jesus to himself. Jesus called on Simon to not think of the woman as a female sinner who owed a debt to Jesus but as a woman who was freely pouring out love in a rich expression of gratefulness that her debts had been canceled. Jesus hoped that Simon would adopt the same worldview and do it for others.

Jesus then forgave the woman of her sin and sent her on her way. Jesus was not assuring the woman of her forgiveness, for she had shown she needed no assurance. Simon did not know her new status as one forgiven and accepted. Jesus announced this to Simon so that he could welcome her into the new community. She, on the other hand, no longer needed forgiveness but recognition and acceptance into the community. Jesus showed that it is more important to be in an intimate relationship with Him and to be willing to do anything in order to demonstrate one’s love, for He desires humility—not the ability to be proper or adhere to strict rules.

E. Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God (8:1-56)

This section develops the idea that a true disciple not only follows Jesus without reservation but proclaims Him and His kingdom to all those around them.

8:1-3 This is the first mention of the twelve disciples since Jesus chose them in Luke 6:12-16. It was uncommon for women to travel with a teacher. The fact that several are mentioned here shows Jesus' concern for women since He allowed them to be disciples along with the men. The fact that Mary of Magdalene and Susanna are mentioned without any reference to husbands and sons may give evidence to their being former prostitutes. They have not returned to their previous communities but rather have joined Jesus' new community. Had Joanna left her husband to join Jesus permanently or temporarily? Single women would have had more freedom to disperse their wealth as they chose without the consultation of a man.

8:4-8 Jesus then told the people who gathered around Him the parable of the seeds falling on different types of ground. Sowing took place in the late fall or early winter (October to December), during the rainy season, and the crop sprouted in spring (April to May) and was harvested around June. Between one year's harvest and the next year's sowing, the field was left idle. The hundred-fold production of the grain refers to the number of progeny on a single stalk of grain. On average a seed would bear thirty-five progeny, with some occasionally producing sixty or a hundred pieces of grain.

8:9-10 The disciples then asked what the parable meant, which was a common response to Jesus' parables. Jesus then quoted from Isa. 6:9, that the knowledge of the truths of Yahweh had been given to them but not to others. This did not seem to answer their question, however, for if the knowledge had been given to them, why did they not understand? And why was the knowledge not being given to others if Yahweh desired all to know Him?

In the parallel passage in Matthew, Jesus gives a more comprehensive explanation. First, Jesus spoke in parables to blind, deafen, and harden those who had made themselves antagonistic to Yahweh (Matt. 13:11-12). Jesus quoted Isa. 6:9-10, where Isaiah had been called to preach the judgment of Yahweh to the people of Israel, whose ears were closed and hearts were hard and who would never repent and come to Yahweh regardless of Isaiah's preaching. In fact, His preaching would harden them even more. In certain times in history, it was the faithful preaching of the Gospel truth that guaranteed unbelief. When people are given the truth, it reveals all the more that they oppose Yahweh's will, and it increases the judgment against them. This can be seen in the Pharisees, who the plain truth of Jesus' teaching made them angrier, and they resisted Him even more, revealing who they truly were and bringing their judgment (John 8:45-47).

In many cases it would not be wise to preach to these kind of people, as when Jesus said to His disciples, "Do not throw your pearls to pigs" (Matt. 7:6). On one hand, openly speaking plain truths to people risks being mocked or killed and then losing one's witness altogether. But one also must not hide the truth from them assuming they will not listen. So the use of metaphorical parables allows one to test the waters to see how the people respond and whether to move forward.

Second, Jesus spoke in parables for the converse reason of revealing things hidden in Scripture (Matt. 13:34-35). Here He quoted Ps. 78:2, where in Ps. 78 the psalmist goes through the history of Israel to point out things about their history that they had missed in their readings. The parables force people to see things they did not see earlier because they were blinded by their

preconceived ideas or shaded perceptions, causing them to misread the text. These truths were already there, but people did not want to see them. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you” (Luke 8:10). He was helping them understand correctly their history and the truths of Yahweh as they had always been written but that they had misinterpreted because of misguided agendas and perceptions. Thus those who truly sought to know and understand Yahweh would understand the meaning of the parable. But for those who sought their own will and desire, it would be as if they were deaf. Genuine hearing is the principal theme of this section.

8:9-15 Jesus then told the disciples the meaning of the parable. Jesus was not communicating the minimum response required in order to receive blessing. Rather, He was instructing the disciples on fruitfulness by pointing out the obstacles that prevent such a response. The Scriptures deal with the questions “How does one get in?” and “How is one effective?” This parable is dealing with the latter. The point of the parable is that all the different soils represent believers because the seeds did grow for a while. Hearing the Word of God and responding is not the point; rather, it is hearing the Word of God and then understanding it so the person grows to maturity and produces fruit that impacts others. Only the seeds that fell on the good soil are the true disciples because they persevered to the end and produced fruit. Fruit is the whole point of the plant getting to maturity. All may hear, but not all will respond and be saved. Authentic hearing leads to faith, which leads to behavior consistent with the Word of God. Since most of His followers are in the *maybe* or *probably* category, they have yet to be tested and thus demonstrate their competence as disciples.

8:16-18 Light illuminates things so others can see their way, and it exposes things for what they truly are. It is foolish to take a light and hide it so that no one benefits from it. Those who respond to the message of salvation and receive it spiritually will receive even more spiritual blessings. But those who do not will lose what they have.

8:19-21 Jesus did not present His family as outsiders to His mission; rather, they were physically distant due to the size of the crowd. Jesus was not saying He was disowning His family, nor did the scene symbolically depict the family’s distance from Him spiritually. He took the opportunity to teach that those with whom He identified most were those who responded to the word. Jesus neither rejects nor praises His physical family. The basis for kinship is understanding and sustaining a positive response to His message, which is hearing and doing (Luke 6:46-49).

8:22-25 Jesus had already displayed His power on the sea (Luke 5:4-8), and Peter had named Him Lord and master. Here Jesus escalated the teaching by taking them out into the storm. In the ancient world, the raging sea was a symbol of chaos and even demonic activity. The First Testament consistently makes the point that only Yahweh has the power to control the sea/chaos. Jesus fell asleep in the boat to test their understanding of His power and authority. The disciples freaked out and rebuked Jesus for not caring. The disciples had evidently learned very little and grown very little in their faith. Jesus demonstrated His divine power and confronted these apparently natural forces as if they were demonic by rebuking them. The point of connection is not in the precise situation the disciples faced in the boat but in the feelings of helplessness they had about where Jesus had led them. The lesson to be learned is that even when it seems we are alone or that Jesus is not aware, He is indeed watching over us. The disciples were amazed, but they were also confused as to His nature. They knew He was at least a prophet (1 Kgs. 17:1), but what did it mean for Him to perform miracles so frequently and even to calm the storm and sea?

8:26-39 The region of the Gerasenes refers to the Gentile territory opposite of the Galilee. This was the first time Jesus entered into Gentile territory. Jesus met a man who was possessed and had supernatural powers. The title “Son of the Most High God” that the demoniac used of Jesus was a Greco-Roman title. Once again, the demons fully understood who Jesus was, yet the Pharisees and the Jews did not. The demons called themselves *legion*, which was a Roman military unit of some 5,600 men. Calling themselves *legion* not only called attention to their numbers but also gave the possession the feeling of a military battle. The demons begged Jesus not to throw them into the abyss—some kind of spiritual dungeon into which a group of demons from the time of Noah had already been thrown (2 Pet. 2:4-5; Jude 6–7). They instead asked to be sent into the pigs.

It is not clear why they would want to be sent into the pigs rather than just into the air or something else. One idea is that they were unclean and the pigs were also unclean. It is also not clear why Jesus agrees to do this or why He seems to not care that the pig farmers lost their pigs. Perhaps they were a sacrifice for the cleansing of the demon-possessed man. Perhaps they had wronged the demon-possessed man somehow and this was their restitution. The text does not answer the questions of why Jesus complied, why they could not just roam the earth, or whether animals can be possessed. The removal of evil is always costly. The pigs served as a visual demonstration of the man’s healing (along with the change in his demeanor), and they seemed to be a sacrifice for the man.

The man was now in his right mind and sitting at the feet of his teacher. He wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus sent him back to his people to tell them what had happened. He was restored to his community and given a commission. The man was given the very task that the disciples will be given in Acts 1–2. Jesus often told the Jews not to spread the news of what He had done because the Jews should have recognized Jesus immediately. And they would misunderstand His ministry as political and speed up the clock to His death. Jesus encouraged the Gentiles, on the other hand, to spread the news of what He had done because they did not have the Scriptures to testify to Yahweh and Jesus and would not have the same access to Jesus’ ministry as the Jews did. The Gentiles also would not have misunderstood Jesus’ ministry as a political one.

8:40-48 Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, showed his humility by falling at Jesus’ feet and asking Him to heal his twelve-year-old daughter, who was about to die. But on the way to the girl, Jesus was stopped by an older woman whose life was not in immediate danger. Jesus allowed Himself to be distracted by this older woman in order to test the faith of Jairus, for faith on its own is not enough; it must be tested (Luke 8:4-21).

The older woman was said to have a “flow of blood,” referring to a uterine hemorrhage. This condition would have made her unclean and been a source of embarrassment, affecting her ability to live normally and be touched by others. She had had this problem for twelve years, and Mark 5:26 notes that she had spent all her money in order to be healed, but physicians had only worsened the condition. She would have been considered unclean and a social outcast, and she would not have been allowed to enter the temple for worship. For her to push herself into the crowds guaranteed that she would infect everyone else and Jesus. She was determined to cross the boundary of legitimate behavior in order to be healed. The woman did not even speak to Jesus but merely touched Him and was healed. Jesus then called her out and revealed what had happened in order to draw out her faith. Her cure was realized in privacy, but now her real problem was a public one. Jesus called her “daughter,” extending kinship to her and restoring her to the community not on the basis of her ancestry (Luke 3:7-9) but as a result of her faith.

8:49-56 Jesus was then told that Jairus's daughter had died. Jesus went to the house anyway and took only Peter, James, and John with Him into the girl's room. From this point on, these three would be singled out to experience more than the other disciples. Jesus healed the girl quickly through touch; He was not concerned about ritual cleanliness. Her spirit returned and she rose up immediately. Jesus did this without ritual—something only Yahweh can do. Once again, He ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

“The most fundamental lesson in this passage is the combination of characteristics tied to faith. Faith should seize the initiative to act in dependence on God and speak about him, yet sometimes it must be patient. In one sense faith is full speed ahead, while in another it is waiting on the Lord. Our lives require a vibrant faith applied to the affairs of life, but it also requires a patient waiting on the Lord, for the Father does know best.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*. The NIV Application Commentary Series, p. 250.

F. Jesus' Identity and the Nature of Discipleship (9:1-50)

The focus in this section is on Christology and discipleship. One cannot embody authentic discipleship unless they correctly understand the true identity and work of Jesus. Yet one cannot correctly understand Jesus' identity and work without discipleship. The appropriate response to Jesus is a growing understanding of who He is and an obedience grounded in an active faith.⁶² In His own time, Jesus was the misunderstood Messiah, but the readers of Luke see what Jesus' contemporaries did not see: that Jesus is resolved to go to Jerusalem to die and rise again.

9:1-6 Jesus sent the twelve disciples out to preach the Kingdom of Yahweh and to heal the sick as Jesus had modeled before them. They were to do this through the power and authority He gave them. The restrictions He put on them were meant to make them dependent on Him for their provisions rather than on their own resources. If they were not accepted by the people, they were to shake the dust off their feet and keep going. The shaking of dirt off the feet was an act of ridding oneself of impurity, yet Jesus has added to this meaning a testimony against the village. The act warned rejecters of impending judgment if their decision did not change. It expressed their separation from God. This was an act Jews performed upon leaving pagan territories.

9:7-9 Herod's interest in Jesus showed that news of Jesus was spreading to even those who usually did not care about spiritual matters, and the mention sets them up for a later meeting. It also shows the questions Luke wants the readers to ask and prepares them for Luke 9:18-22.

9:10-17 Jesus commanded His disciples to feed the crowds. After the sending of the twelve out to heal people, He knew they should be able to do it. Jesus had already previously instructed them to take nothing, so they had been miraculously provided for already. However, they lacked faith and complained about how little they had. Jesus merely gave thanks to Yahweh for what they had and then multiplied the bread and fish. This multiplication of bread connects Jesus to Yahweh's provision of bread for Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16), and the twelve baskets left over connects to the twelve loaves of bread on the priestly table of showbread in the tabernacle (Ex 25:23-30). The abundance of grain in the land was also one of the signs of the coming Messiah (Joel 2:19, 24; Jer. 31:12).

9:18-22 Jesus specifically asked His disciples who they thought He was, to which Peter answered, "the Messiah." Peter did not confess that Jesus was the God-Man Messiah. *Messiah* meant Yahweh's anointed one, referring to the Davidic king. Jesus did not want them to tell people, because their understanding of His identity was not fully developed, and He did not want them to spread the idea of Him as a political redeemer. Here Jesus added to the idea of kingship the fact that He must also die. This is the first time Jesus mentions His death as why He came is mentioned in the book of Luke.

9:23-27 Jesus then stated that whoever wanted to follow Him must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him. The cross was a death sentence. Jesus was calling them to give up everything they had dedicated their life to and give themselves to Him—everything was to be sacrificed to Him and His will for them. This is the same commitment Yahweh expected of Israel in the Great Shema (Deut. 6:4-5). At this point, Jesus wanted them to pledge their lives and allegiance to Him and His mission. Nothing else is important.

⁶² Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 352.

Jesus then stated that some with Him would not die until they saw the Kingdom of God, referring to His transfiguration. The fact that Luke 9:28 says “about eight days later after Jesus said this” connects His statement in Luke 9:27 with His transfiguration. H

9:28-36 Jesus took Peter, John, and James up onto a mountain and transformed into the Glory of Yahweh; they saw the Kingdom of God before they died. At this point it is clear that Jesus was revealing Himself to be divine. Then Moses and Elijah stood next to Him and spoke of His departure. Moses was the prophet at the formation of Israel as a nation that brought them to the Promised Land. Elijah was the prophet at the end of Israel’s time in the Promised Land right before the final prophets came foretelling the coming of the exile. Both of them were great prophets who experienced an exodus and encountered Yahweh on top of Mount Sinai. However, they both failed and died outside of the Promised Land. Jesus had shown Himself to be the better prophet who is the divine Glory of Yahweh and who would lead a better exodus through His death and resurrection.

Peter saw all of this and wanted to build three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. The Feast of Tabernacles was a festival that remembered Israel’s time in the wilderness and looked forward to the coming Kingdom of Yahweh (Lev. 23:42-43; Neh. 8:14-17; Zech. 14:16-21). Peter assumed that this, in connection with what Jesus had said earlier (Luke 9:27), meant the Kingdom of Yahweh was coming. Yahweh called Jesus His Son, which was not said of Moses and Elijah.

Jesus rebuked Peter because, by offering to build three tents, Peter was putting Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Also Jesus had made it clear that His primary mission was not to bring the fullness of the Kingdom of Yahweh now but rather to die first. Moreover, by suggesting their construction Peter was perhaps unconsciously—and effectively—promoting a delay of Jesus’ departure at Jerusalem. He naturally viewed Jerusalem as a place to avoid in view of the possibility of danger there. Peter may have thought the kingdom had arrived, eliminating any reason for Jesus and His disciples to go to Jerusalem.

9:37-43a A man came to Jesus and begged Him to heal his possessed son, whom Jesus’ disciples had failed to heal. Jesus rebuked the disciples because earlier they had gone off on their own and cast demons out of people through the power of Yahweh (Luke 9:1-9), and now they lacked the faith to do the same. They were more concerned about being a part of Jesus’ inner circle (Luke 9:46-48) than about dying to themselves (Luke 9:23-26). So Jesus healed the boy.

9:43b-50 In light of their failure, Jesus reminded them again that He was going to die. It may not be that Yahweh had kept them from understanding what Jesus was saying but that their own selfish resistance was what kept them from understanding.⁶³ Instead, the disciples began to argue among themselves over who was the greatest. Jesus said that only those who welcome the children into their presence is truly great. Children were considered inferior and were servants made to wash the feet of others. They were not worth a person’s time until they became of age. Instead of jockeying for power, they should have been loving and honoring those who had no power and offered no notoriety.

Once again the disciples missed the point and wanted Jesus to stop someone outside their inner circle from driving demons out of people. Jesus told them that if these others were fighting against the demonic realm, then they were not against them. After all the disciples had seen and heard from Jesus, all they could think about was their own power. They were focusing more on

⁶³ See Robert C. Tannehill. *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, p. 1:227.

their perception of what the kingdom of Yahweh is and the fact that they had been chosen by Jesus as leaders in this coming kingdom. Their pride and selfish desires were overriding Jesus' lessons for them and His desire to change their perception of Yahweh and His kingdom. The disciples still had much to learn, even after their confession of who Jesus is. Their behavior should not be surprising, however, for this was what had been modeled to them by the Pharisees. Likewise, they were only behaving outwardly how we behave inwardly.

