

Study Tool from
The Moody Bible Commentary
for

Unexplainable
JESUS

REDISCOVERING THE GOD YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW

AN 8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY OF *LUKE*

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MOODY PUBLISHERS

CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION

“In order to understand the Bible, you must read it.” This is an axiom that we both firmly believe. A secondary principle to which we both hold is, “If you didn’t understand it the first time, read it again.” More than anything else, the understanding of the Bible requires reading it, and then reading it some more. For many generations, committed believers held to the principle of the clarity of Scripture. Among other things, this simply means that if followers of Jesus the Messiah read the Bible, they can understand it. Nevertheless, there are some qualifications for this general principle:

1. Understanding the Bible requires effort—we need to work at studying the Scriptures.
2. Understanding the Bible will take time—we won’t get it all immediately.
3. Understanding the Bible requires that the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds to the Scriptures.
4. Understanding the Bible will happen only if we are willing to obey it.
5. Understanding the Bible will never be complete—we can always learn more.

Having said this, we all need some help from time to time to understand the Scriptures. A person may be reading the Bible for his or her own personal time in the Word and run across a phrase or a word, and wonder, “*What does that mean?*” Or a Sunday school teacher or small group leader might be preparing a Bible Study and wonder, “*How does this passage fit with the paragraph that went before it?*” Or pastors or teachers might encounter people confused by a particular verse and might need some help clarifying its meaning. It is for these reasons, and many more, that all of the contributors for this resource have worked so hard to produce *The Moody Bible Commentary*. We want to help that reader, Sunday school teacher, home group leader or pastor have a better understanding of the Bible. Of course, there are many good commentaries to which the Bible student could turn. What makes this commentary distinctive?

The Moody Bible Commentary is trustworthy. For generations Moody Publishers has had the slogan, “The Name You Can Trust.” That derives from being the publishing house of the Moody Bible Institute, an institution that has maintained its commitment to the truth of the Word of God since 1886. Since the founding of Moody Bible Institute, there have been countless attacks on the veracity of Scripture, innumerable attempts to undermine its teaching, and significant challenges to its authority. Nevertheless, in all that time, the administrators and professors at Moody Bible Institute have maintained a commitment to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible as the very Word of God. This high view of Scripture, along with a determination to practice first-rate biblical scholarship, has made Moody the name you can trust. Thirty faculty members of the Moody Bible Institute have worked together to produce *The Moody Bible Commentary* with explanations that are reliable.

The Moody Bible Commentary is understandable. The authors and editors have striven to explain the Scriptures in a simple and clear way. They defined theological terms, clarified the meaning of difficult biblical words, identified ancient sources with which readers might be unfamiliar, and gave the geographical locations of ancient biblical cities and towns. Although the writers engaged in excellent scholarly research, they made sure that readers would not need a commentary to help them understand this commentary.

The Moody Bible Commentary shows the logic of biblical books. Too often people read the Bible without regard for its literary context or structure. But the writers of Scripture, under the superintending work of the Holy Spirit, wrote inspired text with great literary artistry. Therefore, all biblical books have literary structure and strategies. One distinctive feature of this commentary

is that it follows the structures that are inherent in the biblical books themselves. The commentary on each biblical book has an outline in its introduction. The body of the commentary follows that same outline so a reader can follow the structure throughout that specific book. Moreover, the commentary itself traces the flow of thought, showing how each individual section fits in the overall argument of the biblical book. In essence, *The Moody Bible Commentary* will provide a road map through each book of the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary deals with difficult verses. Sometimes the most frustrating aspect of using a commentary is that it complicates the explanation of difficult or disputed verses and fails to offer help precisely where it is most needed. The authors and editors worked hard to be alert to the possible difficulties in a text and its interpretation, and to address those issues clearly. Of course, every reader finds different questions and sees different difficulties. Nevertheless, this commentary hopes to answer the more perplexing questions. For example, does a particular Bible passage seem to contradict another? Not if it is the inspired Word of God. Also, readers of Scripture are often perplexed by biblical prophecies, wondering when and how these were or will be fulfilled. When these apparent contradictions or perplexing difficulties present themselves, this commentary will address those issues. After all, if a commentary does not address the hard or unclear verses, then it really is not much help at all.

The Moody Bible Commentary uses a literal interpretive method and applies it consistently. By “literal” we mean that the method that governs this commentary understands the words of the text in a normal way. Unless there is a good reason to think otherwise, the phrases and expressions of Scripture are interpreted according to what appears to be their plain sense. If there is a figure of speech or symbol, then it is interpreted with sensitivity to that figurative expression. However, even in the case of figurative language, there is always some spiritual or physical reality the biblical author is conveying through the figure of speech. For example, Jesus is not a literal door (see Jn 10:9), but this metaphor describes Him literally, as the only way for a person to enter a forgiven relationship with God.

Virtually all biblical interpreters agree with this “literal” approach. However, all do not apply it consistently, particularly in prophetic passages. A distinctive feature of this commentary is that it understands much of prophecy in its literal sense and even prophetic symbols are recognized as referring to a genuine reality. As a result, this approach to interpretation will affect how the commentary understands Israel, the Church, and the end of days. In our view, this method of interpretation is the least subjective and easiest way to understand the Bible.

The Moody Bible Commentary sees the Old Testament as a messianic text. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples about “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Lk 24:44). In commenting on this passage, A. T. Robertson once remarked, “Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem to be able to do” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2 [Nashville: Broadman, 1930], 294). Even though much of contemporary scholarship does not believe in direct predictive Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, this commentary does. It presumes that God could and did reveal the messianic hope to the writers of the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, it consistently shows how these prophecies make sense in their literary context, pointing to the coming of the future Redeemer. Additionally, this commentary shows how the New Testament refers to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of these predictions, identifying Him as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

The Moody Bible Commentary is based on the original languages of Scripture. The commentary uses the *New American Standard Bible* as its English language Bible text. When you see quotations from the biblical text in the commentary, they are in bold and taken from the NASB. We chose this translation for the commentary because it is, at the same time, among the more literal and readable translations of the Bible available. However, the commentary authors did not rely on the translation of the NASB. Rather, in their research and study, they used the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible. As a result, there are places where a commentary might point out a more favorable translation of a word or phrase. The authors explain why this particular translation is preferred and often show how a different English version may understand it in the same way or, if necessary, include their own translations of that phrase or word. As a result, this commentary provides a fresh exposition of the biblical text based on the original languages of Scripture.

The Moody Bible Commentary is user-friendly. A variety of elements make this commentary easy to use. Besides using understandable language, it is a one-volume commentary. By limiting it to just one volume, the commentary can be the one book on your shelf to which you can turn when you need help understanding the Bible. Of course there are times when readers will want to study a particular passage in greater detail. Therefore, the contributors included in-text citations, directing readers to works they can use for deeper study. Also, for those who would like greater depth in their study, there is a list of recommended works at the end of each individual commentary. Other helpful elements include an introduction to each book of the Bible, dealing with key features, such as author, date, recipients, historical setting, theological issues, place in the canon, and an outline. There are also maps of the Bible lands as they relate to the Scriptures and helpful charts that clarify the biblical text.

Other aids are included to help with your own personal study and deeper application. Of course, there are subject and Scripture indexes to help readers locate or return to key themes and issues as needed. At various points throughout, there are cross references to key Bible passages that discuss related issues (typically shown with cf. and the Bible verses). Also included are notes directing the reader to other parts of the commentary for further discussion of the same issue if it is discussed elsewhere. In addition, each chapter in the commentary includes some points of application for today's reader, reflecting the Scripture's teaching that it remains a light to guide our paths (Ps 119:105) and is useful in daily life "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2Tm 3:16). Overall, this commentary wants to give you an accessible resource that will readily open the Bible for you, making simple what some might think is overly complex.

Most of all, we want to encourage you never to substitute reading this commentary for actually reading the Bible. All of us, editors and contributors alike, want to support your reading of the Bible by helping you understand it. But it is the actual reading of the Bible that will transform our lives. We concur with the wisdom of Proverbs: "He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD" (Pr 16:20).

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LUKE

KEVIN D. ZUBER

INTRODUCTION

Author. The Gospel of Luke is technically anonymous. The idea that Luke is the author turns upon several converging lines of evidence.

The name “Luke” appears three times in the NT: 2Tm 4:11; Phm 24; Col 4:14. Luke was an associate of the apostle Paul and was a physician. In Col 4 he is mentioned separately from those “of the circumcision” (see 4:10-11). The tradition of the church holds that Luke was a Gentile.

The man who wrote the gospel also wrote the book of Acts (see Ac 1:1-3), and he was a traveling companion of Paul (see the “we” passages (Ac 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1–28:16). The account of the institution of the ordinance of communion (Lk 22:19, 20) is similar to Paul’s (1Co 11:23-25), supporting the traditional view of the author of the third gospel. He appears to have a special interest in Jesus’ healing ministry (compare Lk 4:38 to Mt 8:14 and Mk 1:30), and the language of Luke/Acts is that of someone educated and familiar with the Septuagint (the ancient Gk. translation of the Hebrew Scriptures). Of Paul’s coworkers Luke best fits the profile of the author of Luke/Acts.

Early church fathers such as Irenaeus (c. 185, *Against Heresies*, III.i.1); Tertullian (c. 200, *Against Marcion*, IV.ii); Origen (c. AD 230, in Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.xxv.3-6); and Jerome (c. AD 400, *De Viris Illustribus VIII*) consistently attribute the third Gospel to Luke. The *Muratorian Canon* (c. AD 180) attributes “The third book of the gospel” to “Luke, that physician” (cf. Walter L. Leifeld, “Luke,” EBC, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984], 8:799; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1-9:50*, BECNT [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994], 5).

Date. There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (AD 70) in either Luke or Acts. If Luke and Acts were written at approximately the same time it probably would have been no later than Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (ca. AD 60–63). The book does not mention the persecution of Nero (AD 64), nor does it mention the martyrdom of James (AD 62). At the outset of his gospel Luke admitted that he used sources (since he himself was not an eyewitness to the events in the gospel). He may have used the Gospel of Mark (written as early as the AD 50s). From these considerations a composition date of AD 60–61 is most likely.

Purpose. Luke’s purpose in writing his gospel was (see the Prologue 1:1-4): (1) to provide an “orderly account” of the events of the life of Christ; (2) to show how those events “connect” to the church; (3) to spread the saving truth about the Lord Jesus Christ to *all* nations (cf. 24:47).

Themes. Bock notes, “Four issues were particularly problematic in the church of Luke’s time” (Bock, *Luke*, 1, 2). (1) Gentile inclusion in salvation; (2) the largely negative response to Jesus by the Jewish nation; (3) how “the person and teaching of a crucified Jesus fits into God’s plan” (Bock, *Luke*, 2); (4) what are believers in this new community (disciples who follow Jesus) to be? “Luke-Acts says Jesus is Lord of all, so salvation can go to all” (Bock, *Luke*, 3). The major theme of Luke’s gospel, however, revolves around a simple question, “Who is Jesus?” Nearly every strand of the narrative is related to this question and its vitally important answer—Jesus is the Messiah (Christ).

OUTLINE

- I. Luke's Prologue (1:1-4)
 - A. Luke's Motive and Method (1:1-3a)
 - B. Luke's Reader(s) (1:3b)
 - C. Luke's Purpose (1:4)
- II. The Birth and Childhood Narratives (1:5–2:52)
 - A. Announcement of the Birth of the Forerunner (1:5-25)
 - 1. Introduction of a Faithful Couple: Zacharias and Elizabeth (1:5-7)
 - a. A Despotic Ruler (1:5a)
 - b. A "Priestly" Couple (1:5b)
 - c. A Righteous and Blameless Couple (1:6)
 - d. A Barren Couple (1:7)
 - 2. An Angelic Announcement (1:8-23)
 - a. Zacharias's Priestly Service Interrupted (1:8-12)
 - b. The Angel's Message Delivered (1:13-17)
 - c. Zacharias's Doubt; Angel's Reassurance and (Mild) Rebuke (1:18-20)
 - d. The People Waiting and Wondering (1:21-23)
 - 3. Elizabeth's Joy (1:24-25)
 - B. Announcement of the Birth of Jesus (1:26-38)
 - 1. Time, Agent, Location, and Recipient of the Announcement (1:26-27)
 - 2. Greeting, Reaction, and Assurance (1:28-30)
 - 3. The Message Is about Jesus Christ (1:31-33)
 - 4. Mary's Reaction, Angel's Explanation, Mary's Submission (1:34-38)
 - C. Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)
 - D. John the Baptist: the Birth and the *Benedictus* (1:57-80)
 - 1. Birth and Naming of John by Elizabeth (1:57-66)
 - 2. The *Benedictus* of Zacharias (1:67-80)
 - E. Birth of Jesus; Visitations of Angels and Shepherds (2:1-20)
 - 1. Birth of Jesus (2:1-7)
 - 2. Visitation of the Angels to the Shepherds (2:8-14)
 - 3. Visitation of the Shepherds (2:15-20)
 - F. Scene at the Circumcision of Jesus (2:21-39)
 - G. Boyhood of Jesus (2:40-52)
- III. Transition to Ministry (3:1–4:13)
 - A. Preparation by the Forerunner: John the Baptist (3:1-20)
 - B. Preparation of Jesus (3:21–4:13)
- IV. The Great Galilean Ministry (4:14–9:62)
 - A. Jesus in Galilee and the Synagogue in Nazareth (4:14-30)
 - 1. Jesus in Galilee (4:14-15)
 - 2. Jesus in the Synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30)
 - B. Jesus' Ministry Is Powerful (4:31-44; 5:12-26)
 - C. Jesus Calling His First Disciples (5:1-11; 27-28; 6:12-16)
 - 1. Jesus Called Simon (Peter), James and John, Levi (Matthew) (5:1-11, 27-28)
 - 2. Jesus Called the Twelve to Be Apostles (6:12-16)
 - D. Jesus' Ministry Was Contrary to Expectation (5:29–6:11)
 - E. Jesus' Teaching Was Contrary to Expectation (6:17-49)
 - 1. Sermon on the Level Place (6:17-38)
 - 2. Three Warnings for Disciples (6:39-49)
 - F. "Who Is Jesus?" His Identity Revealed (7:1–8:3)
 - 1. Jesus Healed the Centurion's Servant (7:1-10)
 - 2. Jesus Healed a Widow's Son (7:11-17)
 - 3. Three Episodes Concerning John the Baptist (7:18-35)
 - a. John's Questions about Jesus Are Asked and Answered (7:18-23)

- b. Jesus' Praise of John (7:24-30)
 - c. Jesus' Rebuke of that Generation (7:31-35)
 - 4. Jesus: At Dinner and Anointed; Parable of the Two Debtors (7:36-50)
 - 5. Jesus Is Ministered to by Certain Women (8:1-3)
 - G. Jesus' Teaching in Parables (8:4-21)
 - 1. Parable of the Soils (8:4-15)
 - 2. Parable of the Lamp (8:16-18)
 - 3. Jesus' True Family (8:19-21)
 - H. Jesus: the Master (8:22-56)
 - 1. Jesus Stilled the Storm (8:22-25)
 - 2. Jesus Cast Demons Out of a Man and Into Swine (8:26-39)
 - 3. Jesus Healed Woman with Hemorrhages; Raised Little Girl from the Dead (8:40-56)
 - I. Jesus' Disciples (9:1-62)
 - 1. Mission of the Twelve: A Mission for Disciples (9:1-10a)
 - 2. A Lesson for Disciples: Feeding Five Thousand (9:10b-17)
 - 3. A Disciple's Confession (9:18-22)
 - 4. On Discipleship: Definition, Motivation, and Expectation of a True Disciple (9:23-27)
 - 5. Transfiguration: An Event and Word to Assure the Disciples (9:28-36)
 - 6. Healing a Demon-Possessed Son: A Test for Disciples (9:37-42)
 - 7. Four Failures of Jesus' Disciples (9:43-56)
 - 8. Three Failures of Discipleship (9:57-62)
 - V. Journey to Jerusalem (10:1-19:27)
 - A. More on Missions; More on Discipleship (10:1-24)
 - 1. The Mission of the Seventy (10:1-16)
 - 2. Two Lessons on Discipleship (10:17-24)
 - a. Joys of Being a Disciple (10:17-20)
 - b. Blessings of Being a "Knowing" Disciple (10:21-24)
 - B. Lawyer with Questions; Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)
 - 1. The Lawyer's Questions (10:25-29)
 - 2. The Good Samaritan (10:30-37)
 - C. Martha and Mary (10:38-42)
 - D. Teaching on Prayer (11:1-13)
 - E. A Series of Conflicts (11:14-54)
 - 1. The Question of Jesus' Power (11:14-36)
 - a. Satan or God? (11:14-23)
 - b. Four Explanations (11:24-36)
 - 2. Jesus, a Pharisee, and the Discourse of Woes (11:37-54)
 - F. Jesus Warns His Disciples (12:1-21)
 - 1. Warning about Hypocrisy (12:1-3)
 - 2. Warning about the Fear of Man (12: 4-7)
 - 3. Warning about Confessing and Denying (12:8-12)
 - 4. Warning about Worldliness—the Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21)
 - G. Lessons on the "Eternal Perspective" (12:22-48)
 - 1. Do Not Worry (12:22-34)
 - 2. Be Ready, Be Faithful (12:35-48)
 - H. Six Serious Matters for Disciples to Consider (12:49-13:9)
 - I. Six Features of Jesus' Ministry (13:10-35)
 - J. Jesus at Dinner with a Pharisee (14:1-24)
 - K. Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship (14:25-35)
 - L. Three Parables of "Lost and Found" (15:1-32)
 - 1. Setting of the Parables (15:1-2)
 - 2. Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:3-7)

3. Parable of the Lost Coin (15:8-10)
4. Parable of the Lost Son (15:11-32)
 - a. The First Son (15:12-24)
 - b. The Gracious Father (15:20b-24)
 - c. The Second Son (15:25-30)
 - d. The Gracious Father (15:31-32)
- M. Parables and Teaching for Disciples and Pharisees (16:1-31)
 1. Parable of the Dishonest Manager (16:1-9)
 2. Teaching about Faithfulness in Service (16:10-13)
 3. Corrections for the Pharisees (16:14-18)
 4. Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
- N. Jesus Warning, Teaching, Healing (17:1-19)
 1. Sayings for Disciples (17:1-10)
 2. Healings of the Ten Lepers (17:11-19)
- O. Jesus' Teaching on the Kingdom and the Second Coming (17:20-37)
 1. The Pharisees' Question (17:20-21)
 2. The Instruction to the Disciples (17:22-37)
- P. Two Parables Concerning Prayer and Righteousness (18:1-14)
 1. The Widow and the Judge (18:1-8)
 2. The Pharisee and the Tax-Collector (18:9-14)
- Q. Jesus Meets Children, a Wealthy Ruler, a Blind Man, and Zaccheus (18:15-30; 18:35-19:10)
- R. Jesus Foretold His Death and Resurrection (18:31-34)
- S. The Parable of the Ten Minas (19:11-27)
- VI. Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38)
 - A. Triumphal Entry (19:29-44)
 1. Preparations for the Entry (19:29-34)
 2. The Event Itself (19:35-40)
 3. Jesus' Lament Over the City (19:41-44)
 - B. Jesus and the Religious Leaders (19:45-21:4)
 1. How the Conflict Began (19:45-48)
 2. How the Conflict Continued (20:1-21:4)
 - C. Jesus' Teaching about the Tribulation and the Second Coming (21:5-38)
 1. The Disciples' Questions (21:5-7)
 - a. Exchange that Prompted the Questions (21:5-6)
 - b. The Two Questions (21:7)
 2. Jesus' Answers to the Questions: The Tribulation (21:8-24)
 - a. Warning to Be Wary about Signs (21:8-11)
 - b. Warning and Encouragement Regarding Persecution (21:12-19)
 - c. Warning about Jerusalem (21:20-24)
 3. Jesus' Answers to the Questions: The Second Coming (21:25-36)
 - a. Times of Upheaval (21:25-26)
 - b. The Coming Itself (21:27)
 - c. A Word of Encouragement to Be Hopeful (21:28)
 - d. Words of Warning to Be Alert and Expectant (21:29-36)
 4. Summary of the Temple Ministry (21:37-38)
- VII. The Passion and the Resurrection (22:1-24:53)
 - A. Plot to Murder Jesus (22:1-6)
 1. The Plotters (22:1-2)
 2. The Traitor (22:3-6)
 - B. Upper Room (22:7-38)
 1. Preparations for Passover (22:7-13)
 2. Institution of the Lord's Supper (22:14-20)
 3. Four Post-Supper Conversations (22:21-38)
 - a. The Betrayer Announced (22:21-23)

- b. Debate Over Who Is the Greatest (22:24-30)
- c. Jesus Predicts Peter's Denials (22:31-34)
- d. Jesus Attempted to Prepare His Men for the Coming Conflict (22:35-38)
- C. Three Heartbreaking Scenes (22:39-62)
 - 1. Prayer in Gethsemane (22:39-46)
 - 2. Arrest in the Garden (22:47-53)
 - 3. Denial in a Courtyard (22:54-62)
- D. Four Unjust Trials (22:63-23:25)
 - 1. Jesus before the Sanhedrin (22:63-71)
 - 2. Jesus before Pilate the First Time (23:1-7)
 - 3. Jesus before Herod (23:8-12)
 - 4. Jesus before Pilate the Second Time (23:13-25)
- E. Crucifixion and Burial (23:26-56)
 - 1. The Cross (23:26-49)
 - a. On the Way to the Cross (23:26-32)
 - b. Crucifixion (23:33-38)
 - c. Conversation with Criminals (23:39-43)
 - d. The Conclusion of Jesus' Passion (23:44-49)
 - 2. The Tomb (23:50-56)
- F. Resurrection, Commission, Ascension (24:1-53)
 - 1. Resurrection (24:1-46)
 - a. At the Tomb (24:1-12)
 - b. On the Road to Emmaus (24:13-32)
 - c. With the Disciples in Jerusalem (24:33-46)
 - 2. Commission (24:47-49)
 - 3. Ascension (24:50-53)

COMMENTARY ON LUKE

I. Luke's Prologue (1:1-4)

This "prologue" is one long, complicated sentence. A prologue is typical in ancient literary pieces, but Luke's is atypically brief and quite "formal." There is a balance to this prologue: "a protasis in 1:1-2 ['in as much as' or *'since'*] in which Luke announced his motivation for writing this gospel and an apodosis in 1:3-4 ['it seemed good to me also']" or *therefore* (Bock, *Luke*, 51) in which he explained his purpose for writing.

A. Luke's Motive and Method (1:1-3a)

1:1-3a. Luke noted that there were other accounts—both written and oral. While he made no negative judgment about these accounts, it may be assumed that he thought (1) they were perhaps a bit fragmentary (since **many have undertaken** the task to tell the story); (2) since they were from **eyewitnesses** and therefore most likely being passed on through oral tradition, they needed to be written down; (3) they were perhaps in danger of being lost; (4) each of these other accounts was incomplete standing alone—one account that collected all

the information needed to be compiled. Luke proposed to **compile an account** of his own and **write it out** in a careful and orderly way. He wanted to provide his reader(s) a clear and complete record of the **things accomplished among us**. He was referring, of course, to the events of Jesus' life. The term **accomplished** could be translated "fulfilled" and suggests that the events of Jesus' life are the fulfillment of God's OT promises.

Luke related that he had **investigated everything carefully**, that is, he had gone back to the **beginning**, he had checked the sources, and perhaps he even consulted with the **eyewitnesses**. What Luke recorded in the birth narratives is unique to his gospel, information that only those who were there would know. Luke may have spoken to Jesus' immediate family (even Mary herself). The detailed content of the birth narratives makes this possibility plausible.

B. Luke's Reader(s) (1:3b)

1:3b. Many ancient literary works had prologues and were addressed to important

personages, so Luke addressed his work to **Theophilus**—“Lover of God.” This was a name “used by both Greeks and Jews” making it difficult to establish the person’s ethnic identity (Bock, *Luke*, 64), but most likely he was a Gentile. Some have suggested this was a generic title, a way for Luke to address any interested but anonymous reader, or “symbolic of ‘pious Christians’” (Bock, *Luke*, 63). However, the direct address—**you**—makes it more probable that the one addressed was a specific individual. Some have suggested that he was a Gentile who had already “been taught” (1:4) some truth about Jesus and was perhaps already a Christian. Others have proposed that “been taught” here means merely that this man had “heard about” Jesus, and Luke was attempting to bring him to faith in Jesus. **Most excellent** was an honorific title for a Roman official (as Paul called the Roman governors in Ac 23:26; 24:3; 26:25), so perhaps Theophilus was a Roman official who had heard about this new faith but did not yet believe.

Theophilus would be the prototype of the larger audience, so that the Greco-Roman world would hear of the Son of Man. In any case, Luke’s intent was to explain to **Theophilus** how he, as a Gentile, fit into the larger narrative of Jesus and His fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. Luke had the wider Gentile world in mind as he wrote. He wanted all the nations to know that Jesus Christ, “the Son of Man, had come to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10). Some suggest that Theophilus was Luke’s patron, who supported him so Luke could do his research and write his book. However, Bock notes, “there is no clear way to determine this point” (Bock, *Luke*, 63).

C. Luke’s Purpose (1:4)

1:4. Luke explained that he undertook this task **so that you may know the exact truth** about the life of Jesus—the events and His teaching. Luke was not suggesting that the other gospels had been deficient in any way. His objective was comprehensive precision. The matters at hand—the birth, the life, the teaching, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ—are so eternally vital that Luke wanted to make sure his readers **know the exact truth**.

II. The Birth and Childhood Narratives (1:5–2:52)

A. Announcement of the Birth of the Forerunner (1:5–25)

Luke began his gospel with the story of the forerunner—John the Baptist. In a sense this

takes the reader back to the end of the OT and ties the story of Jesus to the messianic expectation of the OT (cf. Is 40:1-3; Mal 4:5-6).

1. Introduction of a Faithful Couple:

Zacharias and Elizabeth (1:5-7)

a. A Despotism Ruler (1:5a)

1:5a. By starting with a reference to **Herod the Great, king of Judea**, Luke tied the events of his narrative to the narrative of the wider world (cf. 2:1-2; 3:1). Luke was not just trying to provide a chronology of the events he recorded, but he also was saying in effect, “The matters of which I am writing have a place in the larger narrative of world history.” John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth were born in turbulent times—times not necessarily favorable to those who sought to live a life faithful to the God of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, even in such times, God was working out His purposes through His faithful people.

b. A “Priestly” Couple (1:5b)

1:5b. Zacharias (“The Lord has remembered”) was identified as a **priest**—he was **of the division of Abijah** (cf. 1Ch 24:4-19, esp. 24:10). At this time the temple priesthood was made up of 24 divisions—16 from Eleazar (Aaron’s oldest surviving son; cf. Ex 28:1 and Lv 10) and eight from Ithamar (cf. 1Ch 24:4). Each division was named for one of the descendants of these sons of Aaron (cf. 1Ch 24:7-18), and **Abijah** appears as eighth in the list. Each division would serve “in the temple service for a week at a time, twice a year” (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992], 73). **Zacharias** was descended from a long line of godly priest-servants (cf. Neh 12:4). Likewise, his wife **Elizabeth** (“God is an [my] oath” meaning “as God is reliable, so is my oath”) was **from the daughters of Aaron**. Thus both husband and wife had “priestly credentials.” It was quite common for a priest to marry a young lady from the line of Aaron. Leviticus (21:7, 14) specifies that a priest’s wife must be a virgin. Since both Zacharias and Elizabeth were from the line of Aaron they would have expected from birth to be servants in Israel.

c. A Righteous and Blameless Couple (1:6)

1:6. The couple was described as **righteous in the sight of God**—or “justified” (perhaps an echo of Paul’s theology; cf. Rm 3–4)—or simply, this couple lived rightly, openly, and visibly, before God and men. They were **walking (living) blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord**. Luke was not

suggesting that they were sinless but they had a deep inner piety that manifested itself in outward behavior. They lived by the requirements of the law not to *get right*(eous) with God but because they were, in His sight (by faith Rm 3:28) *already right*(eous). The word **blameless** actually comes at the end of the verse (“requirements of the Lord—blameless”) and is emphatic.

d. A Barren Couple (1:7)

1:7. The significance of the statement **they had no child because Elizabeth was barren** was something Luke’s readers in that day would have instantly understood. This was a personal tragedy (see the stories of Sarah and Rachel in Genesis and Hannah in 1Sm 1). Fertility was understood as a blessing (see Dt 7:14; Ps 113:9)—barrenness was the opposite. Since **they were both advanced in years** it seemed the prospects of children and family life were now past for this faithful couple. However this condition set the stage for God to intervene. In the OT there were a number of births only God could accomplish—e.g., Isaac and Samuel. God often waited to do His work when human ability and temporal possibility were exhausted. Nevertheless, this godly couple remained faithful and obedient to the Lord, they continued to serve (see Lk 1:8), and apparently they prayed (see 1:13). Zacharias and Elizabeth were just two, quite normal, common people who, like many others in the biblical narrative, are outstanding examples of faithfulness.

2. An Angelic Announcement (1:8-23)

a. Zacharias’s Priestly Service Interrupted (1:8-12)

1:8-10. Now it happened (“It came to pass”) was an obvious way to advance the story. Zacharias continued to go about his regular duties **performing his priestly service before God** according to the regular schedule (1:8). Luke noted that at this time Zacharias was given a special opportunity (1:9-10). Due to the large number of priests serving in that day (as many as 18,000), not every priest could expect to serve in the inner chamber of the temple itself. The honor of this service was determined by lot twice each day, at sunrise and sunset. A priest would consider it the high point of his career, and it was never conferred twice on any one man. It was at this time, in the service of a humble priest offering the daily incense in the temple, which had been done day-in-day-out for decades, that God chose to break His silence and advance His program of salvation.

1:11-12. While he was engaged in this special service, an angel appeared to Zacharias (1:11). The detail that the angel was **standing to the right of the altar of incense** was something only Zacharias himself would have known, an indication of the care and detail of Luke’s research. Perhaps the angel stood there as an answer to Zacharias’s prayer. The **altar of incense** was one of the furnishings of the temple symbolizing the prayers of the people. Zacharias was **troubled**, and **fear gripped him** (1:12), an appropriate and reasonable response. The appearance of an angel was as unexpected in Zacharias’s day as it would be today.

b. The Angel’s Message Delivered (1:13-17)

1:13-14. The angel’s message to Zacharias had six parts: (1) a word to calm him, **do not be afraid**; (2) a word to encourage him, **your petition has been heard**; (3) a word of joyful news, **Elizabeth will bear you a son**; (4) a word to instruct him, **you will give him the name John**; (5) a word about his personal joy, **you will have joy and gladness**; (6) a word about the joy for many outside his family, **many will rejoice at his birth**. It would have been clear to Zacharias that this birth was significant beyond being the end Elizabeth’s barrenness.

1:15-17. The message of the angel about John himself (1:15) indicated three particulars: The angel indicated that John (1) would be great, (2) would drink no wine, and (3) would be filled with the Holy Spirit. In short, John would be a unique figure—unmistakably devoted to a unique and powerful ministry for the Lord. The angel’s message about John’s ministry in 1:16-17 indicated five facts about John’s ministry: Note facts #1 and #4 are related; facts #2 and #5 are the same; fact #3 is at the center and is a key “salvation historical” fact that said in effect, “Get ready! God is about to once again take up His program with the nation and advance His plan of salvation.” (1) John’s ministry will **turn many . . . back to the Lord** (1:16)—it will be a ministry of leading people to repentance. (2) John **will go as a forerunner before Him** (1:17a, emphasis added)—it will be a ministry of preparation for the Messiah. (3) John will serve **in the spirit and power of Elijah** (1:17b)—it will be a ministry of power and prophetic fulfillment. John will (4) **TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS . . . and the disobedient . . .** (1:17c; cf. Mal 4:6)—it will be a ministry of “reconciliation between families that occurs through the ministry of reform” (Bock, *Luke*, 88). (5) John

will **make ready a people prepared for the Lord** (Lk 1:17; cf. 2Sm 7:24)—it will be a ministry of preparation of the people to respond to the “Lord’s way of salvation” (Bock, *Luke*, 91). Thus the angel indicated John’s ministry would be empowered by God, undertaken in behalf of others, and focused on Christ—a pattern for all Christian service.

c. Zacharias’s Doubt; Angel’s Reassurance and (Mild) Rebuke (1:18-20)

1:18-20. Zacharias’s doubt was not serious but was notable in contrast to Mary’s humble acceptance and instant submission (cf. 1:26-38). Those who enjoy the Lord’s promises most assuredly are those who take Him at His Word most readily. The angel was **Gabriel** (cf. Dn 8:16; 9:21). Zacharias was assured that Gabriel knew whereof he spoke since he was one **who stands in the presence of God** (Lk 1:19a) and such announcements were apparently his special ministry. Zacharias ought to have been focusing on the divine “promise” of the message, not the human “problems” of the message. For his doubt Zacharias would be **silent and unable to speak** until the promise was fulfilled. This would serve both as a sign of the angel’s verity and a rebuke for Zacharias’s incredulity.

d. The People Waiting and Wondering (1:21-23)

1:21-23. The delay caused by the extended conversation between the angel and Zacharias began to cause some mild concern among the worshipers and Zacharias’s priestly colleagues who were waiting for him to reappear after making the prescribed offerings (1:21). It was customary for the priest to emerge and pronounce a blessing on the people. To their astonishment when he did appear he was **unable to speak** (1:22a). By some means it was conveyed to them that he had **seen a vision** (1:22b). Zacharias, no doubt, desired to relate his marvelous experience, but in spite of his attempts to communicate he **remained mute** (1:22c). After serving the rest of his priestly duties Zacharias **went back home** (1:23).

3. Elizabeth’s Joy (1:24-25)

1:24-25. With delicate simplicity Luke recorded that, indeed, **Elizabeth his wife became pregnant** (1:24). There was no supernatural “divine intervention” in this instance. Presumably, the pregnancy occurred in the normal course of human life and family. Nevertheless, Elizabeth clearly understood that this pregnancy was a favor (grace) from the Lord—**the Lord has . . .**

looked with favor upon me (1:25a). No reason is given for Elizabeth secluding herself. It might have been that, fearing a miscarriage, wishing to avoid the incredulity of friends and family, or some other anomaly, she wanted the pregnancy to develop sufficiently before she announced the good news. Luke’s point in this account was that the outworking of God’s purposes are not usually seen among the powerful in the world, or among the societal “movers and shakers.” They transpire and are observed at the level of the humble, the personal, and the private, among the faithful, the weak, the base, and the foolish (cf. 1Co 1:26-28) who simply serve, obey, and trust in God.

B. Announcement of the Birth of Jesus (1:26-38)

1. Time, Agent, Location, and Recipient of the Announcement (1:26-27)

1:26-27. The announcement came in the **sixth month** (1:26) of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. The agent was that same **Gabriel** (cf. 1:19a), and the location was **a city in Galilee . . . Nazareth** (1:26). The region was “not notable.” The city (*polis*) was actually more of a rural village, and the best estimate of Nazareth’s population at that time is that it had no more than 400 people. Like the recipient herself (Mary), the location is humble and obscure, contrary to expectation. The most astonishing and world-altering event in human history, the incarnation of the Son of God, was going to happen, not in a great city or region of power, but in the obscure and humble locations of Nazareth and Bethlehem. The recipient is identified by name—**Mary** (1:27c). Her name meant something like “excellence.” The order of the information given about Mary is peculiar. Typically her name would be given first, then her associations, then the more personal details. However, Luke identified her first as a **virgin** (mentioned twice; the Gk. term *parthenos* is unambiguous, meaning that she had never had sexual relations) who was **engaged** (better “betrothed”) to a man named **Joseph**. Luke, unlike Matthew (Mt 1:22-23), does not refer to the prophecy of Is 7:14, but the point is unmistakable—the impending birth was something only God could accomplish and it would be in fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Her betrothed is identified as one of the **descendants of David**.

2. Greeting, Reaction, and Assurance (1:28-30)

1:28-30. The angel began with two alliterative terms (*chaire, kecharitomene*), **Greetings, favored**

one—literally, “Grace to you, graced one.” She was assured **the Lord (Kyrios) is with you**. This note is actually rich with significance—**with you** is emphatic. Mary’s reaction, in contrast to that of Zacharias, was not fear but thoughtful questioning. She **kept pondering what kind of salutation this was**, trying to think about the import of the words themselves, mulling them over. The angel’s **Do not be afraid, Mary** (1:30) is literally, “Stop being afraid.” His words **you have found favor with God** convey no mere pleasant sentiment—they indicated a divine intention to use this “favored one” in some important way.

3. The Message Is about Jesus Christ (1:31-33)

1:31-33. The angel’s message began with revealing the virgin birth and the name of the Child—**you shall name Him Jesus** (1:31). The transcendent significance of the Child was related: His person—**He will be great** (1:32a); His relation to God—**He will be called the Son of the Most High** (1:32b; a way of saying He is the “Son of God”), and His purpose—**the Lord God (Yahweh of the OT) will give Him the throne of His father David** (1:32c). This child will be the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant promises (1:33; cf. 2Sm 7) and the OT promises of the literal earthly kingdom for the nation of Israel (see also the comments on Mt 3:1-4).

4. Mary’s Reaction, Angel’s Explanation, Mary’s Submission (1:34-38)

1:34-38. While the angel had been relating the transcendent significance of this child, Mary had been stuck on the first point—the matter of her pregnancy! Unlike Zacharias’s, Mary’s response was not an expression of disbelief but only a question of process—**How can this be?** (1:34). The angel’s explanation was delicate, simple, and effective. The child will be the offspring of this young woman and the **power of the Most High** (1:35). This indicates He will be (fully) man and **the Son of (fully) God** (1:35c). **Holy Child** (1:35) indicates, among other things, that this child would not possess a sin nature and was holy from the moment of conception. To encourage her, the angel told Mary of Elizabeth’s pregnancy (1:36) and reassured her that **nothing will be impossible with God** (1:37). Mary’s humble submission (1:38) indicates the reason she was chosen for this tremendous honor.

C. Mary’s Visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)

1:39-45. To confirm the word of the angel (cf. 1:36) Mary immediately went to visit Elizabeth (1:39-40). Upon hearing Mary’s greeting,

Elizabeth and her unborn child experienced the movement of the Spirit (1:41, 44b; see comments on v. 67), prompting Elizabeth to pronounce a blessing on Mary (1:42-45). This blessing indicated that Elizabeth understood the tremendous honor that had been conferred upon Mary and the significance of her child—namely, that He was her **Lord** (1:43b), indicating that Elizabeth understood this child to be the Messiah (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 137). Elizabeth also blessed Mary for her faith in the angel’s message (1:45).

1:46-56. Mary’s response to this confirmation of the angel’s word prompted a song of praise (1:46-55) known as “*The Magnificat*” (after the first word of this song in the Latin version). The song begins with a “Word of Praise” (1:46-47), continues with the “Cause for Praise” (1:48-49a), and centers on the “Object of Praise” (1:49b-55)—namely, the **Mighty One** (1:49a), the One whose name is **holy** (1:49b)—the God of the OT covenant promises. The song itself is filled with OT allusions (e.g., compare 1:46 with 1Sm 2:1; 1:47 with Ps 35:9; 1:52 with Job 5:11; 1:55 with Gn 17:19) and praises God for His mercy (1:50; cf. Ps 103:17; 54), His power (Lk 1:51), His justice and equity (1:52-53; cf. Ps 107:9), and mostly for His covenant faithfulness (Lk 1:54-55). For Mary the greatest significance of this impending birth was that God was about to fulfill His covenant promises to **Abraham and his descendants forever** (1:55).

D. John the Baptist: the Birth and the Benedictus (1:57-80)

1. Birth and Naming of John by Elizabeth (1:57-66)

1:57-66. The birth of John (1:57-58) was recognized by Elizabeth’s family and friends as a display of unusual **mercy** to her from the Lord. In accord with the custom of naming a child on the day of his circumcision (cf. Lv 12:1-3) and following the angel’s instructions (cf. Lk 1:13) Elizabeth named her son **John** (1:60b) instead of **Zacharias** after his father (as the relatives wanted to do, 1:59). Still pressing their case, the relatives inquired from Zacharias (that they **made signs** to him would suggest he was not only mute but deaf as well, 1:62), and to their surprise he confirmed in writing that the child was to be called **John** (1:63). Zacharias had turned from skeptic to believer, and thus he instantly regained his powers of speech and began **to speak in praise of God** (1:64). The first reaction of the people was **fear** (1:65a) because the whole event was awe-inspiring. Then the

news of the event spread to the whole region (**the hill country of Judea** 1:65b) because the event was remarkable. Finally the people wondered about this child because it was clear that **the hand of the Lord was certainly with him** (1:66)—he was extraordinary.

2. The *Benedictus* of Zacharias (1:67-80)

1:67-79. With his restored powers of speech, and being **filled with the Holy Spirit** (a manifestation that in Luke's writings always comes before a person speaks in some revelatory way; cf. Andreas J Kostenberger, "What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit: A Biblical Investigation," *JETS* 2 [1997], 229-40), Zacharias immediately turned to praising God. This song—a work of poetry—was intended to be the answer to the people's question in 1:66—**What will this child turn out to be?** The song, drawn mostly from quotations and allusions of the OT (e.g., 1:68 with 1Kg 1:48 Ps 41:13; 72:18; 1:69 with 1Sm 2:1, 10; Ps 18:2; 89:17; 1:71 with Ps 106:10; 1:73 with Gn 22:16; 1:78 with Mal 4:2; 1:79 with Is 9:2), is called the *Benedictus* (after the first word of Lk 1:68 in the Latin version). In one long sentence (1:68-75) Zacharias praised God for His work of fulfilling His covenant promises to David (1:69) and to Abraham (1:73). This work of "covenant fulfillment" was to be accomplished by the One whom John would one day announce and introduce to the world—this child (**you, child** 1:76). In the rest of the song (1:77-79) Zacharias highlighted the ministry of the coming One in terms of salvation, forgiveness, mercy, guidance, and peace.

1:80. The astonishing beginning of John's life was followed by many years of normal growth and development—physical and spiritual (1:80a). While he did develop his calling outside first-century Judaism's normal paths of instruction (1:80b), it is doubtful that John joined one of the desert sects of his day. While there were superficial similarities between John the Baptist and such groups as the Essenes and the so-called Qumran community (such as ascetic practices, the importance of baptism, and an eschatological message; cf. Stein, *Luke*, 129), John's ministry was much different. His ministry was personal and independent (he was not part of a group). His baptism was unique—an expression of repentance (cf. 3:8) and an initiation into the Messianic community (not a system for ritual cleansing and personal sanctification). His message was about the coming Messiah and the salvation He would bring (cf.

3:6; not about the coming apocalyptic victory of the "sons of light").

E. Birth of Jesus; Visitations of Angels and Shepherds (2:1-20)

1. Birth of Jesus (2:1-7)

2:1-3. Once again, Luke tied his history of Jesus to the history of the wider world (2:1). The time and nature of this **census** is uncertain, as is the exact reason for Joseph to be registered in **his own city** (2:3). **Caesar Augustus**, whose name was actually Octavian, was the great nephew of Julius Caesar. He ruled Rome for 41 years and was the emperor behind *Pax Romana* (Peace of Rome). Although shrewd and ruthless in his rise to power, he was wise and even benevolent in his actual reign. He accepted the (semi-divine) title of "Augustus" in 27 BC (which marked the beginning of his reign and of emperor worship). He died in AD 14 and was succeeded by his stepson Tiberius (see 3:1).

While **Quirinius** (2:2) may be a name obscure to us (aside from this reference) he was a well-known figure of the era. He was mentioned in Josephus (*Antiquities* 17.13.5 paragraph 355) and was a military man as well as **governor of Syria** (a much wider area than the present day country).

Apparently Caesar Augustus had ordered a number of regular and special censuses during his reign, so this is not out of the ordinary. The purpose of the census was to get an accurate record of a region's population for taxation purposes, and that seems to be the reason Joseph considered it necessary to travel to the hometown of his clan—Bethlehem. The problem is trying to fit Luke's census with those of the day (according to the extrabiblical records). In brief, we know of a census conducted by Quirinius in AD 6 (cf. Ac 5:37), but that does not seem fit with this census. Furthermore, the most likely time for Jesus' birth (all things considered) is between 4 and 6 BC—but Quirinius was governor of Syria much later than that. While more than a few commentators have offered possible solutions, some have simply suggested that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice, so there may have been a census before the (recorded) one that occurred in AD 6. Others have noted that the word **first** in Lk 2:2 (**This was the first census taken**) could be understood as "before," or "prior to"—hence, Luke is saying this census was before the (more famous one) conducted by Quirinius. All in all, the scene here is quite believable, and we can assume that the problems

could be worked out if we had more specific information. There is no reason to doubt Luke's accuracy (see Bock, *Luke*, 903-09).

2:4-6. For Luke the important point was that this decree, in some sense, required Joseph and Mary—who was engaged to him, and was with child (2:5) to travel to the city of his heritage—**Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David** (2:4). (The note that the couple was only engaged is subtle but clear—this child is not Joseph's—this birth will be a virgin birth). Luke did not mention Mc 5:2, but his readers (as many readers today) would already have known the name of the town and the significance of its association with David. They would have understood that a pagan emperor's decree (that moved an empire) was the means of a sovereign God to accomplish His perfect plan (by moving an obscure young couple to an obscure town to fulfill biblical prophecy).

2:7. With a surprising reserve and simplicity—given the expectations created in the first chapter—Luke described the birth of Jesus Christ—**And she gave birth to her firstborn son** (2:7a). The description—**wrapped Him in cloths** (2:7b)—depicted the normal procedure for newborns, who were bound in cloths to straighten their limbs, an act thought to help promote the health and strength of an infant's limbs. However, the detail—**and laid Him in a manger** (2:7c)—described an act that was completely contrary to expectation and seemingly utterly absurd! Tradition and familiarity with the story has removed the absurdity for many readers. Yet the idea that a young mother—even an inexperienced one—would place her newborn in an animal feeding trough is to be understood as entirely incongruous. The explanation—**there was no room for them in the inn** (2:7d)—tells the reader why there was a manger present, but it does not take away the inappropriateness of using it as a crib for a newborn. The scene is one of abject humility—of utter condescension. It is contrary to expectation so far as the arrival of the Messiah is concerned. Luke is letting the reader know from this beginning, this Messiah will surprise you; this Messiah will do the unexpected.

Inn (*katalyma*) is better translated “guest room in a private home” (cf. Lk 22:11, where the same word is used; see Lk 10:34, where a different word, *pandocheion*, is used for an “inn”). The home, probably belonging to a relative, where Mary and Joseph would have stayed, was full,

so they sought refuge and privacy either in an animal room adjacent to the home (analogous to an attached garage), or in a nearby cave used for housing animals. In either case, the idea of the holy family being turned away from an inn so Jesus would be born in a stable is probably not quite accurate.

2. Visitation of the Angels to the Shepherds (2:8-14)

2:8-14. In keeping with the theme of events that are “contrary to expectation” Luke recorded that the first persons to hear the “good news” of this birth were shepherds. Tradition has led many to think of this announcement as quite fitting, but in reality shepherds were the least likely persons to receive such a glorious announcement. Shepherds, especially those charged with the night watch, were among the most socially undesirable classes. They were considered disreputable and unclean, and they represented “the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came” (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 108). The glorious appearing of the (at first, single) angel was meant to impress these lowly shepherds with the glorious truth in the words—**for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord** (2:11). The three titles—**Savior, Christ, Lord**—appear in this combination only here in the NT, and they highlight His mission, His royalty, and His authority. The sign—the description of the circumstances of the child—would have made locating the babe rather easy; the song of the angels (**a multitude of the heavenly host**, 2:13-14) would have made locating the child rather urgent.

3. Visitation of the Shepherds (2:15-20)

2:15-20. Luke emphasized that the shepherds went in haste to find the child (2:15, 16). The scene of the shepherds' visitation of the infant Jesus highlighted two themes that run throughout Luke's Gospel: First, this Messiah will not come, or serve, or engage in His calling in a way that is “expected” by the religious establishment, but He will be recognized by the humble, the outcast, and the socially marginalized; second, this Messiah will cause people to “wonder,” to be “amazed”—here by the manner of His coming, later by His teaching and His ministry (cf. 2:33, 47, 48; 4:22; 5:9; 8:25; 9:43-45; 11:14; 20:26; 24:12, 41). Luke noted that **Mary treasured all these things** and continued to think about them (2:19; cf. 2:51). No doubt it was Mary's recollection of these events that informed Luke's narrative.

F. Scene at the Circumcision of Jesus (2:21-39)

2:21-24. Luke depicted Joseph and Mary as dutifully fulfilling the laws concerning **circumcision** (2:21; cf. Lv 12:3) and **purification** (after giving birth) (2:22; cf. Lv 12:1-8) and presentation (of the **firstborn**) (2:23-24; Ex 13:2, 12). Mary's sacrifice of **A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS** (2:24; cf. Lv 12:8) indicated that the couple was not wealthy.

2:25-39. The performance of these required rituals set up two encounters in the **temple**. The first encounter was with a man named **Simeon** (2:25-35). Simeon was described as **righteous and devout** (2:25) and one to whom the Spirit of God had given a promise that he would live to see **the Lord's Christ** (2:26). Upon seeing the child he recognized the fulfillment of that promise (2:29) and of the Lord's promise of salvation for **all peoples** (2:31)—both Gentiles and **Your people Israel** (2:32). Simeon had an ominous warning about this child as well—His life would be a challenge to the nation of Israel and would bring sorrow to Mary (2:34-35). The second encounter was with a **prophetess** named **Anna**. She was described as an elderly but devout worshipper. As with Simeon, when she saw the child she recognized that in Him was the fulfillment of the promise for **all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem** (2:38).

G. Boyhood of Jesus (2:40-52)

2:40-52. In this, the only account in the gospels of Jesus' boyhood, Luke described a time when the family visited Jerusalem for Passover (2:41). After the celebration Jesus was not found with the caravan heading back to Nazareth (2:43-44). When Joseph and Mary returned to the city and found Jesus, He was in the temple discussing spiritual matters with the teachers (and amazing them with His understanding 2:46-47). When His parents found Him, His mother chided Him, **Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You**. But His explanation—**I had to be in My Father's house** (2:49)—indicated that He was well aware of His own identity at an early age, and of the identity of His true Father, the Lord God. Other than this instance of "divine precociousness" Luke indicated that Jesus' growth and development were completely normal, except for the **grace** (2:40b) and **favor** (2:52) He enjoyed from God.

III. Transition to Ministry (3:1–4:13)

A. Preparation by the Forerunner: John the Baptist (3:1-20) (see also the comments on Mt 3:1-13)

3:1-20. Luke began the description of John's ministry by identifying the political and religious leaders of the day (3:1-2), once again tying the history of Jesus to the history of the wider world. John is identified as the **son of Zacharias** (3:2)—the same person from the earlier narrative (cf. 1:5-24, 57-80). He is the one to whom **the word of God came**, identifying him as a prophet. John is also identified by his message of **baptism of repentance** (3:3) and as the fulfillment of the prophecy of **Isaiah** (3:4-6; Is 40:3-5). His message was geared to the people who came to hear him. To the curious (Lk 3:7), to the presumptuous (3:8), and to the complacent (3:9) he preached a message of warning and repentance. To those who did repent (crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers who said **what shall we do?** in 3:10, 12, 14a), he gave practical advice to show the **fruits of repentance** (3:8). To those looking for the Messiah he pointed away from himself to One who was **mightier than** he was (3:16). John's ministry aroused the opposition of Herod, who had him imprisoned (3:18-20). John the Baptist epitomized faithful preaching, Christ focused ministry, and boldness in the face of opposition.

B. Preparation of Jesus (3:21–4:13) (see also the comments on Mt 3:13-17)

3:21–4:13. The baptism (3:21-22) of Jesus assured Him of the approval of His Father and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. While Matthew's genealogy established Jesus' legitimate right to rule on David's throne, being the royal line through Joseph—Solomon—David, Luke's genealogy (3:23-38) of Jesus proved His birthright (probably the legal blood line through Mary, through Nathan; 3:31b). Thus Jesus had both the prophetic and legal right to the Davidic promises. Furthermore, Luke's genealogy tied Jesus solidly to the family of man, Adam (3:8), since Luke traced the genealogy to Adam, in contrast to Matthew who goes only so far as Abraham. This was to emphasize the universal relevance of Jesus for the entire race. The temptation (4:1-13) proved His sinlessness and His power over Satan. The three temptations (in different order from that of Matthew, cf. Mt 4:1-11) were: (1) Serve Yourself (Lk 4:3-4); (2) Honor Yourself (4:5-8); (3) Be spectacular (be presumptuous and prove

Your self-importance; 4:9-12). Jesus countered each temptation with an appeal to Scripture (cf. Dt 8:3; 6:13; 6:16). These events proved Jesus was the right man, with the appropriate background, with the proper credentials, and with the desirable experience for the ministry He was about to begin. On the temptation, see also the comments on Mt 4:1-11.

IV. The Great Galilean Ministry (4:14–9:62)

A. Jesus in Galilee and the Synagogue in Nazareth (4:14-30)

1. Jesus in Galilee (4:14-15)

4:14-15. Luke introduced the great Galilean ministry of Jesus by identifying five general features of this period: (1) the location of this ministry was **Galilee** (4:14a); (2) the power for this ministry was **the Spirit** (4:14b); (3) the impact of this ministry was extensive—**news about Him spread** (4:14c); (4) the practice of this ministry was **teaching in their synagogues** (4:15a); (5) the reception of this ministry was generally popular—He **was praised by all** (4:15b).

2. Jesus in the Synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30)

4:16-19. Jesus' experience in His hometown of **Nazareth** (4:16) was in stark contrast to the last of the general features of His ministry just mentioned (4:15b). As was His pattern He took the opportunity to teach in the synagogue. His reading was from the scroll of Isaiah and the text was Is 61:1. This was a recognized messianic text and spoke of the Spirit-empowered Servant of the Lord (cf. Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12); His power was from the Spirit of the Lord, His ministry was preaching the gospel, His audience was the poor, the captive, the blind and the oppressed. His message was good news, release, recovery of sight, and freedom. In His reading of the text Jesus stopped after reading the first line of Is 61:2—**TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD** (Lk 4:19).

4:20-21. Luke's description masterfully conveyed the tension of the scene: Jesus closed the book, sat down, and calmly but firmly informed the group, **Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing** (4:21b). Note two key points: the place where Jesus stopped reading is significant—the rest of the verse in Is 61:2 describes the events that will take place at Jesus' second coming, namely judgment and full-orbed restoration of Israel (thus, had He read the whole verse He could not have said

that text was fulfilled!) Also, by stopping and applying the first part of the text to Himself (in His first coming) He is, in effect, claiming that He Himself will fulfill the rest of the verse (in His second coming). Here Jesus was making an unmistakable claim to be the Messiah. At the outset of His public ministry He answered the question "Who is Jesus?"—He is the Messiah!