“The failure of the disciples is represented at its most basic level in this: Jesus had implored the disciples to honor those of no status at all, but they have refused partnership with one who did not share the status they assumed for themselves.”⁶⁴

Greatness is not inherent in a person but is established by one's relationship to Jesus; to receive Jesus is to receive the God who sent Him. Jesus also challenged the way people are evaluated: if greatness is to be found in the least, then greatness is to be found in all. Jesus eliminated the comparison between people in the community.

⁶⁴ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 393.

III. Jesus Goes to Jerusalem in Order to Suffer and Die (9:51–19:48)

This division records Jesus' ministry activity as He makes His way to Jerusalem in order to die as He had just declared (Luke 9:21-22; 44). Everything from Luke 9 on is on the way to the cross to die. The kingdom is not coming with a conquest of Rome but the death of the lamb. Luke emphasizes this idea with the use of the word "to journey," used four times in Luke 9:51-56.

Luke moves on from developing Jesus' identity and the nature of His mission to developing four other major ideas: first, the coming of salvation in all of its fullness to all people; second, the expectation that Mary's Son would be the cause of division in Israel (Luke 2:34); third, that Jesus must suffer rejection and be killed; and fourth, Jesus' exodus.⁶⁵

This division is made up of a chiasmic parallelism.

A Departing, to go to Jerusalem (9:51-55)

B Three recruits, kingdom of God (9:56-62)

C See, listen, revealed, hear (10:1-24)

D What must I do to inherit eternal life? Law (10:25-37)

E Women differing in relation to Jesus (10:38-4)

F Teach us to pray, when you pray, persistence (11:1-13)

G Seven other spirits are where? judgment: just as Jonah and queen, (11:14-36)

H Pharisee, amazed, inside, love seat of honor, prophets (11:37-54)

J Secrets will become known, cast into hell (12:1-12)

K Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me (12:13-48)

L Division, judge for yourselves, manure (12:49-13:9)

M Sabbath, crippled woman, ox, water (13:10-30)

N Kill, Jerusalem (13:31-33)

N' Jerusalem, kill (13:34-35)

M' Sabbath, man with dropsy, ox, well (14:1-24)

L' Hate his father and mother, estimate, consider manure (14:25-35)

K' Give me the share of property that belongs to me, brother (15:1-32)

J' Charges were brought, welcome you into the eternal homes (16:1-13)

H' Pharisees, ridiculed, lovers of, hearts, prophets (16:14-17:10)

G' Other nine, where are they? judgment: just as Noah and Lot (17:11-37)

F' Need to pray always, continually coming (18:1-8)

E' Men differing in relation to God, groups differing in relation to Jesus (18:9-17)

D' What must I do to inherit eternal life? Commandments (18:18-30)

C' See, hidden, revealed, hear (18:31-19:10)

B' Kingdom of God, three servants (19:11-27)

A' Arriving, going up to Jerusalem, came near and saw the city (19:28-48)

⁶⁵ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 394–98.

A. Discipleship on Hearing and Doing the Word (9:51–10:24)

In this section Jesus first announces that He must go to Jerusalem in order to die. It is at this point He begins to make clear what true discipleship means and to send the twelve out to proclaim the Kingdom of Yahweh. Those who will share in the Kingdom of Yahweh are those whose lives are determined by the message of Jesus.

9:51-56 As Jesus headed to Jerusalem, He decided to go through Samaria, which was in the middle of the country between Galilee and Jerusalem in the south. When Israel was taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722 BC, some of the Israelites were left behind and began to intermix with the Gentiles who were resettled there (2 Kgs. 17). This mixed group then caused problems for the Jews who returned to Judea after the Babylonian exile in 536 BC, described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. They worshiped Yahweh, accepted only the Torah as Scripture, and had their own temple, which created even more division between them and the Jews. Neither group liked each other. When the Jews traveled back and forth between Galilee and Judea, they would travel along the Jordan River in the east to avoid going through the Samaritan territory. Jesus refused to this, for He had come for them just as much as for the Jews.

Because the Samaritans did not welcome Jesus, the disciples wanted to call down fire on them like Elijah had on the people in this region (2 Kgs. 2). The disciples were still expecting a political revolution, so they were missing the message of love and repentance Jesus was teaching. Though some may walk away, Yahweh still graciously gives people time to reflect on their decision. The timing and act of judging is for Yahweh alone to determine. The disciples did not realize that they would all eventually flee from Jesus and refuse to be associated with Him. Were He to kill the Samaritans, He would have to kill the disciples too. Jesus will be killed instead of them.

9:57-62 Three people came to Jesus and said they wanted to follow Him but then gave excuses why they could not commit fully to Him now. They were waiting for the time to be right.

To the first person, Jesus emphasized that He had no home and that following Him meant giving up everything.

The second wanted to bury his father first. The man's father had not died yet, for if he had, the son would not be allowed in public during the time of the burial and for a week afterward due to being unclean through contact with a dead body. He was saying he would follow Jesus after his father had died and he had gained his inheritance. The phrase "let the dead bury the dead" refers to those who are spiritually dead or are not concerned about kingdom matters.

The third man said he wanted to say goodbye to his family first. Jesus warned against looking back to what could have been or what was, as Israel did when coming out of Egypt. Jesus is warning that following Him will require sacrifice and even pain, thus people must make following Him the greatest priority in their lives; there is no sharing Him with other priorities.

"Jesus' demands are new and radical, and these men could hardly have known that their requests would be countered so directly and emphatically. The point is not so much to rebuke the would-be disciple for having deficient desire as to warn about what association with Jesus involves and to point out with rhetorical clarity the newness of times Jesus brings."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 983.

10:1-12 Jesus sent the disciples out again in order to do ministry on their own in His name. The idea was not that they were not allowed to talk to anyone; rather, it stressed the urgency of getting the message out there. They were to preach the kingdom of Yahweh and that Jesus was the one bringing it. It was not yet time to preach “Jesus saves” because they did not totally understand who He was, let alone what He was here to accomplish.

10:13-16 Jesus made the Jews’ lack of understanding clear when He stated that it would be more bearable for Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon (Isa. 23; Jer. 25:22, 47:4; Ezek. 26:1-28:24; Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10) on the day of judgment than for the Jewish cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida because the Jewish cities had the Torah and the prophets to prepare them for the Messiah, and they claimed to know Yahweh (Luke 4:23-30). Jesus claimed that rejecting Him is so severe that it is the same as rejecting the Father who sent Him; that is how closely connected they are.

10:17-20 Then the disciples came back excited by all the things they were able to do and that even the demons submitted to them. Jesus responded positively to them by saying their ministry was undoing Satan’s power on the world.

Jesus’ statement “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” does not refer to a past event, and it is unclear if this is a vision or just a remark. The point is that the disciples’ ministry spelled defeat for Satan.

But Jesus also knew His disciples and this reality could lead to them being like the religious leaders, filled with pride at what they were able to do and thus distancing them from the people who needed their compassion and their help. He warned them that they should “not rejoice that the spirits submit to you but rejoice that your names stand written in heaven.” The power of salvation and being a part of the covenant people of Yahweh are not about self and power; they are about loving and knowing Yahweh intimately. It is not about your position, what you can do, or how others see you, but about knowing Yahweh, experiencing His love and trust, feeling the same love for others that He does, and joining Him in the work He is doing to redeem creation.

10:21-24 Jesus’ claim in Luke 10:22 is one of the strongest Christological statements by Luke. Both the Father’s total authority and revelation from Him are said to reside in the Son; thus, they are co-regents. The first thing Jesus states is that He is Yahweh’s Son who has total authority as co-regent with Yahweh. Second is that His knowledge is tied to the Father. Third is that the knowledge of the Father is left in the hands of the Son and is given to whomever He wishes to reveal it. The Father and the Son have switched roles from the description in Luke 10:21. No one can really understand the Father or what Yahweh is about without listening to the Son and His revelation.

B. The Fatherhood of God (10:25–11:13)

In this section Jesus continues to make clear what true discipleship means and emphasizes His connection to Yahweh the Father.

10:25-28 In the first section (Luke 10:25-27) of this parable, an expert in the Law asked a question, and Jesus responded with His own question. The expert in the Law then answered Jesus' question, and only then did Jesus answer the man's question. This structure is repeated in the second section (Luke 10:28-37) except that Jesus sets the stage for His own question with the story of the good Samaritan. Jesus often answered people's questions with his own question. Jesus did this because the initial question put to Him was often obscure or impertinent, or something was just a bit off. By asking His own question, He was reorienting the entire discussion to where it should have gone all along.

This expert in the Law was an expert in the Torah and the Mosaic Law; he was a lawyer-theologian, who, as is evident in the context, saw himself as greater in his understanding of the Law than Jesus was. At this time in the Jewish culture, it was customary for the teacher and the students to all be sitting while the teacher taught. When a student had a question, he would stand out of respect to the teacher and ask the question. This expert in the Law stood to ask a question—but for the purpose of testing and entrapping Jesus; he was a hypocrite. He was trying to justify himself and his self-righteous interpretation of the Law wherein he would inherit eternal life through his own works. Jesus' teachings were a threat to this. If he could entrap Jesus or show the flaw in Jesus' thinking, then he could score points in his status with the other religious leaders and in his status with Yahweh toward inheriting eternal life. The question he was asking was "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" His desire was to show that Jesus was in violation of the Mosaic Law and could be shown to be a false teacher. Jesus' counter-question put Himself in the position of evaluating the man's answer rather than having the man evaluate His answer. The man responded by quoting Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. Most of the religious leaders believed these two passages best summarized the Mosaic Law. Jesus undermined the man's desire to entrap Jesus by agreeing with him. But then Jesus undermined the man's pride by sarcastically saying, "Go and do this and you will live," or "Go and love Yahweh and others perfectly, you know, like you already have been, and you will have no problem in getting into the Kingdom of Yahweh; I believe in you."

10:29-37 The man knew Jesus' comment was dripping with sarcasm and that he had been outdone can be seen in when he said to himself that he must justify himself before Jesus. He had just been beaten in the first round and was not looking good; he needed to score more points than Jesus to come out on top. In this second round, the man came back with "Well then, who is my neighbor?" This was a weak comeback, for what the man expected Jesus to say was, basically, that his neighbor was the other Jewish people just like him—well-educated, pursuing the Law, physically healthy, financially secure, and having a good social status, all indicating Yahweh's good favor over them. Jesus' sermon on the mount erased the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, friend and enemy, and all other social statuses, but the man sought to reintroduce these distinctions.

Jesus told a parable of a Jewish man attacked and robbed on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The journey from Jerusalem to Jericho was a rugged and treacherous terrain that went from almost 2,600 feet above sea level to 825 feet below sea level across 17 rocky miles that wound through the desert and was surrounded by caves. The description "a certain man" means that one

cannot classify the person as friend or enemy. The attackers stripped him of his money and clothes, and he could not speak. All of these things represented his social status, which had now been stripped from him, and he was humiliated before all who passed by on the road. The priest and Levite were both spiritually righteous men on their way home from serving for at least a week in Jerusalem. Given the culture, they probably saw the beaten man as having no status and that if Yahweh had allowed this, then he deserved it. Or, they may have feared it was a trap for them at the hands of the waiting thugs. If they did touch him and he happened to be dead, then they would be ritually unclean and would have to go back to Jerusalem for a week of purification. And, after all, they just wanted to get home.

In contrast, the Samaritan (see the notes on Luke 9:51-56) helped this man, who would under normal circumstances hate him, and he also risked becoming a victim himself. He provided oil to soothe the man's wounds and wine to disinfect them. The Samaritan stayed with the man for the night to ensure he was cared for and then laid down two days' wages, promising to repay any extra expenses. He offered enough money for room and board for twenty-four days and promised to come back and pay more. If, after he had healed, the injured man could not pay for all this, since he had been stripped of so much, then the innkeeper would have had every right to sell him into slavery in order to cover the debt. The Samaritan was thus saving the man from slavery as well. The Samaritan was moved by compassion, not obligation (like Luke 7:13). Loving one's neighbor flows out of a radical love for Yahweh. The Samaritan is not a model of right action, but his actions were rooted in compassion that gave more than could ever be expected.

Jesus then asked the question "Which of the three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" This is a clever question, for Jesus changed the man's question from object to subject. Instead of "Who do I have to consider to be my neighbor?" it asked, "How can I or should I be a good neighbor?"

The man answered Jesus' question by saying, "The man who showed mercy." He could not even bring himself to say the word *Samaritan*. Jesus had put the expert in the Law in his place by forcing him to admit that the one he believed to have the wrong social status and thus was unworthy of eternal life was the one who had truly lived out Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. The man had to admit to himself that he had wrongly interpreted the Law and salvation to be about status and that the Law was truly about love regardless of status. The parable pictured grace responding to need. It contrasted the response of the "righteous" Jewish leaders, who would not help their own kind, with the response of the Samaritan, who was the lowest human around and had every right to hate the Jewish man on the road but did not. The parable showed that one cannot use the Law to find exceptions around who to love and who not to love by either segregating yourself or defining for yourself who your neighbor is.

Jesus then told the man, without sarcasm this time, to "go and do likewise." Jesus ended the first round by saying "go and do this" to make the point that one's self-justification doesn't work because nobody can obey the Law perfectly. Now Jesus ended this second round by saying "go and do this" to make the point that the Law was about responding in compassionate grace to others in need; in fact, all the laws were examples of how to love others—not actions one had to do simply to obtain salvation. Even so, though the grace found through the cross is true, Jesus' final command does expect His covenant people to live in obedience in the way Jesus did. Yet one does this because they already belong to Yahweh and want to love Him and others, not to earn a position of belonging to Yahweh. Hearing is authenticated in doing. It is one thing to

interpret the law correctly; it is another to internalize it. The core question was whether the man loved Yahweh enough to respond to the challenge of this demand.

Even though it was not the point of Jesus' parable, by organizing this parable this way—in this section of Jesus on His way to the cross—Luke made the point that Jesus is the ultimate Good Samaritan. Jesus is the one who sees us dying in our sins on the road of life and in His compassion heals us, saves us from slavery to sin and death, and gives us a new life in Him, made possible through His death on the cross.

10:38-42 Jesus went to visit two sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha complained to Jesus that Mary was not helping her prepare the meal but was instead just sitting at Jesus' feet listening to Him teach.

Jesus informed her that Mary had chosen what was better, to sit and learn at the feet of Jesus. The true disciple should never be too busy to sit at Jesus' feet. Martha risked running over others with her poor attitude. Working was more important than the One in whom she was to remain. The other lesson here is that one should not spend their time worrying over what others are doing. Works that rooted in a sense of obligation is not a legitimate act of works. Women usually were servants in order to allow for the instruction of men, yet Jesus allowed Mary to take that role.

“This then was a lesson in priorities for Martha and all Jesus' disciples. Jesus' point was not that a contemplative life is better than an active life or that scholarship is preferable to domesticity. Giving attention to Jesus' words is of primary importance. This is the better way to serve Him. This passage should be a warning to disciples who tend to be too active in Christian service and neglect the Word of God.”⁶⁷

11:1-4 Jesus proceeded to teach His disciples how to pray. The first portion gives a set of second-person singular declarations to God, followed by first-person plural requests. The Jews did not refer to Yahweh as Father because this was too intimate of a title. Yet Jesus was encouraging intimacy with the Father. They were to see themselves as the children of God (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16).

They were then to pray that the kingdom of Yahweh would come to earth. Matt. 6:10 adds, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The ultimate goal is not to get to heaven but rather to bring the kingdom of Yahweh to earth. Jesus was calling His disciples not to escape the world into some ivory tower or monastery but to dedicate their lives to turning the social order of earth upside down so that it would reflect the social order of heaven. Yahweh created earth and placed humanity in the garden in order to expand the garden across the earth and make it look like His character. Israel failed to do this because of their sin. But now Jesus had come to die and redeem us so that believers could do what Israel was never able to do: expand the kingdom of Yahweh on earth. Ultimately, Jesus is not going to take us to heaven (though that is where believers go when they die), but He will bring heaven to earth (Rev. 21–22).

The believers were to depend on Yahweh for their daily bread. This alludes back to Yahweh's provision of bread for Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16:9-21). They were allowed to collect only enough bread for each day. The point was that they were to rely on Yahweh daily and trust that He would provide what they needed for each day.

⁶⁷ Thomas L. Constable. *Notes on Luke*, p. 139.

“Forgive us as we forgive others” implies that if the believer refuses to forgive others who have sinned against them, then they cannot expect forgiveness from Yahweh for their sins. This is illustrated in the parable of unforgiving debtor in Matt. 18:21-35. The true believer is to reflect the image of Jesus and to live and love like He does. Jesus loved others so much that He was willing to die in order to forgive them. Therefore, how can someone say they know and love Jesus if they are not willing to do what He does? This does not mean forgiveness is easy and quick but that one should be pursuing forgiveness as they surrender their violations to the Judge of creation.

The believer is to look to Yahweh, rather than to their own works and means, to protect them and lead them out of temptation.

11:5-13 The house described was a one-room family home where bread was made on a floor mat and was baked and consumed daily. With the disturbance of sleep, it would become known to all in the village and the requirements for hospitality would be a responsibility expect all in the village. The parable addresses the attitude that one should have in approaching prayer. The point of contrast is between the neighbor and Yahweh; the point of comparison is between the petitioner and the disciple. The point is not that one must beg Yahweh in order to have Him respond but of the shameless boldness and great lengths one goes to when approaching the Father in prayer.