4:22-30. Jesus might have legitimately expected that the application of this verse to Himself would be a cause for praise and rejoicing (as His impending birth had been for Mary and Zacharias). But He was well aware that His present ministry would not be universally well received even by the citizens of His hometown (4:22b). He quoted a proverb, **Physician heal yourself**. The proverb means, "Do yourself a favor—perform a miracle right here, right now, like the one you performed in Capernaum, so we can see clear proof that you are the One who fulfills this verse!" He also cited two OT examples of "prophetic rejection" that exposed their resistance and precipitated their rejection of Him (4:23-27). Even though the people of Nazareth wanted to kill Him, Jesus escaped and relocated the base of His ministry to Capernaum (4:29-30, 31) with occasional visits to synagogues in Judea (4:44).

B. Jesus' Ministry Is Powerful (4:31-44; 5:12-26)

4:31-44. Jesus' ministry at this time was characterized by (1) powerful, authoritative preaching (4:31-32), (2) demonstrations of power over the demonic forces (4:33-37; 41), and (3) demonstrations of power over disease (4:38-40; for the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, see the comments on Mt 8:14-17).

5:12-16. Two special instances of His power over disease are recorded in the healing of a leper (5:12-16) and healing of a paralytic (5:17-26). In the first instance Jesus was confronted with a man **covered with leprosy** (5:12; this was likely not the disease known as "Hansen's Disease" today but one of a multitude of skin rashes and diseases prevalent in that day). This condition would have provoked general revulsion and would have rendered the man ceremonially unclean, excluding him from society and from worship in the temple. The man's plaintive cry—**Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean** (5:12c) did not imply that he thought Jesus might be unwilling. Rather, it demonstrated he indeed believed Jesus had the authority

(**Lord**), the inclination (**if You are willing**), and the power (**You can make me clean**). Jesus' response confirmed the leper's faith in Him: (1) He touched him—an act of incredible compassion (the man may not have been touched by another human hand in years); (2) He spoke to him—I **am willing** (5:13b); (3) He healed him—**immediately the leprosy left him** (5:13c). Jesus' instructions to the man were probably intended to prove Jesus' deference to the law (5:14) and to forestall the kind of publicity that only served to confuse and confound His ministry (see also the comments on Mt 8:1-4).

5:17-26. The second special example of power over disease—the healing of the paralytic (5:17-26; see also the comments on Mt 9:1-8)—occurred at a time when, as Jesus was teaching (Luke informs us) He also had **power**. . . **to perform healing** (5:17c). This note is likely simply meant to remind the reader that healing power was a mark of His “messianic credentials”; cf. 4:18; Is 61:1. While He was teaching, several men brought a paralyzed man on a bed or cot. As the size of the crowd prevented them from getting to Jesus (Lk 5:18-19a), they made a hole in the roof of the room where Jesus was and deposited the man **in front of Jesus** (5:19b). On this occasion Jesus took the opportunity not only to demonstrate His power over disease but also to confirm His authority to forgive sin. Instead of immediately doing what the paralyzed man and his friends wanted, Jesus, **seeing their faith** (5:20a, seeing they believed He had the power and authority to heal), said to the paralyzed man, **Friend, your sins are forgiven you** (this need not suggest that the man's disease was caused by sin). This declaration provoked a reaction in the hearts (they **began to reason**) of the Pharisees in the crowd (5:21a). For them such a claim amounted to blasphemy because **God alone** can forgive sins (5:21b). Jesus offered a reasonable challenge to the “reasoning” of the Pharisees: to say **Your sins have been forgiven you** is just as easy to say as **Get up and walk** (5:23). The unexpressed point Jesus was making is if One can say to a paralytic “Get up and walk” and he does get up and he walks, that says something about the power and authority of that One—both to heal *and* to forgive sins. Jesus then explicitly claimed the authority to forgive sins (5:24a) by healing the paralytic (5:24b-25). The effect on the crowd provoked astonishment, fear, and praise (5:26).

C. Jesus Calling His First Disciples (5:1-11; 27-28; 6:12-16)

1. Jesus Called Simon (Peter), James and John, Levi (Matthew) (5:1-11, 27-28)

5:1-11. Jesus continued His teaching ministry in Galilee, right on the shore of the lake (5:1). It was at this time that Jesus met Simon (Peter), possibly because Jesus used Peter's boat as a preaching platform (5:3). When Jesus challenged Simon to continue fishing, even after an unproductive night (5:4-5a), it was a test to see if Simon understood who this man was. Verse 5 contains a fair amount of irony. Simon was the fisherman and knew fishing during the day would be pointless (fish feed on the insects that come out at night when it is cooler, and when it is darker so that they are less likely to be seen and eaten by other predatory fish). After all, Simon was the fish expert; Jesus was just a carpenter. What does He know about fish? But Simon complied, and his compliance led to a miraculous catch (5:6-7). Immediately Simon knew who Jesus was. Peter called him **Lord** (5:8a). Peter's reaction was not a command for Jesus to go away but an expression of his own unworthiness (5:8b). Far from disqualifying Peter, his recognition of Jesus' worthiness and his own sinfulness is precisely what made him an ideal candidate to be a disciple. Jesus reassured Peter and gave him a new assignment (5:10b), as He did with James and John (5:10a), so that they **left everything and followed Him** (5:11). The point here is starkly simple: a disciple is one who sets everything else aside (literally if necessary) and follows Jesus. In addition, if Jesus could make Simon successful at something Simon knew was impossible (fishing during the day), then there was an implicit encouragement for Simon that Jesus could also make him successful at **catching men** (v. 10).

5:27-28. The calling of Levi (Matthew) followed the same pattern: Levi was identified as a tax collector at work (5:27a). Nevertheless, Jesus called him—**Follow Me** (5:27b), and he did just that (5:28). His response was immediate and complete.

2. Jesus Called the Twelve to Be Apostles (6:12-16)

6:12-16. The calling of the first disciples was given greater significance by Jesus' identifying them as **apostles** (6:13)—ones sent out with a unique authority in Jesus' ministry and in the history of the church. These men were from all walks of life, from various social and economic

backgrounds, and from different hometowns. Yet they had at least one thing in common—they were devoted to Jesus and the work He had called them to do.

D. Jesus' Ministry Was Contrary to Expectation (5:29–6:11)

5:29–6:11. Luke recorded several scenes of Jesus' unconventional ministry (see also the comments on Mt 9:10-13). First, he recorded that Jesus ate with sinners (5:29)—despite the opposition it provoked (5:30). He did so because He saw His ministry as that of a physician who needed to have contact with the sick (5:31) and because he saw Himself as a prophet/evangelist calling **sinners to repentance** (5:32). A second unconventional feature of Jesus' ministry (see also the comments on Mt 9:14-17) was that he did not teach His disciples to fast (5:33). Jesus explained that this time in His ministry was not the time for fasting (5:34-35). He also explained that His ministry was not just a “patch on the old” but something entirely new, so old forms of “piety” were not appropriate (5:36-39). A third unconventional feature of Jesus' ministry was that He did not require the disciples to conform to the legalistic practices of the Pharisees (6:1-5). Finally, Jesus healed on the Sabbath (6:6-11)—even though this provoked the opposition of the Pharisees (6:11)—because it demonstrated Jesus' priority of life over legalism.

E. Jesus' Teaching Was Contrary to Expectation (6:17-49)

1. Sermon on the Level Place (6:17-38)

6:17-38. In this section Luke presented his version of the Sermon on the Mount (see the comments on Mt 5-7). Matthew placed this event on a mountain (Mt 5:1), but Luke put it on a level place. Some see this as a contradiction, but likely it was a level place on the top of a mountain. Three groups of people were present: a **large crowd of His disciples** (6:17b), a **great throng of people** (6:17c), many of whom had come to be healed (6:18-19), and the Twelve. Nevertheless, Jesus' teaching was directed at the Twelve (6:20a). In the first section, the so-called “Beatitudes” (6:20b-23; *makarios* means “blessed,” or “happy”; see the comments on Mt 5:1-6) and the “woes” (20:24-26), Jesus presented attitudes and values for His disciples that were contrary to expectation. Jesus' disciples should consider themselves “blessed” in situations that would otherwise produce sorrow (poverty, loss, persecution), for they knew that in the end they would have a **reward** in heaven. Likewise, they

needed to be wary of situations that produce temporal and temporary comfort, ease, and popularity. In the second section (6:27-38; see also the comments on Mt 5:43-48) Jesus laid down some “rules for living as disciples”: disciples must love, do good to, pray for, be generous toward, and be merciful and non-judgmental toward unbelievers. Such contrary-to-expectation living (1) contrasts with how unbelievers act (6:32-34), (2) conforms to the nature of **your Father** (6:35-36), and (3) is the way to be rewarded (6:37-38).

2. Three Warnings for Disciples (6:39-49)

(see also the comments on Mt 6:1-6; 7:7-27)

6:39-49. In concluding His instruction to the disciples, Jesus gave them three principled warnings using multiple illustrations. First, He warned against “spiritual pride” using illustrations of the “blind leading the blind” (6:39), a pupil and his teacher (6:40), and a ludicrous picture of a man with a log in his eye attempting to help a man with a speck in his eye (6:41-42). Second, He warned against “inconsistent living” (living “bad” and trying to produce “good”) using illustrations of two types of trees (6:43) and of various types of fruit-bearing plants (figs, grapes) (6:44). “Good” only comes from “good.” Third, He warned against “spiritual presumption” (6:46) using the illustration of houses: those “founded well” last, but those “founded poorly” do not (6:47-49). Disciples must not presume that a superficial relationship with Jesus will stand in times of distress.

F. “Who Is Jesus?” His Identity Revealed (7:1–8:3)

In the next section Luke drew together several events and encounters along with examples of Jesus' teaching to address the question of Jesus' identity further. Luke contrasted those who identified Jesus with those who failed to do so. The action took place in **Capernaum** (7:1).

1. Jesus Healed the Centurion's Servant (7:1-10) (see also the comments on Mt 8:5-13)

7:1-10. In this account of a healing the unexpected element is the centurion himself. This man—a Gentile (likely a Roman) was a centurion—a leader of soldiers (7:8a). A centurion had to be a tough, fair, and authoritative figure. This particular centurion was depicted as a loving master who was concerned about his sick slave (7:2), and was a **worthy** man, esteemed by the Jewish people under his jurisdiction (7:4), a man civil—even cordial—to the Jewish nation (**he**

loves our nation 7:5a), and a generous man (he **built us our synagogue** 7:5b). There is possibly an implicit fulfillment of Gn 12:3 here. Because the soldier was kind to the Jewish people, he himself received a blessing from the Lord. Furthermore, even though he apparently had never seen but had only heard of Jesus, he sent for Him to **come and save the life of his slave** (Lk 7:3b). Despite his own authority, the centurion was deferential, not considering himself worthy of a personal visit from the Master (7:6, 7). He displayed a great faith and an understanding of Jesus' authority and power (7:8b). For this he not only received an answer to his request—His servant was healed (7:10)—but Jesus commended him for his faith (7:9). Jesus is thus seen as One with authority, compassion, and power to heal—all qualities of the Messiah (cf. Is 61:1; cf. Lk 7:18-23).

2. Jesus Healed a Widow's Son (7:11-17)

7:11-17. As Jesus and His disciples traveled to a village called Nain (with a large crowd in tow, 7:11) they encountered another large crowd (7:12c) accompanying a funeral already underway (7:12a). The circumstances were doubly tragic—the deceased was the only son of a widow (7:12b). This meant the widow was completely destitute—no husband and no son meant no foreseeable means of support. Looking beyond the crowds, the sorrowful event, and the hopelessness of the circumstances, Jesus **saw her**. He **felt compassion for her**, and He spoke to her (7:13a)—no doubt this was a breach in the decorum of the sad situation. But His words were even more out of keeping with the event—He **said to her, Do not weep** (lit., “stop weeping” 7:13b). Then He stopped the procession altogether (7:14a). Jesus had happened upon this funeral, and He took the initiative to reverse the entire circumstance. He addressed the young man and commanded him to **arise** (7:14b). When Jesus returned the young man back to his mother, the crowd reacted with fear and praise. The estimate of the crowd was not complete—this man was not merely a **great prophet** through whom God had **visited His people** (7:16)—He was fully divine, the Son of God, the One with authority and power to raise the dead.

3. Three Episodes Concerning John the Baptist (7:18-35) (see also the comments on Mt 11:2-19)

The last reference to John the Baptist was in 3:20, which notes that Herod (Antipas) had “locked John up in prison.” Apparently, from

prison John had heard about Jesus' ministry—**about all these things** (7:18).

a. John's Questions about Jesus Are Asked and Answered (7:18-23)

7:18-23. These questions do not necessarily indicate that John was having a “crisis of faith” or had begun to doubt Jesus. He did have questions, and he logically and properly sent his disciples to Jesus to get the answers. It seems that while he was sitting in prison John wanted reassurance. (Perhaps he was thinking of the prophecy that the Messiah would “set the captives free”; Is 61:1), and he knew Jesus was the only One who could do it. As the disciples of John arrived at the place where Jesus was, it just so happened that **At that very time** (Lk 7:21a) Jesus was healing people and casting out demons. Jesus told John's disciples to report what they witnessed (7:22a) (e.g., **the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT**, cf. Lk 4:18 and Is 61:1; 29:18; **the lame walk**, cf. Lk 5:17-26 and Is 35:6; diseases are cured Lk 5:12-16; 17:11-19 and 2Kg 5:1-19; **the deaf hear** Lk 11:14 and Is 29:18; 35:5; 42:18; **the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM**, cf. Lk 4:18 and Is 35:5; 61:1. Note that Jesus did not mention the OT Scripture (Is 61:1) about setting the captives free at this juncture!). These were things the Messiah was expected to do and proved He was indeed **the Expected One** (Lk 7:19, 20).

b. Jesus' Praise of John (7:24-30) (see also the comments on Mt 11:7-15)

7:24-30. Jesus used this occasion to offer some words in praise of John. Jesus asked the crowds three versions of the rhetorical question, **What did you go out into the wilderness to see?** (7:24, 25, 26). A **reed shaken by the wind** was something pliable and bendable—John was not fickle or vacillating. A **man dressed in soft clothing** was someone refined who lived in comfort in **royal palaces** (7:25b)—John was tough and lived in the desert. So the answer to the first two questions was “No!” But John was a **prophet and more than a prophet** (7:26)—he was the forerunner to the Messiah (7:27). John was great because of his humility (cf. Jn 3:30) and because he fulfilled his mission for the Messiah—he pointed men and women to Messiah Jesus. Jesus' estimate of John was well received by the common folk (7:29) but rejected by the religious leadership (7:30).

c. Jesus' Rebuke of that Generation (7:31-35) (see also the comments on Mt 11:16-19)

7:31-35. Jesus' rebuke was directed at the religious leadership that had rejected John (7:31). His point was that neither John's asceticism

and stern message of the need for repentance nor Jesus' message of healing and hope (His welcoming of sinners) was satisfactory to the self-appointed arbiters of "taste" and "wisdom." The leaders were like "petulant children" who refused to play when John and Jesus did not play what they wanted (cf. Liefeld, "Luke," 8:901).

4. Jesus: At Dinner and Anointed; Parable of the Two Debtors (7:36-50)

7:36-39. The contrast between the common Jewish people who accepted Jesus and the leadership who rejected Him was starkly drawn in an encounter between Jesus and **one of the Pharisees** (7:36a). Jesus had accepted an invitation to dine with a Pharisee, and while He was eating (**reclined at the table** 7:36b) a woman, identified only as **a sinner** (7:37a), came to the house. It was not unusual to have uninvited guests standing at the perimeter of the banquet table, perhaps seeking to be noticed or to be offered some portions of the dinner. This woman, however, had come with a bottle of perfumed oil (7:37b) with only one purpose: to honor Jesus. Luke described her movements in meticulous detail to highlight the effect on the dinner party. Her actions of devotion (**weeping**—lit., "bursting into tears"—and positioned at His feet, **wiping** His feet with her hair, **kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume** 7:38) were heedless of all propriety—they were actions of uninhibited affection toward Jesus. The Pharisee's reaction was one of judgmental disgust. He (and no doubt others) thought to himself (7:39a) that if Jesus were indeed a prophet he would know what sort of woman (**she is a sinner**) was touching Him (7:39b) and that He would have refused her devotion and put a stop to this display.

7:40-50. Jesus responded to this unexpressed criticism with a parable, virtually asking the Pharisee, named **Simon**, permission to tell it (7:40). The parable involved **a moneylender with two debtors** (7:41a) One owed a considerable sum—a debt it might have taken years to pay back; the other owed a lesser sum—a debt that might have taken weeks to pay back (7:41b). Graciously the lender forgave both men. Jesus' question to Simon was **which of them will love him more?** (7:42). When Simon had given the obviously correct answer—the one forgiven more loved more (7:43)—Jesus applied the parable to the current situation. Jesus acknowledged that the woman had shown great love toward Him while Simon had shown

little respect for Him (7:44-46). She had been extravagant in her love—Simon had failed even at common courtesies. Her devotion was an evidence of her love, which was the outworking of her gratitude for being forgiven. When Jesus said to her, **Your sins have been forgiven** (7:48), He was not suggesting she had earned forgiveness by her actions, but that her actions were the loving evidence that she had been forgiven. To the consternation of the dinner party (7:49), Jesus pronounced forgiveness and confirmed her salvation (7:50).

5. Jesus Is Ministered to by Certain Women (8:1-3)

8:1-3. Jesus' mission involved much traveling and preaching (8:1a, b) (cf. Lk 4:18; Is 61:1), being diligent in His calling and assisted by the Twelve (Lk 8:1c). In all of this activity, several women supported Him (8:2-3). Women were held in rather low esteem in that day, but Jesus loved and sought out those who were outcast and downtrodden by the culture. Although He did not appoint women to positions of leadership or as His apostles, He treated women with respect and esteem, and they showed their appreciation by supporting His mission (8:3c).

G. Jesus' Teaching in Parables (8:4-21)

8:4-21. In Luke's gospel these two parables have specific application to the teaching of Jesus. Those who acknowledge and receive Him are the good soil—they "see and understand," and they "take care how they listen" to Him.

1. Parable of the Soils (8:4-15) (see also the comments on Mt 13:1-23)

8:4-10. The parable is divided into three sections: the parable itself (8:4-8); the disciples' question about Jesus' reason for teaching in parables (8:9-10); and the explanation of the parable (8:11-15). The parable itself is straightforward. A sower sowing seed would have been a common sight to Jesus' hearers (8:5a). Some seed fell **beside the road** (8:5b) on the edges of the footpaths where it was **trampled under foot** (8:5c), hence, ruined. This seed would also be exposed and therefore easily picked off by the **birds of the air** (8:5d). Some seed was sown (unknowingly by the sower) **on rocky soil** (8:6a) that was merely a thin layer of dirt over bedrock. Such soil had no depth to retain water, and plants that germinated there would perish from lack of **moisture** (8:6b). Some seed fell **among the thorns** (8:7a). This was soil that had (again, unbeknownst to the sower) the seeds of weeds already mixed into it. Since the weeds were

more aggressive they **grew up** with the good seed but eventually **choked it out** (8:7b). Finally, some seed **fell into the good soil** (8:8a); this seed thrived and **produced a crop** (8:8b)—the only seed to do so—and it was an abundant crop.

Jesus admonished His hearers to really listen to His teaching—**He who has ears to hear, let him hear** (8:8c). This may have prompted the disciples' twofold question: One, what did the parable mean? (the answer was to come in the final section), and two, (implied) why did Jesus speak in parables? (cf. Mt 13:10-17). Jesus answered in effect that His parables made it possible for the "fruitful hearted" (cf. Lk 8:8) and the "illuminated heart" (cf. 8:16) to really hear and understand while making it impossible for the "hard hearted," the "distracted heart" (cf. 8:5-7), and the "careless heart" (cf. 8:18) to "see, hear, or understand."

8:11-15. In His explanation of the parable Jesus made it clear that the seed was **the word of God** (8:11). The various soils represented various types of human hearts. In the Bible the "heart" is understood as the seat of human thinking as well as emotions (cf. Jr 17:9-10; Mt 9:4; 15:18). The problem with the first type of soil/heart was its hardness, which left it vulnerable to the influences and deceptions of Satan (Lk 8:12). The problem with the second type of soil/heart was that these people liked what they heard in the Word and responded to it for a time. However, they were shallow and there was no depth of root, so trials and temptations caused them to wither. The third type of soil/heart was "mixed" with **worries and riches and pleasures of this life** (8:14b). Whereas the demise of the seed in the case of the second soil/heart was somewhat sudden, the failure here was gradual. The good seed was **choked** out by **worries**—the cares of everyday life; **riches**—the goods of this life; and **pleasures**—not just sensuous pleasures, but the amusements of this mundane and temporal world. It was not necessarily the "big issues" that choked out the good seed but the life of the "everyday" that slowly overtook the heart and left no room for the more serious issues—eternal and spiritual matters—that had to do with Christ and sin and salvation. Only one type of soil/heart (8:15a) was a **good heart** (8:15b), and only such hearts **hold [the Word] fast, and bear fruit with perseverance** (8:15c). The bearing of fruit is the marker of the good soil and the evidence of genuine life (see also the comments on Mt 13:18-23).

2. Parable of the Lamp (8:16-18)

8:16-18. Using the metaphor of a lamp, Jesus revealed three qualities of His teaching: (1) it was itself fully visible and illuminating (of the heart/soil) (8:16), (2) it exposed what was hidden (it will expose what sort of "soil" one's heart is) (8:17), (3) it is to be heeded (8:18).

3. Jesus' True Family (8:19-21) (see also the comments on Mt 12:46-50)

8:19-21. Luke briefly noted that Jesus' family, while not neglected, was not favored over others. Rather, He gave His preference and attention to those who heard and recognized **the word of God** (8:21) in His teaching and obeyed it.

H. Jesus: the Master (8:22-56)

In the next section Luke depicted Jesus as the Master, highlighting His power and authority. Jesus demonstrated His power over nature in the stilling of the storm (8:22-25); His power over the supernatural when He cast the demons out of the Gerasene demoniac (8:26-39); His power over disease in the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage (8:43-48); and His power over death in raising Jarius's daughter (8:40-42, 49-56). The theme of "fear" was prominent in these events. Jesus inspired "fear" when He displayed His power over the natural (8:25) and supernatural (8:37). He quelled "fear" with His healing power (8:47, 50).

1. Jesus Stilled the Storm (8:22-25) (see also the comments on Mt 8:23-27)

8:22-25. Jesus and the disciples often moved from place to place in small boats, which had been familiar to them as fishermen. The scene depicted here was mundane and commonplace (8:22), and the sailing was serene enough that Jesus quickly **fell asleep** (8:23a). Soon, however (as was not uncommon on the lake), a **fierce gale** arose (8:23b), and the boat was in danger of capsizing (8:23c). Amazingly, Jesus was still asleep and these experienced—but terrified—fishermen frantically awakened Him (8:24a). Their panicky address to Him—**Master, Master** (8:24b)—was one that Luke probably intentionally recorded to highlight the reality of His person, a reality He was about to prove. He was indeed the Master! Upon rising He **rebuked the wind and the surging waves** (8:24c), and they simply **stopped** (8:24d). The unnatural calm and His gentle rebuke to them—**Where is your faith?** (8:25a)—unnerved them more than the natural wind and waves. They were **fearful and amazed** (8:25b). While their own question was for them a genuine one (8:25c),

in Luke's account it was rhetorical—He was the Master, and the Lord.

2. Jesus Cast Demons Out of a Man and Into Swine (8:26-39) (see also the comments on Mt 8:28-34)

8:26-39. The eventful boat ride ended at a place Luke identified as **the country of the Gerasenes** (8:26). The exact location is disputed. Likely, this was in the Decapolis, a community of 10 Roman cities, nine of which were on the eastern side of the Jordan River. That this was a Gentile area explains the presence of the swineherds who appear later in the narrative. There Jesus and the disciples immediately encountered a man whose spiritual condition was dire—**possessed with demons**, whose physical condition was destitute (he had no clothes), and whose social condition left him isolated—no house, living **in the tombs** (8:27). Upon seeing Jesus, the man cried out, addressing Jesus in terms that indicated His divine Sonship and majesty, and begging Jesus not to **torment** him (8:28). These statements were actually the voices of the demons, who had abused the man for some time (8:29). The man was actually possessed by many demons—**Legion** (8:30). Apparently not wanting to be disembodied—a prelude to ultimate punishment in the **abyss** (8:31)—but nevertheless knowing they were powerless to resist His command to leave the man (8:29), the demons requested to be cast into a herd of **swine** (8:32a). When Jesus had permitted it (8:32b) they entered the swine, and the maddened animals rushed into the lake and drowned (8:33). News of the event spread rapidly (8:34). Rather than marveling at the liberation and restoration of the now demon-delivered man (8:36), whom they surely all knew well (8:35b), the residents were fearful and requested that Jesus **leave** their country (8:37). These people were among the many who “saw but did not see, nor did they understand.” In one last scene, Luke described how the demon-delivered man requested to go with Jesus (8:38). He was denied, but he was given the task of spreading the message of the **great things** God had done for him (8:39). It was important that a witness to the Lord remain even in this country that had turned Jesus away.

3. Jesus Healed Woman with Hemorrhages; Raised Little Girl from the Dead (8:40-56) (see also the comments on Mt 9:18-26)

8:40-42. In the next account Luke actually recorded two healings—one “unintentional”

and one plainly “intentional.” Upon His return to Capernaum Jesus was welcomed (in contrast to the Gerasenes, 8:37) and was confronted by a man named Jairus (8:41a), **an official of the synagogue** (8:41b) and the father of an only **daughter**, who was 12 years old and dying (8:42a). He was desperate to have Jesus come and heal her (8:41c). Jesus agreed to this request, but the ever-present crowds blocked His progress on the way (8:42c).

8:43-48. In this throng was a woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years (the exact age of the dying little girl) (8:43), leaving her weak and ritually unclean (cf. Lv 15:19-25; see also Ezk 36:17; CD 4:12-5:17; 11QTemple 48:15-17; Josephus, *War* 5.227; *m. Nidda*; *m. Zabim* 4:1). Luke recorded that she **could not be healed** (8:43d; Mark added that she had spent all her money on physicians who not only did not help her but actually made things worse, Mk 5:26—a detail Dr. Luke left out!). Her plan was to touch His garment (cf. Mt 9:21) believing that in doing so she would be cured. This was a bold act—she risked rejection or worse. Her act could be considered an assault because she was unclean, and might render Him and others unclean. Nevertheless, she surreptitiously **came up behind** (Lk 8:44a) and without His notice **touching the fringe of His cloak** (8:44b). The fringe may have been the tassels worn on the four corners of one's garments to remind a person of the law (Nm 15:38-41; Dt 22:12). Luke wanted his readers to understand that there was no natural way Jesus could have perceived this woman's act. She was healed **immediately** (Lk 8:44c). Just as immediately, Jesus was aware that He had been touched, not just by the press of the crowd (8:45), but in such a way that healing **power had gone out** of Him (8:46b). His insistence, **Someone did touch Me** (8:46a), convinced the woman to admit what she had done (8:47a). In her fear (and perhaps shame) she confessed her act, explained why she had done it (8:47b), and reported her healing (8:47c). By compelling her to make a public confession Jesus actually completed her restoration for now she could freely associate with her fellows who would know that her uncleanness was ended. Jesus' blessing—the only place where He addressed anyone as **Daughter** (8:48)—assured her that because her faith in Him was genuine, her healing by Him was complete.