Jesus promised that if people seek and knock, it will be given to them. Just like a good earthly father, Yahweh is a gracious God who gives when His people ask. The point is that Yahweh supplies graciously in response to one’s request—not that one gets whatever they want. The passive verbs show that Yahweh is the supplier, while the active verb shows that the disciple is the one to pursue. One is to ask with faith in Yahweh’s desire to respond appropriately.

C. Jesus' Behavior Questioned (11:14-54)

In this section the Pharisees' opposition against Jesus increases. Likewise, Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees becomes greater as He calls them out for their hypocrisy.

11:14-23 After driving a demon out of a man, some accused Jesus of doing it in the power of Beelzebul. *Baal Zebul* means "Lord of the dwelling or temple," a title known from the Ugaritic texts. This may refer to *Baal Zebub* in 2 Kgs. 1:2-3, 6, 16, a local manifestation of the god Baal at the Philistine city of Ekron. The Jews used this name synonymously with that of Satan.

Jesus made the point that a kingdom cannot stand if it is attacking itself. So why would Satan be attacking his own kingdom and undermining his own purposes by casting demons out of people? If Jesus is of Satan, then why was He attacking himself? His miracles and teachings proved to whom He belongs. If His power came from Satan, then the Pharisees had just credited Satan with tremendous power. Plus, why would Satan be helping so many people? Jesus is the greater power that attacks and destroys the house of Satan.

11:24-26 In Luke 11:24, the background for the reference to "waterless places" (NET, NASB) or "arid places" (NIV) is not entirely clear, though some Jewish texts suggest spirits must have a place to dwell but not with water (Luke 8:29-31; Tob 8:3). Some suggest that this idea started with the image of the desert or deserted cities as the places demons dwell (Isa 13:21; 34:14).

11:27-28 Jesus' illustration was of a person who had experienced a great act of Yahweh but had not responded with his own commitment to Yahweh. So what if you are healed only to get sick again? The only way to experience total healing is by responding to Jesus. Jesus' reply to the crowds about His mother showed that responsive action is more important than praise.

11:29-36 Jesus accused the Jews of being a wicked generation, for, after all He had done in front of them, they were still asking for signs and proof of who He was. Jesus said that the only sign He would give them was the sign of Jonah. Matt. 12:39-40 adds that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and nights, so Jesus would be in the grave for three days and nights. The point is that the ultimate sign of who He was is His death and resurrection.

The Queen of the South (1 Kgs. 10:1-13; 2 Chr. 9:1-12) came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and about the blessings Yahweh had provided him and went back praising Yahweh. The Queen of the South and the Ninevites (Jonah 3:4, 10; 4:1) would judge Israel because although they were ignorant of Yahweh and saw so little compared to the Jews, they repented and turned to Yahweh. The Jews, however, were not responding in the same way (Luke 4:23-30). The picture of Gentiles judging Jews is the opposite of First Testament expectation and was a severe rebuke to Jesus' audience.

11:33-36 The purpose of light is to be a source of guidance through eliminating darkness and revealing the proper way. The eye is the vehicle of perception, the source of reception. The content of one's perception determines their health. The Greco-Roman world understood the eyes as not letting light in but letting the body's light out, meaning everyone had their own divine light that was entrapped in bodies of flesh and needed to be freed in order to reveal their true selves and potential. For Jesus, humans have no inner light; they are the darkness (John 1:1-14; 1 Jn. 1:5-7). One is to take in the light of Yahweh and Jesus and allow it to transform them into the Godhead's image. The warning is to be constantly on the watch to what you take in. The call is to respond to the message of light that has come into the darkness.

11:37-41 Jesus went to a Pharisee's house to eat and did not wash His hands first. Jesus is wrong in transgressing their expectations but is justified in doing so in order to make a point about the spiritual uncleanness of the Pharisees. They say they are righteous, yet they do not take care of the poor. They had failed to bring into alignment their outer and inner nature. The issue was that the Pharisees were not consistent in their lives; they were not concerned with inner purity, yet Yahweh is because He created both. Jesus called them to give from their inner being rather from their outer being.

11:42-44 Jesus pronounced a set of three woes (a cry of mourning) against the Pharisees. First, the Pharisees were tithing to the temple but ignoring justice in their cities. Second, because of their pride, they sought attention to the exclusion of others. Third, they were dead on the inside yet gave everyone the impression they had it all together. By focusing on the maintaining of purity, they had actually made themselves impure and endangered the purity of those around them.

11:45-53 They told Jesus that they were offended, so Jesus went on to pronounce a second set of three woes. Jesus was calling them to repentance, yet they saw it as insulting because they viewed the charges as false; thus, repentance was not possible.

The first woe did not involve their failure to perform the rules, rather the extra burdens they put on people while refusing to help them, which ended up leading them away. It could also deal with their subtle interpretations of the law that provided loopholes for themselves.

The second woe was that the same spirit that caused their ancestors to slay the prophets was still among them. They said they honored the prophets through construction of tombs for them, yet they rejected the prophet's message. Thus, they were actually honoring the fact that they were dead; "they killed the prophets; you make sure they stay dead." Through this Jesus foreshadowed that they would do the same to the apostles, which would be evidence of how they truly felt about the prophets.

The third woe was that they were obstacles to others knowing Yahweh. Rather than revealing and providing the key to knowledge, they took it away.

D. Vigilance in the Face of Eschatological Judgment (12:1-59)

In this section Jesus warns of the coming judgment for those who do not follow Him or heed His teachings on what it means to be a true citizen of the coming Kingdom of Yahweh.

12:1-5 Jesus warned His disciples of the yeast of the Pharisees. Yeast was symbolic of corruption because it spread all throughout the bread and puffed it up. It was forbidden to put yeast in bread offered to Yahweh in the sacrifices and during many religious festivals. His warning was to be wary of hypocrites, to not be led by them or to become like them, for they spread like a disease. The Pharisees looked good on the outside, but Jesus made it clear that Yahweh would one day expose everything that is hidden.

12:6-7 Jesus then warned the disciples to not fear humans, who can kill only the body, but to fear Yahweh, who can destroy both body and spirit. The word *hell* comes from “Gehenna,” a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew words *ge hinnom* (“Valley of Hinnom”). This was the valley along the south side of Jerusalem. In First Testament times, it was used for sacrificing children and virgins to the pagan god Baal-Molech (Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35), and it came to be used as a place where human waste, rubbish, and dead criminals were disposed of and burned. In the intertestamental period, it came to be used symbolically as the place of divine punishment (1 En. 27:2, 90:26; 4 Ezra 7:36).

The disciples needed to be more concerned with the approval of Yahweh than that of man. They were to know that Yahweh cared for them and knew them intimately. If Yahweh cares for the birds and animals, how much more does He care for humans?

12:8-12 Jesus used the “Son of Man” title to refer to himself as judge. How you treat Jesus will determine how Yahweh treats you on the day of judgment. For Jesus, there are only two options: accept Him or reject Him. This distinction refers to a pattern of rejection (Peter and Judas’ lives serve as examples). Rejection of Jesus in this earthly life will be forgivable because it is a one-time act, so to speak, but the rejection of Spirit signifies a lifetime of persistent and decisive rejection of the work of Jesus and the message of the Spirit. Once the testimony of the Spirit is permanently rejected, then the person cannot be forgiven since they have rejected Jesus’ work. Jesus’ death paid for all the sins of all humans whether they accept Him or not. Post the death and resurrection of Jesus, no one is separated from Yahweh because of their own personal sins; now, the only sin that separates one from Yahweh is the rejection of Jesus’ sacrifice and atonement on the cross that allows for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

12:13-34 A man in the crowd came to Jesus, asking Him to arbitrate between himself and his brother to make sure their inheritance was divided justly. The laws of inheritance are laid out in Num. 27:1-11; 36:7-9; Deut. 21:16-17. Echoing language from Ex. 2:14, Jesus refused the role and warned them of greed in their lives.

Jesus then told a parable of a rich man who had so many crops that he tore down his barns to build bigger ones in order to store the abundance. Now that he had a nice nest egg, he could enjoy life the way he wanted. But Yahweh judged him for his selfishness. The rich man had mismanaged his wealth morally, spending it only on gratifying his own needs. He did not use it to care for the needs of others but had secured his position in the community as others were made more dependent upon him. He had attempted to secure his future without reference to Yahweh (Prov. 14:1; Jer. 4:22).

12:22-34 Worrying is a waste of time, for it cannot accomplish anything; it is all out of your control. Anxiety shows that one does not believe Yahweh is in control or is not concerned about one's circumstances. One needs to practice seeing the signs of Yahweh's gracious provision. The quest for security is a lack of awareness of Yahweh as Father. Knowing that Yahweh takes care of believers liberates them from anxious thoughts, and they are able to reorient themselves to the purpose of Yahweh and His community. Spend more time trying to take care of others' needs than worrying about or trying to meet your own needs. Pursue the kingdom, and all your needs will be provided for.

12:35-48 Jesus was telling His disciples to always be obedient and anticipate His return, for they did not know the time He would return. Their focus instead was to want to know Him better seek to please Him. Jesus was talking only to the disciples, for those who do not follow Him are incapable of obeying Him. The contrast is between the faithful and the unfaithful slave. He described the slaves in relation to service not power. The first behavior was blatant disobedience, the second apathy, and the third ignorance. Thus, those who follow Jesus are responsible to Him. Notice the graphic way Jesus describes their actions and then what will happen to them as a result.

12:49-59 The peace Jesus brought is not universal. It is only for those who respond to Him and align themselves with the kingdom of Yahweh. Thus there will be division between the sides. His desire was to bring it all to an end by bringing judgment to the earth, but He knew that He must first bring it upon Himself for our sake.

12:54-59 Jesus rebuked the crowds for knowing so much about the natural world but being able to foresee spiritual matters. Jesus was saying it was better to settle matters outside of court than to have one's sin exposed and then go to jail. In the same way, it is better to confess your sin and have it settled than to pay for it in full.

E. Israel Turns Away, Blessing Still Comes (13:1–14:35)

In this section Jesus continues to heal the sick and teach on the kingdom of Yahweh.

13:1-9 Some told Jesus about the recent massacre that Pilate had committed against the Jews. Though this event is not recorded outside the Bible, many like this at the hands of Pilate are recorded outside the Bible. Perhaps they were wondering if Jesus was going to do anything about the incident. However, Jesus did not enter the social, political issues of the day but instead used the incident in order to teach a lesson. Tragedy, whether by human hands or natural, is not a judgment against the victims.

The fig tree is a variation on the picture of a vine (Isa. 5:1-7; Mic. 7:1). Vines normally take three years to start producing fruit, whereas a healthy fig tree starts bearing fruit in its first year. The fig tree represented the nation of Israel (Isa. 5:1-7; Hos. 9:10; Jer. 8:13, 24:1-8; Mic. 7:1), and the message was that the nation of Israel should have been producing fruit but was not. Thus they *should* be removed to allow life to others, but through Yahweh's mercy He was giving them a little more time in order to repent and produce fruit (Luke 3:9). The imagery portrays Yahweh's displeasure as well as His patience.

13:10-21 Jesus was the one who initiated the healing of the crippled woman, who in His culture were normally shunned. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they were more concerned about their property than they were about the needs of others. What better day to reflect on Yahweh's activities than on the Sabbath.

13:18-21 Jesus was contrasting the start of the kingdom with its eventual character; it starts off small and seemingly insignificant, but over time it will grow to a large entity. In the case of the yeast, it will spread out and encompass everything. The birds are an allusion to the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Dan. 4:7-23, representing the Gentile nations.

13:22-30 The people who were shut out of the Kingdom of Yahweh were many of the Jews who were following Him. They assumed that their heritage was what would save them. They assumed that hanging out with Jesus and following Him was sufficient. However, the gate is narrow, and many would find themselves outside when it would be too late to do anything about it. Jesus was calling them to respond to Him and obey now. Those who would make it in were from other nations, an idea that even the disciples were struggling with. Jesus made it clear that the mark of a true believer is someone who knows Yahweh intimately and seeks to love others in His name.

“The reply of Jesus begins by asserting that the way of salvation is a door which God opens and man enters. The entry cannot be made without God. The gate of heaven opens only from the inside. But also man has to make his own way in, once the door is opened. And this is not easy. The entrance is narrow, and it is a case of struggling through rather than strolling in. If men fail to enter, it is not that God is unwilling to admit them, but that they will not enter on the only terms by which entrance is possible.”⁶⁸

“Jesus exhorts his audience to labor hard to enter through the narrow door. The idea is not to work one's way to God, but to labor hard at listening and responding to his message. The concept is very much like passages in Proverbs that exhort one to incline the ear to wisdom and pursue it like riches (e.g., Prov. 2:1-5).”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ T. W. Manson. *The Sayings of Jesus: As Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke*, p. 125.

⁶⁹ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 1234.

13:31-35 In the previous paragraph Jesus stated that one must make every effort to get into the kingdom of Yahweh, and many would be surprised to find that they would not enter because the way is narrow. Yet here Jesus stated that despite this reality, His desire was to draw them close and for all to receive and enter into His presence.

The title “fox” carries the idea of one who is cunning and a deceiver. Sending this message with the Pharisees suggests that Jesus saw them as closely associated with Herod. The reference to three days is a figurative way to speak of a quick succession of events. Jesus was not saying that all of the prophets were killed in Jerusalem but that the Jews were the ones who killed them; so, it is fitting that He should die in Jerusalem.

14:1-6 The condition called dropsy involves swollen limbs from the accumulation of fluid in the body’s tissues, usually gathering in the legs. When Jesus asked the Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, the Pharisees for the first time did not say anything. They were beginning to learn that they could not stand up to His arguments. Jesus referring to their child called them to compassion and concern for others. The Pharisees deemed it lawful to take care of an animal in need on the Sabbath as long as it was not carrying a load. Yet they thought it was unlawful to heal a human on the Sabbath. They had created a law that served their own interests over the interests of others.

14:7-14 The Pharisees lived in a world of scorekeeping, where the system was rigged in their favor as the elite. Therefore, in their minds, they deserved the seats of honor and the best accommodations at the expense of others. Likewise, when they treated others well, they did it so that the other person would be obligated later to do the same for them (maybe even better since they were keeping score) or be in their debt.

For Jesus, the real issue was humility and placing oneself at the service of others. If you seek to better others’ lives rather than your own, then you will be exalted to a greater status than you could ever exalt yourself. Jesus’ focus was on knowing Yahweh so well that the believer becomes more and more like Him; in this way, His heart for others becomes your heart. The Pharisees had turned Judaism into rules and status, forsaking relationships.

14:15-24 Jesus then told a parable of a man who invited guests to a party, but the guests started to make excuses for their nonattendance. The implication was the man had already sent out an invitation, and the guests had responded that they would attend, but at the time of the banquet they all backed out. The host needed to know how many animals to prepare, and the guests needed time to find out who else was coming. Whatever the excuses of the guests, their refusal to join the banquet was a social strategy to defame the host.

Their excuses were foolish. In the first two cases, no one purchases anything without first viewing the product. Besides, if he already owned it, why did it have to be viewed at that precise moment? With the third person, the time of his wedding would have been planned well in advance so that he would have known when receiving the first invitation whether he could make the banquet or not.

What is remarkable is that the anger of the host did not lead to reprisal, but rather he departed completely from the social system of status preservation and reprisal and sought those outside the city who were completely destitute. He was now inviting those who could not repay him. No longer would his social relations be governed by the old system.

The first group he invited represented Israel as a whole, who should have been aware of the kingdom and been ready to receive it; for many years the prophets spoke of its coming, and the Israelites were the chosen people and claimed to follow Yahweh. The second group was the poor and the sick, who would have been excluded from worship by the Pharisees and seen as not worthy of the kingdom of Yahweh. The third group was those outside the borders of Israel—the Gentiles. Those who were so sure they would make it into the kingdom were now excluded because of their pride, while those who were once excluded were now brought in. The prophets foretold of a New Jerusalem that would include all the nations and all the outcasts (Mic. 4:1-7; 7:16-17; Isa. 2:2-4; 11:10; 19:18-25; 40:6-7; 49:6; 55:3-5; 56:3-8; 60:1-11; 66:12; Zeph. 3:9-12; 66:17-19; Jer. 3:16-18; Ezek. 17:22-24; Hag. 2:6-7; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-19).

14:25-35 One must make Jesus priority over everything else in life. The word *hate* here does not mean literally to hate one's family since that would go contrary to the great command of loving others. Instead, it means to "love less," showing the level of commitment to Himself that Jesus was requiring; He must take priority over everything else in one's life. Jesus' followers must set aside family relationships and close friends by which they have formed their identity and instead orient themselves to Yahweh's purpose, finding their identity in Him and in doing His will. Bearing the cross shows willingness to sacrifice everything for Him, especially accepting the pain of persecution and even death. Jesus stated that if one was not willing to do this, they could not become His disciple.

Jesus' disciples were to live as though they were condemned to death by crucifixion, oblivious to the desires of the world and for securing their own social status and future through obligations or possessions, instead finding their identity in Jesus' in what He did for them through His suffering and self-sacrifice.

The first illustration makes the point that one must take time in careful reflection to decide whether one is ready to make the commitment and sacrifice that Jesus demands. If not, then he will not be able to follow through with his commitment. The second illustration makes the point that one should consider whether they want to go against one who is more powerful than themselves or join him.

Jesus' disciples must renounce attachment to materialistic things, for these serve only to blind them and fight for their loyalty. To fail in allying oneself totally to Jesus and only hear Him at a distance is a waste of a valuable opportunity.

F. The Father's Pursuit of Sinners (15:1-32)

In this section Jesus told three parables in order to explain why He ate with sinners and the importance and value these people have in Yahweh's eyes. The point is that they and especially the disciples should share this attitude toward the sinner. Each parable builds on the previous one, where each thing that was lost is more valuable than the last. The response in heaven shows that these parables are fundamentally about Yahweh.

15:1-12 Once again the Pharisees complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told a parable about a shepherd who lost a sheep. Sheep are known to quickly become disoriented and agitated when separated from the flock. The shepherd did not stop looking for the sheep until he found it, and then he threw a party celebrating the find.

The silver coin is a drachma, which was equal to ten days' wages. The woman searched everywhere for the coin, and when she found it, she threw a party celebrating the find. The point is that what brings the greatest joy and excitement in heaven is when sinners come into a relationship with Yahweh.

15:11-32 Jesus then told a parable of a man who had two sons. The younger son asked for his share of the estate. The "estate" literally means "the life." The son was asking for his share of the inheritance he would receive after his father died; this is the equivalent of wishing him dead. The younger son addressed him as "father" but was not treating him like one. The son then left home and squandered everything he had. He fell so far that he ended up working for the Gentiles among the pigs, which are unclean, and was tempted to eat the food the pigs were eating. Not only had he dishonored his father, but now he had dishonored himself. The phrase "he came to his senses" is an idiom for repentance; likewise, the fact that he desired to express to his father that he had sinned against him shows a repentant heart.

The father had been searching the horizon, waiting for the day his son would come back. When he saw his son approaching at a distance, he ran to him. Jewish fathers of high status did not run to people; they glided with grace as they walked or required others to come to them. Likewise, running to his son would have required the father to pull up his robes, breaking protocol and exposing himself. All this points to the fact that the father was so excited to see his son that he was willing to publicly shame himself. The father received his son back with great joy before the son could even ask for forgiveness. Also, the father bestowed great blessings on his son, giving him a ring that would have borne the seal of the family and sacrificing a bull that would have normally been reserved for the Day of Atonement.

Upon seeing this, the older son resented his father for receiving his younger brother back in this way. What the younger son felt fortunate to become (a mere servant) the older brother resented. He had stayed home not because he loved his father but because working in his fields was a way to get what he wanted. Yet the younger brother had not done what was expected and still received gifts from the father.

The father made it clear to the older brother that everything was already his. He did not have to work to earn his father's love and possessions; they were already his by the fact that the father loved him. So it was the same with the younger brother, who once was lost and was now found. The older brother represented the Pharisees and Jews, while the younger brother represented the Gentiles and the outcasts of the parable of the banquet (Luke 14:15-24). The two sons were the ones who controlled the literary action, yet it was the father's response to the two sons that

provided the lessons. Thus the parable is more about the father than about the prodigal son. The parable shows, first, that Jesus' acceptance of the outcast who responded positively to Him is a reflection of the character of Yahweh and, second, that Jesus was inviting the Pharisees to join Yahweh in celebrating the restoration of the lost.

G. Kingdom Economics (16:1–17:10)

In this section Jesus warns of the dangers of wealth as a distraction to entering into the Kingdom of Yahweh. The problem is not wealth in itself but the temptation to put it ahead of Yahweh and serving Him.

16:1-9 Jesus told a parable of a rich man who called his manager into account for “squandering” his money—the same word used of the prodigal son, linking these two parables together. The manager, knowing he was going to lose his job, decided to reduce the debt of all those who owed him so that they would welcome him when he had no job. In order to reduce the bill that the debtors owed, the manager was either removing the interest from the debt or deducting his own commission. Most likely it was the latter since Jesus made reference to spending one’s own wealth. The rich man commended the manager because he acted shrewdly in spending his wealth and winning favor among people to secure his future.

16:10-13 Jesus encouraged his disciples to spend their money in order to win friends so that they could lead them into the Kingdom of Yahweh through the relationship they had established. One will be welcomed more warmly into heaven for this than for spending it only on oneself. Jesus was calling them to surrender all to Yahweh and to prove themselves in the little things so that He could entrust them with more and give them greater responsibility. The motive for the disciple’s true obedience is not to obtain a reward or escape judgment but because he intimately knows the Father, desires to please Him, and wants the Father to trust him in making His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matt. 6:9-10; Luke 11:2). Yahweh then shows His love to the disciple by entrusting more responsibility to him in His kingdom so that he can be a part of doing even more. It is not a reward but a responsibility with which Yahweh entrusts him.

Jesus warned against trying to serve two masters at the same time, because that person will end up loving one master and hating the other. He was specifically speaking of Yahweh and money, but the principle applies to any masters. Two masters’ wills for you will always be in conflict with each other, and their separate demands will create frustration and anxiety in you. Therefore, you will eventually pick the one you love the best—usually the one that brings you the greatest enjoyment and comfort in your way of thinking. Jesus has a strong insistence on the exclusiveness of Yahweh in a disciple’s allegiance and devotion.

16:14-15 Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, who loved money more than Yahweh, especially at the expense of others. Like most humans, they were keeping score of why they were better and worthier than others in the culture. They believed that because they had more money, power, and prestige, they were superior to others who did not and were therefore greater in Yahweh’s eyes. The Pharisees were not wicked because they saw these things as having value, but rather that they highly valued them as the source of their significance. And what made them even more wicked was that they sneered at and devalued others who either did not have these things or, as in Jesus’ case, did not highly value these things as they did. Unfortunately, as the teachers of the Law they had convinced the people that this was what it meant to be acceptable to Yahweh. This is why the disciples fought and jockeyed for position and power so much around Jesus. Jesus made it clear, however, that although the Pharisees were skilled at making themselves look righteous and put together before the people and convincing them that this was important to Yahweh, Yahweh saw their true hearts and was not pleased with them.

16:16-18 There is debate over whether the Hebrew phrase should be translated “everyone is forcing his way into it” (NIV, NASB) or “everyone is urged to enter it” (NET). The latter is

preferred because it fits the context better. Jesus was not seeking to reject the Pharisees but rather to warn them of the risks of rejecting Him; He was communicating to them that the opportunity to know Him was always available. The Greek word for the “least stroke of a pen” literally means “little horn” and refers to the little writing strokes of the Hebrew letters that enable one to distinguish between Hebrew letters.

The Law points to the Kingdom of Yahweh and so does not fail. It is fulfilled and transformed in Jesus. It does not fail because its purpose is Jesus, and its authority and power are expressed through Jesus. One cannot take the view that one is still under the full weight of the Law or that it is void because this ignores Luke 16:16-17. The point is that if they were going to keep the Law, they must embrace Jesus’ kingdom message to which it points.

Jesus’ instruction on divorce serves as an example of His authoritative teaching in that it shows how a desire for righteousness produces a high standard of ethics, and such righteousness does not need the law. This concept addresses the heart of why one would seek to break a vow made before Yahweh rather than what is or is not legal according to the letter of the law. Jesus actually offered a rigorous interpretation of the Law on divorce (Deut. 24:1-4). Jesus stated that divorce leads to adultery, the presupposition being that a person typically seeks divorce in order to remarry; therefore the person is breaking their vows before Yahweh in order to commit adultery legally. Jesus established only the basic principle rather than every possible scenario. Matt. 5:32 makes the point that divorce because of sexual immorality is permissible. However, Jesus also said that the Law allowed for divorce only because human hearts are hard, and dying to oneself for the sake of the other is not easy (Matt. 19:1-12). Divorce was not Yahweh’s original desire. 1 Cor. 7:10-11 states that marriage should be maintained if at all possible. This shows Jesus’ authority going beyond the exception Moses stated (Deut. 24:1-4) and demonstrates that righteousness hates divorce. Yahweh has shown throughout Scriptures—and ultimately in the cross—that He never gives up on humans, no matter their sin, and pursues them in order to redeem them, no matter the cost to Himself. So then, if the believer is to take up their cross, follow Jesus, and reflect His character as the image of God, then the believer is to love their spouse like Jesus loved the world (Eph. 5:25). Love for Yahweh and others in the example of Jesus moves one beyond the need for the Law.

16:19-31 Jesus told a parable that contrasted the fates of a rich man and a poor man. The rich man wore fine clothing (even his underwear was fine), lived in a large walled house, and feasted every day, while Lazarus was left in the dirt with the dogs and longed for scraps from the rich man’s table. Lazarus’s name means “God helps,” indicating his dependence on Yahweh. This is significant because Lazarus is the only figure in any of Jesus’ parables who is given a name, which gives him greater value than the rich man in the story. It also shows that though he is unnoticed by people, his fate is known by Yahweh. Lazarus was not leper, since a leper would not have been allowed to beg in public.

The everyday people did not have the ability to take care of the extra needs of the crippled and sick in their families because they worked all day just trying to provide for the basic needs of the family. It was a part of the culture that people would take their crippled and sick to the houses of the wealthy, who had the ability to meet these needs. The wealthy would do so, not out of compassion but out of their required almsgiving to make themselves more acceptable in Yahweh’s eyes. They did not do it themselves, however, but would send their servants to feed them. This rich man was so self-centered and calloused that he did not even do this, and Lazarus longed for even the table scraps given to the dogs. The dogs licked Lazarus’s wounds, showing

him more compassion than the rich man did. It was in the gate of the city that justice was to be served—not where the needy were to suffer from disregard (Amos 5:12, 15). The rich man had disregarded the will of Yahweh.

In an ultimate role reversal of what the culture would have thought would happen, Lazarus the crippled went to Abraham's side, while the rich man went to Hades. "Abraham's side" is where the covenant people of Yahweh went after death and is portrayed as a place of security and godly fellowship for First Testament believers before Jesus' work on the cross. The word *hell* (NET, NIV) is actually the Greek term *Hades* (NASB) and stands for the Hebrew concept of Sheol ("grave"), where the dead were gathered (Ps. 16:10; 86:13). In the Second Testament, Hades sometimes has an additional negative force of awaiting judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

One would expect the rich man, after seeing this reversal, to say something like, "Oh wow, I got that so wrong," and with remorse to repent of how he treated Lazarus. Instead, there was no repentance; he was still self-absorbed and entitled, thinking of only himself as he begged for mercy. He even had the audacity to command that Abraham send Lazarus, who he still saw as a servant, to come over and serve his needs. Abraham's response was, first, that the rich man had already lived his life and made his choices to hoard for himself and give nothing or very little to others like Lazarus; now he had to live with the result of those choices. Second, there was a great chasm between them, and there was no crossing over. These two points make it clear that escape from hell is not possible (Heb. 9:27). The idea that people have another chance in hell to repent and get out is refuted here. But what is interesting is that, likewise, no one can go from heaven to hell. Most likely, the godly in heaven would want to help those in hell, but this is not possible. The rich man begged Abraham, still commanding Lazarus to be sent, to warn his family of their fate. Abraham made it clear, however, that they had already been warned through the Word of Yahweh as spoken through the prophets. Then the rich man began to argue with Abraham that he was wrong and that someone resurrected from the dead would convince them. Abraham said that it would not convince them, as seen in fact that Jesus raised the four-day rotting corpse of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, from the grave, and some responded by reporting it to the Pharisees in order to have Jesus stopped (John 11:46). This also foreshadows the fact that the Pharisees would still reject Jesus even after His resurrection.

This parable shows, first, that going to hell does not change people. Not once did the rich man humble himself, repent, and ask for forgiveness. He remained arrogant, self-absorbed, and entitled even in his judgment suffering. Hell is not full of people who are sorry for their sins and want to repent but Yahweh will not let them. It is made up of people like this rich man, who still think they are the center of the universe. Hell is made up of people who are in an endless and wretched cycle of sin, dysfunctionality, arrogance, and condemnation. It is place of pride, selfishness, pursuit of power, and keeping score, all at the expense of others. Their torment is self-inflicted at the hands of their own selfishness.

Second, this parable warns against the dangers of pursuing money over Yahweh and of ignoring His Scriptures and His prophets. The rich man was not excluded from heaven because he was rich but rather because he valued his wealth so much and became callused to the needs of others, which wealth often causes. The things our culture teaches us to take pride in may actually blind us to our need for grace.

Third, the parable shows that Yahweh has not left humanity without a witness; He has for many thousands of years pursued humanity and given witness to His love for us, our need for

repentance, and the way to come into a saving relationship with Him through the Word and the prophets. And now humanity also has Jesus, His death and resurrection, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. If all this was not already enough, why would anyone think that something more after death and in hell would be the missing piece to convince the unbeliever?

“These verses should warn us against putting too much hope in signs and wonders as what will persuade people to believe in Jesus. The Word of God is a more convincing witness to Him than any miracle. This does not mean that miracles are valueless. God used them to corroborate the testimony of Scripture in the past, and He may do so occasionally today, but Scripture is the Holy Spirit’s primary tool in bringing people to repentance (cf. John 16:7-15).”⁷⁰

17:1-4 Jesus was speaking against false teachers who would come into the community of believers and seek to lead them astray; they are in contrast to “these little ones,” which refers to His chosen. A millstone was a circular stone used for grinding grain. It would be better for the false teachers themselves to die than to lead others astray. The “woe” is a sign of condemnation, and the gruesome description of their death shows how serious of an offense Jesus took this act to be.

Jesus was showing them the importance of looking out for each other and sharing in each other’s commitments to pursue righteousness. They were to rebuke each other quickly to keep sin from going on too long in the community and destroying it. Yet they were also to be quick to forgive, for the point is the restoration of people for the pursuit of righteousness. There should be no end to forgiveness, and there is no room for grudges.

17:5-6 Jesus did not mean that they would literally be able to go out and transplant trees into the sea; rather, this was a hyperbolic statement that nothing is impossible for those who have faith in Yahweh. The issue is not about how much faith someone has but about the presence of faith and how it is applied.

17:7-10 Jesus gave an illustration of a person who had a servant. This illustration was not concerned with economic level but with one’s sense of duty, and it was not about inherent wealth but about function. The point is that obedience will not be accepted if done in pursuit of merit; rather, it must be from a sense of duty. The servant cannot choose what to obey, for they have given themselves to their master. The stress is on the disciple’s humble self-esteem and desire to serve rather than the desire to be praised for their behavior. This does not mean Yahweh will not bless His disciples or exalt them; it only means this should not be their motive. Obedience is not to be given in order to gain honor or to receive a reward.

⁷⁰ Thomas L. Constable. *Notes on Luke*, p. 199.

H. Faithfulness in Looking for the King and the Kingdom (17:11–18:30)

In this section Jesus develops more of what the Kingdom of Yahweh is like, what it means to enter it, and what it means to live in it. Here He continues to shatter preconceived ideas of the Kingdom of Yahweh and when and how it will come.

17:11-19 Jesus healed ten men with leprosy and then sent them on their way to be inspected by the priests. One of them came back and praised Jesus for healing him. This point is that gratitude is a necessary and appropriate response to Yahweh's involvement in one's life. It shows the attitude the disciples were to have when they encountered Yahweh. It also shows how far away the Jews were from this attitude despite the fact that they were the ones who should understand it the best.

17:20-21 The Pharisees' question was wrong because it assumed that Yahweh's reign is exclusively future, and they were hoping to recognize the coming of the Kingdom through scientific observation and assessment. This is not because the coming Kingdom is without evidence, but rather the evidence is not self-interpreting and is often misinterpreted or overlooked. It cannot be localized by being associated with a particular nation (Acts. 1:6-8).⁷¹ The Pharisees had failed to see the many signs that had already come and were so undeniable. Jesus told them to not look for the Kingdom of Yahweh in some spectacular sense, for it had already come. Jesus was referring to himself, for He is the fulfillment of the expectation of the Kingdom. The Pharisees' failing to understand this meant they did not recognize nor respond to Yahweh's Kingdom. The phrase "in you" (NIV) should instead be translated "in your midst," for Jesus would never have told the hostile Pharisees that the Kingdom was inside them since they were seen as unbelievers.

17:22-37 The reference to the Son of Man's coming pertains to Jesus' coming in power and setting up His reign on earth in the way they anticipated it (Dan. 7:13-14). When the Kingdom of Yahweh does come in its fullness, they will not need to look for it or for signs of it because it will be so obvious when it happens that no one will question or wonder. Just as lightning is so bright that it fills the whole sky, so will be His coming. However, the Son of Man must first suffer on the cross, for only then can He establish His kingdom with certainty that it will last forever because it will be filled with redeemed people rather than sinners.

Jesus' reference to Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah makes the point that failure to respond to Jesus leaves one exposed to the judgment of Yahweh. The illustrations show that people were unconcerned about Yahweh and so were unprepared for His coming and wrath. Lot's wife is an example of an unbeliever who desired the possessions of the world more than Yahweh even in the face of His judgment. What is at stake is not whether someone is involved in the routine of life but rather if they are single-minded on the purpose of Yahweh.