8:49-56. During this time Jairus had been waiting for Jesus to come to his house to heal his daughter. However, the sad report arrived

that the daughter had died (8:49). Before Jarius could react to the news he was reassured and encouraged by Jesus—**Do not be afraid . . . only believe, and she will be made well** (8:50). While the delay with the woman may have annoyed Jarius, now her healing by Jesus was an encouragement to him. Jesus' parting words to her about faith and healing were exactly what Jarius needed at that moment—faith (believe) in Jesus leads to being “made well.” Although Jesus was a “passive participant” in the healing of the woman, here He took control. “The timing may not have been what Jarius desired, but the events were still in [Jesus'] control” (Bock, *Luke*, 806). Jesus took only His inner circle of disciples—Peter, James, and John (those who were privileged to see the special demonstrations of His power, who would later understand what this power meant) and the girl's parents into the room (8:51). He rebuked the “professional mourners” (8:52a) and commanded them to **Stop weeping** (8:52b) as He explained that she was not dead but only sleeping (8:52c). The “laughter” of this crowd showed their disingenuousness—they were insincere mourners at best. Jesus tenderly took the child's hand and spoke softly to her—**Child arise!** (8:54). Jesus had been close to uncleanness when the woman touched Him. Now He deliberately touched a dead body, but His touch cleansed and healed. Again the healing was “immediate”—**her spirit returned** (8:55a; cf. 1Kg 17:21-22). She had indeed died, and then she **got up immediately** (Lk 8:55a). In a touch of realism, Luke recorded Jesus' instructions that she should be given something to eat (8:55b). When Jesus returned the girl to her amazed—and no doubt grateful—parents, He instructed them not to spread the news of this event around (8:56). Perhaps this was to help avoid the sensationalism that might have led the people in a frenzy to make Him king prematurely.

I. Jesus' Disciples (9:1-62)

In the next several sections the focus in Luke's account is on the disciples and issues of discipleship.

1. Mission of the Twelve: A Mission for Disciples (9:1-10a) (see also the comments on Mt 10:1-18)

9:1-5. Although there are noticeable differences between Luke's accounts and those of Matthew (cf. Mt 10:1-14; 14:1-14) and Mark (cf. Mk 6:7-16; 30-34), none of these discrepancies is serious enough to doubt the basic credibility of

the narrative. Jesus clearly headed this mission: (1) He called, empowered, and authorized it (Lk 9:1); (2) He set the task—to cast out demons, to heal, and to preach (9:1b-2); (3) He controlled the message—**proclaim the kingdom** (9:2); (4) He delimited the provisions for the mission (9:3)—this was to be no pleasure trip but a working journey—they were to travel light; (5) He instructed them on the procedures of the mission (9:4)—they were not to seek their own comfort or be concerned about their own popularity—they were not to play favorites for personal favors; (6) He dictated the terms of the mission (9:5)—they were not to stop and debate the message—they were not to seek revenge for petty slights, but they were to keep moving.

9:6-10a. The disciples' responsibility was to follow Jesus' orders. They were obedient and so fulfilled the mission (9:6). Herod was **perplexed** (9:7b) by the mission, indicating that it was having an impact. Luke recorded how Herod reacted to the events—**all that was happening** (9:7a). The strange rumors about Jesus that Herod heard were apparently also heard by the disciples (9:8; cf. 9:19), indicating that they were widely known. These rumors—especially those that suggested that John had risen from the dead—were particularly disconcerting to Herod, for he had had John beheaded and now, it seemed, another like him had already come in his place (9:9a). The note that Herod **kept trying to see Him** (9:9b) was an ominous foreshadowing of Jesus' trial before Herod (cf. 23:8-12). Finally, the disciples were successful in this mission (9:10a). When they returned the notoriety of their mission created a large interest in Jesus Himself.

2. A Lesson for Disciples: Feeding Five Thousand (9:10b-17) (see also the comments on Mt 14:13-21)

9:10b-17. The interest created by the mission of the Twelve resulted in large crowds following Jesus and the disciples, even as far as **Bethsaida** (9:10b). Jesus welcomed them, continuing to do as He had been doing—teach and heal (9:11). The presence of the crowd set the stage for an opportunity for Jesus to challenge His disciples to rest in their confidence in Him. Late in the day it became obvious that the crowds needed to be dispersed so they could find food and shelter (9:12). When the disciples urged Jesus to send the crowds away—an eminently practical suggestion—Jesus challenged the disciples: **you give them something to eat** (9:13).

The disciples, looking to their own resources, quite rightly observed that the few provisions they could muster were woefully inadequate (9:13). Jesus did not dispute this conclusion but instructed the disciples to have the crowd sit down in an orderly fashion (9:14), and they did so (9:15). This crowd numbering **about five thousand men** meant there were many thousands more counting women and children. Luke managed to build tension into his narrative by relating the details of Jesus' deliberate actions. He **took** the few provisions, looked up to heaven, blessed them, and broke them. He **kept giving** them—the ongoing action is the climax—to the disciples (9:16). It was the disciples who distributed the provisions, just as Jesus had commanded them, to the people. The lesson, intended primarily for the disciples, was, “Do not look to your own resources but look to and trust in Jesus' ability to use whatever resources you have to meet the needs of others” (see Stein, *Luke*, 272). The full satisfaction of the people and the excess abundance were residual reminders of Jesus' messianic power (cf. Ps 105:40; Jl 2:26).

3. A Disciple's Confession (9:18-22) (see also the comments on Mt 16:13-20)

9:18-20. In Luke's account this great confession of Peter happened during (or just after) a time of prayer (9:18). Jesus asked a preliminary question to set up the question He really wanted to ask: **Who do the people say that I am?** (9:18b). Once again (as Herod had learned, see 9:7-10) the rumors about Jesus ranged from the ludicrous (**John the Baptist**) to the hopeful (**Elijah**); this is understandable in the light of the prophecy of Mal 4:5) to the improbable (**one of the prophets** returned to life) (Lk 9:19). These answers do indicate that the people recognized in Jesus a “transcendent presence,” but they were wide of the mark, as the disciples knew. Jesus' direct question, **But who do you** (emphatically spoken) **say that I am?** (9:20a) received a direct and swift answer from Peter—**The Christ of God** (9:20b). Luke intended this confession to be taken at face value as the conclusion of one—a close and trusted disciple—who was in a position to know whereof he spoke. Jesus was indeed the Christ. The confusion of the people would explain to Theophilus and to Luke's readers why so many who saw Jesus did not believe in Him while the disciples were so confident in their convictions about Him. They were in the place to know (and the account of the transfiguration that follows reinforces that point).

9:21-22. Surprisingly, Jesus immediately

instructed the disciples **not to tell this to anyone** (9:21). The reason for this may have been that such information could be badly used either by Jesus' friends or His enemies, but the main reason for this instruction is explained in the next verse. If the disciples were to announce the Messiah had come, the people may have anticipated the political, warrior Messiah and have obstructed or misunderstood Jesus' ministry as the suffering servant.

It was at this crucial point Jesus made the first of several predictions of His passion (9:22; cf. 9:44-45). He told the disciples that He **must suffer many things** (9:22a). “He *must* suffer. Suffering for Him was no accident, but a compelling divine necessity. The cross was His vocation” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Luke*, TNTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974], 169), and He must not be prevented from accomplishing the work there—the very work He had come to do.

4. On Discipleship: Definition, Motivation, and Expectation of a True Disciple (9:23-27) (see also the comments on Mt 16:24-27)

9:23. These episodes about discipleship were placed around other events in the life of Christ, in which Jesus was directing more and more of His ministry toward the disciples. In light of the impending turn toward Jerusalem (cf. 9:51) and then just after that turn, Jesus took the opportunity to instruct His disciples (9:23a) on the meaning of following Him.

The definition of a true disciple may be understood in four terms: the disciple must have *desire*—**If anyone wishes to come after Me** (9:23b), must practice *denial*—**he must deny himself** (9:23c), must show *dedication*—**and take up his cross** (an act of submission; “the fundamental idea is of submission to another”; Bock, *Luke*, 853) **daily** (9:23d), and must accept *direction*—**and follow Me** (9:23e). The basic requirement of a disciple is to “follow Jesus.”

9:24-26. The motivation of a true disciple can be found in three principles: (1) the principle of the reversal of ultimate commitments—disciples live not for their own sakes but Christ's—**for My sake** (9:24); (2) the principle of the apparently disproportionate exchange—“This verse is essentially a proverb” (Stein, *Luke*, 279)—a disciple gives up the world (if necessary) for Christ (9:25); (3) the principle of reciprocal repudiation—a disciple knows that being ashamed of Christ will bring shame by Christ—that is, Christ **will be ashamed of him** at Christ's return (such a person will prove not

to be a true disciple and be lost) (9:26). True discipleship requires utter selfless commitment to Christ, repudiation of the world for Christ, and unflinching loyalty to Christ.

9:27. The expectation of a true disciple is life in Christ. When Jesus said there were some who would **not taste death** (9:27) He had in mind those disciples who were about to witness the transfiguration. (For more on the theme of discipleship see 9:57-62.)

5. Transfiguration: An Event and Word to Assure the Disciples (9:28-36) (see also the comments on Mt 17:1-8)

The transfiguration might well be considered the Father's answer to the question Jesus had posed to the disciples ("But who do you say that I am?" cf. 9:20). The Father's answer was the best informed and most precise of all! The event and the confirmation of Jesus' identity were intended to fortify the disciples' convictions about Jesus. This event was also meant to give encouragement to Jesus just as a major transition point in His ministry—the "journey to Jerusalem" (cf. 9:51)—was about to begin.

9:28-29a. Luke recorded that the events took place **eight days after** the events of Peter's confession and Jesus' instruction following that dramatic declaration (9:28). The apparent discrepancy with Mark (Mk 9:2, "six days") was due to different ways of reckoning days. Perhaps Mark counted only the days "in between" the events and Luke counted those days but also the day of Peter's confession and the day on which the transfiguration occurred. The point of the note (which is actually only to say "about eight days," NIV) is to tie Peter's confession (Lk 9:20) to the transfiguration (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 283). For this occasion Jesus took Peter, James, and John (as He had done at the home of Jarius, cf. 8:51). Their part was to observe and record this transcendent event (cf. 2Pt 1:16-18). There was no indication of which mountain was chosen for this happening. The traditional site of Mt. Tabor is unlikely because of its distance from the events at Caesarea Philippi. Mt. Hermon is more likely since it was a tall mountain and close to Caesarea Philippi. The initial reason for this interlude was prayer (Lk 9:28b-29a).

9:29b-31. Luke omitted the word "transfigured" (cf. Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2) and simply, if enigmatically, described the alteration in Jesus' appearance—**His face became different** (lit., "other") and **His clothing became white and gleaming** (Lk 9:29). The image was reminiscent of Moses'

face as described in Ex 34:29-35: "Moses' face shone." The term **gleaming** appears only here in the NT and has the idea of "emitting light," probably indicating that it was Jesus' body that was "shining" and not a change in the clothing. The whole scene was one of otherworldly, transcendent, "Majestic" (cf. 2Pt 1:17) glory. Instantly, (**behold**) two attendants appeared with Jesus, identified as **Moses and Elijah** (Lk 9:30b). Likely these two represented the Law and the Prophets—indicating that Jesus was the continuation of the salvation-historical program revealed in the OT. That they came to His transfiguration demonstrated His superiority over them—He was the fulfillment of what they had prophesied. Their conversation focused on His coming Passion—His death, burial and resurrection—to which Luke cryptically referred as **His departure** ("exodus" 9:31b) that He would soon **accomplish at Jerusalem** (9:31c). "Fulfillment is the key theme of this verse. The events discussed are part of God's plan, which will come to pass" (Bock, *Luke*, 869).

9:32-33. At this time the earthly observers, **Peter and his companions** (9:32a), who had been asleep (9:32b), were aroused and became **fully awake** (9:32c). They saw Jesus' glory and then two men (9:32d). They had been brought to the mountain for this event, and they had nearly missed it. The overwhelming splendor of the event and the heady privilege of seeing Moses and Elijah prompted Peter to speak—but he did so without thinking (**not realizing what he was saying**, 9:33c). His first expression was not inappropriate even if it was rather feeble: **Master, it is good for us to be here** (9:33a). Surely this was one of the most memorable events of Peter's life, and it was well beyond "good." His proposal to build three booths (tabernacles, 9:33b) was singularly inappropriate for three reasons: one, by suggesting **three tabernacles** he was essentially putting Moses and Elijah on par with Jesus (ignoring that only Jesus was transfigured); two, the suggestion of tabernacles indicated that Peter wanted to make the "mountaintop moment" last (but such moments are given not to divert one from service but to prepare one for service; and to "stay on the mountain" would make an end out of a means); three, this was not the fulfillment of the OT prophetic word—this was not the kingdom, and this was not the end of Jesus' sojourn.

9:34-35. Before Peter could finish his inappropriate suggestions a heavenly interruption

set him right. First, a **cloud** appeared (9:34). The suddenness of the cloud's appearance and the reaction of Peter and his companions signified that this was no ordinary cloud. It was none other than the outward manifestation of the divine presence (cf. Ex 16:10; 19:9; 1Kg 8:10-11). The **voice** that **came** from the cloud (Lk 9:35a) was unmistakably that of God the Father (since He identified Jesus as **My Son**, 9:35b). His designation of Jesus was intended to eliminate all speculation and provide rock-solid assurance of His person—He is **My Chosen One** (9:35c). Here the Father Himself confirmed what Mary and Zacharias had testified, what Jesus had claimed in the synagogue in Nazareth, and what Peter himself had so recently confessed: Jesus is the Promised One, the Messiah, and the Son of God. The Father's final command—**listen to Him!** (9:35d) had a double meaning: first, "Peter, stop talking and listen!" and in a wider sense, "Listen to the Word of Jesus." There is probably a subtle allusion here to Dt 18:15. Jesus is the prophet like Moses, the prophet regarding whom God through Moses commanded, "You shall listen to him" (Dt 18:15c; cf. also Ac 3:22 which indicates that Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy).

9:36. The dramatic scene ended with Jesus standing alone (9:36a). The mysterious nature of this event—understanding it would only be possible after the Passion of Jesus—caused them to keep **silent** about it (9:36b) for the time being.

6. Healing a Demon-Possessed Son: A

Test for Disciples (9:37-42) (see also the comments on Mt 17:14-20)

9:37-40. Jesus had no sooner descended from the Mount of Transfiguration (9:37a) than He was confronted with several situations that demonstrated the disciples' lack of faith, their slowness to learn, their pride, and their intolerance. The first situation involved a father and his **boy** possessed by a demon (**a spirit seizes him**) (9:38, 39). The picture Luke drew was chaotic. A large crowd (9:37b), apparently attempting to gain Jesus' attention, was hindering a distraught father from making his appeal to Jesus. He had to shout over the crowd (9:38a), "begging" Jesus to help (9:38b), and he was describing his son's sorry condition (9:39). Furthermore, he was lamenting the disciples' failure to deal with the demon (9:40).

9:41-42. Jesus expressed His exasperation as an aside, that is, it was addressed to no one in particular and to the entire group in general: **You unbelieving and perverted generation**

(9:41a). Having just come from the wonderful experience on the mountain to this chaos was a trial to Him, and He longed to be finished with His earthly mission—**how long shall I be with you and put up with you?** (9:41b). No sense of personal pettiness was expressed, but there was, no doubt, exasperation with His disciples' failure to help the man, weariness with His spiritual opposition (the demons), and grief for the plight of the man and his son. Nevertheless, He was instantly ready to serve—**Bring your son here** (9:41c). Jesus' power was evident in His rebuke of the demon (an obviously powerful demon by the demonstration that he made before he left the boy, 9:42a). Jesus showed His compassion by the way He gave the son back to the father (9:42b).

7. Four Failures of Jesus' Disciples (9:43-56)

(see also the comments on Mt 17:22-23)

9:43-45. The effect of the exorcism on the crowd—amazement (9:43a) and marveling—(9:43b) seemed to have little effect on Jesus, who turned His attention to the disciples (9:43c). In four brief scenes Luke recorded failures of Jesus' disciples. First, even when He tried to get them to pay attention—**Let these words sink into your ears** (9:44a)—offering yet another prediction of His coming Passion (9:44; cf. 9:21-22), they failed to understand. In this instance, however, Luke recorded that **it was concealed from them** (9:45). This was a divine concealment. Had they understood what Jesus was telling them they may have lost all motivation, or they may have tried to take steps to prevent it. *After* all these things happened they would recall these predictions, and they would then understand that His death was no accident and He was always in control.

9:46-48. In the second of these four scenes of failure Luke recorded an argument between the disciples over **which of them might be the greatest** (9:46; see also the comments on Mt 18:1-5). Besides being particularly inappropriate right after Jesus had predicted His own suffering and death, their behavior displayed an appalling lack of humility and an unsavory exhibition of hubris. Jesus—**knowing** not just the content of the argument but **what they were thinking in their heart** (9:47a)—confronted this outrageousness by taking a **child** and standing him **by his side** (9:47b). His point here was not "disciples are to be as this child" but "disciples are to receive this child," that is, to serve and honor this child (9:48a). Jesus' point was that disciples must not be too proud and self-important to refuse to

act as a “servant to a child.” He concluded this lesson with the principle of reversal: the way to greatness in God’s economy is to be the least important in this present economy (9:48b).

9:49-50. In the third scene of disciple failures Luke recorded that an indignant disciple, **John** (9:49a), reported to Jesus that someone (not of the immediate group) was casting out demons in [Jesus’] **name** (9:49b). With apparently no sense of irony that this unnamed individual was apparently able to accomplish what Jesus’ own disciples had recently failed to do (cf. 9:40)—and that it was inherently a good thing to cast out demons, regardless of who was doing it—John informed Jesus, **we tried to prevent him** (9:49c), all because he was not one of them. The failure here was obvious. To stop the doing of good in order to preserve that work for the “right people” is not merely inefficient, it is misguided. Jesus corrected John and explained, **he who is not against you is for you** (9:50). If the ministry is good and right and true, the work should be encouraged not hindered, regardless of who gets the credit.

9:51-56. The fourth and final scene of disciple failure happened in Samaria. In this instance, as Jesus was beginning His journey to Jerusalem (9:51), He sent some of His disciples ahead to a village in Samaria **to make arrangements for Him** (9:52) to engage in ministry there. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, so the Samaritans (the longtime antagonists of the Jews) were not helpful, nor were they receptive to the idea of His visit (9:53). The first inclination of James and John for this affront was excessive retaliation, to say the least. They wanted to call down **fire . . . from heaven** (9:54). Jesus’ rebuke was swift and pointed—“This is not the way His followers behave” (Morris, *Luke*, 179). This sort of retaliation was exactly the opposite of the spirit and intent of Jesus’ mission. The lesson for these disciples was this: those who reject Christ are not the enemy. They are the mission field.

8. Three Failures of Discipleship (9:57-62)

(see also the comments on Mt 8:18-22)

9:57-62. These verses are addressed to potential disciples. In each instance the term “follow” is prominent. Three would-be disciples encountered Jesus. In the first encounter the would-be disciple made a rash commitment (9:57) but was reminded of the cost. Following Jesus meant having **nowhere to lay** one’s head (9:58). Those who follow Jesus may not enjoy the comforts of home in this life. In the second

encounter, the would-be disciple is called by Jesus—**Follow Me** (9:59a), but he revealed his misplaced priorities. The request for a delay to **bury my father** (9:59b) did not mean he needed to attend a funeral but that he needed to wait until his father died (perhaps to collect an inheritance), or perhaps to engage in a customarily protracted time of mourning. This explains Jesus’ response (9:60a). He was not making a callous demand of a grieving son but calling on this man to forsake any potential personal benefit and to put eternal loyalties and commitments above all other—even family—loyalties and temporal commitments (9:60b). In the third encounter the would-be disciple apparently just wanted to **say goodbye** to his family (9:61b). Jesus knew, however, that were the man to go home the strength of his commitment to **follow the Lord** (9:61a) would weaken and that he would be drawn back by the bonds of family love. Using the image of a plowman, Jesus admonished this would-be disciple to see that a plowman **after putting his hand to the plow** cannot **look back** (9:61c) and make a straight furrow. So a disciple cannot be “looking back” (to his or her old life, old friends, old habits) and be committed to Christ.

V. Journey to Jerusalem (10:1-19:27)

A. More on Missions; More on Discipleship (10:1-24)

This section continues the emphasis on discipleship—emphasizing the requirements, meaning, and practice of discipleship.

1. The Mission of the Seventy (10:1-16)

10:1-16. The mission of the seventy was similar to that of the mission of the Twelve (see 9:1-6). (There is a discrepancy with this number in several important Gk. manuscripts. Some have “seventy” and others have “seventy-two.” Either reading may be correct. There is no substantive difference for the meaning of the text with either reading).

Jesus was clearly in charge: He assembled the **seventy** (10:1), motivated them (10:2), and warned them of the dangers (10:3). As they were few in numbers their dependence on the **Lord of the harvest** (10:2b) was all the more acute. He instructed them to travel light for the journey (10:4), to seek peace with the people they met (10:5-6), not to seek personal advantages on the way (10:7), to accept whatever provisions were available (10:8), to offer their services freely and fully to all (10:9), and to eschew retaliation if

rejected (10:10-11). They were to know that ultimate justice would befall their opponents (10:12), so they could leave the matter of judgment in the hands of the Lord. Jesus offered an aside to these instructions—a pronouncement of woe on the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida (10:13), and Capernaum (10:15) for their lack of response to His ministry and message. It should have been a chilling warning of the inevitability of the judgment of the Lord—to which the cities of Sodom (10:12) and Tyre and Sidon (10:13) could attest. The time to heed the message of Jesus' messengers is immediate because they speak for Him (10:16). And those who speak for Jesus must not take rebuff personally—the rejecters are rejecting Christ (10:16). This mission was a foretaste of future gospel proclamation (cf. 24:46-48; Acts 1:8).

2. Two Lessons on Discipleship (10:17-24)

Those disciples involved in the mission were not mere spectators of Jesus' mission but participants—and they could expect the joys and blessings of being in His service.

a. Joys of Being a Disciple (10:17-20)

10:17-20. The seventy returned and reported their experiences **with joy** (10:17). They knew the joy of spiritual accomplishment (10:17a) since they had completed the task given to them. They knew the joy of spiritual victory (10:17b). Demons had apparently been cast out in the name of Jesus—**Your name** (10:17c). Jesus' response to this news is interesting, as He added a detail to their report of which they would have been unaware. While they were engaged in the mission Jesus saw **Satan fall from heaven** (10:18). The picture here is metaphorical: as the mission had spread, the influence of the enemy had diminished. "In that gospel triumph Satan had suffered a notable defeat" (Morris, *Luke*, 185). Furthermore, they had experienced the joy of spiritual protection and confidence (10:19). "The disciples are secure in God's hands" (Bock, *Luke*, 1008) (e.g., Dn 3:16-18); but mostly, they had come to a greater assurance of the joy of their own salvation (Lk 10:20).

b. Blessings of Being a "Knowing" Disciple (10:21-24)

10:21-24. In an expression of joy and praise that sprung from His deep relationship with **the Holy Spirit** (10:21a) Jesus turned to His **Father, Lord of heaven and earth** (10:21b) to praise Him for the gracious revelation of His plans and purposes—**these things** (10:21b). The Father had not given His revelation to the **wise**

and **intelligent** (to such persons these things were **hidden**) but to **infants** (10:21c). Jesus rejoiced that His disciples "knew things." They "knew" about the Son (10:22); they "knew" about things that **many prophets and kings** (10:24) had wanted to know. This "knowing" had come to them by the Father because it pleased Him to do so (10:21d) and they were blessed in it (10:23).

B. A Lawyer with Questions; Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)

1. The Lawyer's Questions (10:25-29)

10:25-29. Luke provided no background for this exchange. Apparently Jesus was teaching in a public setting when a **lawyer** (10:25a) (a scribe schooled in the law of Moses) asked Jesus a question, attempting to find a flaw in Jesus' teaching (**put Him to the test**, 10:25a). While the question itself is a good one—**what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** (10:25b), clearly he "was thinking of some sort of salvation by works and had no understanding of divine grace" (Morris, *Luke*, 187). Jesus' question in response was not intended to be evasive—**What is written in the Law?** (10:26a)—but meant to limit the discussion so as to eliminate from the outset fruitless exchanges and debates involving human speculations (cf. Ti 3:9). In His next question—**How does it read to you?**—Jesus was not asking for the lawyer's own relativistic take on the law but was conducting a counter-test. There was a right and a wrong answer to this question. When the lawyer quoted Dt. 6:5 ("love the LORD your God") and Lv 19:18 ("love your neighbor as yourself") (both cited in Lk 10:27), Jesus acknowledged that he had **answered correctly** (10:28a). However, Jesus' quotation of Lv 18:5—**DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE** (Lk 10:28b)—brought home the devastating point that perfect obedience to the law was not possible. At this point the lawyer should have realized the inherent error of "works righteousness" implied in his opening question. The lawyer was not ready to give up and so **wishing to justify himself** (10:29a) he evasively asked another question—**And who is my neighbor?** (10:29b). The lawyer was attempting to "limit the commandment" so as to make it possible for him to obey it sufficiently enough to merit eternal life. **To justify** may carry the same sense of "justification" in Paul's writings since Luke was one of Paul's missionary companions and would be steeped in the apostle's theology. Jesus exposed the fallacy of this tactic, and He answered the lawyers' question in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

2. The Good Samaritan (10:30-37)

Several important features of this parable (mostly lost on those who are familiar with its traditional title, if not its specific contents) would have been “contrary to expectation” for the initial audience. The setting (on the road traveling away from Jerusalem to Jericho), the indifferent characters (a priest and a Levite), and especially the hero of the story—a Samaritan—were all contrary to the expectations of a Jewish audience. Such a morality tale would be expected to have the characters moving toward Jerusalem, the initial audience would have expected that the respected religious leaders would be the heroes and the despised Samaritan a scoundrel.

10:30-37. The scene Jesus drew was credible—the 17-mile road between Jerusalem and Jericho (10:30a) had a reputation as a dangerous road (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 4.8.3. §474)—and it was tragic. A man was set upon by **robbers** and beaten and left **half dead** (10:30c). The appearance **by chance of a priest** (10:31) offered a ray of hope into this awful scene, but alas the priest **passed by** the broken figure. Perhaps he had concluded that the man was already dead and did not want to risk ceremonial defilement. Likewise a **Levite** (one who assisted priests in the affairs of their ministry) passed by the man (10:32). Depicting these religious authorities as callous and unfeeling would no doubt have scandalized the audience. They would have bristled at the notion that these respected authorities could be so unsympathetic. However, the appearance of the **Samaritan**, cast in the role of hero would have perplexed Jesus’ audience even more. The Samaritans and Jews despised each other (for the reasons for the hatred, see comments on John 4:4-6). Although the hatred ran both ways, Jewish people thought “such people were unclean and were to be avoided” (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1031). “Jesus’ introduction of the Samaritan was thus devastating” (Morris, *Luke*, 189-90). The actions of the Samaritan were compassionate, selfless, and costly (Lk 10:33-35). (None of the elements of this parable is to be taken allegorically.)

Jesus concluded with a final question to the lawyer, one that he could not evade (10:36). The point of Jesus’ parable (in answer to the lawyer’s question, 10:29c) was this: anyone in need is my neighbor, anyone who helps another in need is my neighbor, and anyone who helps me is my neighbor. Jesus indicated that one’s neighbor

was anyone in need that an individual could help, and that the help that should be rendered must be lavish and extensive if one wishes “to justify himself” before God as this lawyer did. But the man would not be capable of always fulfilling the law at the level required, and would not be able to “justify himself” by keeping it. When it comes to works righteousness, God is a maximalist with respect to obeying the law. A minimalist approach, as assumed by the lawyer, is unacceptable to Him. For this reason, because of humankind’s inability to live the law, justification must be by grace through faith.

C. Martha and Mary (10:38-42)

10:38-42. A brief scene involving two sisters—Mary and Martha—provided the setting for another lesson on discipleship. Since Luke simply mentioned **a village**, he probably assumed the reader would be familiar enough with the story to know that the village was Bethany and that these two women were sisters to Lazarus (see Jn 11:1). Jesus arrived at the home of Martha, and she **welcomed Him into her home** (Lk 10:38). Her sister Mary took the opportunity to sit **at the Lord’s feet** (10:39) to listen to His teaching, while Martha herself was busy with the **preparations** and formalities associated with the visit of an important person like Jesus (10:40a). Martha appealed to her guest Jesus, asking Him to direct Mary to assist her. The Lord’s response was gentle (**Martha, Martha**—“My dear, dear Martha” 10:41a), but pointed. In a mild rebuke to Martha for her concern for **so many things** (10:41b), so many trivial things, Jesus informed Martha that Mary had chosen what was most important—listening to the Lord (10:42). Jesus’ point was that the mere formalities of a relationship with Jesus—things like serving the Lord dinner, or meeting Him in a social setting—must never take the place of a vital and personal relationship with the Lord. Mere social contact (with Jesus or other disciples in church) cannot replace serious attention to His teaching.

D. Teaching on Prayer (11:1-13)

11:1-4. Luke included a brief section on prayer (parallel to the more extended teaching as recorded by Matthew (Mt 6:9-15 in the Sermon on the Mount; see the comments there). Jesus taught the importance of prayer by His own example (**Jesus was praying**, Lk 11:1). He also taught His disciples a model prayer (11:2a), indicating that this was not a prayer to be repeated but a paradigm to be followed when praying.

The prayer included: (1) address to the **Father** (11:2b)—to address the Father as such was prayer with assurance and respect; (2) petition for the Father’s name to be **hallowed** (11:2c)—that His name would be honored; (3) petition for the **kingdom to come** (11:2d)—that the final rule and authority of God would be recognized and actualized on earth; (4) petition for **daily bread** (11:3)—that all the promised provisions of the Lord for physical life would be forthcoming (a confession of creaturely dependence); (5) petition for God to **forgive** (11:4a)—that the promised provisions for spiritual life would be forthcoming (a confession of spiritual dependence); (6) promise of forgiveness to others (11:4b; see also the comments on Mt 6:14-15 and 18:31-35)—a recognition of the need for humility before others; (7) petition for protection from temptation (11:4c)—a confession of spiritual reliance.

11:5-13. Jesus followed this instruction on prayer with a parable on prayer and a principle about prayer. The parable taught the need for persistence in prayer (11:5-8). The principle taught the need for confidence in prayer (11:9-13). The verbs in the rhythmic **ask . . . seek . . . knock** are present imperatives—“keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking.” The confidence of a believer is to be like that of a child with a loving parent. It is an honor to the parent that a child asks and expects to receive what is needed. God is honored by the requests of childlike believers. And of course, their needs are supplied through the means of prayer.

E. A Series of Conflicts (11:14-54)

While on the journey to Jerusalem Jesus was involved in a series of conflicts. Luke recorded these conflicts not only to illustrate Jesus’ person but also to prove His power and authority. Ability and authority are often best demonstrated when they are challenged.

1. The Question of Jesus’ Power (11:14-36)

In essence, in this episode Jesus was challenged as to the source of His power. Ludicrously, His opponents suggested He was in league with Satan.

a. Satan or God? (11:14-23) (see also the comments on Mt 12:22-37)

11:14-16. Here a miracle of healing and exorcism was not the climax but the setup for the ensuing conflict. A man was possessed by a demon, which caused him to be mute (Mt 12:22 indicates he was blind as well), and Jesus marvelously delivered him. While the crowds were

amazed (Lk 11:14), the opposition was unimpressed. They charged Jesus with being empowered by **Beelzebul** (a derisive pun on Baal-zebul, a Canaanite god. Beelzebul means “lord of the flies,” i.e., a pile of dung) (11:15). Jesus was challenged to prove Himself by producing a **sign from heaven** (11:16)—a rather ironic challenge in the light of the miracle that had just occurred.

11:17-23. Jesus’ **knew their thoughts** (11:17a), that is, He knew and understood their motives for the charges and the challenges, and His response was devastatingly simple. He pointed out that their reasoning was illogical (11:17b-18), inconsistent (11:19), and based upon faulty perception (11:20). His short parable about a **strong man** (Satan, 11:21) and a **stronger man** (Jesus Himself, 11:22) employed simple and unassailable logic. The parable demonstrated that the struggle on the spiritual level of existence (Satan and his forces vs. the power of God, of Christ, and the Holy Spirit) is subject to the same rules and principles as temporal conflicts—the stronger force wins (cf. 1Jn 4:4). He concluded with a warning to the opposition (Lk 11:23) that effectively turned the tables on them. It was they, not He, who were in alliance with Satan, and the proof of their demonic alliance was their opposition to Jesus. Neutrality regarding Jesus Christ is impossible.

b. Four Explanations (11:24-36)

11:24-36. To prove that His power came from God and that He served God, Jesus gave four explanations about spiritual matters. First, the truth about unclean spirits is that they work together (11:24-26)—the lesson here is “partial reformation” is inadequate. Second, true joy does not come from merely acknowledging Jesus but from obeying God (11:27-28). Third, the truth about signs is that they can be missed (11:29-32)—the lesson here is that the “sign giver” is more important than the signs themselves. Fourth, the truth about light is that without a “clear eye” the light does no good (11:33-36)—the lesson here is one must have “open eyes” (faith) to “see” that Jesus is the power, the sign, and the light from God. Anyone who fails to “see the light” is thereby shown to be **full of darkness** (11:34; see also the comments on Mt 6:22-23).

2. Jesus, a Pharisee, and the Discourse of Woes (11:37-54)

11:37-38. Following the short discourse on the light, Luke recorded an instance of one who was “in darkness.” A Pharisee had invited Jesus to lunch (11:37a), and in spite of the (possible)

disingenuousness of this invitation, Jesus accepted (11:37b). It is doubtful that the Pharisee wanted to learn from Jesus—more likely he was looking for an opportunity to criticize Him; “Jesus was being watched” (Bock, *Luke*, 1111). Upon the instant of Jesus’ reclining at the meal, the Pharisee observed an offense—Jesus had failed to be **ceremonially washed** for the meal according to the tradition of the Pharisees (11:38). This was not a washing for hygiene but a ceremonial ritual of external and self-congratulatory piety required by tradition but not by the law of Moses.

11:39-41. Jesus’ rebuke to the Pharisee was as swift as the Pharisee’s observation of Jesus’ supposed offense. He first pointed out their failure, namely, their hypocrisy of overly scrupulous concern for the external cleansing of objects and utensils (11:39a) while demonstrating a complete disregard for their internal impurities (11:39b). He also pointed out the cause of their failure: He called them **foolish ones** (11:40a)—which in OT terms meant they were “blind to God” and had failed “to respond to God’s will or his way” (Bock, *Luke*, 1113). He finally pointed to the cure for their failure: they needed to cultivate the inner virtues—love, generosity, humility. Only these would render them truly clean before God (11:41).

11:42-44. From this particular lesson to a single Pharisee, Jesus turned to a “Discourse of Woes” pronounced upon the Pharisees as a group (see also the comments on Mt 23:1-36). The word “woe” used here is not so much of a curse as a lament. A paraphrase that expresses the meaning of “woe to you” is “how sad for you.” The first woe was pronounced against “selective obedience” and the neglect of the commands of true piety (11:42). The practice Jesus had in mind was “overly scrupulous tithing.” Their failure was the neglect of **justice and the love of God**, while the solution was finding and maintaining a proper balance. The second woe was for pride (11:43). The third was for deceptive and deadly false teaching (11:44). The overall theme of these first three woes was the sin of hypocrisy.

11:45-52. The recitation of the woes was disrupted by a lawyer, objecting that Jesus’ indictments were too broad and insulting to the lawyers—the experts in the law (11:45). Jesus then directed the following woes to the lawyers **as well** (11:46). The fourth woe was pronounced upon the lawyers because, instead of expounding the law so as to enhance a man’s

relationship with God, they added **burdens** (extra stipulations and commandments) to the law, burdens that neither the average man, nor even they, could **bear** or keep adequately (11:46). The fifth woe accused them of falsely honoring the **prophets** (11:47a, 48b). Their honor of the prophets was mere formalism—the homage to mere ciphers of the prophets as symbols without honoring the substance of the prophets, namely their message of the wisdom of God. In reality, they had the same attitude toward the prophets as their **fathers**—who **killed** the prophets (11:47b-48a). Jesus explained that the prophets were not only God’s messengers but—in demonstration of **the wisdom of God** (11:49a)—the act of sending prophets, who were then rejected, served to prove who was and who was not a true follower of God (11:49-51). The sixth woe was for the lawyers’ failure to use the **key of knowledge** (11:52)—a euphemism for the law itself—to open up a way for men to know God. Instead they used it to keep men from knowing God.

11:53-54. The “Discourse of Woes” against the **scribes and the Pharisees** (11:53a) solidified their opposition against Jesus, and they responded with increasing hostility toward Him, more pointed questioning of Him, and by **plotting against Him** (11:53b-54).

F. Jesus Warns His Disciples (12:1-21)

In the light of the opposition to Jesus and in the face of Jesus’ rising popularity, Jesus had some pointed teaching for His disciples—four warnings.

1. Warning about Hypocrisy (12:1-3)

12:1-3. Jesus first warned His disciples about the **leaven of the Pharisees** (12:2a)—the pervasive sin of the “externally religious,” namely, hypocrisy. The “hypocrite” in Greek was originally one who “acted” a part, assumed a “mask” (as in a play or at the theater). The religious hypocrite merely played the part of a religious man, but there was no reality, no relationship with God in and from the heart. Jesus explained, by means of two proverbs, that hypocrisy is a shortsighted practice because what is hidden will eventually be exposed (12:2) and because what is whispered will eventually be made public (12:3). In short, nothing remains hidden or secret forever. One day, hypocrisy will be exposed for what it is—a sham (cf. Rm 2:16; cf. Ps 139:12).

2. Warning about the Fear of Man (12: 4-7)

12: 4-7. Jesus next warned His disciples (**My friends**, 12:4) about the danger of the fear of

man. This is a danger to which disciples are often exposed and may result in a denial of the faith or a failure to maintain expressed convictions. Pressure often causes people to “go along to get along.” In the opening contrast (12:4-5) Jesus took the issue right to the extreme to make His point. People ought not to be feared, for the worst they can do is **kill the body** (12:4). But God is to be feared because He can kill and **cast into hell** (12:5). The point being made must not be lost by the extreme comparison—Jesus is not threatening His friends with hell. The point is, men have limited capacity for either helping or hurting us while God has unlimited capacity for judging or blessing. Accordingly, disciples should concern themselves with seeking the good will of God before being concerned about seeking the good will of men. Jesus softened the contrast with a word of comfort: the one who fears God will find a God who cares for His own (12:6-7). Two illustrations make Jesus’ point. God’s care for sparrows ought to assure us that He cares for us (12:6-7), and God’s knowledge of us—some of which is quite trivial, like the number of hairs on our heads—should assure us that He knows and cares about all our non-trivial concerns (12:7; see also the comments on Mt 10:24-31).

3. Warning about Confessing and Denying (12:8-12) (see also the comments on Mt 10:32-33)

12:8-12. The third warning is the solution to hypocrisy and fear of man. Jesus demanded that His friends **confess Him before men** (12:8). To confess is more than just a “cold recitation of words” but it is an active acknowledgment—by life and word—that “Jesus is Lord” of one’s life. Three reasons are offered to encourage disciples to confess Christ: one, there is “the principle of reciprocity”—that is, if we desire Christ to confess us (acknowledge us as rightfully belonging in heaven—**before the angels** 12:8b) we must confess Him before men (12:8-9). Two, there is the problem of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:10). This appears to be a case of willfully denying the revealed truth about Christ—that is, unbelief. A “permanent rejection” (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1143) of the Spirit-revealed truth will not be—indeed cannot be—forgiven. Third, Jesus encouraged His friends to confess Him before men by reminding them of the promise of the Holy Spirit (12:11-12). When accused and threatened for commitment to Christ, there is no need to worry or fret about how to respond.

This is so because Jesus promised that **in that very hour** (12:12) the strengthening provision of the Spirit would provide ability to offer a bold and clear witness.

This promised provision is “for that very hour,” not for the prior imaginings of what one could or one would say in that hour. The promise here is not for some supernatural or revelatory information but more likely a promise to bring to mind at the appropriate time those truths one has learned by the normal means (Bible reading, study, listening to the Word preached). The same expression—“do not worry”—is used in 12:22, and the promise there is not for “supernatural provisions” but a promise of sufficient material provisions supplied, again most likely by the usual means (employment, God’s abundant creation, the generosity of others). These promises are not for unusually gifted or especially spiritual persons but for all disciples who put their trust in the Lord.

4. Warning about Worldliness—the Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21)

Finally, Jesus offered His friends a warning about worldliness—an overweening concern for the things of this world and this life.

12:13-15. The account began with an “impertinent request” from a man in the crowd for Jesus to be an arbiter in a dispute (apparently) over an inheritance (12:13). Jesus immediately rejected the suggestion that He become involved in a family dispute (12:14). However, this exchange prompted Jesus to address a more serious concern—a problem that lay at the heart of the dispute (and, no doubt, in the hearts of both disputants). The problem was greed (12:15a), which at root is but one expression of a deeper pathology, worldliness. Jesus explained that greed—the inordinate desire for “more”—is pointless because life does not consist of an abundance of **possessions** (12:15b). That is, life is to be about more than the “stuff” accumulated in this temporal existence. There is another, transcendent existence that the “stuff” of this life is to serve. The “stuff” of this life must never become an end in itself.

12:16-20b. Jesus illustrated this principle with a devastatingly simple and true-to-life parable. A rich man found his land so productive he could not store all the crops (12:16-17). Apparently it never occurred to him to give the excess away to others who might be in need. He was so self absorbed that he consulted only with himself on how to address this “problem” (12:17,

19a). After making provision for himself (12:18), and after congratulating himself (12:19b), he made plans for himself to enjoy his excess fortune for **many years** (12:19). However, God, the One to whom he had given no thought at all, now took notice of him. **But God said** (12:20a) abruptly changes the rosy picture of temporal ease. God called the man a **fool** (12:20b)—which indeed he was for he had actually made no provision for his **soul!**

12:20c-21. The phrase **your soul is required of you** (12:20c) is literally “they demand your soul from you” but is a substitute for the divine passive . . . and means his soul was demanded (*apaitousin*, from the verb *aiteo*, “to ask, to demand”) by God (Stein, *Luke*, 352). His life was not his own but a gift, something entrusted to him by God, and now at his death he was required to give an accounting to God for his life (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1153). However, when that accounting was given, while he left many provisions behind, he had no provisions, or treasure, with God (20:21). “The really stupid thing was the rich man’s easy assurance that the future was in his control” (Morris, *Luke*, 213). The rich man’s purely temporal perspective left him with no provision for eternity. The mere possession of wealth does not guarantee favor with God (cf. Jms 1:9-11; 5:1-6), much less assure one of salvation. “Wealth’s only legacy is its fleeting nature (Lk 6:24-25). Only wealth handled with generosity meets with God’s approval” (Bock, *Luke*, 1155).

G. Lessons on the “Eternal Perspective” (12:22-48)

1. Do Not Worry (12:22-34) (see also the comments on Mt 6:25-34)

12:22. The parable of the rich fool—the man who had many temporal provisions but none for eternity—led Jesus (**For this reason**) to some instruction for **His disciples** (12:22a) on the need to develop the “eternal perspective.”

Jesus first addressed the disciples with a simple but powerful command. “The catchword that unites this section is the word ‘worry’ which occurs in 12:22, 25, 26. (The synonym *meteorizo* in 12:29 is also translated ‘worry.’)” (Stein, *Luke*, 353-54). **Do not worry** (12:22) is literally “stop being worried” and is an imperative, a command; the converse, “be content” is also implied (cf. Php 4:11-12; 1Tm 6:6-8).

12:23-34. Jesus next addressed the concerns that made the command necessary. They are the basic needs of life, the concerns of “daily existence,” of **life** itself—food and clothing. In

essence Jesus listed the reasons one should not worry: One, it shows a lack of the proper perspective on life (12:23). Two, it is unnecessary, as demonstrated by the birds, which do not cultivate crops or store them in barns, yet they are fed (12:24), and by the lilies, which do not gather the materials or spin yarns for clothing, yet they are more gloriously clothed than Solomon (12:27). Three, worry is pointless. It cannot add any time to one’s life and is a waste of the time one does have (12:25-26). Four, it shows a lack of faith (12:28c). Five, it is what unbelievers do and is a poor testimony before them (12:30). In sum, worrying is a failure of faith.

The solutions to worry are: One, disciples are to know that they have a heavenly **Father** (12:30b). Two, disciples are to **seek His kingdom** (12:31a), that is, be about the work of living for and seeking souls for His kingdom. Three, disciples are to **not be afraid** (12:32a) and instead are to be resting in the assurances of **your Father** (12:32b). Four, disciples are to divest themselves of “temporal possessions” (12:33), while investing in eternal things (e.g., one’s own soul, cf. 12:19-21).

2. Be Ready, Be Faithful (12:35-48)

12:35-38. Continuing on the same theme, Jesus encouraged His disciples to readiness and faithfulness. To these ends He offered three illustrations: In the first illustration disciples are to be like men **dressed in readiness** with lighted lamps prepared for the “master’s” return (12:35, 36). The duty of the master’s men is to wait (12:36); their responsibility is to be alert (12:37a); their challenge is they do not know the hour he is coming (12:38); the reward they will receive is “blessing” and “table fellowship” with the master (12:37).

12:39-40. The second illustration encouraging readiness pictured a homeowner and a thief (12:39-40). Without spelling the details, apparently, a thief had broken in to the house of the homeowner. Jesus’ commonsense observation was that if the homeowner had known the time the thief was coming he would have prevented the break-in. This is an admonition for constant readiness, since disciples do not know the time of the return of **the Son of Man** (12:40).

12:41-46. The third illustration encouraging readiness was prompted by a question from Peter that amounted to “Who is this teaching for?” (12:41). Jesus did not answer Peter directly (which is to say the teaching is for anyone who understands and applies it), but Jesus

introduced a parable by means of a question: **Who then is the faithful and sensible steward?** (12:42; see also the comments on Mt 24:45-51). The positive answer to this question is, the faithful steward is the one who is given a task (12:42b), who performs the task (12:43b), and who is therefore blessed by the master (12:43a). The reward Jesus mentioned here—**put him in charge of all his possessions** (12:44)—is a hyperbolic expression meant to say that the reward will be far greater than the challenges and hazards encountered in his temporal service. “The reward is a more permanent form of service . . .” (Bock, *Luke*, 1180). The Lord’s reward for a job well done is more work. The negative answer to the question is, the unfaithful and foolish slave is the one who assumes the master’s delay will continue indefinitely, who chooses **to eat and drink and get drunk** (12:45; “Such behavior recalls the fool of 12:19” [Stein, *Luke*, 361]), who will be shocked by the master’s return, and who will be severely punished (12:46; cf. Ex 29:17).

12:47-48. Jesus next pictured two cases of “unprepared” slaves. The willfully unprepared slave will be punished with **many lashes** (12:47), but the ignorantly unprepared slave will receive a lighter punishment (12:48a). Jesus was not here introducing several “classes” of Christians (e.g., genuine, committed ones; “carnal” ones; spurious, false, mere “professing” ones). The issue here is not soteriology (salvation) but “faithfulness.” The parable assumes those in view are simply stewards and slaves of a master and they are either faithful or they are not. Jesus was not giving the disciples a way to “test” their genuineness or to assure themselves of salvation or eternal rewards. In the parable the master will return, and Jesus’ disciples must live with the expectation that He too will return. If they live with that expectation they will be found faithful—and that faithfulness will be rewarded. If they live with callous disregard they will be found unfaithful—and that will be punished. The point of the parable is not to provide the hearer with a catalogue of rewards and punishments, or to draw conclusions about the relationship of the slaves to master or disciples to Jesus but to encourage faithfulness. Furthermore, as the parable concludes, the principle is that the more one knows, the greater his or her responsibility. “We are all accountable” (Morris, *Luke*, 219). Verse 48 indicates that there will be varying degrees of both responsibility

and reward based on one’s inherent gifts and abilities.

H. Six Serious Matters for Disciples to Consider (12:49–13:9)

12:49-12:59. In light of the eternal perspective and the ministry and responsibility to which the disciples were called, Jesus, in quick succession, presented six matters for the disciples to consider.

1. They needed to consider the judgment to come. First, He mentioned the judgment He would render—**to cast fire** (12:49), and then He referred to the judgment that He Himself would suffer—**a baptism to undergo** (12:50). Jesus tied the two events together because the latter, His suffering on the cross, is the only way for men and women to escape the former (1Th 5:9). “Jesus’ commitment to God’s will was total. He was completely governed by the desire to complete his baptism, even though it meant suffering death in Jerusalem (Lk 13:32–33)” (Stein, *Luke*, 365).

2. The disciples needed to know the **division** that serving Jesus would bring (12:51-53; cf. Mc 7:6). “With Jesus’ arrival comes a period of decision and crisis for people and between people” (Bock, *Luke*, 1192). This division will reach to the most intimate levels—even among families.

3. They needed to be discerning about the nature of the times (12:54-56). The time for repentance was running out. They were hypocrites who could discern the weather but claimed to be unable to discern the meaning of Jesus’ ministry—**this present time** (12:56).

4. They needed to **settle** (temporal) accounts quickly (12:57-59). The point here appears to be that disciples must not be found fussing over temporal matters when the Lord returns. Disciples should do whatever it takes to avoid spending their last dime or last hour before the Lord returns dealing with merely temporal concerns. “Because of the arrival of God’s kingdom (12:53–56), it [was] time to get one’s life in order and be reconciled to God (12:58)” (Stein, *Luke*, 367). In short, they were to get things settled with the earthly judges so they could prepare to face the heavenly One.

13:1-9. 5. They needed to **repent**—turn to God because of the uncertainty of life (13:1-5). Jesus’ teaching prompted a few in the crowd to report to Him an incident in which **Pilate** ruthlessly executed some **Galileans**, apparently as they were in the act of offering **sacrifices**. “They were killed as they were sacrificing” (Stein, *Luke*, 370).

No known incident fits the exact picture indicated here (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1205). Jesus did not take the occasion to excoriate Pilate, or offer a defense of God in the face of evil, or even to propose an explanation of why such tragedies happen at all. He rejected the idea that the deaths of these unfortunates were because (as many might suppose) they were especially notorious sinners. They were no more and no less sinful than anyone else. Jesus unnervingly affirmed that “the threat of a tragic end [was] present for all” (Bock, *Luke*, 1206). He even added another tragic, and in this case seemingly even more inexplicable, incident of calamitous death (13:4) to reinforce the point that His hearers should not waste time seeking to fathom the exigencies of (apparently capricious) events. Rather, they—as sinners themselves—should **repent** before God and be prepared for the eternity that looms after this unpredictable and often tragic existence. “The issue is not when death will happen or why, but avoiding a terminal fate with even greater consequences” (Bock, *Luke*, 1206).

6. Finally, they needed to produce **fruit** (show evidence of the working of God in their lives) soon (13:6-9; cf. Mc 7:1). The key to the point of this parable is not that the owner wanted to cut down the fruitless tree, but rather the advice of the vineyard-keeper to wait and give it a chance—with some care and tending—to produce fruit. Jesus’ hearers are warned that as of yet they have no fruit—but the Lord is long-suffering. Still, without fruit they can anticipate only judgment. The **fig tree** was often used as a symbol for the nation of Israel (cf. Mt 21:19; Mk 11:14), so there may be an application to that nation and to individuals who were fruitless (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 371). “Literally the parable’s ending is open ended, awaiting an appropriate response by those it represents” (Bock, *Luke*, 1210).

I. Six Features of Jesus’ Ministry (13:10-35)

13:10-35. Luke used this juncture to exhibit six features of Jesus’ ministry: (1) Jesus showed compassion by healing a woman on the **Sabbath** (13:10-13; for background on the Sabbath controversies, see the comments on Mt 12:1-14). (2) He dealt with opposition by facing down His critics (13:14-17). (3) He provided instruction in two parables that revealed the nature of the kingdom (13:18-21—when it comes the kingdom will be “extensive” and “pervasive”; see also the comments on Mt 13:31-33). (4) He gave a strong admonition to **strive to enter the narrow way**—that is come into a relationship with God

through faith and trust Him alone (13:22-30; see also the comments on Mt 7:13-14). (5) He showed resolution to press on to **Jerusalem** to fulfill His mission (13:31-33). (6) He demonstrated His affection for the inhabitants of Jerusalem in His lamentation over **the city** (13:34-35; see also the comments on Mt 23:37-39). Here again, Luke mentioned that Jesus was on His way to **Jerusalem** (13:22).

J. Jesus at Dinner with a Pharisee (14:1-24)

14:1-6. Jesus did not refrain from meeting and even dining with His opponents. He used these opportunities to rebuke and instruct them. On this occasion Luke recorded Jesus’ attendance at a **Sabbath** dinner with **one of the leaders of the Pharisees** (14:1), “a synagogue head (8:41) or a higher official” (Bock, *Luke*, 1255). More than likely, **a man suffering from dropsy** (14:2; “dropsy” is literally *hydropikos*, probably edema in which various parts of the body become filled with fluid”; Stein, *Luke*, 386) was present for the purpose of testing Jesus. Luke notes He was under the scrutiny of the opposition—**they were watching Him closely** (14:1). “The term means ‘to watch lurkingly’” (Bock, *Luke*, 1256), no doubt to find some cause to accuse Him of some infraction of their traditions. Jesus challenged His opposition with a question: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” (14:3; cf. 6:9; 13:16). Their silence allowed Him to proceed to heal the man. Jesus healed him with three actions: **He took hold . . . He healed him . . . He sent him away** (14:4), thus the miracle was firm, full, and final. Jesus concluded this encounter with an illustration of simple, commonsense kindness and humanitarianism (14:5) that made the unarguable (14:6) point that even Sabbath observance was subordinate to compassion.

14:7-15. Jesus then took the occasion to teach on humility (14:7-11), a quality apparently lacking in the other guests, and hospitality (14:12-14), a quality apparently lacking in his hosts. The simple principle behind both pericopes is that a concern for others should supersede a concern for oneself. Once again, Jesus taught His disciples to consider the eternal perspective. His disciples must wait to be **exalted** (cf. 14:11), and they must be generous and considerate of others in this life, expecting to be repaid **at the resurrection** (14:14).

14:16-17. Jesus followed this teaching with a parable about a **big dinner** (14:16-24). Apparently, Jesus’ teaching had had an effect on the guests—but not the effect He desired. In

response to Jesus' words a man cried, **Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God** (14:15). It is unclear if the man meant the "bread of Jesus' teaching" (which he should have meant) or the physical bread of this Jewish (Sabbath) dinner (which he probably meant). This man was expressing the common assumption that only the Jews—the pious Jews—would be in the kingdom enjoying this feast. In response Jesus told this parable of a man who prepared a dinner and invited guests (14:16-17). Stein notes, "It was customary to extend two invitations. The first (as here v. 16) was to 'make reservations' and the second (cf. v. 17) to announce that the banquet was beginning" (Stein, *Luke*, 393).