Jesus' reference to people being taken away does not refer to the rapture of the believers but to people being taken away in judgment. The whole context is about people being taken away in judgment, so it would not make sense to switch to believers being supernaturally taken away. Likewise, there is nothing in the context that suggests end-of-the-world supernatural events, let alone anything about a rapture.

Jesus' reference to the dead body and vultures shows that judgment will be universal and permanent. By the time people are aware, it will be too late because death will already have

⁷¹ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 629.

come, and separation from Yahweh cannot be undone. Jesus was not concerned with giving signs and clues for people to know or be ready for the day He would return; He was most concerned with devotion to Yahweh and righteous behavior.

18:1-8 Jesus told the parable of the persistent widow in order to teach the disciples to be persistent and patient with Yahweh when seeking out justice; though it may not come as quickly as one desires, He will bring it. The contrast was between the judge who did not care about justice yet gave it because the woman was annoying and Yahweh who loves us and does care about justice. Thus, how much more will Yahweh give justice willingly to the believers? The parable does not promote a particular way of praying or praying the same thing over and over; rather, prayer is a metonym for confidence and openness before a gracious God.

18:9-14 The point of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is that a superior, condescending attitude makes it difficult to serve others and is not pleasing to Yahweh. Yahweh desires humility and a loving, servant heart toward Him and others. It is one's heart, not accomplishments, that matters to Yahweh. The Pharisee may look better on the outside with his socially acceptable behavior, but he was not moving toward Yahweh. The tax collector may have looked worse because of his behavior, but he sought Yahweh and was moving toward Him. He understood who he was in light of who Yahweh is. Luke's purpose was not to condemn any particular group but to warn against a particular way of conducting oneself in light of the present and impending reign of God.

“Many modern Christians have heard this parable so often that we immediately associate Pharisees with self-righteous hypocrisy and tax collectors with humble piety. In Jesus' day the Jews viewed them differently. It was the Pharisees who were the models of righteous behavior and the tax collectors who epitomized sinfulness. Therefore this parable undoubtedly had a great impact on the disciples.”⁷²

18:15-17 Children were considered inferior and were servants to wash the feet of others. They were not worth a person's time until they became of age. Receiving little children was equivalent to granting them hospitality in washing their feet or anointing their head, things normally reserved for those of equal or greater status. Jesus showed that children are valued, and He made the point that what Yahweh desires are a simple childlike trust and dependence.

18:18-30 This question is nearly identical to that of the legal expert in Luke 10:25. The man was using “Good teacher” as a word game of status. Jesus' rejection of the title had to do more with the motive with which it was given than with denying His own deity, since it was given out of flattery. Jesus was basically saying that if you want to follow the one who is “good,” then follow Yahweh (1 Chr. 16:34; 2 Chr. 5:13; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 53:6; 72:1) and show respect to His teacher by obeying His teachings; no one is inherently good in Yahweh's eyes.

Jesus cited commandments 7, 6, 8, 9, and 5 (Ex. 20:12-16) of the Ten Commandments. Perhaps Jesus quoted only these because they were the ones the man struggled with the most in the truest sense of the commandments. Or perhaps by referring to the few He implied the whole.

Jesus hit him where it hurt the most by telling him to sell everything and give the proceeds to the poor. The selling of his property was not what was necessary to gain eternal life, for this implies that one can earn salvation. Nor is this a command for *all* people who follow Jesus, for in Luke 16:9-13 Jesus commanded one to use their wealth to win friends, and in Luke 5:29 and 19:8 Levi

⁷² Thomas L. Constable. *Notes on Luke*, p. 212.

and Zacchaeus were not required to give away all they owned, yet they were generous to the poor. For this man, money came before Yahweh, and the selling of his possessions was intended to force the ruler to humbly depend on Yahweh only. How this is done may differ from person to person, but what is true of all people is making Yahweh the primary focus. The ruler's lack of response was an indication of where his heart was and that in his mind Jesus was not good enough to cause him to change.

The wealth of the rich is a distraction to their understanding their need for Yahweh and their dependence on Him for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The reference to the needle and the camel is a hyperbolic statement to show the difficulty that wealth poses to humans. The Jews saw wealth as a blessing from Yahweh for being righteous. In other words, if those who are blessed are excluded, then who can get in? On their own, it is impossible for them to enter, yet with Yahweh drawing them in, it is possible.

“The religious leaders have repeatedly been presented as people who exalt themselves (11:43; 14:7-11; 16:15; 18:9-14) and as greedy rich people who neglect the poor (11:39-41; 14:12-14; 16:14; 19-31). However, Jesus has not given up all hope that some of these people will change. This is apparent in the scene in 18:18-27.”⁷³

Jesus' point is that those who have given up everything will be rewarded with far greater and longer-lasting wealth than anything in this life could offer. The wealth here is more spiritual and Heaven oriented than it is physical or earthly. One must enter the Kingdom of Yahweh now if they are to inherit life in the future consummation of the Kingdom.

⁷³ Robert C. Tannehill. *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, p. 1:187.

I. Messianic Power and Warning of Responsibility (18:31–19:48)

In this section Jesus finally arrives at Jerusalem and enters the city and the temple. Here the people receive Him as their king who has come to conquer Rome. They do not understand that He has come to die in order to conquer sin.

18:31-34 Although Jesus was telling the disciples in very clear and blatant words what was going to happen, they did not understand what He was talking about because it was hidden from them. The significance is Jesus was very aware of what was going to happen to Him, with such details that He would not have been able to orchestrate it Himself if He were not God.

18:35-43 This healing is here to show the contrast between the crowd and the blind man. The blind man saw Jesus as the son of David and understood what Luke 7:22-23 affirms. Yet after all this time and all of Jesus' healings and teachings, the people still did not get what He was about, and they were still amazed by the healing of the blind man.

19:1-10 Zacchaeus may have not actually been a short person, as has commonly been understood. The meaning of the Greek word translated "short" is a difficult word to translate and could mean young of age.⁷⁴ The text says he climbed a tree because of the crowds, not because he was short. Anyone of average height would not have been able to see Jesus through the crowds. The point is that Zacchaeus was willing to do whatever it took to see Jesus. And because of this faith Jesus noticed him. When Jesus commanded him to come down and to host a party, he instantly obeyed. Almsgiving was associated with including people in your family circle, not with reciprocation. Zacchaeus did not distribute his wealth to gain status or honor; rather, he was a social outcast who put his possessions in the service of the needy and justice. Salvation is the restoration the sinner and outcast to the community of Yahweh's people.

In Luke 18:22 Jesus had just commanded the rich ruler to sell all his possessions in order to follow Jesus. Yet we also see in Luke 16:9-13 Jesus commanding His followers to use their wealth to win friends. Jesus' point is not that wealth is wrong but what it should be used for when it is available. This point is furthered by the fact that this passage is parallel to Luke 5:29, where Levi, a rich tax collector, did not give away all his money upon following Jesus but used it directly to help people. The placement of this story is significant in that after all of Jesus' time among them, they still did not understand that the sinners were the very ones He had come for; He was not about rejecting people like the Pharisees did.

19:11-27 One mina was about three months' wages. Jesus told the parable to inform the crowd that the Kingdom of Yahweh in its fulfillment would not arrive as quickly as they assumed; therefore, they must be diligent and obedient until it came so that Yahweh would be pleased with them and would reward them in the Kingdom. Those who used their talents in obedience to Yahweh in this earthly life would be given even greater talents and responsibilities in the Kingdom. Those who did not, because they had a poor understanding of Yahweh, would lose everything.

The irony of the third man's thinking was that the king's response to the first two servants had already proven his fears about the king to be false. This shows that he did not truly know the king. Likewise, the king showed that if the man truly believed these things about him, then he should have made at least some effort to do something beneficial. The third slave is portrayed as one who called himself a follower of Jesus, but in reality, he would not inherit eternal life

⁷⁴ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 669.

because of his lack of knowledge of Yahweh and his consequent inability to be obedient. Several points speak to this view. First, Matthew's account of this parable (25:14-30) makes clear reference to final judgment: "throw that worthless slave into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Likewise, Luke mentions the slaughtering of the enemies. Second, the slave ends up with nothing, and what he thought he had, he never did. Luke 19:26 is worded like Luke 8:18, which states that those who refuse the light lose the light they thought they had. Third, in Luke 19:22 the slave is called evil, which connects him to the enemies of Yahweh, mentioned in Luke 19:27, which is a strong remark for final judgment. Fourth, the slave is called "the other one," denoting him as being in a separate class from the other two and portraying him as the odd man out, which shows up frequently in Jesus' parables (Matt. 13:29-30, 41, 49-50; 18:32-34; 22:11-13; 25:41; Luke 12:46).

19:28-40 Luke goes into detail about the obtaining of the colt in order to show Jesus' precise foreknowledge and understanding of every detail. Jesus as Lord superseded the rights of the owner of the colt just like the requirements of the king would supersede that of his subjects. The fact that the disciples found everything just as He told them emphasizes His prophetic omniscience without making prior arrangements. The image of Jesus riding a wild donkey would not be one of humbleness but of a royal and exalted king riding into his kingdom. This is reminiscent of David placing his son Solomon on a mule to take him to the Gihon spring to be anointed as King over Israel (1 Kgs. 1:32-40). This also would be a fulfillment of Gen. 49:8-12 and Zech. 9:9. In fact, the people responded by praising Jesus and declaring Him king as he entered the city, and never once did Jesus correct them on their declaration (Matt. 21:1-11).

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and then the temple (Luke 19:45-48) is a fulfillment of Ezek. 40-47. In Ezek. 10 Ezekiel saw the Glory of Yahweh departing the temple and Jerusalem eastward because of Judah's idolatry and lack of justice. This was followed by the destruction of the city and temple at the hands of the coming Babylonians. In Ezek. 40-47 Ezekiel had a vision of the temple/city rebuilt with multiple gates, the prince of Yahweh sitting in the gate (Ezek. 44:1-3), a river flowing out of the southern side of the temple (Ezek. 47:1-12), and the Glory of Yahweh returning to the temple from the east (Ezek. 43:1-12). Yet when the Jews returned to Judah after the exile and rebuilt the temple, the Glory of Yahweh did not return, nor had it ever returned (Ezra 3:7-13; 6:13-18). In Luke 9:28-36 Jesus revealed Himself to be the Glory of Yahweh and then headed toward Jerusalem. Now He entered Jerusalem and then the temple, coming from the east (Luke 19:28-48). In John 2:13-22 Jesus referred to the temple as His father's house and then as His body and said that it would be torn down and rebuilt in three days, referring to His body in His death and resurrection. Jesus was now in the temple calling it "my house" (Luke 19:46). Jesus was showing that He is the rebuilt temple of Ezekiel's vision and the return of the Glory of Yahweh. This will be further seen in His crucifixion.

The Pharisees demanded that Jesus' disciples be rebuked for allowing the declaration of Jesus' kingdom. Jesus told them that even creation recognized that He was king, even if they did not, and that creation would sing His praise if humans did not. Jesus then wept for the city of Jerusalem because He knew a day was coming when, because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus, the Romans would attack the city and destroy the temple (70 AD). What is odd about this moment is that it followed His triumphal entry, where it seemed everyone was accepting Him. This shows that He knew their hearts and that their joy was because of who they thought He was—not who He truly was and what He had come to do. He knew that soon they would all abandon Him,

when they perceived Him to be a failure in conquest against the Romans rather than their deliverer from sin through His death.

The day for peace includes both the king who establishes and maintains peace and the response of the people in welcoming the king. Jesus anticipated His rejection and thus refused to bring peace. Thus divine visitation would not be one of redemption but of judgment (Luke 10:8-15; Isa. 29:3; 37:33; Jer. 6:6, 15; 10:15; 52:4-5; Ezek. 4:1-3; 21:22). This is the point of no return. “The days will come upon you” is borrowed from the prophets (Isa. 39:6; Hos. 9:7; Amos 4:2; Zech. 14:1).

19:45-48 Jesus’ entry into the temple has in view the court of the Gentiles. Here worshipers bought animal sacrifices from the merchants. What upset Jesus was that the merchants charged a large fee for the animals and often cheated the people—actions supported by the Sanhedrin. Beyond this they were probably cheating the people spiritually by making it difficult if not impossible to come and know Yahweh (Isa. 2:2-4).

The rationale for Jesus’ actions comes from Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11—a mixed citation that juxtaposes two contradictory ways of construing the temple: what it should be, a house of prayer, and what it actually was, a den of thieves. Had the temple been used as a genuine house of prayer, would Jerusalem have failed to recognize the time of Yahweh’s visitation?

In Matt. 21:18-22 this scene is followed by Jesus cursing a fig tree that was not producing fruit. This alludes back to Luke 13:6-9, where Jesus told a parable of a fig tree not producing fruit and warned that if it continued to be unproductive, it would be cut down and replaced with other trees (Gentiles). The fig tree was symbolic of Israel; they now faced the judgment of Yahweh.

IV. The Innocent One Slain and Raised in Jerusalem (20:1–24:53)

In this final division Jesus' ministry comes to its culmination as He moves into the temple and faces the power of the priesthood head on. The question centers on who has legitimate authority to rule over Yahweh's people, to interpret Scripture, and to determine appropriate behavior. Thus Jesus' first order of business was to reclaim the temple for its legitimate use of pure worship to Yahweh and to reveal Yahweh to the people concerning His purpose for Israel as fulfilled in Jesus when He becomes the true temple through His death and resurrection. It was time for all revelation and worship to be centralized in the Son of God as the true temple, which means the physical temple and its leadership had to be brought to an end and transferred to Jesus the Messianic King. The hostility arises when the Jerusalem leadership, whose authority is tied to the temple, refuses to embrace Jesus' understanding of the function of the temple. Though they will fail miserably to undermine Jesus' authority and understanding of Yahweh and His will, Jesus will allow them to kill Him in order to fulfill the purpose of Yahweh and rebuild the temple.

A. The Conflict with the Jerusalem Leadership (20:1–21:4)

In this section Luke has two major focuses. First is to certify that Jesus' authority comes from Yahweh; therefore, He is able to faithfully interpret the will of Yahweh. Second is to show the public that the Jerusalem leaders did not enjoy the divine sanction of Yahweh, evidenced by their using the temple to give themselves power and privilege over the people.⁷⁵ Throughout His ministry Jesus has been involved in a war of interpretation, and now, after Jesus has upset the normal religious atmosphere of the temple, the religious leaders begin to question Jesus on His authority for doing so. Jesus engages in self-interpretation, which validates His authority. Jesus' answers to their questions defeat their intentions, and then He responds by stumping them with His own question and denounces them for not aligning their lives to the purpose of Yahweh.

20:1-8 Jesus' deflecting the question from the chief priests and experts in the Law was not because He was trying to avoid it; rather, He asked them a question in order to show the leaders' evasion of the clear answer of who Jesus is. In this way Jesus had trapped them by revealing that they cared more about public opinion than they did about the truth. Jesus' question is crucial because John pointed to the Messiah (who Jesus claimed to be), John verified Jesus as Messiah, and Jesus endorsed John's ministry by receiving his baptism. The leaders' uncertainty was less than satisfactory since they were supposed to be leading the nation. Ironically, they would be very outspoken about who they viewed Jesus to be during His trials, which they would control.

20:9-19 Jesus told a parable that symbolized Yahweh sending His prophets and then His Son to be king over the land. However, those who worked the land (the Jews) decided to kill them all off thinking that they would inherit the land. Perhaps they thought that with no heir, the land would revert to the workers upon the master's death. Their flawed logic shows the absurdity of the Pharisees' thinking and their desire to reject Jesus and His ministry. Because of their actions, the land (inheritance) would be taken away and given to the Gentiles. The parable is an allusion to Isaiah 5. However, in Isaiah 5 the owner of the vineyard pronounces judgment on the vineyard rather than on the tenants.

The quotation in Luke 20:17 comes from Ps. 118:22-23. The stone imagery refers to a foundation stone. Stumbling over one would be very difficult since they were larger than a man

⁷⁵ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 731.

and several tons in weight. This imagery in reference to Jesus is common in the Second Testament (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:6-8; Eph. 2:20). The irony in using Ps. 118:22-23 here is that in the First Testament, Israel was the one rejected by the Gentiles, but here, it was Jesus who was rejected by Israel. Thus Jesus moved the nation of Israel from being on the side of Yahweh to standing against Him.

20:20-26 The tax was relatively insignificant, one denarius, which was a day's wage for the average adult male. For the poor it was still a lot of money. The tax was a reminder of the subjugation of the Jewish people to the authority of the Roman Empire. Failure to pay was equivalent to rejecting Roman authority and rule. The denarius bore the image of Tiberius and the inscription "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus." On the reverse side, his mother Livia is portrayed as an incarnation of the goddess of peace, along with the inscription "high priest."⁷⁶

The spies had hoped that Jesus would attack the leadership and sovereignty of Rome in the same way He had the leaders of Israel. If Jesus told them *not* to pay taxes, then they could present Him to Rome as a traitor; if He told them they *should* pay taxes, then they could show the people that He supported Caesar over Yahweh.

Jesus was not a nationalist, nor was He so senseless as to engage in a trap designed to destroy Him. Jesus responded with a "both" answer. To "give" (NET, NIV) or "render" (NASB, KJV) comes from the Greek word *apodidomi*, meaning to pay back a debt. The coins had the image of Caesar on them, and so they should be given back to Caesar, who minted them and provided for the people in many ways. Jesus acknowledged the genuine existence of civic debt and the need to pay it back. This recognizes the authority of civil government as well as Yahweh's providence in its existence and authority. Similarly, humans were created with the image of God on them, and thus they were to give their lives to Yahweh (Luke 9:23) and expand the Garden/Kingdom of Yahweh in loving obedience to Him. Jesus avoided the empty debate and addressed the real issue of the matter: they were to give to Caesar and to Yahweh what belonged to each.

20:27:40 The Sadducees believed in the authority of only the Torah and denied the existence of angels, the afterlife, and a resurrection. So the Sadducees asked Jesus a question that would demonstrate the absurdity of a belief in the afterlife. The Sadducees' question is on the issue of Levirate marriage, which was designed to continue the name of a man who died childless (Deut. 25:5; Ruth 4:1-12). If a man died with no children, then his wife was to marry his brother in order to produce an heir for him. The first son of the brother would receive the inheritance of the woman's first husband. By asking this question, the Sadducees used the complexities of Levirate marriage in the afterlife to show the absurdity of an afterlife hope. The Sadducees believed that there is the persistence of life through one's descendants. It was believed that "immortality through posterity" was upheld by Moses, which would then render the idea of resurrection unnecessary, and so the Torah would exclude belief in the afterlife. The real issue is who has the authority to interpret Scripture faithfully. In other words, who holds to the true meaning of the teachings of Moses, the greatest prophets ever?

Jesus turns the question from obedience to Moses to one of understanding Moses. Who interprets Moses (Scriptures) faithfully? For Jesus, the Scriptures are not self-interpreting but must be read

⁷⁶ See Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 1612.

from the right perspective and authority.⁷⁷ In His first response, Jesus answered by saying that not everyone qualifies for the afterlife; some will be excluded from the blessings of heaven. Second, people will not get married in the afterlife, since there is no longer death in the afterlife. Absent the reality of death, the need for a levirate marriage is no longer present. These points nullify the Sadducees' question about the spouses.⁷⁸ By referring to the angels, Jesus struck another doctrinal issue that they denied.

In His second response, Jesus asked them a question about the reality of the resurrection from the Torah (Ex. 3:6), which contains the only books they recognized as scripture. If Yahweh referred to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (who were dead at that time), would that make Him a God of dead people? Since Yahweh is the God of the living, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must be in the afterlife. Therefore, Yahweh and Moses both embraced the idea of resurrection. His phrasing is reminiscent of 4 Macc. 7:19; 16:25, which affirm that these people are given life by Yahweh.

20:41-44 In their failure to stump and trap Jesus, He responded with His own question for them. Jesus quoted Ps. 110:1 in order to demonstrate from Scripture that the Messiah was not to be just a biological son of King David but was to be greater than David, which would make Him God. Ps. 110 is about the coronation of a king over Israel. David is speaking and says that “the Lord said to my lord.” In the Hebrew, the first “Lord” is the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, and the second “lord” is the Hebrew word *adonai*, which means “sir, master.” David states that Yahweh is making the second lord—the lord over David—king over Israel, and he acknowledges that both of these lords are greater than he. But if David is king over Israel, then there is no greater earthly king, and Yahweh is the only one who is greater than he. So how can David have two lords over him? Some teachers of the Law taught that the second lord was Solomon, since his kingdom was greater than David's. However, in Jewish culture the son is never greater than the father, and the father would never refer to his son as lord. Jesus asked them who this second lord is if only Yahweh is greater than David in authority over Israel. They could not respond, and so Jesus did not tell them the answer. The point Jesus was making is that the second lord is Himself and that, as David's biological descendant, He was greater than David because he was preexistent before David, making Him God. Jesus gave this answer to the priest at His trial in Luke 22:69.

20:45-47 Jesus warned that the pride of the religious leaders was not something to respect or seek, and they were not worthy of emulation. They were arrogant as they paraded around in their robes, which was the outer garment signifying a person's status. They took from the group in most need and left them devastated. This went contrary to the desire, love, ministry, and calling of Jesus.

21:1-4 Jesus gave a counterexample of a widow who had nothing and was being robbed by the religious leaders, yet she gave everything she had to Yahweh. Her gift was two lepta, which was worth one-half of a quadrans or 1/128 of a denarius—worth about six minutes of an average daily wage. In comparison, she had given far more to Yahweh than the religious leaders had because it came from the wealth of her heart. Thus, she was in line with the desire, love, ministry, and calling of Jesus.

⁷⁷ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 718.

⁷⁸ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 721.

B. Jerusalem's Destruction and the End (21:5-38)

In this section Jesus warns that His coming is not the end of the domination of the Gentiles like they expected but rather the end of Jerusalem at the hands of the Gentiles. Israel had chosen the physical temple over Jesus as the true temple, and so in Yahweh's judgment both temples would be destroyed; only Jesus as the temple would be rebuilt—in His resurrection. Jesus denies that the end would come immediately after the fall of Jerusalem but tells them things would instead get worse until the Kingdom of Yahweh came in its fullness. Until then His followers were not to follow those making false claims about the end and His coming, but they were also not to respond in fear. They were instead to watch. The focus is on readiness.

21:5-9 The Jews were admiring the splendor of the temple, created by human hands, not in the glory of Yahweh who was to be worshiped in the temple. Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that would happen in 70 AD as a result of Israel's rejection of Him as Messiah. The people asked when this would happen. Jesus responded with the phrase "but the end will not come at once," showing that these signs had more to do with preparation than with knowing the actual time. Jesus did not give them the answer they wanted but went on to describe all the things that would happen until the end came.

21:10-19 Jesus stated that people would come and claim to be the Messiah or say the time is near, that wars would be numerous, that there would be earthquakes, famines, plagues, and other terrors, and signs in the sky. They were to focus on Him, however, and not all the things that were happening in the world. In all of this, the nations' governments would seize the followers of Jesus and persecute them. They were not to be afraid but see it as a chance to witness to who Jesus is and to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness, not the end of everything. They were not to trust in themselves; rather, He would give them the words to say. The world and even their families would hate them, but He would take care of them. Terror is an inappropriate response, because however chaotic the end is, it is the divine will of Yahweh, and He will use all of it to fulfill His purpose.

"Saving faith does not renounce Jesus; it holds onto him even in the face of persecution. To cease to trust in Jesus is to never have trusted him. Judas pictures one who failed. Peter pictures one who lapsed but whose commitment was real. The spiritual force of this verse reinforces that of 21:18. To cling to Jesus is to have life—even in the face of death."⁷⁹

21:20-24 Jesus then returned to the destruction of Jerusalem and commanded His disciples to flee to the mountains when that day came because it would be a day of total destruction that no one would survive. Israel would be trampled by the Gentiles until the "times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," which is a general way to describe the current of Yahweh's plan, when the Gentiles would be dominant in the world.

On the one hand, in the First Testament the day of vengeance against unfaithful Israel anticipated the vindication of God in which Israel would be restored. The times of the Gentiles would be a time during which God would temporarily use the Gentiles until Israel was restored as the agent of God. On the other hand, Luke 21:25 does not consider the place of Israel in God's plan but rather to the end time, which is marked by the coming of the Son of Man. There is no reference to restoration.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 1674.

⁸⁰ Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 739.

21:25-28 In the midst of this chaos, the Son of Man would come arriving on a cloud with power and great glory (Dan. 7:13-14). The only thing that was above the clouds were the gods. Jesus was proclaiming Himself as God, who would come in the future to establish His reign over earth, bring an end to evil, corruption, and rebellion in the world, and bring the redemption of His covenant people. Even though Jesus was talking about His actual return, these events were not a sign of His return (Luke 21:8-11). Thus it is difficult to sort out an actual sign that signifies how soon His return will be. What makes it more difficult is that Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as well as the events that would lead up to His return.

21:29-38 The fig tree is totally bare in the winter, so when it begins to show shoots and leaves, it is the sign of summer, and it is totally obvious. Thus all these signs will signify the coming of the Son of Man. Jesus then said, “This generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” There are several views on who “this generation” is. Some interpret it as either the generation to whom Jesus was speaking or the one to whom Luke was writing. However, both of these views would make Jesus wrong since His return did not happen in their lifetime. Some suggest that Jesus was referring only to the events of 70 AD as the beginning of all the other signs. However, the context implies that the fulfillment of Yahweh’s kingdom is in view in “these things,” and so this would also make Jesus wrong. Others argue that “this generation” refers to this *type* of generation, meaning the Jews will not pass away. The problem here is that the word *genea* (“generation”) does not mean an ethnicity or a general type when used in isolation.

Another view is that “this generation” refers to the generation that will be alive when the signs begin and that they will not pass away until the fulfillment of the kingdom of Yahweh, implying that the end will not drag on for generation after generation. This seems the most likely view. The main objection is that *genea* usually refers to the present generation, rather than a later one. However, this remark does not come until after His comment about the nearness of the end *to certain signs*.⁸¹ Thus in Luke, “this generation” refers to the people who are resistant to the purpose of Yahweh (Luke 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32; 11:50-51; 17:25; 21:32).⁸²

Jesus concludes by calling His followers to be more concerned about their obedience and diligence to Him so that He is honored when He returns. Jesus called the believers to a life of prayer that would enable them to remain obedient up to and through this time.

⁸¹ See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, pp. 1688–1692 for further discussion.

⁸² Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 742.

C. Betrayal and Farewell (22:1-38)

In this section Jesus connects the Passover with Himself and the fact that He had on numerous times said He had to die in order to redeem the world. His death and resurrection were the inauguration of a New Covenant and age about which all prophets had spoken. This leads to His betrayal and arrest that begin to rapidly speed things up to His death.

22:1-6 The Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover were two different festivals according to Lev. 23:4-8. Passover was on the fourteenth of Nissan, and Unleavened Bread was a seven-day festival that began the day after Passover. By the time of Jesus, there were too many Jews who came to Jerusalem for Passover to be able to do all the animal sacrifices in one day. So Passover and Unleavened Bread were merged together as different families made sacrifices and celebrated the Passover on different days throughout the week. This is why it was not odd for Jesus to celebrate the Passover meal with His disciples the day before the actual Passover—and He would be the Passover sacrifice on the fourteenth of Nissan.

During the time of celebrating Passover, the redemption of Israel from Egypt, Satan and the Jewish leaders were seeking to kill Jesus. Satan thought He was thwarting the plans of Yahweh and the Jewish leaders believed they were eliminating an enemy of Yahweh; neither realized they were fulfilling Yahweh's plan to redeem the world in fulfillment of prophecy. In the minds of the Jewish leadership, this was their chance to seize Jesus, when the crowds were not present, so that they could spin their own false accusations and propaganda to the people as they brought Jesus out for public execution.

Satan entered Judas, one of Jesus' own followers, in order to kill Jesus. That Judas was "of the devil" (John 6:70) plus his betrayal revealed his true character and showed that just because someone stands close to Jesus or knows Him does not guarantee spiritual life if that person's heart is not allied with Yahweh.

22:7-20 Jesus' instructions and the fact that the disciples found things exactly the way Jesus said showed His knowledge of future events. Jesus and the disciples reclined at a Roman triclinium, which was a low rectangular table. On three sides were pillow-like couches for reclining, with the fourth side left open for servants to bring the food to the table. The host would sit at the head of the table, with the guests on each side of him and down the left and right sides. They reclined on their left side, supporting their head on their left elbow, leaving their right hand free to take the food. If they wanted to talk to the person to the left of themselves, they would have to lean back into their chest to speak. They would then eat from shared dishes.



At a Passover meal, the head of the family pronounces a blessing over the first cup (the cup of sanctification), then it is shared, and the herbs are dipped in salt water and eaten. The father then tells the story of the exodus and delivers an exposition on Deut. 26:5-11, and Psalms 113–114 (Hallel) are sung. Then the second cup (the cup of judgment) is drunk. The head of the family blesses the bread, breaks it, and hands it to the others. The meal is eaten, and the unleavened

bread is broken and eaten. Then the last two cups (the cups of redemption and the kingdom) are drunk, and Psalms 115–118 are sung.

It was after the first two cups had been drunk and at the time of the meal that Jesus told His disciples He would suffer and die after this meal, not eating of the meal again until it was completely fulfilled in the kingdom; this referred to His second coming, when He would eat the Passover meal with them again (Luke 21:18). On the one hand, Jesus' statement that He would eat the Passover meal again one day underscored Jesus' conviction that death is not the last word, for He anticipated a renewal of fellowship around the table. On the other hand, the Passover had a focus on past, present, and future, so that the feast anticipated a second exodus of eschatological deliverance.⁸³

At the Passover meal, the Jews would take the bread and pass it around. The bread Jesus took represented the bread Yahweh had provided for Israel to keep them alive physically in the wilderness. Jesus did this to represent symbolically that His body would be broken for them to provide them spiritual life. The Greek verb “*is my body*” indicates representation, not identification.⁸⁴

Wine represents joy and the abundance of life, which is intrinsically tied with the coming of the Messianic King in Gen. 49:8-12. The symbol of wine is also connected to the sign of the New Covenant, prophesied in Jer. 31:31-34. In Jer. 31:12 Yahweh declared that in the day that Yahweh restored His people to the Promised Land there would be an abundance of grain, wine, and olive oil in the land, which would be followed by the cutting of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Likewise, Joel 2:19, 24 described an abundance of grain, wine, and olive oil in the land, followed by the coming of the New Covenant and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the covenant people of Yahweh (Joel 2:28-32).

But it was not intrinsically connected to the sacrificial blood for the cleansing and atonement of sin like Jesus was doing here. The first miracle Jesus performed was the turning of water into wine, which every Jew would have seen as a sign, according to Gen. 49:8-12, that the Messiah had arrived. The water that Jews used was the ceremonial water used for the cleansing of sins, which was not allowed for common use. Thus, Jesus connected the sign of the Messianic King (wine) to the cleansing of sins (the ceremonial washing water). Now Jesus had connected both the wine, the symbol of the Messianic King, and the cleansing of sin to His own blood, which would be poured out as from the sacrificial lamb for the cleansing of their sins. Jesus is the lion and the lamb (Rev. 5:5-10), the king and the high priest of Israel, which had never been connected in any Israelite ruler except for in the prophecies of the Messiah (Ps. 110; Zech. 3:8; 4:1-14; 6:9-15).

Jesus declared that the bread and wine were the sign of the New Covenant, which would replace the Mosaic Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8-9). This covenant would actually do away with sins completely, and the Law/Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32; Ezek. 11:17-21) would indwell the covenant people of Yahweh, allowing them to have an intimate relationship with Yahweh and giving them the desire and ability to obey Yahweh out of love. This New Covenant, made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus, would unconditionally and completely atone for the sins of

⁸³ See Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 759.

⁸⁴ See Ellis. 1974: p. 256; BAGD pp. 223–224. See also Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, pp. 1724–1725.

the covenant people of Yahweh so they could enter into the presence of Yahweh without sin and intimately dwell with Yahweh for all eternity.

22:21-30 Jesus made it clear that He knew Judas was going to betray Him, yet the disciples were obviously confused. Jesus knew that Yahweh's plan was at work and that these events were destined. Likewise, the betrayer was responsible for his actions and was subject to Yahweh's wrath.

The disciples, as usual, began to argue over who would be the greatest in the kingdom that Jesus was going to usher in. Jesus responded by comparing their behavior to that of the Gentiles, who lord over people through intimidation. He then told them that Yahweh desires behavior opposite of what they had just demonstrated. Yahweh desires a servant's heart, not an attitude of superiority. But He then encouraged them that they did belong to Him because they had received Him and remained with Him through many trials.

22:31-38 Jesus also declared that He knew Peter was going to betray Him and gave him the sign of the rooster crowing three times. Satan was working in all the lives of the disciples to try to destroy them. The only thing that was protecting Peter and stopped Satan from succeeding was that Jesus had interceded for him.

Jesus told them that things were about to get really rough for them. Before, He had sent them out with nothing because He was with them, but now He was going to be taken away from them, and they needed to be prepared for what was going to happen. Jesus did not believe that a money bag would help them; rather, it was a metaphor for being prepared for what was coming. Jesus also told them to get a sword, a metaphor for the intensity of the spiritual warfare that was coming. This is clear in the fact that they told Him they had two swords and He responded that that was enough. Two swords were clearly not enough, however, for the overthrow of Rome to which they thought He was referring. It is more likely He was saying they did not understand anything He was trying to tell them.

Jesus then quoted Isa. 53:12, making it clear that He was the suffering servant who had to die for Israel and not the warrior king who would conquer Rome. He had to first conquer sin, death, and the grave before He could conquer the evil governments of the world.