14:18-24. Apparently, many of these invitees had accepted the first invitation, but they began to make excuses, and the excuses were superficial, insincere, and even insulting (14:18-20). "Such excuses are lame, even insulting, in light of the occasion and their previous willingness to come" (Bock, *Luke*, 1273). The man was angered by this disrespect, and in response he sent his slave to invite the **poor, crippled, blind, lame** (14:21). Even then there was still room, and so the man sent his slave out beyond the confines of his neighborhood. "To find these outcasts and afflicted takes effort, and so the servant searches the city" (Bock, *Luke*, 1275). There was still room, and so the slave was sent to the **highways and along the hedges** that lined the fields, and travelers were compelled—irresistibly drawn in to the feast (14:22-23), while the first invitees were shut out (14:24). The meaning and application of the parable became dramatically clear when Jesus revealed that He had been speaking of **my dinner** (14:24). In this parable Jesus made it clear that his hosts—the leaders of the nation—had in effect declined His invitation (to believe in Him) and that others (the Gentiles) would be invited to take their places. "The rejection of Jesus and the kingdom by official Judaism (14:24) precipitated the inclusion of Israel's outcasts (4:18; 7:22) and the Gentiles (Acts 13:47-48; 18:6; 28:25-28). The great reversal had taken place" (Stein, *Luke*, 394; cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1277).

K. Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship (14:25-35)

14:25-35. Even though large crowds followed Jesus (14:25), Jesus' attention was on His own disciples. "Jesus wants those who are contemplating a relationship with Him to know what it means" (Bock, *Luke*, 1283). In His teaching to

them He instilled several principles of true discipleship. The principle of "first loyalty" (14:26) is that devotion to Jesus must take precedence over all others. Jesus' saying that His disciples are to **hate** their own relatives probably has the idea of "in comparison to their overriding devotion to Christ." "Discipleship is fundamentally a call to allegiance. Jesus is to have first place over all, including family" (Bock, *Luke*, 1284). Next is the principle of "cross bearing" (14:27). A disciple must be willing to suffer (see also the comments on Mt 10:34-38). This is complete commitment to Christ that sets aside all personal ambition and gives oneself to the third principle, "counting the cost" (14:28-32). One must plan ahead and serve Christ prudently. Jesus illustrated this principle using the example of the "imprudent builder" (14:28-30) who began but could not complete his project, and by the example of the "prudent king" (14:31-32) who came to terms with an enemy he could not defeat. Next is the principle of "sacrifice" (14:33). The disciple must be willing to give up all temporal goods in service to Christ. The principle of "being salt" (14:34-35a) reveals that disciples are to have an "influence" on the world and not the other way around. Finally, the principle of "hearing with one's ears" (14:35b) indicates that disciples are to do more than "hear Jesus' words." They are to follow through on these principles in their daily lives.

L. Three Parables of "Lost and Found" (15:1-32)

In this chapter Luke recorded three parables. One of them—the Prodigal Son—is among the best known and most beloved of all Jesus' parables. The primary point of the parables, usually neglected in popular lessons on them, is that the religious leaders should not have been criticizing Jesus for seeking tax collectors and sinners (15:1; note how this verse introduces all three parables). God rejoices when such are "found," and the sour attitude of the Pharisees and the scribes is condemned (as seen in the interaction between the father and the older brother in 15:25-32, *which makes up nearly half of the parable*, another point frequently neglected). A secondary, though admittedly important, theme of all three parables is that God rejoices when repentant sinners turn to Him and are "found." "The way to God is through repentance. God's arms are open to the person who will seek Him on His terms. God's arms close around the child ready to run to Him and receive what He offers"

(Bock, *Luke*, 1295). Another theme is the joy that comes when that which is lost is found.

1. Setting of the Parables (15:1-2)

15:1-2. The setting in which Jesus spoke these parables is important to the point of the parables. **The tax collectors and the sinners**, the ostracized, and the outcast, were coming to hear Jesus (15:1), and He received them. This provoked **the Pharisees and the scribes** who criticized Jesus for these associations. The parables explained why Jesus welcomed and fellowshiped with such people. The fourfold pattern—an item is lost, a search is made, the item is found, rejoicing follows—appears in each of the parables. This pattern is the pattern of salvation—sinners are lost, they are sought by Christ (cf. 19:10), they are found by God, rejoicing follows. Only in the parable of the Prodigal Son is the human responsibility to repent presented.

2. Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:3-7)

15:3-4. The parable of the lost sheep is best known for the numbers involved. Jesus put the hypothetical situation before His listeners. He imagined a man with **a hundred sheep—ninety-nine** were with him safe and secure while **one** has become **lost** (15:4a). In real life, the risk of leaving the ninety-nine in **open pasture** (lit., “wilderness”) would probably have been too great to **go after the one which is lost** (15:4b). Yet the caring shepherd did just that. He searched for the lost sheep until he found it (15:4c).

15:5-7. The tender picture of a shepherd carrying the sheep across **his shoulders** (15:5) would have heightened the point: the shepherd is the one who pursued, found, and retrieved the sheep. The initiative (of seeking) and the accomplishment (of finding) belong to the shepherd. When the sheep was found there was great joy. The picture of rejoicing—calling the neighbors, rejoicing over one lost, but found, sheep is to be understood as hyperbole. While an actual circumstance like this would surely be a cause for joy and relief (for the shepherd anyway), it is unlikely that the picture Jesus was describing would actually happen. The “over-the-top” reaction of the shepherd (15:6) is meant to contrast with the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes toward the tax collectors and sinners who have come to hear Jesus. They should at least have been supportive—if not ecstatic—when sinners showed an interest in the things of the Lord. They were however as unmoved as this shepherd was overjoyed. Jesus made the point: **heaven** (a metonymy for God) is much more like the overly

ecstatic shepherd when sinners come to repentance (15:7) and unlike the critical Pharisees.

3. Parable of the Lost Coin (15:8-10)

15:8-10. The second parable is remarkably simple and reiterates the same basic point as the first: something lost (a coin) was diligently searched for and ultimately found, to the great joy of the finder. As with the parable of the lost sheep, the reaction of the woman who found her coin—calling neighbors and friends—is not true to life. It is an exaggeration. However, it is meant to make the point that there is extravagant joy **in the presence of the angels** (15:10 indicating God Himself) when sinners repent. Both of these parables teach that it is God who takes the initiative to seek the lost (cf. 19:10), as demonstrated by the controversial actions of Jesus who sought the social and spiritual rejects.

4. Parable of the Lost Son (15:11-32)

15:11. This parable appears only in Luke’s gospel and is acknowledged by many as a masterpiece of storytelling. While it is often known as the parable of the Prodigal Son, note that Jesus began the parable with the mention of **two sons** (15:11), with the older brother playing as vital a role in the parable as the younger.

a. The First Son (15:12-24)

15:12-20a. The younger of the man’s sons exhibited a foolish rebellion (15:12-13). He selfishly requested his inheritance, showing himself as disrespectful and uncharitable. In effect, when the young man asked for his inheritance he was betraying a materialistic, selfish impulse at best, and at worst was saying to his father, “I wish you were already dead.” When the young man received his inheritance (15:12) he imprudently departed, and then he sinfully squandered his money (15:13). The young man found himself in an inevitable destitution (15:14-16). He was struck by poverty (15:14), thrown into virtual slavery (15:15a), and experienced hunger and estrangement (15:16-17), probably for the first time in his life. From the nadir of this condition the young man took the steps necessary for his restoration (15:17-20a). He **came to his senses** (15:17), that is, he became aware that his own foolishness and sinfulness had brought him to this destitution. He realized he needed to make a full confession (15:18, 21), and he had to own up to the condition of his heart and the consequences of his actions. He exhibited genuine humility when he concluded that he was unworthy to be called a son and was willing to accept the status of hired man (15:19). Finally,

he took the necessary action to follow through in deed from the intentions of his heart—he **got up and came to his father** (15:20a).

b. The Gracious Father (15:20b-24)

15:20b-24. The note that **his father saw him** (15:20b) while the young man was still far off may indicate that the father was looking for the son, though the text does not say this and the point should not be pressed. The father's reaction, like the response of the shepherd to finding the lost sheep and of the woman upon finding the lost coin, was "exaggerated" (15:20c). "There can be no doubt that in the father's welcome of the younger son Jesus is teaching that the heavenly Father welcomes returning sinners" (Morris, *Luke*, 243). The father's compassion for his returning son would not permit him to accept the terms offered by the Prodigal. The father did not even allow his son to get so far as to propose becoming like one of the **hired men** (15:19b)—nothing short of full restoration would do. The son was clothed (15:22) and his return was celebrated (15:23). The father's justification for this celebration revealed the severity of the son's condition before his repentance (**was dead . . . was lost**) and the complete restoration of his condition since his repentance (**has come to life . . . has been found**) (15:24). The father's statement made the application of the parable clear: Sinners are dead and lost, but they can come to life and can be found if they return to the Father.

c. The Second Son (15:25-30)

In a sense the parable was complete, having made, for the third time, the point made in the first two parables of this chapter—God finds and receives lost sinners who repent and return to Him. But the attitude of the Pharisees (15:2) needed to be addressed directly. It is clear that the older brother represented the scribes and Pharisees. It is this half of the parable that is most pertinent to the context of 15:1, and in which the primary point of the parable is found.

15:25-30. When the older brother was made aware that his younger brother had returned and that a celebration was underway to welcome him back (15:25-27) he became angry and resentful (15:28a). His complaint **I have never neglected a command of yours** (arguably not true) (15:29) echoed the attitude of the legalistic Pharisees. His accusations against his brother were uncharitable (and untrue—there is no mention of **prostitutes** [15:30b] in the earlier narrative about the younger son). His unwillingness to

be forgiving was in stark contrast to the attitude of the father. And his attitudes were not significantly different from those of his younger brother's. The older brother would have liked a **young goat** so that he could **be merry with his friends** (v. 29), that is, to enjoy material goods from his father without his father's company. The two were not so different after all!

d. The Gracious Father (15:31-32)

15:31-32. Again, the father was the picture of graciousness and forbearance. His pleas to the older son, reiterating his earlier words about the younger son's pre- and post-repentant states were largely lost on the bitter and resentful older son. No conclusion to this exchange between the father and this older son is given. Jesus allowed the Pharisees to write their own conclusion: They could continue to resent that Jesus welcomed tax collectors and sinners (cf. 15:2), or they could drop their bitterness and join the celebration as repentant sinners themselves. Perhaps an application from these parables is that God's people should weigh carefully their own attitudes toward those on the fringes of society—and consider more deliberate attempts to reach them as Jesus did, and for which He was criticized. We should also be slow to criticize or question the motives of those who are seeking to minister to social and spiritual outcasts (such as drug addicts, homosexuals, prostitutes, or criminals). The last verse summarizes the point of all three parables—what was lost has been found.

M. Parables and Teaching for Disciples and Pharisees (16:1-31)

In this chapter Jesus challenged His disciples and the Pharisees about temporal values and worldly ways of thinking. The relation of the teaching here to the previous chapter is unclear. "The material in this chapter is for the most part unique to Luke" and it "deals with the common theme of possessions" (Stein, *Luke*, 411). Both the disciples and the Pharisees needed to understand that the values, principles, and standards of the world—the "ways of thinking" that enable one to get along in this life—are incommensurate for one who serves God, and God will judge those who do not serve Him.

1. Parable of the Dishonest Manager (16:1-9)

16:1-9. In an enigmatic parable Jesus taught the disciples that they needed to be wise in the use of temporal positions, possessions, and power. Jesus pictured a discredited manager who was about to be fired by his employer

(16:1-3). This dishonest manager shrewdly used his position to secure his future—at his employer’s expense—by discounting the outstanding accounts of his master’s debtors (16:4-7). Surprisingly, the master **praised** this man, not for his dishonesty, but for his shrewdness (16:8). Jesus also commended the man, not for his dishonest dealings, but for his foresight and shrewdness (16:9). “He is commended for acting and preparing himself for the judgment awaiting him. He is commended essentially for being a shrewd scoundrel and taking care of his future” (Stein, *Luke*, 412). The master did not like it, but he had to give the “shrewd manager” his due—the master had been outwitted! Jesus was not encouraging His disciples to be dishonest, but to be shrewd—and that not about temporal matters like this scoundrel, but with respect to eternal matters (cf. 12:33). Our temporal wealth should be used for treasure in heaven.

2. Teaching about Faithfulness in Service (16:10-13)

16:10-13. Still addressing the disciples, Jesus articulated two principles (loosely related to the previous parable) about service. First, the principle of “faithfulness”—**He who is faithful in a very little thing** can be trusted with **much** (that is, many more and larger things). Thus disciples are to be faithful (exhibiting honesty and integrity) in temporal things (like money) if they want to be trusted in more important (spiritual and eternal) matters. (16:10-12). The second principle concerns masters: It is impossible to **serve two masters**. Therefore, disciples need to serve God (out of love and loyalty to Him) and not wealth, that is, they must not serve merely to get paid or because they want to get rich (16:13).

3. Corrections for the Pharisees (16:14-18)

16:14-18. Jesus commended faithfulness for His disciples in contrast to the greed of the Pharisees—**lovers of money** (16:14). The Pharisees were given several (somewhat disparate) correctives to their way of thinking: What they valued was not what God valued (16:15). The law was not what they thought it was (16:16), and as an example of that, their views on divorce were judged by Jesus to be deficient (16:18).

4. Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

It seems best to understand this as a type of parable or a parable-like story (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1363). Some argue that several of the features of this story are not typical of a parable: It is

not actually identified as a parable. Unlike in other parables, one of the characters is named. Lazarus was a fairly common name, meaning “God helps” (see comment on 16:20). This is not the Lazarus of Jn 11. Unlike other parables, it is not an illustration that could be observed in the course of everyday life (e.g., a sower sowing, a woman cleaning her home). It portrays the afterlife in untypical ways (i.e., there’s no judgment or banquet), cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1362-63. However, “to call this account parabolic is not entirely incorrect” (Bock, *Luke*, 1363). Considering the lack of clear corroborating passages in Scripture, it is highly speculative to suggest this story describes either Hades (the abode of the dead, in the LXX *Sheol*) or the relative arrangement of the compartments of the afterlife for the righteous and unrighteous dead. In other NT uses (Mt 11:23; 16:18; Rv 20:13-14) Hades is understood as a real but otherwise shadowy place for the wicked dead until the time of judgment, and there are no indications that people there can see, much less communicate, with the righteous dead. Bock is probably correct to suggest that “the conversations are simply part of the story’s literary means to depict the great chasm in the afterlife between the righteous in Paradise and those in Hades” (Bock, *Luke*, 1363).

16:19-25. The skewed values and thinking of the Pharisees and the foolishness of all who live without a thought for eternity are exposed by this parable. Jesus began by describing the temporal conditions, the life circumstances, of two men: one was rich and lived an opulent life (16:19); the other was not just poor but destitute and diseased (16:20-21). Even though they lived in proximity—the poor man at the rich man’s **gate** (16:20b) living off the scraps **from the rich man’s table** (16:21)—their lives could not have been more disparate. Upon his death the **poor man named Lazarus** (16:20a; the one “helped by God”) is taken by angels to **Abraham’s bosom** (16:22), a place of comfort and blessing. Upon his death the rich man is confined to **Hades** (16:23). Their circumstances are completely reversed. The rich man first asked for relief but was informed that this was impossible (16:24, 26) because there was a **great chasm fixed** between them. **Chasm** is a term found only here and describes an “unbridgeable space.” “The theological passive that such a place ‘has been fixed’ asserts that God has set up the afterlife in such a way that the righteous and the unrighteous do not mix . . . the image is strong

and suggests that how we respond in this life is decisive for where we reside in the next” (Bock, *Luke*, 1373). The rich man’s torment increased knowing that he could have elevated Lazarus in life (and perhaps himself in death) had he been more concerned about the injustice of their temporal circumstances (16:25). Now it is too late for him.

16:26-31. The rich man then turned to thoughts about those whom he had left behind. Showing that he was still thinking like the worldly man he was, he asked that someone might return to warn his brethren about his fate (16:27-28). Surely, he reasoned, **if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!** (16:30)—evidences and human reason would certainly bring his brethren around. But he was informed that, in effect, the warning was already available in the Scriptures (**They have Moses and the Prophets**, 16:29) and that additional warnings—even by someone rising from the dead—would prove ineffective. The point of the parable is clear: a set of values and a perspective on life that considers only the temporal, the worldly, and the “present life” is inadequate and will prove to be foolish in the light of eternity. The rich man did not go to Hades/hell because he was rich. He went there because his life and hope were devoted to his earthly riches, which he never used to “lay up treasure in heaven.” He put his own earthly ease before his concern for others, which indicated that his heart was not right with God! The parable also indicates that even the most extreme miracles (**if someone rises from the dead**, v. 31) will not be sufficient to engender faith or repentance in those who observe them.

N. Jesus Warning, Teaching, Healing (17:1-19)

1. Sayings for Disciples (17:1-10)

17:1-10. To prepare His disciples for the ministry they will undertake for Him, Jesus warned them about **stumbling blocks** (17:1-3a)—people and things that cause His disciples to sin. These stumbling blocks are **inevitable** (17:1a), will be judged severely (17:1b-2), and should be avoided (17:3a). Furthermore, Jesus taught them to be prepared to rebuke and forgive those who stumble (sin) and repent (17:3b-4). Additionally, Jesus taught them about faith (17:5-6): it is not the size or amount of faith but the object of faith that gives faith its power. Finally, Jesus taught them to be prepared to be **a slave** (17:7-10)—completely at the Master’s disposal.

2. Healings of the Ten Lepers (17:11-19)

17:11-19. Luke again (for the third time cf. 9:51; 13:22) mentioned that Jesus was **on the way to Jerusalem** (17:11). On the way he was confronted by ten lepers (17:12). He did not immediately heal them but sent them **to the priests** (17:13) an act that would be appropriate for one who was healed from leprosy (cf. Lv 13:2, 3; 14:2-32), and on the way **they were cleansed** (Lk 17:14). However, only one (**and he was a Samaritan**, 17:16—a people who were, in the prevailing view of the Jews of the pharisaical type, not acceptable to God) turned to glorify God, to acknowledge that Jesus had healed him, and to give thanks to Jesus (17:15). Jesus commended his **faith** (17:19). The principle here is that even those in low religious standing (as the Samaritans were, in the opinion of the Jewish people in Jesus’ day) were able to acknowledge and believe in Jesus. But the religious leaders of Israel, who should have been most sympathetic to Jesus and His teaching, were unwilling to embrace Him.

O. Jesus’ Teaching on the Kingdom and the Second Coming (17:20-37)

1. The Pharisees’ Question (17:20-21)

17:20-21. The Pharisees—apparently in yet another attempt to trip up Jesus—had asked about the **coming of the kingdom** (17:20a). Jesus’ answer did not cast doubt on the fact of the coming of the kingdom, but His answer corrected two popular notions. First, the kingdom was not coming in such a way that it could be predicted (**with signs**) (17:20). Second, the kingdom would not come in exactly the way men expected it would (17:21).

2. The Instruction to the Disciples (17:22-37)

(see also the comments on Matthew 24-25)

17:22-37. The question and answer about the kingdom led to Jesus’ more detailed instruction about the kingdom for the benefit of His disciples (17:22a). Jesus instructed them about the kingdom in four areas. First, as to the timing of the coming of the kingdom, there will be a longing for the **days of the Son of Man** (17:22) as well as false sightings of the Son of Man (17:23). Yet, there will be no missing Him when He does appear (17:24), and He will not appear until after the cross (17:25). Second, Jesus instructed them about the earthly conditions when the kingdom comes. It will be a time like the days of Noah (17:26-27; see also the comments on Mt 24:37-39) and the days of Lot (17:28-30), meaning that life will proceed in a normal, even mundane way until a time of sudden and unexpected

catastrophe. Third, Jesus taught them about the urgency related to the coming of the kingdom (17:31-33). It is a time not to look back or hesitate. This is a description of the second half of the tribulation period (cf. Dn 9:24; Rv 19:11; Mt 24:29-44), and it applies to the nation of Israel. Finally, Jesus revealed that the purpose of the coming of the kingdom (Lk 17:34-37) would be judgment.

P. Two Parables Concerning Prayer and Righteousness (18:1-14)

1. The Widow and the Judge (18:1-8)

18:1-3. This episode begins a bit differently in that the application of the parable about to be told appears as the introduction of the parable. In light of the troubles of life and the difficulties encountered because of their service to Christ, the disciples needed **to pray and not to lose heart** (18:1). The note about praying here makes it clear that the actions of the widow in the parable to follow are to be understood as lessons on prayer, not legal advice! Specifically, disciples are to pray for the Lord's return and not grow weary in those prayers! The persons in the parable are a **judge** (18:2) who lived **in a certain city** and a **widow** (18:3) in the same city. Jesus described the judge (18:2) as one **who did not fear God**. "This describes the judge's lack of the most fundamental requirement in life, reverence toward God (cf. Pr 9:10)" (Stein, *Luke*, 444). Furthermore this judge **did not respect man**. "This judge did not care what people thought. This judge was not the type to be moved out of compassion" (Bock, *Luke*, 1448). In these respects he was completely unlike God (and Jesus' hearers may have wondered where this comparison was headed). The woman is noted for her persistence—**she kept coming to him** and her insistence—**Give me legal protection** (18:3).

18:4-5. The widow came day after day to register her legal claim. At first the judge resisted—**he was unwilling** to give her legal protection (18:4a). He was probably waiting for a bribe, which she could not pay. But after a time he relented—**I will give her legal protection** (18:5b). He explained (to no one in particular) it was not because he feared God, which he did not, and not because he respected man, which he did not, but only because by her coming she had worn him out (18:5). She had so badgered him that he gave her what she wanted only to get relief from her pestering. "The words 'wear me out' (*hypopiazai me*) are difficult to translate,

for they literally mean 'strike under the eye, give a black eye' [BAGD, 858; TDNT 9:50 n. 88]" (Leifeld, "Luke," 1000; cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1449). This seems to be a figurative expression for "wear one down emotionally."

18:6-8. Jesus then explained—**And the Lord said** (18:6)—in a "lesser to greater" type of argument, that if such an unlikable, irascible, ignoble judge can be moved to do the right thing by the persistence of a lowly widow (who means nothing to this judge), what will the good, loving, kind, and righteous God do for His elect ("chosen ones"), His own people, when they **cry to Him day and night** (18:7b) (continually, without ceasing)? "As in 16:1-8, Jesus used a less-than-noble character as an illustration (cf. also Mt 13:44: 25:1-13) . . . If the unjust judge finally granted the persistent widow's request, how much more will a just God hear and grant the petitions of his followers who pray to him day and night" (Stein, *Luke*, 444). The answer is He will not **delay long** to answer their cries (Lk 18:7c). He will **bring about justice** (18:7a), and He will answer them **quickly** (18:8). The promise here is not necessarily for speedy, but for timely answers to prayer.

In this parable Jesus taught that God need not be badgered by prayer but that those who pray, His own elect, should do so consistently (18:1), persistently (18:5), and expectantly. For those who pray this way answers will come—maybe not as soon as they want or expect, but when they come they will be understood as having come "right on time."

2. The Pharisee and the Tax-Collector (18:9-14)

18:9-12. Luke introduced the next episode with the term **parable** (18:9) and again provided the reader with the application in the introduction. Possibly this lesson was prompted by an incident Jesus actually witnessed in the temple and related in this parabolic form. Jesus identified two men praying in the temple (18:10). One was a self-righteous **Pharisee** (18:11). His prayer was filled with contempt for others (18:11) and self-congratulation (18:12). His prayer reflected the typical attitude of the self-righteous Pharisees who thought they could be in a right standing before God (that is, "justified"), by such fastidious acts as fasting and tithing (18:12). The other man was a **tax collector** (18:10). Tax-collectors were typically Jews who served the Romans by collecting taxes for them. They were viewed as collaborators and were ostracized. Often

they were unscrupulous and greedy and took advantage of their fellow Jews by overtaxing them and keeping the takings. Roman authorities typically contracted with individuals to collect taxes. As long as the Roman quota was met, the Romans were happy. For a tax collector to make a profit, however, required systematic overcharging of those who were taxed, as the Romans did not share a percentage of the fees with the tax collectors.

18:13-14. The people looked at the tax collectors both as traitors and as thieves. For Jesus to use such a person as the “hero” of a parable would have been a surprising twist indeed. This tax collector’s demeanor conveyed his sense of unworthiness (18:13a), in that he stood **some distance away** from the temple proper. He showed utter self-abasement before God—**unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven**. He displayed a distressed and penitent attitude by his act of **beating his breast**, and his prayer was a cry for mercy from a repentant heart (18:13b). He entreated God to **be merciful** to him. *Merciful* (*hilaskomai*) was used in the LXX to translate verbs related to atonement for sins, and here means “to be gracious because of some sacrifice.” This publican was completely dependent on God for establishing a right relationship with Him, in contrast to the Pharisee in the parable. Jesus’ shocking conclusion was that the humble man, the tax collector, was **justified** (considered righteous in the eyes of God) rather than the proud man (18:14). The lesson was clear: only those who come to God with authentic humility can expect to find God favorable. This parable is one of the most significant lessons on the crucial truth of justification (cf. Rm 3:21-28). The tax-collector was declared righteous on the basis of his repentant faith.

Q. Jesus Meets Children, a Wealthy Ruler, a Blind Man, and Zaccheus (18:15-30; 18:35–19:10)

18:15-17. Jesus’ first meeting with the **children** demonstrated His approachability and illustrated the type of faith needed to approach Him (18:15-17). This does not mean one must be credulous (like a child who will believe anything), but one must trust in Jesus implicitly—as a child would trust a parent or other responsible adult. Such a child does not ask for an adult’s credentials or inquire into his or her parents’ qualifications—he or she just recognizes the authority and ability of the parent intuitively.

18:18-27. Jesus’ next meeting with **a ruler** demonstrated that, while He could be approached,

this approach had to be with the right understanding (18:18a; the designation “rich young ruler” is arrived at by combining all three synoptic gospel accounts of the meeting—see Mt 19:22, Mk 10:22, and here, the only account where he is identified as **a ruler**). The response of Jesus to the ruler’s greeting—**Why do you call me good? No one is good except God** (Lk 18:19)—was not a denial by Jesus of His own deity, but a question designed to expose the ruler’s superficiality. The man had a superficial understanding of “goodness,” and therefore a superficial understanding of God. As the conversation continued he showed a superficial understanding of the law (18:20-21). Finally, he proved to have a superficial understanding of Jesus, for he failed to demonstrate humility before Jesus or a willingness to follow Jesus, because that meant giving up the comforts and securities he possessed in this life (18:23; see also the comments on Mt 19:16-30). Even though there are many explanations for the saying Jesus quoted in 18:25—**For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle**—in the end it seems that it is a hyperbolic expression. As such the meaning is fairly plain—it is very difficult for those who are rich by the temporal standards of the world to give up those riches for the sake of the kingdom. This saying perplexed some of Jesus’ followers. It was assumed that the rich had advantages not only for this life but also for the next. Riches were considered a sign of God’s blessing and favor. Jesus’ words seemed to belie that assumption. Jesus answered that even in such cases only the grace and power of God can break the hold of temporal riches (18:27) (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 459).

18:28-30. This discussion of riches prompted Peter to remind Jesus of all that he and the others had given up to follow Him (18:28). Jesus assured Peter and the others that such sacrifices would not go unrewarded (28:28-30).

18:31-34. See page 1588.

18:35-43. Jesus’ next meeting with the blind man on the Jericho road (18:35; see also the comments on Mt 20:29-34) demonstrated that Jesus was indeed the Messiah—the **Son of David** (18:38b, 39b) and that He would show compassion (as it was predicted for the Messiah, see Lk 4:18; Is 61:1).