D. Trials and Death of Jesus (22:39–23:56)

In this section the Jewish religious leadership reveal themselves as truly being the enemies of Yahweh as they kill His Son in an effort to secure their power, which Yahweh had threatened. Yet Yahweh uses this to fulfill His plan for His Son to die for the sins and redemption of the world. This will then lead to their loss of power as it is transferred to those who are in Jesus and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

22:39-46 Jesus knew that the only thing that would get Him through what was coming was praying with Yahweh. He also encouraged His disciples to do so, but they were more overcome by sleep than the realization of what was about to happen. The “cup” to which Jesus referred was the cup of Yahweh’s wrath that would be poured out on mankind, which Jesus was now going to take on their behalf (Ps. 11:6; 75:8-9; Isa. 51:17, 19, 22). This cup entails death and suffering.

The humanity of Jesus in His fear of suffering and dying is clearly portrayed. Though Jesus is God and was committed to the plan of the Father, He was also human and did not want to suffer. As a Jew under Roman rule, He would have seen many crucifixions. By His age He had known the suffering of life, and He did not want to endure such suffering. This also shows that Jesus did not have a death wish; it was not something He was seeking out even though He had talked about His death a lot during His ministry. Though He was committed to redeeming the world through His suffering, His emotions were still valid and worthy of being shared with the Father. Yet Jesus made it very clear that He was committed and submissive to the will of the Father, not the desires of His emotions.

Jesus was in such anguish that He was sweating profusely. The word *like* in “his sweat was *like* drops of blood falling to the ground” shows this is a simile, not that He was literally sweating drops of blood. It emphasizes the degree to which He was sweating because of the turmoil He was in. Jesus rebuked the disciples for falling asleep rather than praying because He knew that Satan wanted to sift them like wheat, and the only way they could guard against this was through prayer. He rebuked them because He had made it clear to them that this was the most important thing they could be doing at the moment, and they had failed.

22:47-53 Jesus was arrested after dark (Matt. 26:50; Mark 14:46; Luke 22:54; John 18:3, 12). This could have occurred anywhere from 10 pm to 12 am. Jesus was taken to Annas first (father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest) (John 18:12). Jesus was then taken to Caiaphas, the high priest and the elders and the teachers of Law (Matt. 26:57-60; Mark 14:53-56; John 18:24).

At the approach of the soldiers, Jesus did not try to flee like a fugitive. He was very calm and at peace, and He willingly gave Himself over. Peter’s attacking the servant with his sword shows that the disciples had not paid attention to the many times Jesus had said He had to die or to His teachings about love and compassion, even when it comes to one’s enemies. Their misunderstanding and preconceived ideas of the prophecies of the Messiah had blinded them to the reality of who Jesus was and what He had come to do. Jesus’ healing of the man’s ear shows His compassion to those who were going to harm Him—something He had instructed His disciples to do (Luke 6:27-28). This night and the next day would demonstrate that Jesus was truly committed to living out His teachings even in the midst of horrific betrayals and persecution from His own people.

22:54-62 Peter denied Jesus because he feared, as a follower of Jesus, that Rome would hunt him down and exterminate him to eliminate the possibility of a successor after Jesus. The denial is

the result of a loss of nerves, not a rejection of Jesus. This is supported by Jesus' forgiveness of Peter after His resurrection. The irony is that it was not the Roman army that was questioning him but a young girl.

Peter was close enough to Jesus physically to see Him and what was being done to Him. This shows that despite Peter's denials, he had taken the risk of getting close to Jesus. The eye contact between Jesus and Peter shows a deeper relationship than that which existed between Jesus and Judas. Likewise Peter's reaction of weeping bitterly shows greater sorrow and regret over what he had done to Jesus than what is seen with Judas, who was only concerned about himself.

According to Mark 13:35, the rooster crowed before dawn (anyone who has ever had roosters can confirm this). Baker's Encyclopedia of the Bible indicates there were four watches during the night. The first was called the evening watch, which ended at 9 pm; the second was called the midnight watch, which ended about midnight; the third watch ended at 3 am; and the fourth or morning watch ended about sunrise. Therefore, the rooster could have crowed anytime between 3 am and 6 am.

22:63-71 At daybreak the council of elders, chief priests, and teachers of law called a meeting (Luke 22:54-66). The word "daybreak" (*hemera*) means "the time space between dark and dawn." Dawn can be anytime the light from the sun first appears which occurs before sunrise. If sunrise occurs at 6 am, then Jesus could have been taken to the high priest as early as 4 am. Luke mentions that the meeting was convened at daybreak after the rooster crowed (Luke 22:63-71). The trial began and ended before daybreak, showing that it did not take them long to falsely convict Jesus. Thus the trial ended before 6 am.

Jesus was put on trial at the house of Caiaphas the high priest. The religious leaders, who were supposed to be the model of the image of God, mocked and abused Jesus while He awaited His trial. The irony is that the purpose of Yahweh was brought to completion by the very ones who had resisted His purpose the most. The Jewish leaders were provided with all the evidence they needed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. They failed to believe and, ironically, interpreted this evidence at His expense.

They asked Jesus if He was the "Christ," the Greek word for Messiah ("the anointed king of Yahweh"). Jesus' answer basically makes the point that they had already made up their minds as to who He was and what they were going to do to Him, so it did not matter what He said.

Jesus then answered the question about Ps. 110:1 that He had asked them in Luke 20:41-44. Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man from Dan. 7:12-13, claiming to be the God-man, and stated that He would be seated at the right hand of Yahweh. "Seated at the right hand" is an allusion to Ps 110:1 ("Sit at my right hand...") and a claim of sharing authority with Yahweh in heaven (Ex. 11:5; 12:29; 1 Kg. 1:17; 3:6; 8:25; 1 Chr. 17:16). This expression is a circumlocution for referring to Yahweh. Matt. 26:64 adds "the coming on the clouds," as in God coming to judge them. They wanted to know if He claimed to be the Messianic King; He went further and claimed to be the God-man who would sit at Yahweh's right hand as their judge. The irony here is that the high priest and Sanhedrin may have thought they were Jesus' judges, but in fact Jesus was their true judge.

"For most Jews, the idea of coming directly into God's presence and sitting with Him in constant heavenly session without cultic purification or worship was an insult to God's

uniqueness. It was the essence of blasphemy since a human seated by God diminishes His stature... One could stand before Him, but one does not sit with Him.”⁸⁵

After Jesus admitted to being the Son of God, the high priest declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy, and He was condemned to death. They spit at Him and struck Him with their fists (Matt. 26:65-68; Mark 14:63-65; Luke 22:63-71).

They now had everything they needed to execute Jesus under the authority of the Mosaic Law for blasphemy (Lev. 24:10-16). However, under Roman law they did not have the authority to implement executions, so now they would have to go to Pilate, the Roman prefect, to convince him under Roman law that Jesus was deserving of being executed.

23:1-5 Early in the morning, the chief priests took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman prefect (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28). Both Matthew and John use the Geek word *proia*, which means “day-dawn” or early morning, while Mark uses another form of the word, *prio*, which also means dawn or early morning. Therefore, all three writers must have been referring to just at sunrise when Jesus was taken to Pilate. Pilate found no valid reason to crucify Jesus.

Romans did not forbid blasphemy in the way the Jewish leaders saw it, for many Greco-Romans, even Caesar Augustus, had claimed to be god. So they brought to Pilate the charges that Jesus had encouraged the people to not pay taxes to Rome and that He had claimed to set Himself up as king over the Jews without appointment by Rome, making Him a rival king and usurper to Rome. This was treason under Roman law and was punishable by death.

Pilate asked Jesus directly if He believed Himself to be the king of the Jews. Jesus’ answer was not a denial that He believed Himself to be the Messiah but a clarification that He was not claiming to be the kind of king they all had in mind. Pilate was not convinced of the charges for the disposition, nor was the attitude of Jesus that of someone defiantly opposing Rome.

23:6-12 When Pilate, who had jurisdiction over Judea in the south, heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Jesus to Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee in the north. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod because he wanted to pass the responsibility of dealing with Jesus and the Jewish leaders to Herod since he was in charge of that region. The Jews were such a thorn in Rome’s side that if Pilate did not have deal with them, then all the better.

It would not have taken long for Jesus to travel to Herod, since both Pilate and Herod were in Jerusalem to deal with the influx of people during the Passover festival. Herod was happy to see Jesus because he wanted Jesus to perform miracle for his entertainment. He questioned Jesus extensively and most likely did not get what he wanted nor find any reason that Jesus should be executed. However, not wanting to be too disappointed, he allowed for the mocking and physical beatings of Jesus for the entertainment of his palace attendants. Realizing that dealing with Jesus was political suicide, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate to be dealt with. That day Pilate and Herod, who did not like each other, became political friends as they dealt with the issue of trying to prevent a riot among the Jewish leaders and people.

23:13-16 Pilate made it clear to the people that neither he nor Herod had found anything guilty in Jesus deserving of execution. Yet the Jewish leaders and crowds were still demanding for Jesus to be crucified. What Rome valued highly in its empire was keeping the peace. Because of the pressure on official leaders to maintain the peace, Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus; he did not

⁸⁵ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 1799.

want to do anything that would cause a revolt, which would disturb the peace and have to be put down with violence. Based on the large following Jesus had, Pilate was not sure whether killing Him might cause a revolt among the people who loved Him just a week prior, at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40), or if keeping Him alive would anger the Jewish leadership and cause a revolt.

Why would Pilate, a Roman prefect, seem to care about Jesus' innocence when non-biblical, historical accounts portray him as someone who hated the Jews and taunted them? To understand this tension, one must understand the nature of Pilate and his relationship with the Jewish people. Pilate as a ruler was described by two sources from the first century: Josephus, a Jewish historian, and Philo, a Jewish philosopher. Between the two of them, they describe the following four incidents involving Pilate and the Jews (in chronological order):

1. In 27 AD Pilate brought military standards into Jerusalem.⁸⁶
2. Pilate used money from the Jewish temple to pay for Roman aqueducts (not dated).⁸⁷
3. Pilate placed Roman votive shields in the temple (not dated).⁸⁸
4. In 36 AD Pilate put down a Samaritan uprising.⁸⁹

When Pilate first came to power (27 AD), he had military standards (flags) bearing iconic imagery set up in Jerusalem. This offended the Jews, who saw these standards with the images as idols. The Jews protested to Pilate for many days in Caesarea, his capital. In response to this, Pilate had Roman soldiers surround the Jewish crowd, and he threatened to have them all killed. The Jews fell to the ground and exposed their necks to the soldiers and said that they would rather die than violate their law. Pilate, impressed by their conviction, relented and had the military standards removed.

In a second incident, Pilate took money from the temple treasury in order to build an aqueduct. Once again the Jews protested publicly in the thousands. In response to this occasion, however, Pilate ruthlessly had many of them slaughtered. There was no repercussion from Rome for this act.

In a third incident, Pilate sent gilded shields into the temple courtyard, which had Roman pagan images on them that offended the Jews. Philo wrote that Pilate did it "to vex" the multitude. The Jews complained to the sons of Herod and other Roman-supported rulers in the region, who took the complaints to Rome. The Jews also wrote a letter to Tiberius, who in anger sent a rebuke to Pilate. According to Philo, Tiberius "wrote a letter, reproaching and reviling him in the most bitter manner for his act of unprecedented audacity and wickedness, and commanding him immediately to take down the shields and to convey them away from the metropolis of Judea to Caesarea."

Philo described Pilate: "He was a man of a very inflexible disposition, and very merciless as well as very obstinate." He went on to write that Pilate "feared lest [his Jewish opponents] might in reality go on an embassy to the emperor, and might impeach him with respect to other particulars of his government, in respect of his corruption, and his acts of insolence, and his rapine, and his habit of insulting people, and his cruelty, and his continual murders of people untried and

⁸⁶ See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.55–59.

⁸⁷ See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.60–62.

⁸⁸ See Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 38.299–305.

⁸⁹ See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.85–89.

uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity.”

Finally, at the end of Pilate’s rule (36 AD), a man led a group of Samaritans to Mount Gerizim, the holy mountain for Samaritans, claiming to know where vessels of Moses were hidden. In response, Pilate had his Roman soldiers kill the man and his followers. Jews and Samaritans complained to Pilate’s superior in Syria, Vitellius, who in turn sent word to Rome. As a result, Pilate was called to Rome to face Emperor Tiberius. However, Tiberius died before Pilate arrived.

These four incidents show that Pilate could be ruthlessly violent but that he would also relent when pressured by Rome. Rome valued maintaining the peace of the empire (*pax romana*) as one of their highest priorities. Though Rome would act ruthlessly to put down rebellions in order to maintain peace, it would not purposely provoke nations that would require considerable resources and energy to deal with. Historical records describe Pilate as one who hated the Jews, and these four incidents show that at times he would purposely provoke the Jews. This did not go over well with Emperor Tiberius, and the Jews knew they could use this against Pilate to force him to relent.

Because of the political tensions in Judea, Pilate would have initially been hesitant to respond to the Jewish leaders’ condemnation of Jesus, which was sprung suddenly on the ruler that morning (considering the consequences that may come from Tiberius). Pilate may not have viewed Jesus as much of a threat, especially since Jesus exerted no obvious political muscle that could threaten Rome—and depending on how much Pilate knew of Jesus’ ministry for the past three years.

Likewise, just a couple of weeks ago the crowds were in love with Jesus and celebrating His arrival into Jerusalem. If Pilate killed Jesus, an innocent man, the crowds would go to Tiberius and complain that Pilate was inciting them. This then would bring the rebuke of Tiberius. To some extent he had to consider the will of the people in order to keep his position of power.

Another factor for Pilate’s reluctance to crucify Jesus was the political fall of Sejanus, a Roman senator and Tiberius’s ruthless and anti-Semitic right-hand man, in 33 AD. Sejanus was the one who had appointed Pilate as prefect over Judea. If the crucifixion of Jesus took place after Sejanus’ fall, then this would be a reason for Pilate to tread lightly.

It was only when Pilate realized how important this was to the leadership and that the people had turned against Jesus that he acted in order to “keep the peace.” It appears that the high priest Caiaphas was someone Pilate trusted, since Pilate was the one who, though he had the right to appoint a different high priest during his rule, never did. Given the choice between defending someone he did not know and responding to the advice of someone with whom he worked regularly, he chose to take the view of the one he knew. Notice also that the Jewish leaders told Pilate, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar! Everyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar!” This would have certainly convinced him, especially in light of his history with the Jews. Likewise, seeing the overwhelming desire of the crowd to have Jesus crucified would have convinced him that whatever following Jesus did have at one time was now gone.

Notice also that the Gospels do not paint Pilate in as favorable of light as he might first appear to be. The Gospels make it clear that Pilate found Jesus not guilty yet still chose to wash his hands of the political situation and condemn Jesus to death anyway. Likewise, Pilate had Jesus flogged and crucified, which was a far greater torture and punishment than necessary. These are not the actions of a righteous leader. Matthew’s narrative and Acts 4:26-27 state that Rome failed to do

the just thing. In the Gospels, Pilate was the last one responsible for Jesus' death because he failed to carry through on his initial opinion of Jesus' innocence.

23:17 The omission of verse 17 is due to the fact that many of the best Greek manuscripts lack Luke 23:17. "Now he was obligated to release one individual for them at the feast." It appears in only two different locations, which are dated late and with variations in wording, which makes it look like a scribal addition.

23:18-25 It was tradition at Passover that Rome would release a prisoner to the Jewish people. Usually there was someone who was not guilty of legitimate crimes whom the people saw as unjustly imprisoned. But Barabbas was murderer and an insurrectionist who had caused a lot of problems for the Jewish people. However, the crowds had gained a mob mentality of wanting Jesus dead no matter the consequences or what had to be done in order to accomplish it. The first irony is that for three years the crowds had followed and loved Jesus, and just a weeks ago they were praising Jesus as their Messiah. Now they wanted Him dead as if they had never liked Him. The second irony is that everything Jesus was accused of but was not, Barabbas was, and they were willing to let Barabbas go in order to have Jesus killed. Pilate wanted to release the one who was not guilty, the one whom they wanted crucified. They wanted Pilate to release the one who was guilty, the one for whom crucifixion was reserved.

It is at this point that the others gospel writers record the flogging of Jesus (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1). Brutal floggings were normal before any crucifixion, except maybe in the case of mass crucifixions, when the number to be killed each day allowed no time for whippings. There were three types of floggings, depending on the severity of the crime. The *fustigatio* was a minor beating given for relatively light offenses and was accompanied by a severe warning. The *flagellatio* was a severe flogging given to criminals whose offenses were more serious. The *verberatio* was the most severe and was always associated with other punishments, including crucifixion. Since Pilate used the flogging to try to appease the crowd without a crucifixion, Jesus could have received either of the latter two floggings.

The Romans would scourge a condemned criminal before he was put to death. The Roman scourge, also called the "flagrum" or "flagellum," was a short whip made of two or three leather (ox-hide) thongs or ropes connected to a wooden handle. The leather thongs were knotted with a number of small pieces of metal, usually zinc and iron, bones, or heavy indented pieces of bronze, attached at various intervals.



The criminal was tied to a low pillar with his hands above his head. He was then beaten by several "lictors" (professional whippers). The flagrum was thrown down onto the back so that the lead and bone pieces could dig into the back, and then the flagrum was ripped down the back in order to cause shredding. The scourging would have gone from the shoulders down the back, buttocks, and back of the legs. The scourging would quickly remove the skin so that part of the spine and bowels were exposed. Eusebius, a third century historian, described a flogging by saying, "The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure." Dr. C. Truman Davis describes the flogging:

"The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across a person's shoulders, back and legs. At first, the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises,

which the others cut wide open. Finally, the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons, and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue.”