19:1-10. Jesus’ last meeting with Zaccheus in Jericho (19:1) demonstrated that Jesus had indeed come “to seek and save the lost” (cf. 19:10). One might consider Zaccheus an unlikely candidate for Jesus’ attention—he was a tax collector

(see 18:10 above) and he was rich (19:2b). With this description no doubt Luke intended that the reader recall the incident with the rich young ruler at this point (cf. 18:23-24). He also was **small in stature** (19:3b; he would have been easy to overlook). Nevertheless, Zaccheus had the desire and determination to see Jesus (19:3a, 4). Jesus saw not only the figure in the sycamore tree but also the desire of the man's heart. He spoke to him and invited Himself to Zaccheus's **house** (19:5-6). Despite Jesus' reception of sinners rankling some (19:7), it was soon clear that Zaccheus had been changed by this encounter with the Messiah. He resolved to give to the poor and make restitution to those whom he had defrauded (19:8). This quick, decisive reversal of attitude toward wealth—a willingness to spend it not in a shrewd, worldly way but to spend it with eternal life in view (cf. 16:9) (in contrast to the reticence of the ruler, cf. 18:18; in contrast to the life of the rich man, cf. 16:19) made it clear that **salvation had come to Zaccheus's house** (19:9).

R. Jesus Foretold His Death and Resurrection (18:31-34) (see also the comments on Mt 20:17-19)

18:31-34. This was the third prediction by Jesus of His coming passion (cf. 9:22; 43b-45). He made the prediction to the disciples in particular (18:31a) and with a precision that made it unmistakable (18:31b-33). Yet the disciples failed to understand (18:34). Luke's purpose for including these predictions was to prove that Jesus was in control—His death was no miscalculation or accident of history.

19:1-10. See p. 1587.

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

(see also the comments on Mt 25:14-30)

19:11-27. This parable taught a concluding lesson (at the end of the journey to Jerusalem, 19:11) on the proper attitude toward one's temporal resources in light of eternity. There are two parts to this parable: Part one concerned a **nobleman** who departed to a **distant country to receive a kingdom . . . and then return** (19:12). The citizens, however, sent a delegation saying, **We do not want this man to reign over us** (19:14). At the end of the parable it was revealed that these rebellious citizens—called **enemies** of the Master/king (19:27a)—would be destroyed (19:27b). The picture is, of course, that of the Lord Jesus Christ who would depart (after the resurrection) but will return to establish His kingdom. The rebels needed to be warned:

“There is no neutral position in relationship to Jesus” (Bock, *Luke*, 1543).

Part two of the parable concerned the charge the Master left with His slaves. Ten slaves were each given a mina (a unit of money worth about one-sixtieth of a talent, or about three months' wages) and charged to **do business** with this money—invest it (19:13b). Upon his return, the master looked for an accounting. With two of the slaves the accounting was good. Each man had made money by his investments (19:16, 18), and each was commended (19:17, 19) and given greater opportunity for service. Thus far this parable illustrated the principles Jesus had taught on earlier occasions (cf. 12:34-48; 16:10-12). A third slave is called **Another** (*heteros*), a word that means “another of a completely different sort.” This slave had not invested the money. He had for fear of the Master hidden it away and intended only to return it to the Master (19:20-21). This provoked a scathing rebuke from the Master (19:22-23) and the loss of the man's mina (19:24). He proved to be a faithless slave unworthy of any opportunity to serve the Master (see also the comments on Mt 25:29-30). The lesson once again was that (while Jesus is away) His disciples are to use the goods of this world and the opportunities to serve Him to accomplish spiritual goals.

VI. Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28–21:38)

19:28. This is a transitional verse that marks the end of the journey to Jerusalem that began at 9:51 and the beginning of the next phase of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus had a complex relationship with Jerusalem and its inhabitants. His fame had obviously spread to the populace of the city (cf. 19:37b), but just as obviously they had little genuine understanding of His mission.

A. Triumphal Entry (19:29-44)

The triumphal entry was “an event of outstanding significance” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978], 872). Actually, Luke recorded only the approach to the city (cf. 19:37) and not the actual entry.

1. Preparations for the Entry (19:29-34)

(see also the comments on Mt 21:1-6)

19:29-34. The preparations were made as Jesus approached **Bethphage** (exact location unknown) and **Bethany** (19:29a) on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives (itself just east of the city.) Luke recorded: Jesus' instructions (19:29b-31), the disciples' compliance (19:32), and the

acquiescence of those who owned the colt that Jesus said would be ready for Him (19:33-34). The entire picture seems to indicate, not “prophetic insight” or “divine omniscience,” but that Jesus, by means not revealed, had made prior arrangements with the colt’s owners to have the animal in readiness. That the owners so freely allowed the colt to be taken seems to suggest this was a prearranged rendezvous. Also, the instructions Jesus gave included a mix of precise and vague terms (19:30-31), and this semi-cryptic conversation is repeated exactly in the actual event of retrieving the animals (19:33). This all looks very much like a preplanned event. Luke’s point in this account seems to be that Jesus took the initiative and that He was fully in control of the event. Furthermore, by this arrangement He was giving evidence of His own messianic consciousness. He knew what He was doing, and what He was doing was fulfilling prophecy. Specifically He was consciously fulfilling the prophecy of Zch 9:9 (see the comments there) much as He had done in Lk 4:16-21 when He was consciously fulfilling the prophecy of Is 61:1-2a. He was announcing Himself as the Messiah.

2. The Event Itself (19:35-40)

19:35-40. All of the details of this event (see the commentary on Mt 21:1-9)—Jesus on a colt (19:35), the coats strewn on the road (19:36), the words used by the shouting crowds (19:37-38), indicated the messianic presence. Luke alone used the title **King** (19:38a) to alert his audience to the “regal figure” of Jesus and to highlight (for Gentiles who may not have been as cognizant of OT messianic imagery) that as Jesus entered the city He presented Himself “as the king who brings the nation’s eschatological hope” (Bock, *Luke*, 1559). However, even as the crowds were expecting eschatological triumph (over the Romans), Jesus was about to bring the eschatological judgment on sin—at the cross (cf. Dn 9:24a, “to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity”; see the comments there). The rebuke of the Pharisees (Lk 19:39) demonstrated that they understood the implicit (messianic) claim that was being made in this event. Jesus’ response (19:40; cf. Hab 2:11) indicated that this claim could not be denied.

3. Jesus’ Lament over the City (19:41-44)

19:41-44. Luke recorded Jesus’ reaction upon seeing the city. The expression **wept over it** (19:41) fails to convey the depth of emotion—Jesus “burst into tears” (cf. Jr 8:18-21; 9:1). He saw . . . He wept . . . He said. He entered as the

King but turned immediately to His role as prophet and again (cf. Lk 13:34-35) pronounced judgment on the city (19:44-45). This judgment was fulfilled in AD 70 (Lk 21:10-28 describes events at the end of days; for the historical background of AD 70, see the comments introducing the Olivet Discourse in Mt 24–25). In spite of the apparent recognition of Him, He knew these things had **been hidden from their eyes** (19:42b). Their own preconceptions and self-generated expectations about who the Messiah would be and what he would do prevented them from seeing the Messiah in Jesus and kept them from recognizing **the time of your visitation** (19:44c).

The judgment of Jerusalem clarifies two issues regarding the history of anti-Semitism: First, the judgment was caused by the Jewish leadership’s *rejection* of Jesus as Messiah, not for being uniquely and perpetually guilty of crucifying Jesus. This contradicts the historic “Christ-killer” accusation against the Jewish people. Second, the judgment was fulfilled by the devastating events of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, not through the oppression of the Jewish people in their perpetual wanderings and persecutions. Beginning with Justin Martyr (who wrote of the Jewish people “tribulations were justly imposed on you, for you have murdered the Just One,” *Dialogue with Trypho*, 16), the church has frequently leveled both these false charges against the Jewish people, misunderstanding the clear teaching of Lk 19:41-44.

B. Jesus and the Religious Leaders (19:45–21:4)

1. How the Conflict Began (19:45-48) (see also the comments on Mt 21:12-13)

19:45-48. Soon after the events of the triumphal entry Jesus embarked on a course of action that brought Him into conflict with the religious leadership of the nation. He **entered the temple** and drove out those who had perverted the place of prayer and worship into a commercial enterprise (19:45-46). He taught in the temple, and His popularity provoked the opposition of the **chief priests and the scribes** (19:47-48).

2. How the Conflict Continued (20:1–21:4)

20:1-8. The opposition to Jesus took the first available opportunity to question His teaching and authority (20:1-2; see also the comments on Mt 21:23-27). Jesus countered this inquiry with one of His own about John the Baptist (20:3-4).

Jesus knew that the leaders had not believed in John but He, and they also, knew the people regarded John as a prophet of God (20:6). They could not openly deny John, but they refused to acknowledge him (20:7). Jesus therefore refused to answer their question about His authority. Yet in effect He had answered it, for His authority came from the same God and Father who had commissioned John.

20:9-18. Jesus followed this encounter with a parable about a vineyard owner and some renters who refused to honor the vineyard owner's representatives when he sent them to receive his payment (see also the comments on Mt 21:33-46). The wicked renters mistreated and killed the owner's men and finally mistreated and killed the owner's son (20:9-16). Afterward, the owner himself destroyed them and gave **the vineyard to others** (20:16a). The religious leaders understood immediately that they were being cast as the wicked renters (cf. 20:19) and rejected the story—**May it never be!** (20:16b). It appears from the context and the reaction of the religious leaders that Jesus meant them—those leaders had been rejected. Jesus was not making an application to the nation of Israel (and notions of “replacement theology” are not indicated by this parable and its application. See Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], 59 commenting on Mt 21:43). But Jesus drove home the point that these leaders, in rejecting Him, had rejected the **CHIEF CORNER stone** (20:17)—in effect, the Messiah (cf. Ps 118:22).

20:19-26. The conflict continued with questions from the religious leaders designed to trap Him in a contradiction or to get Him to say something that would diminish His popularity. The first question was about paying taxes (20:21-22; see also the comments on Mt 22:15-22). Jesus' answer made it clear that paying taxes (**to Caesar** or any human government) did not indicate divided loyalty. Rather paying taxes and devoting oneself to God were both expressions of submission to God (cf. Rm 13:1-7).

20:27-40. Next the Sadducees, who did not believe in the supernatural afterlife, presented Jesus with a ludicrous hypothetical scenario about a woman who successively (according to the law) married seven brothers (one after the other as each died) (20:27-31; see also the comments on Mt 22:23-33). Their question was, “In the afterlife, **which one's wife will**

she be?” (20:33). Jesus' answer was simply to point out that the conditions of that life will be completely different from conditions in this life so far as marriage is concerned (20:34-36). Then He turned their reasoning back on them by pointing out that the very Scriptures they honored spoke of **the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM . . . ISAAC, AND . . . JACOB** (20:37b; cf. Ex 3:6). The way Scripture spoke of the patriarchs indicated that they were still living years after they had passed from the scene. This proved **He is not the God of the dead but of the living** (Lk 20:38), and thus these patriarchs could look forward to the resurrection (cf. Dn 12:2).

20:41-47. At this point Jesus turned the tables on the opposition, and He asked them a question (see also the comments on Mt 22:41-46). In Psalm 110 David, clearly in reference to the Messiah (Christ), calls the Messiah **MY LORD** (20:42; Ps 110:1). Jesus' question to the religious leaders was, “How is it that David calls the Messiah—one who is David's descendant—**MY LORD?**” Of course, the leaders had no answer, but Jesus knew that the One who was the “child born” descendant of Abraham and David humanly speaking was also the preexistent “son who was given” (cf. Is 9:6). This made it possible for the Messiah to be both David's descendant and divine Lord. Jesus then warned his disciples about the duplicity and hypocrisy of the scribes (Lk 20:45-47; see also the comments on Mt 23:1-36) and contrasted that with the lesson of the widow's humble gift (21:1-4).

21:1-4. Apparently, Jesus noticed a **poor widow** who put **two small copper coins** into one of the several chests designed to receive such offerings. “These coins (*lepta*) were the smallest coins in use” (Stein, *Luke*, 509), and the smallest denomination acceptable as a gift. No one else was paying her any attention because what she would give would be inconsequential and unworthy of notice compared to the grand gifts of others. But Jesus noticed and commented the others gave **out of their surplus** (21:4a)—that is, they gave what they could easily spare. However, she gave **out of her poverty** (21:4b)—that is, she gave what she could not really spare. She gave **all that she had to live on**. She gave sacrificially. The actions of this poor widow are not to be seen as a “requirement” to get right with God. One does not earn a right standing with God by giving—sacrificially or otherwise. But these are the actions of one who is right with God. They prove one's standing with God.

C. Jesus' Teaching about the Tribulation and the Second Coming (21:5-38)

In the context of this conflict with the religious leaders (on the same day, see 20:1) Luke included Jesus' teaching to the disciples about the second coming. Much of this discourse is prophetic and refers to the time of the tribulation (see commentary on Mt 24–25) and the second coming of Jesus.

1. The Disciples' Questions (21:5-7)

a. Exchange that Prompted the Questions (21:5-6) (see also the comments on Mt 24:1-2)

21:5-6. During a lull in the back-and-forth with the opposition, the disciples took time to admire the striking beauty of the temple (21:5). The temple itself was adorned with beautiful white marble stones (Josephus, *Wars*, 5.5.6). The massive foundational stones, some of them 30 feet long and still in place today, would have been impressive. The decorations, contributed by wealthy worshipers (**votive gifts**, 21:5b), would have made the temple a place of unusual opulence—something quite beyond what the disciples would have seen anywhere else. The admiration of the disciples was soon broken by Jesus' stark prediction that one day this structure, as massive and as beautiful as it was, would be utterly destroyed—not **one stone left upon another** (21:6). (It may be that this prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in the Jewish revolt (Lk 19:41-44), but the content and context of the discourse to follow would suggest that this was an eschatological prediction (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1663; but see the interpretive options for the Olivet Discourse in the introductory comments before Mt 24:1).

b. The Two Questions (21:7) (see also the comments on Mt 24:3)

21:7. The unexpected and stunning nature of Jesus' prophecy about the temple would have impressed the disciples. "The disciples recogniz[ed] the importance of Jesus' reply and ask[ed] Him, as Teacher (*didaskale*) when 'these things' will be" (Bock, *Luke*, 1663). Note that there were *two* questions the disciples asked—**when?** (21:7a) . . . and **what sign?** (21:7b). In effect, Jesus answered the first question in the discourse itself and warned them not to attempt to focus and rely on any "one sign."

2. Jesus' Answers to the Questions: The Tribulation (21:8-24)

Jesus did not discount the value or relevance of "predictive prophecy" but addressed the

disciples' questions with a series of "warnings" and "words" of instruction.

a. Warning to Be Wary about Signs (21:8-11)

(see also the comments on Mt 24:4-8)

Jesus began by turning to the question about **the sign** (21:7b). In effect, He warned about the relative predictive value of the signs—that is, the disciples must be wary about the use of the signs—do not be **misled** (21:8a). He warned them about the coming of "phony prophets" (**will come in My name**), "false Christs" (**I am He**), and "deceitful date-setters" (**the time is near**) (21:8b). Even "catastrophic" events (**wars and disturbances** 2:9b, 10a; **earthquakes . . . plagues . . . famines . . . terrors . . . signs from heaven** [such as eclipses] 2:10b-11), must not cause them to follow the false alarmists (2:8c) or to lose heart (2:9a). These things will continue to happen **but the end** is not **immediately** (21:9c)—that is, He has not yet come. The events Jesus was describing here are the events of the first half of the tribulation (cf. Jr 30:7; Jl 2; Rv 6–19) and are thus the events that *lead up to*, but are not the second coming itself.

b. Warning and Encouragement Regarding Persecution (21:12-19) (see also the comments on Mt 24:9-14)

21:12-19. Here Jesus offered the disciples not only a word about the nature of the tribulation but also some practical instruction about persecution. First, disciples were to expect persecution from the world (21:12a, b, 17a). Second, they should recognize the opportunity for a witness (12:13) for **My name's sake** (21:12c, 17b). Third, disciples should be determined to endure persecution (21:14a; **make up your minds**). Finally, they must expect the promise of preservation and endurance from the Lord (21:18-19).

c. Warning about Jerusalem (21:20-24) (see also the comments on Mt 24:15-28)

21:20-21. The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented persecution and hardship for the Jewish people and nation of Israel (21:23b; cf. Jr 30:7). The height of persecution will come with a siege of Jerusalem (Lk 21:20a; Zch 12:1-9). The description here and in parallel texts on this point in prophetic history (cf. Mt 24:4-31) make it unlikely that this is a description of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 (for more evidence on this understanding, cf. the comments introducing Mt 24, and on Mt 24:15-16). This siege will be a prelude to the city's **desolation** (Lk 21:20b; cf. Mt. 24:15). "The abomination of desolation" is the center point

of the tribulation period (cf. the comments on Dn 9:24-27).

21:22-24. The note that these things will happen **so that all things which are written will be fulfilled** (21:22b) indicates that Jesus expected the OT prophecies concerning the end times to be literally fulfilled. The uniquely Lukan phrase **times of the Gentiles** (21:24b) (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1680) covers the time when Israel lives under ungodly Gentile rule, from the beginning of the Babylonian captivity (c. 586 BC; cf. 2Kg 25), through the era of the postexilic return, the era of the NT, the era of the Church until the second coming, and the ensuing restoration of the Davidic kingdom (cf. Zch 14:9). Some maintain that the events referred to in Lk 21:24 should be restricted to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and that Luke's version of the Olivet Discourse was altogether fulfilled when Rome destroyed Jerusalem. For a criticism of this view, see the comments introducing Mt 24. Finally, there is the note that the city will be **trampled under foot . . . until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled** (21:24b), which again covers the time from the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 586 BC until the restoration of the kingdom during the millennium following Christ's second coming (cf. Rv 20:1-6).

3. Jesus' Answers to the Questions: The Second Coming (21:25-36)

Jesus finally turned to the matter of His second coming (cf. Mt. 24:3b).

a. Times of Upheaval (21:25-26) (see also the comments on Mt 24:29)

21:25-26. Jesus described the days prior to the second coming itself as days of upheaval—cosmic, 21:25a, 26b (cf. Jl 2:30-31; Ac 2:19-20a); international, Lk 21:25b; terrestrial, 21:25c; and social, 21:26a (cf. Rv 15-19). “Humans will be overcome by fear” (Bock, *Luke*, 1683).

b. The Coming Itself (21:27) (see also the comments on Mt 24:30-31)

21:27. At this time of unprecedented upheaval the **SON OF MAN** (21:27a; cf. the comments on Dn 7:13) will return. He will return in the same way as the disciples will see Him ascend into heaven (cf. Ac 1:11b and the comments there)—physically, and in a **CLOUD** (21:27b; cf. Ac 1:11a). He will return **with power and great glory** (Lk 21:27c; Zch 14:4-6; Rv 19:11-16).

c. A Word of Encouragement to Be Hopeful (21:28)

21:28. Jesus offered a word of encouragement to those who will survive the upheavals of the tribulation and are awaiting the return of their Lord. “Redemption here is used in a broad sense,

not deliverance from the penalty of sin but deliverance from a fallen world” (Bock, *Luke*, 1687). Jesus' return will mark the ultimate victory over the forces of the world and Satan.

d. Words of Warning to Be Alert and Expectant (21:29-36) (see also the comments on Mt 24:32-35)

21:29-33. Jesus followed up His discourse with some words of warning and admonition. The parable of the fig tree essentially warned the disciples that once the events Jesus has just described begin to unfold they will continue unabated to the conclusion—the second coming—He has just described. The note about **this generation** (21:32a) is best taken to refer to the generation that is alive when these events begin to unfold (not to the generation to whom Jesus was speaking; similarly, see the comments on Mt 24:34). Jesus' point is, “When the signs come, they will proceed quickly; they will not drag on for generations. It will happen within a generation” (Bock, *Luke*, 1692). Jesus' strong assurance of the veracity of His words—**My words will not pass away** (21:33b)—is also a bold claim to ultimate authority.

21:34-36. Jesus concluded His discourse with a warning to be expectant and to live expectantly—**Be on guard** (21:34)—**keep on the alert** (21:36). In essence, He was teaching His disciples that the way to endure the day-to-day trials of life, as well as the times of peculiar stress and even persecution, is to live with the expectation of the Lord's return—to “keep seeking the things above,” to “set your mind on the things above,” and keep living for the Lord's return (cf. Col 3:1-4).

4. Summary of the Temple Ministry (21:37-38)

21:37-38. Luke added a note at the end of this section to inform the reader of the situation in which Jesus found Himself during these days of opposition and teaching. Although Jesus' teaching in the temple was popular, this only increased the intensity of the opposition against Him. While He was teaching the crowds in the temple **during the day** He was relatively safe, but in the **evening**, when the crowds went home, He found it necessary to retire to the safety of the mount that is called **Olivet** (Mount of Olives).

VII. The Passion and The Resurrection (22:1-24:53)

A. Plot to Murder Jesus (22:1-6) (see also the comments on Mt 26:1-5, 14-16)

Having noted that Jesus found it necessary to spend His nights at this time outside the city

on the Mount of Olives, Luke made explicit the reason for these movements.

1. The Plotters (22:1-2)

22:1-2. Luke noted the time when the plotters began to get serious about their work—it was **Passover** (22:1). Luke was alerting his non-Jewish audience that this was a time of unique significance—the time of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb (cf. Ex 12:1-27; Lk 22:7). The plotters are, in effect, preparing the sacrifice of the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (cf. Jn 1:29). The plotters are identified as **chief priests** and **scribes** (Lk 22:2a)—they were more on the political side of Jesus’ opposition. Apparently, they wanted to get rid of Jesus before the crowds of Passover worshipers entered the city. They feared He would find even greater popularity with the crowds who came into the city from around the nation (22:2c) so they coldly and deliberately determined to **put Him to death** (22:2b).

2. The Traitor (22:3-6)

22:3-6. Luke immediately stated that **Judas** (**Iscariot** was his family name) was motivated and animated by **Satan** (22:3a). This was by no means an effort to exonerate Judas, but was meant to highlight that one facet of the opposition to Jesus was supernatural, spiritual, and satanic—alongside the human designs of Judas and the religious leaders. The note that Judas had been one **of the twelve** (22:3b) made this act the more unfathomable and heinous. How Judas knew that the plotters would receive him (22:4a), accept his offer to **betray Him** (22:4b), and pay him for this act (22:5) is not made clear. While the exchange of money might seem to indicate a motive of greed, in reality, Judas’ act was utterly irrational and inexplicable, as is unbelief itself. Judas’ plan was to seek a suitable time and opportunity to betray Him—a time when Jesus was isolated from the protection of the **crowd** (22:6).

B. The Upper Room (22:7-38)

With the plot hanging over Jesus’ head, the scene in the upper room had a melancholy aspect to it from the start. Throughout Luke’s description there is a “sense of the significant” in every scene.

1. Preparations for Passover (22:7-13) (see also the comments on Mt 26:17-19)

22:7-13. The note about the feast of **Unleavened Bread** and the sacrifice of the **Passover lamb** (22:7) would have added to the significance and solemnity of these preparations for

the reader who was aware that Jesus Himself is “our Passover” (cf. 1Co 5:7). Jesus Himself knew this was His last Passover and these were His last hours. The Passover had to be eaten within the walls of the city (cf. Lk 2:41; 2Ch 35:16-19; *Jub* 49:15-16; cf. Stein, *Luke*, 538), so He needed to make arrangements other than His retreat to the Mount of Olives. Luke alone noted the names of the two disciples charged with the preparations for this Passover—**Peter and John** (Lk 22:8a). The preparations would have involved “seeing the lamb was roasted . . . and preparing all the side dishes and wine” (Stein, *Luke*, 538), and yet the only question from the disciples was, **Where?** (22:9b). The details in Jesus’ response indicate that this was a prearranged meeting (22:10) and the room had already been secured (22:11-12). The disciples found that everything was **just as He had told them** (22:13). Jesus was thus presented as an observant Jew, performing all the responsibilities of piety as described by the law. It also showed that Jesus was in control of the situation—an emphasis that will be true even through His arrest and trials. (On the question of the chronology of the Passover accounts see Thomas and Gundry, *Harmony of the Gospels*, 320-23).

2. Institution of the Lord’s Supper (22:14-20) (see also the comments on Mt 26:20-29)

22:14. Luke’s introduction to the scene of the last supper—**When the hour had come** (22:14a)—continued “the sense of the significant.” This was “the hour” not just of the start of the Passover celebration, but the hour that actually began the passion of Christ. However, the scene opened with no hint of all that was to come. Jesus **reclined** at the table (22:14b) and **the apostles with Him** (22:14c), enjoying the meal and each other’s company.

22:15-20. Into this idyllic scene Jesus introduced an ominous note, one He had attempted to convey to the disciples previously (cf. Lk 9:22)—His impending suffering (22:15b). In addition, He announced He would not eat another Passover with them **until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God** (22:16). It was in the light of the cross (His suffering) and the hope of His future reign (**until the kingdom of God comes**; 22:18b) that Jesus instituted the celebration of “the bread and the cup.” Using items left over from the Passover meal, Jesus took the elements of bread and wine and re-signified them as **My**

body (22:19b) and **My blood** (22:20c). As the bread was given (22:19a) and the wine **poured out** (22:20b) so His body was given and His life poured out. Jesus viewed His death as sacrificial and vicarious—His body was **given for you** (22:19a), His blood **poured out for you** (22:20b; emphasis added). The actions He prescribed—eating and drinking—indicated the disciples, by partaking of these elements, were signifying their faith in Him and their trust in the death He was about to suffer. “Here is not only deep theological truth but great love” (Bock, *Luke*, 1725). Jesus’ command, **Do this in remembrance of Me** (22:22:19c), was meant to remember His Person, His work on the cross, and that He is coming again—we are “proclaiming His death until He returns” (1Co 11:26).

3. Four Post-Supper Conversations (22:21-38)

The disciples were given no time to reflect on the significance of the ceremony that Jesus had just instituted because the events of that night moved inexorably, allowing little time to reflect or think.

a. The Betrayer Announced (22:21-23) (see also the comments on Mt 26:21-24)

22:21-23. In the first post-supper conversation, Jesus announced that He would be **betrayed** (22:22). Although the reader already knew this, it was a shock to the disciples. Even more outrageous was that the betrayal (22:21b; lit., “is in the process of betraying”) was already underway. Next, Jesus explained that this treachery was not unexpected but was a part of the way that had **been determined** (22:22a) as part of the divine plan (cf. Ps 41:9; 55:12-14; Ac 2:23). Nevertheless, He indicated that the traitor would still be culpable for his crime (Lk 22:22b). This conversation concluded with the disciples speculating on who the culprit might be (22:23).

b. Debate Over Who Is the Greatest (22:24-30)

22:24-30. Whatever angst the disciples felt over the revelation that Jesus was about to be betrayed soon left them, and, in the second post-supper conversation, they began a silly argument over which of them would be regarded as the **greatest** (22:24). It was an evidence of Jesus’ selflessness and patience that He did not rebuke them for their truly amazing indifference to Him and His impending passion, but instead He used the occasion to teach them yet another serious lesson on service. True greatness, He taught, is not in having others serve you

(22:25), but the greatest is the one who **serves**. Jesus pointed to Himself as the supreme example (22:27). Still, He gave them an encouraging promise and assured them that their service and sacrifice would not go unrewarded (22:28-30).

c. Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denials (22:31-34)

22:31-34. In the third post-supper conversation Jesus revealed to Peter that he would deny Him. The conversation began with Jesus reassuring Peter that while Satan had asked to **sift** Peter **like wheat** (22:31)—that is, to test him severely, nevertheless, He, Jesus, had **prayed** for Peter, specifically that his **faith may not fail** (22:32a). Jesus’ words indicated that Peter would not be completely unscathed by this Satanic attack, but that he would be **turned again** (22:32b; i.e., repentant) and that he could look forward to being again in a place where he could **strengthen** the others (22:32c). Peter’s response showed that he had no inkling of the danger he was in, and that he was overconfident in his own ability to keep himself faithful. His boast—**I am ready** (22:33)—would in short order be proven empty, sadly, as Jesus’ sobering prediction of Peter’s denial would be fulfilled (22:34).

d. Jesus Attempted to Prepare His Men for the Coming Conflict (22:35-38)

22:35-38. In the final post-supper conversation Jesus once again attempted to prepare His disciples for the conflict that was just ahead of them. He first reminded them that He had not previously sent them out unprepared (22:35). Now, speaking metaphorically (using the items of **money belt**, **bag**, and **sword** as non-literal expressions of “being prepared”), they were called to prepare themselves (22:36) because He was going to be **NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS** (22:37b). What He was about to undergo was to be considered a **fulfillment** of what was **written** (predicted in the OT) (22:37). Nevertheless they were to be ready for His absence. The disciples did not understand Jesus’ point, or the nature of the conflict to come, and they produced two actual swords (22:38a). Jesus’ words, **It is enough** (22:38b), may be understood not as a commentary on the number of weapons but as an expression of mild frustration over the disciples’ misunderstanding (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 555). But **enough** means “to be sufficient, suitable in number or amount.” The disciples had two swords after accompanying Jesus for nearly three years. If He objected to the possession of weapons as a general rule, the disciples would not have had them so late in their association

with Jesus in His ministry. **It is enough** more than likely indicates that Jesus did not object to the means for self-defense.