Hebrew law was strict on the extent of flogging, limiting it to 40 lashes. The Pharisees, in order to make sure they never broke the law, gave only 39 lashes. However, the Romans had no limit, except that the criminals should be left with just enough strength to carry their crosses to the place of execution. The gospels report that Jesus could not carry his cross, suggesting a very severe beating.

23:26-31 Jesus’ trial and flogging before Pilate ended by the sixth hour, or 6 am (John 19:1-16). All four Gospel accounts are almost identical relating this event. Although John appears to indicate Jewish time in other parts of his book (John 1:39; 4:6; 4:52, 53), in this instance he can only be referring to Roman time because, as will be seen in the next frame according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus was nailed to the cross at the third hour, or 9 am Jewish time. If John meant Jesus’ trial ended at the Jewish sixth hour, or 12 noon, this would not make sense because He would have been tried after He was hung on the cross. Therefore, it appears John indicates Pilate had finished trying Jesus by the Roman sixth hour, 6 am, or sunrise. John Leeper in *A Prelude to Glory* shows how all these trials among Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate could have occurred within a couple hours because they all resided within five to twenty minutes of each other during the Passover week.

Because Jesus had been flogged so severely, He was not physically strong enough to carry His own cross beam like the other criminals being crucified would have. So the Roman soldiers randomly grabbed another person to carry it for Him. When the women wept for Him, He told them not to weep for Him but for themselves when Jerusalem would be destroyed in 70 AD because of Israel’s rejection of Jesus the Messiah, which He prophesied in Luke 21:20-24.

The best explanation for Luke 23:31 is that if Yahweh did not spare Jesus, then how much more would the offending nation not be spared when divine judgment came? This would fit into the context of Jesus talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The second-best option is if the Jews treated Jesus this way for coming to deliver them, then how would they be treated for destroying Him? The only thing against this view is the switch in subjects.

23:32-38 They took Jesus to “the skull” (known as *Golgotha* in Aramaic, John 19:17), which was named so because it was a hill that looked like a skull or it was associated with death because of all the crucifixions that took place there. Usually, the Romans crucified people right outside the city gates along the road for all to see as a reminder: do not oppose Rome, or this will happen to you. Jesus was crucified at the third hour (9 am).

Crucifixion is considered by historians one of the most brutal and painful ways to be executed in all of human history. On the way to the crucifixion, the criminal was forced to carry the horizontal beam of the cross, called the “patibulum.” The fact that Jesus could not carry this shows how severe the scourging was, and most likely He was going into hypovolemic shock due to the loss of a large amount of blood. Once at the crucifixion site, the criminal would be stripped naked, which for a Jew would be a great disgrace and humiliation.

Then he would be laid down on the patibulum, and his wrists would be nailed to it in an outstretched position. The Romans used spikes that were five to seven inches long and drove them in through the wrist or just below the elbow. Ropes or wooden blocks would keep the wrists from sliding off the nails. Nails through the hands would have shattered all the bones and

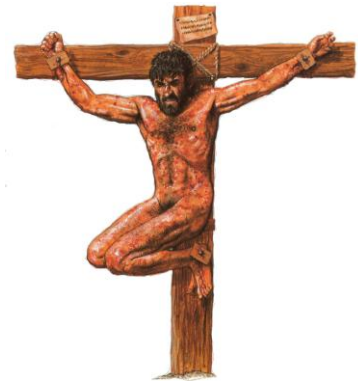
orn the skin, causing the body to fall off the cross. Instead, the nail at the wrist was a solid position that would lock the hand. The nail would crush the median nerve, the largest nerve going from the hand in the wrist. This is the equivalent feeling of when one hits their “funny bone,” except that the nerve was crushed rather than bumped.⁹⁰



After this, the patibulum, to which the criminal was nailed, would be raised up and attached to the vertical beam. The weight of the body hanging on the nails would cause the criminal’s arms to be immediately stretched about six inches and his shoulders to be dislocated. In cases where the nails were placed just below the elbow, the weight of the body would cause the nail to rip the length of the forearm, stopping at the wrist. The feet would then be laid side by side, and a nail would be driven through the anklebones into the bottom of the vertical beam. The pain here would be similar to pain of the median nerve being crushed in the wrist.

The criminal was crucified alongside a major road, and his waist would be no more than head level with all those on the ground. Crucifixions took place in this way so that everyone going in and out of the city would have to see it up close, which would be a reminder to them that this is what happens when you oppose Rome.

Death would come by suffocation over many hours. The stresses on the muscles and diaphragm would put the chest in the inhaled position. The criminal would have to push up from the nails in his ankles and pull on the nails in his wrist in order to exhale. This motion would scrape his scourged back up and down the coarse and splintery wood of the vertical beam. Jesus’ speaking while on the cross would have been a painful task—anything he said was extremely important. The pain involved was beyond imagining. In describing a crucifixion, the Romans created the word, *excruciating*, which means “out of the cross.”



“As the person slows down his breathing, he goes into what is called respiratory acidosis—the carbon dioxide in the blood is dissolved as carbonic acid, causing the acidity of the blood to increase. This eventually leads to an irregular heartbeat. In fact with his heart beating erratically, Jesus would have known the moment of his death... the hypovolemic shock would have caused a sustained rapid heart rate that would have contributed to heart failure, resulting in the collection of fluid in the membrane around the heart, called a pericardial effusion, as well as around the lungs, which is called a pleural effusion.”⁹¹

According to Roman eyewitnesses of crucifixions, the criminal could suffer on a cross for days, often with crows picking at their flesh and eyes and lions and bears coming out to chew on their legs. To determine whether a criminal had died, the Romans would pierce the side through the right lung and into the heart, so that when they pulled the spear out, a separated fluid (the pericardial and pleural effusion) flowed out, signifying death. If the Romans wanted to speed up

⁹⁰ See Lee Strobel. *The Case for Christ*, p. 197.

⁹¹ Alexander Metherell in Lee Strobel. *The Case for Christ*, pp. 198–199.

the death, they would break the legs so that the criminal could not push up to exhale. The fact that this did not happen to Jesus shows again how severe His flogging was in that He died so quickly.

During Jesus' crucifixion the Roman soldiers divided His clothes among themselves, which is an allusion to Ps. 22:18, which identifies Jesus as the suffering innocent one. They then mocked Him in that He was not able to save Himself like He had saved others. Jesus' apparent inability was in fact unwillingness to save Himself, for it was in His self-sacrifice that He would conquer sin, the devil, and death, which would save others (Luke 9:24). The soldiers also gave Him "sour wine" (NET, NASB) or "wine vinegar" (NIV), which was a cheap vinegar wine diluted heavily with water and was the drink of the poor, slaves, and soldiers. Its sharp taste was said to remove thirst more effectively than water. The context here along with Ps. 69:2 suggest that the offer was a joke.

The incredible love of Jesus is seen in the fact that He was forgiving them of their sins not just by dying for them on the cross, but He stated this forgiveness aloud as they were in the midst of killing Him.

23:39-43 One of the criminals being crucified along with Jesus placed His faith in Jesus and defended Him before the other criminal who was mocking Jesus. That Jesus told him "*Today* you will be with me in paradise" was revolutionary at that time. The only way one can enter into the holy presence of Yahweh in Heaven without dying is if they are without sin, surrounded by angels as a barrier between them and Yahweh, or through the blood atonement of Jesus. The first is not true of humans, the second is not the kind of intimate relationship with humans Yahweh wants, and the third had not happened yet in the historical time period of the First Testament. This means that in the First Testament the believers did not enter Heaven upon death but rather went into some kind of spiritual sleep, referred to by the Jews as Abraham's Bosom. By the end of this day, however, Jesus would be dead, having atoned for the sins of the world and making entrance into Heaven possible.

23:44-49 John 1:1-5 says Jesus was the light that had come into the world, which is darkness. Now the light of the world was dying, and so the land was covered in darkness. The darkness also recalls the eschatological motif from the judgment imagery of the day of Yahweh (Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10, 30-31; Zeph. 1:15). However, Acts 2:16-18 also sees the day of the Yahweh as something that still approaches. The darkness shows the current prevailing of evil as well as the judgment of Yahweh. This darkness covered all the land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour (12 pm to 3 pm).

It was at this time that the temple veil tore in two. In the first Testament, the tabernacle/Temple was the only dwelling place of Yahweh on earth. It was made up of two rooms: the Holy place, into which only the priests were allowed, and the Holy of Holies, into which only the high priest was allowed one time a year with an animal sacrifice. Access to Yahweh was extremely restricted because of the sin of humans. In John 2:13-22 Jesus referred to the temple as His Father's house and told the Pharisees that the temple would be destroyed and that He would raise it up again in three days. Jesus was referring to His body in His death and resurrection, making the point that His body was the true temple and the Father's house. Therefore, Jesus as the God-man was the more perfect temple (2 Pet. 2:4-8). Then in John 14:1-4 Jesus said that in His Father's house are many rooms and that He was going to the cross to prepare a room for His covenant people. Jesus' death was going to bring an end to the need for the temple, and His

resurrection was going to establish a new temple, as His body, that would have many rooms for all believers. They would be able to enter and dwell with Yahweh because Jesus was going to become the more perfect sacrifice and more expansive temple. This is why the veil tore in the temple building—to show that all now had total access to Yahweh through Jesus (Matt. 27:50-51). Jesus was the new temple of Ezekiel's vision and the glory of Yahweh returning to it (Ezek. 40-48).

In Jesus' final breath He quoted Isa. 42:1, entrusting Himself to the care of Yahweh (Luke 22:42), and then died. The Roman centurion witnessing the crucifixion of Jesus and all the signs surrounding that day acknowledged that Jesus was truly unique as the Son of God. The faith of the thief on the cross and of the Roman centurion emphasizes the fact that Jesus had come for the lost, the outcast, and the Gentiles. Jesus died at the ninth hour (3 pm) (Matt. 27:32-53; Mark 15:25-38; Luke 23:32-46; John 19:18-30).

23:50-56 The details concerning Joseph of Arimathea show that not all the religious leaders of Jesus' time were evil and sought the death of Jesus. There were some who were righteous and were seeking the fulfillment of the kingdom of Yahweh. Likewise, the wealth of Joseph of Arimathea means that his tomb would have been a large and well-marked tomb, so many people would have known where to find it. Thus it would have been obvious which tomb Jesus was supposed to have been in after His resurrection as evidence to all. The actions of Joseph of Arimathea and the women not only show their concern and love for Jesus but also that they were not ashamed of their association with Jesus, for they had not done these things in secret; Joseph even went to Pilate.

E. Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus (24:1-53)

In this section Jesus does what no other has done: defeat sin, the devil, and death in His resurrection. His appearance before many of His followers finally brings understanding to what Yahweh was accomplishing through His Son. This understanding and the joy of Jesus' resurrection leads to their passion to be His witnesses to the world.

24:1-12 Sunday morning the women went to the tomb to finish the preparation of Jesus' body since they had run out of time on the day of His death as the Sabbath was about to begin, but they found the tomb empty. Angels appeared to them, announcing that Jesus had risen and reminding them that they should have known this because Jesus had talked about it a lot before He died. The women immediately believed and told the disciples, but they thought it to be nonsense. The women were not taken seriously because women generally were not valued, the disciples had not fully understood the true meaning of Jesus' words, and they did not have the testimony of the angels. Peter, however, might have believed, seen in his running to the tomb.

“What has happened with Jesus can be understood only in light of the Scriptures, yet the Scriptures themselves can be understood only in light of what happened with Jesus. These two are mutually informing. And before the disciples will be able to recognize the risen Lord (Luke 24:3, 5, 34), they must grasp especially the nexus between suffering and messiahship.”⁹²

24:13-35 Jesus met two of His followers along the road, but they were kept from recognizing Him. They told Him they believed that this man named Jesus of Nazareth was the Messianic King, but he had died. Even though the women saw angels announcing His resurrection and many saw the empty tomb, they still doubted because they had not found His body. Jesus then rebuked them for their lack of understanding of the prophets. Though they saw Jesus as a prophet, they had failed to take the prophets and Jesus' prophecies seriously concerning His suffering, death, and resurrection. So Jesus went through the entire First Testament helping them see everything that was connected to who He was and to His ministry and work. It was not until the unique way He broke the bread that they recognized Him and believed. They began to tell many others that He had risen.

24:36-49 Then Jesus appeared to the main disciples, who even still had a hard time believing, thinking He was a ghost. Jesus encouraged them to touch His physical resurrected body and believe, then He ate with them. Jesus then began to teach them, and they finally began to understand His fulfillment of the prophets. Now that they understood, Jesus was going to send them out to be His witnesses, but they would not be able to do it without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that would empower them to be His witnesses (Acts 2).

“We are dealing with sacred events that are part of the essential content of Christian faith as 1 Cor. 15 makes clear. Paul declares that if Jesus is not raised then he cannot save and one cannot invoke him for present aid and future hope. To be something other than a human ethical or philosophical system, the Christian faith must be inextricably tied to resurrection. Without resurrection, Christianity is just another human approach to God; it is emptied of transforming power and hope; it is a mere shell, not worth the energy one devotes to it. To hope in a resurrection that did not occur makes Christians the most pitied of people (1 Cor. 15:19). It is to believe an illusion. Without a resurrected Jesus, Christianity has nothing

⁹² Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 844.

special to offer the world, for a dead Savior is no Savior at all. The world is full of exemplary people, but a resurrected Savior who cares and fulfills God's promises is the unique hope that the Christian faith offers to the world. This does not mean that the fact of the resurrection is the ground of the Christian faith; rather, it is the one who emerged from this reality—the resurrected Christ—who is Christianity's foundation. Only through a raised Christ, the Exalted One, is it possible to have a relationship with God through Christ. Christ's resurrection by the power of God makes that relationship possible and offers testimony to the reality of life before God beyond the grave. Jesus' resurrection is not the end of his story; rather, it represents his transition to an expanded role in God's plan, which becomes the focal starting point for our potential new life in him. To believe in Christ is to believe not merely in his example, but in the power of his resurrection to grant new life."⁹³

24:50-53 Jesus then took them outside the city and ascended into heaven where He was enthroned at the right hand of Yahweh. This is the final fulfillment of Jesus as the Son of Man from Dan. 7:13-14. According to Phil. 2:5-11 Jesus was fully God before His incarnation, but when He took on human form, He willingly gave up the right to fully exercise and exploit His godhood over others during His earthly ministry. As a result of His obedience to Yahweh in His death on the cross, Yahweh exalted Jesus and reenthroned Him over all of creation. Heb. 2:5-9 says He was for a little while made lower than the angels during His incarnation until He ascended and was reenthroned in Heaven. This is where Daniel's vision comes in. Daniel saw Jesus as human and God appearing in Heaven after His incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven, approaching Yahweh on the clouds in order to be reenthroned. Then Yahweh exalted Him and gave Him back all authority, honor, and power over an eternal kingdom (Heb. 1:1-4). It is this reality that the disciples began to understand, and therefore they were compelled to worship Jesus as He ascended into Heaven.

⁹³ Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*, p. 1881.

Conclusion

Luke clearly portrays Jesus as the God-man who is the total fulfillment of the prophecies of the long-awaited Messianic King. Over the last several hundred years, the Jews had been shaped by their oppression under foreign rule and saw the Messiah narrowly as a conquering King who would destroy the governments of all the nations, establish the Kingdom of Yahweh on earth, and usher Yahweh's covenant people into eternal peace. Though this is what the prophets foretold, there was more to what the Messiah would be and do. The oppression of the Jews at the hands of foreign powers also caused them to see the Kingdom of Yahweh as exclusive to Jews, and they began to see themselves as superior to the Gentiles, while those who were crippled or sick they saw as being under the judgment of Yahweh and thus were excluded.

Jesus emphasized two main things that the prophets foretold and that the Jews missed. First, He emphasized the fact that He came to suffer and die and not conquer Rome (Luke 9:21-22, 43b-45; 18:31-35; 22:19-23). He understood that the far greater enemy to humanity was sin—humanity's true oppressor and the reason for Rome's corruption. Jesus would have to conquer the power of sin, the devil, and death in order to free humans spiritually to follow Yahweh before He could conquer the evil nations they were part of and establish the Kingdom of Yahweh on earth. This concept is what both the disciples and the religious leaders struggled to comprehend.

Second, Jesus emphasized that He did not come for just the "righteous" Jews but for all people, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, social status, and physical health (Luke 5:31). The true covenant people of the Kingdom of Yahweh are known by their love for all people including their enemies. Their empathy and compassion are what will truly win people for Jesus and change the world—not fighting for one's rights and bringing down those they see as unworthy.

This is the type of kingdom Jesus came to build through His love and death for the world (John 3:16-17). His people had lifted their rights and power above all others and saw Him as so unworthy of the Kingdom of Yahweh that they killed Him, falsely viewing Him as their enemy and a threat. Yet it was their killing of Him that brought their redemption and the Kingdom of Yahweh on earth. This is how He conquered His enemies: by loving them sacrificially to the point of death that then brings them life.

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