C. Three Heartbreaking Scenes (22:39-62)

Even with the institution of the Lord's Supper and the post-supper conversations, the disciples had not realized the deep significance of the events of the night thus far. Moreover, nothing in the movement of Jesus out of the city would have alerted them to the shattering experiences that were soon to follow. Luke noted that it was **His custom** (22:39; cf. 21:37) to leave the city at night for the refuge of the Mount of Olives. In three emotionally fraught scenes, the disciples' world was turned upside down.

1. Prayer in Gethsemane (22:39-46) (see also the comments on Mt 26:30-46)

22:39-40. Upon reaching the western slope of the **Mount**, identified by Luke only as **the place** (22:40a, identified in the other gospels as "Gethsemane," which means "olive press," Mt 26:36; Mk 14:32), Jesus admonished His disciples to **pray** (lit., "keep praying") **that you may not enter into temptation** (Lk 22:40b). The events to follow would test the disciples' trust and commitment to Jesus. They needed the strength that only divine assistance could provide. Tellingly, Jesus' response to an impending crisis was prayer (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1763). Even as He was facing the monumental challenge of His passion, He was concerned for His men. Luke did not record that Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him inside the garden to pray (cf. Mt 26:37).

22:41. Luke recorded Jesus' actions with a simplicity that still conveyed the depth of significance of the scene. First, Jesus **withdrew** . . . **about a stone's throw** (22:41a) or simply "not far away." The term **withdrew** (*apospao*, "tear away") is stronger than simply "went away"—it adds a note of emotion (cf. Ac 21:1). Second, He **knelt down** (Lk 22:41b); again, the action is more vivid than simply the act of "kneeling." The parallel accounts (cf. Mt 26:39; Mk 14:35) say He "fell down," in the sense "He dropped to His knees." Finally, He began **to pray** (22:41c), indicating that He gave voice to the sentiments of His heart.

22:42-44. There are four parts to Jesus' prayer: First, He acknowledged the Father's ability to hear and to answer—**if You are willing** (22:42b). Second, He communicated His petition—**remove this cup from Me** (22:42c). Jesus was not asking to be released from the purpose for which He had come, but He was voicing the perfectly

understandable desire to avoid the suffering He was about to face. Third, He expressed His submission—**yet not My will, but Yours be done** (22:42d). This was no mere resignation but an active submission, a giving of Himself to the Father's purpose and will. Fourth, He conveyed His fervency (22:44b). So intense was this act of prayer that Luke recorded that He was **in agony** (22:44a), that is, He was physically affected—so much so that **His sweat became like drops of blood** (22:44c). This may be an instance (noted only by Luke the physician) of *hematridrosis*—a condition that occurs when one is under great stress. However, Luke said Jesus' perspiration was **like** blood, using a comparative particle (*hosei*). The phrase probably indicates simply a comparison, meant to indicate the intensity of Jesus' effort; it produced profuse or dripping sweat. The intensity of the prayer affected Him spiritually as well, so much so that an **angel from heaven** (22:43) arrived to strengthen Him (perhaps with encouraging words; cf. Dn 9:3, 23). This is another detail found only in Luke's account.

22:45-46. As the mysterious scene began with Jesus' concern for His disciples, so it concluded with that concern. Jesus returned to find the disciples asleep. Luke noted that the sleep was **from sorrow** (22:45), which may indicate that they were aware of His struggles in, and the intensity of, His prayers. Nevertheless, He rebuked them for their inattention and warned them of the danger at hand (22:46). Although Jesus understood the gravity of the moment, the disciples did not. Yet in a short time they would.

2. Arrest in the Garden (22:47-53) (see also the comments on Mt 26:47-56)

22:47-51. Luke's account indicates the swift and confusing rush of events. From the secluded scene of prayer, the action moved to the chaotic events of arrest and trial. Luke's account of the arrest is the shortest of the gospel writers. Even while Jesus was **still speaking** (22:47a), a crowd of **chief priests and officers of the temple and elders** (22:52a) led by Judas the traitor (22:47b) approached Him **to kiss Him**. The **kiss** (22:47c; Luke did not record the act of the kiss itself) was no doubt the signal to the officers that He was the One to be arrested (cf. Mt 26:48-49; Mk 14:44). But the familiarity and (false) affection of the act made the betrayal that much more heinous. Jesus' rebuke to Judas (Lk 22:48) was blunt and withering—no question that this was the despicable act of a traitor. This word from Jesus may have been the first indication to the

disciples of what was actually happening, and it prompted an inept and futile response (22:49). The impetuous act of **one of them** (22:50a; Peter, cf. Jn 18:10), slicing off the ear of a servant of the high priest (Lk 22:50b), indicated the continued misunderstanding of the disciples (cf. 22:38). The swift rebuke of Jesus—**Stop! No more of this** and His compassionate act of healing the man's ear (22:51, the last miracle of Jesus' ministry) contrasted with the militant actions and harsh intentions of His accusers.

22:52-53. Jesus' rebuke to the religious leaders was condemning and revealing. As if this healing was not enough of an implied rebuke, Jesus noted that their method (**with swords and clubs**), their manner (**as you would against a robber**, 22:52), their choice of location, and their timing (not in the temple and at **this hour**, 22:53) of this arrest all indicated something of their real motivation and intentions. Bluntly, He attributed their act to **the power of darkness**, namely, Satan (cf. Col 1:13).

3. Denial in a Courtyard (22:54-62) (see also the comments on Mt 26:69-75)

22:54-55. As the sweep of events moved on, Luke recorded that Jesus was taken to the **house of the high priest** (22:54a). Before the trial itself Luke (as did the other three gospel writers) recorded Peter's denial. It is a testimony to the veracity of the gospel writers that they faithfully recorded the failure of one of the "pillars of the church" (cf. Gl 2:9). The events of the scene are almost painful to read, and they unfolded slowly over the course of Jesus' trial. First, Peter's **following at a distance** (22:54) is noted. It is doubtful that any spiritual significance is to be attached to that note. He simply lagged behind the arresting party. Next, Peter's presence at a small fire with a group of the locals is mentioned (22:55). Again, this is merely a factual statement meant to set up the three identifications that follow.

22:56-60a. Three separate people identified Peter, likely because he had sat with them for perhaps two or three hours, outside the high priest's house. First a mere **servant-girl**, after **looking at him intently** (22:56b; this probably was meant to convey that Peter was trying to conceal himself in the dim glow of the firelight), identified him as one who **was with Him too** (22:56c). Peter's denial was swift and terse (22:57). Second, **a little later** (22:58a) another man placed Peter with Jesus' disciples—**You are one of them too!** (22:58b). Again, Peter's denial

was swift, but now a bit more emphatic—**Man, I am not!** (22:58c). Then, after **about an hour** (22:59a) yet another man more insistently began to affirm that **certainly Peter was with Him**, and he asserted that Peter was Galilean to back up his identification (22:59b). The rising conviction of his accusers was met by the rising intensity of Peter's denials. Therefore, he responded with his most vehement denial—**Man, I do not know what you are talking about** (22:60a; Luke omitted Peter's cursing, cf. Mk 14:71). The scene was distressing, but it was about to grow even more intense.

22:60b-62. While the words of denial were being spoken, Peter heard the crow of a rooster (22:60b). At that instant, **the Lord turned and looked at Peter** (22:61a). One can only imagine the searing pain of conscience that swept over Peter at that moment as Peter recalled Jesus' words (cf. 22:34) spoken only hours before (22:61b). **He went out and wept bitterly** (22:62); "The effect on Peter was shattering" (Morris, *Luke*, 316). As difficult as this scene is to read, it serves not only to reassure readers of the veracity and accuracy of the narrative as a whole. It also served to teach that restoration, even after the most egregious failures, is possible. The gospel writer spared no one's reputation so as to tell the story completely and faithfully.

D. Four Unjust Trials (22:63-23:25)

The identity of Jesus is the main theme of the trials, as it is of the historical narrative as well. Luke kept asking and answering, who is Jesus? Ironically, in these accounts the interrogators are the ones who speak the truth about Jesus. Although Luke does not highlight it, evidently the accounts themselves demonstrate that there were a number of illegalities about these trials. Luke left it to the reader to see and come to the appropriate conclusion that Jesus was unjustly charged and executed.

1. Jesus before the Sanhedrin (22:63-71)

22:63-64. Apparently there was some sort of illegal pre-trial hearing that Luke did not record (cf. Mt 26:59-68; Mk 14:55-65). Holding Jesus at the high priest's house had been illegal, as was the beating that followed. The abuse Jesus suffered involved both psychological (**mocking**) and physical abuse (**beating**, Lk 22:63), as well as a cruel game—they blindfolded Him, struck Him, and then taunted Him to identify the attacker (22:64). Luke added the emphatic explanation—they were **blaspheming** (22:65). All of this had been predicted by Jesus (cf. 9:22, 44), showing that in

spite of the appearances, through all the abuse, Jesus was in control, and all of it was according to the divine plan (cf. Mt 26:53-54).

22:65-67. As the trial itself got underway, Luke noted who was attending. The **Council of elders** (22:66a) is probably a synonym for the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 22:5). Among those sitting in judgment were some of those who had been in the garden to arrest Jesus—**scribes** and **chief priests** (Lk 22:66)—so much for a fair trial! There followed a series of questions from the council and Jesus' response. The first question—**If You are the Christ, tell us** (22:67a) was completely disingenuous. Everything Jesus did, His healings and His teachings, from His affirmation in Nazareth (cf. 4:21) up to the healing of the servant's ear just hours earlier, had proven that He was the Messiah. His first response exposed their dishonesty—**If I tell you, you will not believe** (22:67b). Jesus' point was that neither "evidence" nor "reason" would change their minds because they were already convinced that Jesus was *not* the Messiah.

22:68-71. Jesus also exposed their prejudice by pointing out that "dialogue" with them was useless because they would refuse to answer Him honestly (22:68). However, even in the face of their dishonesty and bias (and knowing how His answer would be twisted by them) He answered honestly and more completely than they expected. In effect He told them, "Yes, I am the Messiah and one day I will prove it to your satisfaction and chagrin." He quoted a portion of Ps 110:1 and applied the messianic title **SON OF MAN** (cf. Dn 7:13-14) to Himself. This prompted the council to ask an even more inflammatory question—**Are You the Son of God, then?** (Lk 22:70a). Jesus' ready and confident answer was in effect, "Yes, I am the Son of God." (**Yes, I am** is literally "You say that I am"; both expressions convey the same idea.) Luke recorded this to convey that Jesus did not hesitate to affirm His messiahship and His deity, truths that Luke had been affirming throughout his narrative (cf. 1:32-35; 3:22; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 9:35; cf. Ac 9:20; 13:33). The reaction of the council was swift and definitive. "As far as Jesus' opponents were concerned, their purpose . . . had now been accomplished" (Stein, *Luke*, 571).

2. Jesus before Pilate the First Time (23:1-7) (see also the comments on Mt 27:11-14)

23:1-2. However, while the council had the verdict they wanted, they did not have the authority to carry out the death sentence they

wanted. For that they needed another charge, one that would stand before Pilate, the Roman governor (23:1). Therefore, Jesus' accusers would change their strategy before Pilate. Rather than question Jesus, they attempted to bring three accusations against Him. One accusation was that He was **misleading our nation** (23:2a)—a sort of general charge of stirring up insurrectionist sentiments. A second accusation was that He was encouraging insubordination to the Roman authorities, at just the point that mattered most to those authorities—the paying of **taxes** (23:2b). (That this charge was patently false would have been clear to anyone; cf. 20:20-26). The third accusation was that Jesus was calling Himself **Christ, a King** (23:2c). This last accusation revealed that Jewish people considered any claim to be the Messiah as a claim to be king, no doubt reflecting their expectations of the literal fulfillment of the promises of the Davidic covenant (cf. 2Sm 7; Ps 89). From this charge, they also wanted Pilate to conclude that Jesus intended to foment a literal (armed and military) rebellion against Rome.

23:3-4. It was this last charge that interested Pilate and so he followed it up with a direct question to Jesus—**Are You the King of the Jews?** (23:3a). Jesus' answer was likewise direct. **It is as you say** (23:3b; see Jn 18:33-37 for a fuller reply). In spite of what appeared to be an admission of guilt, Pilate rendered his verdict—**I find no guilt in this man** (23:4).

23:5-7. The accusers were not so easily dissuaded and sought to press the first charge (insurrection) that Pilate had apparently ignored (22:5). However, upon their mentioning of Galilee, Pilate saw a possible opening to avoid further involvement in the matter. He would refer Jesus to Herod (Antipas, ruler of Galilee who had also ordered John the Baptist's execution, cf. 13:31) who happened to be visiting Jerusalem for Passover.

3. Jesus before Herod (23:8-12)

23:8-12. The account of Jesus before Herod is unique to Luke (cf. Ac 4:27-28). This was a meeting that was long overdue (Lk 23:8b). Herod had wanted to see Jesus **to see some sign**, that is some miracle, **performed by Him** (23:8c). The expression is a clue to Herod's mindset—Jesus was considered to be a "performer" who could put on a good show; Herod had no deeper interests. As Herod was an insincere inquirer (23:9a), Jesus felt no inclination to dignify the proceedings with any answers (23:9b; cf. Is 53:7). This is not

the silence of one “Jesus meek and mild,” but the silence of a superior not condescending to lower Himself to the childish level of this shallow knave. Once again, it is an example that through it all Jesus was in control. However, His accusers were again vehemently pressing their case (Lk 23:10). Luke’s description of their behavior is emphatic. Herod’s contemptuous and juvenile mockery (23:11a) of Jesus only served to reinforce the picture of Herod as a superficial and foolish character who, in the presence of the Son of God, can only think of coarse jests and mocking contempt. He made no verdict and sent Jesus back to Pilate (23:11b) “The really frightening thing about the incident [is that] with the Son of God before him Herod could only jest” (Morris, *Luke*, 321). Luke noted that their mutual hostility toward Jesus turned the hostility between Pilate and Herod to friendship (23:12)—a twisted and corrupt basis for becoming **friends**.

4. Jesus before Pilate the Second Time

(23:13-25) (see also the comments on Mt 27:15-26)

23:13-17. Since Herod had not relieved him of the responsibility of dealing with Jesus, Pilate once again found himself before the Jewish religious authorities (23:13). The scene unfolded in three parts: First, Pilate rendered his (what he thought would be the final) verdict. Again, in Luke’s narrative an unbeliever stated the truth—**I have found no guilt in this man** (23:14b). The charges against Jesus were, indeed, groundless—He was simply an innocent man—and this was the opinion of Herod as well (23:15) who, like Pilate, had the authority to execute Jesus. Still, to appease the leaders and the crowd, Pilate decided to (unjustly) **punish Him**, but then to **release Him** (23:16). In a parenthetical note, Luke informed the reader that, not only had he found Jesus innocent but Pilate also was using a recognized custom, an act of clemency, to **release** Jesus (23:17; this verse is not found in a few of the oldest Gk. mss).

23:18-25. In the second part of this scene, the crowds (**they**, 23:18a), no doubt prompted by the religious leaders, expressed their displeasure with Pilate’s verdict and demanded not only that Jesus be taken away (23:18b) and crucified (23:21), but also (in a tragic irony) that a genuine insurrectionist, **Barabbas** (23:18c-19), be released instead. The scene shifted back and forth—Pilate reiterating his verdict of Jesus’ innocence and his intent to release Jesus (23:20,

22), and the crowds increasingly insistent on his death (23:21, 23). In the final, tragic scene of this trial a pliable Pilate capitulated to the will of the people—he condemned Jesus (23:24) and released the insurrectionist (23:25). Why did the crowd prefer the insurrectionist? That his insurrection was mentioned twice would indicate that that is what they wanted—they were rejecting Jesus as Messiah who came to save sinners (cf. 19:10) and not to throw off the yoke of Rome.

E. Crucifixion and Burial (23:26-56)

Luke related the crucifixion and burial with a studied simplicity. There is no attempt to draw out the pathos of the scene, there is no melodramatic description, (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 588), and there is no theological explanation of the events—no “theory of the atonement” (see Is 53). There is only the record of the events, which is designed to keep to Luke’s main theme—answering the question “Who is Jesus?”

1. The Cross (23:26-49)

a. On the Way to the Cross (23:26-32) (see also the comments on Mt 27:31-34)

23:26-27. In Luke’s account, the narrative of the way to the cross is taken up with the people encountered on the way. The first person is **a man, Simon of Cyrene** (23:26a). Normally criminals were forced to carry their own cross to the place of execution. However, the beatings and extended trials caused Jesus to be too weak to perform this task, and so Simon was forced (only Luke uses the forceful term **seized**) to carry the cross (23:26b). Simon, probably a Jew from North Africa (Cyrene), was visiting Jerusalem for the Passover and may have become a follower of Jesus (cf. Mk 15:21). Luke noted **a large crowd** (Lk 23:27a) of people following Jesus to His execution. Luke’s description of the crowd was ambiguous. Sometimes the crowd seemed to be with Jesus, but at other times (as during the recent trials) they were with the opposition. Once again the crowd displayed its ambivalence toward Jesus, following more out of curiosity than concern. Next came a brief encounter between Jesus and some **women**, the professional mourners (23:27b) (not those who had followed Jesus during His ministry) who were dutifully, if somewhat mechanically, performing their duties. Even in His weakened condition Jesus took the opportunity to offer a word of warning to these women and the crowd.

23:28-32. First, instead of expressing appreciation for their sentiments on His behalf, He

surprisingly admonished them to direct their lamentations, not for Him, but for themselves and their children. For rejecting Him they will all face a judgment (23:28). Second, He offered a prophetic word on the tragedy about to befall them. The **days are coming** (23:29a), He said, when conditions would be so bad that those without children would be the most **blessed** (23:29a, b), certainly a stark and disturbing thought for these women. Furthermore, in those days men would prefer being covered with earth—i.e., death—rather than face the judgment that was about to befall them (23:30). Jesus quoted Hs 10:8 and Is 2:19, both contexts that speak of judgment. Finally He offered a proverb (Lk 23:31) that said in effect, if this travesty—a condemnation of the innocent (**when the tree is green**)—can happen then how much more likely will be the judgment on the guilty (when the wood is **dry**)? The overall point Jesus was making is this: the citizens needed to wake up and realize that by this rejection of the Messiah they were in danger of judgment. Indeed, that judgment fell in AD 70.

Luke added a brief note about the two criminals who **were being led away** with Jesus (23:32) in order to provide a setting for the conversation that took place during the crucifixion.

b. Crucifixion (23:33-38) (see also the comments on Mt 27:35-44)

23:33. The place of the crucifixion was not only a place of shame (with criminals, 23:33b), but even its name—the **place called The Skull** (23:33a) was foreboding. It may have resembled a human skull (“Calvary” is a transliteration of the Latin word *calvaria*, which means “skull”; “Golgotha” is the Aramaic equivalent) or it may have been a place associated with skulls, that is, a place of death—executions and graves.

23:34a, b. The first of three statements from the cross (as recorded by Luke) was a word of forgiveness (23:34). If Jesus’ prophetic retort to the professional mourners seemed a bit discordant (one would think He would appreciate the gesture), this word of forgiveness is completely unexpected (in an entirely different way). When one might expect Him to be reasserting His innocence (which in a way He does here), He rather prayed a prayer for forgiveness for His executioners—**Father, forgive them** (23:34a). Jesus was not suggesting that ignorance is an excuse for sin (23:34b); he was being gracious. He was practicing what He taught (cf. 6:27-28), and He was fulfilling prophecy (cf. Is 53:12).

23:34c-38. The activity around the cross involved the soldiers playing games of chance with His **garments** as the prize (23:34c; cf. Ps 22:18) and several groups of people mocking and berating Him. Once again, even in the cruel derision and contempt of the **people** (Lk 23:35a), **rulers** (23:35b), and **soldiers** (23:36a), Luke managed to have the opponents of Jesus speak the truth about Him. Unknowingly they were confirming that He is the One who can save others (23:35c; 37b; cf. 19:10) *not by saving* Himself but by *giving* Himself. “[T]he saving nature of Jesus’ ministry is referred to four times in the space of five verses” (23:35-39; Stein, *Luke* 590). He is **the Christ of God, His chosen One** (23:35d), He is **the king of the Jews** (23:37a, 38). All of this mockery *was fulfilling* the prophetic word of Ps 22 (cf. Ps 22:6-18) and thus is itself confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah. Luke expected his readers to understand that these mockers were correct in their mockery and chiding because unwittingly they confirmed the Christology that he had related in the previous 22 chapters: He is the Christ/Messiah (cf. Lk 1:32-33; 2:11, 26; 4:41; 9:20), He is the King of the Jews (cf. 1:32-33; 2:4; 18:38-39; 19:38), and He is the Savior (cf. 1:47, 69, 77; 2:11; 19:10).

c. Conversation with Criminals (23:39-43)

23:39-43. Luke’s account of the conversation with the two criminals is unique to his gospel. With Matthew (Mt 27:44) and Mark (Mk 15:32), Luke noted the abuse that Jesus received from the criminals, but unlike the others he recorded that while the abuse came from one of the criminals (Lk 23:39a) the other criminal defended Jesus. Once again the facts of Jesus’ person and mission (that He was **the Christ** and had come to save others) were put into the mouth of Jesus’ antagonists through the first criminal’s rant (23:39b). The second criminal responded in three ways. First, he rebuked the mocking criminal, acknowledging the justice of their punishment (23:40-41a). Second, he defended Jesus, acknowledging the Lord’s innocence (23:41b). Third, he made a request of Jesus, demonstrating his faith. In the simple request, **Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom** (23:42), the criminal affirmed his belief that Jesus was the Messiah and the King of the Jews, since he expected Jesus to have a kingdom, and that He could save him—**remember me**. As a result, the criminal received a promise—**Today, you shall be with Me in Paradise** (heaven; Rv 2:7) (23:43b). This was the

second of the sayings of Jesus from the cross as recorded by Luke.

d. The Conclusion of Jesus' Passion (23:44-49)

(see also the comments on Mt 27:45-56)

23:44-46. The **sixth hour . . . until the ninth hour** (23:44) would have been noon to three o'clock in the afternoon. The supernatural darkness (23:44-45a; there is no hint of an eclipse or other natural phenomenon) indicated that an event of cosmic significance was happening. The rending of the veil in the holy place of the temple was another supernatural indication that the way into the presence of God was now accomplished by Jesus' sacrifice (cf. the comments on Mt 27:51; cf. Heb 10:19-20). The third word of Jesus from the cross (as recorded by Luke) and the final cry of Jesus, committing Himself into His Fathers' hands, quotes Ps 31:5. In that psalm a righteous man pleads for a rescue from his enemies but nevertheless commits himself in trust to the LORD. "Jesus' remarks are an expression of righteous faith . . . Jesus is the righteous sufferer *par excellence*." Bock suggests that in this expression of "his trust that God will care for him . . . Jesus is expressing his trust that God will "resurrect him" (Bock, *Luke*, 1862). And as in Jn 19:30—"It is finished!"—Jesus was affirming that He had accomplished the sacrificial atonement for sins, that work for which He had been born (cf. Lk 1:77; 2:29-32). "Thus after finishing his mission, Jesus committed himself into his Father's hands and breathed his last. No one took his life from him. He gave it freely (cf. Jn 10:18)" (Stein, *Luke*, 597). Of course, this does not imply the silly notion that Jesus "committed suicide" but that He freely submitted Himself to the Father's purpose for His incarnation (cf. Mt 1:21; Jn 1:29; Gl 1:4) and offered Himself willingly as a sacrifice.

23:47-49. Luke recorded three reactions to Jesus' death: The first was the confession of the centurion that **this man was innocent** (23:47). This is significant because any centurion would have been a man of utmost integrity whose word was to be accepted as completely unbiased and true. Also, he would have been the man in charge for this execution (he was in a position to know the man he was executing). Finally, he was a Gentile, so his testimony would have had great weight with Luke's readership. Furthermore, this is the same testimony as that of the criminal. Thus from both sides of the "law" came the same conclusion—Jesus was innocent. The second reaction was that of the crowd, which was remorse (23:48). The fickle crowd that had

cried for His death, that had gathered for the **spectacle** of it all, those people, after they witnessed all the events, were **beating their breasts** (23:48c; Luke alone recorded this act of communal contrition). The final reaction to Jesus' death was on the part of the friends (**acquaintances**), and faithful women who had followed Him from Galilee (23:49). They were vigilant. They **were standing at a distance** and waited for the opportunity to serve Jesus one final time.

2. The Tomb (23:50-56) (see also the comments on Mt 27:57-66)

As with the account of the crucifixion, the account of the burial is related simply and without a melodramatic flourish.

23:50-52. First, a good man made a bold request. In a short space, Luke related several key facts about this man: his name was **Joseph** (23:50a; a common name then as now), he was **a member of the Council** (23:50b; which meant that this request may have put him at odds with those who had opposed Jesus), and he was a man of quality (**a good and righteous man**, 23:50c), meaning a man of integrity. As proof, it is related that he **had not consented to their plan and action** (23:51a)—that is, he had not approved or participated in the unjust trials or false accusations against Jesus. Additionally, he was from a town called **Arimathea**, a city of Judea (23:51b), and he was **waiting for the kingdom of God** (23:51c)—that is, he was looking for the Messiah. He also was a bold man, asking Pilate for **the body of Jesus** (23:52). For Joseph to identify himself as sympathetic to Jesus—if not as actually one of His followers—right after Jesus had been executed would have required courage.

23:53-56. Next, Luke recorded a considerate and sympathetic burial (23:53). The whole scene conveyed a sense of deep respect and loving care for Jesus. "The reader is to note the respect shown to Jesus and the effort made to give Him care" (Bock, *Luke*, 1878). Finally, there was a hasty internment. The notes regarding the **preparation day** and the onset of **the Sabbath** (23:54) conveyed that the normal preparations for burial had to be curtailed. The women (cf. 23:49) made sure they knew where the tomb was (23:55) so that they could return there after preparing **spices and perfumes** (23:56) to complete the rituals of burial.

F. Resurrection, Commission, Ascension (24:1-53)

In Luke's account the events surrounding the resurrection all occurred on the same day, and

all of them in, or around, Jerusalem (cf. Stein, *Luke*, 602).

1. Resurrection (24:1-46)

a. **At the Tomb (24:1-12)** (see also the comments on Mt 28:1-8)

24:1-3. Luke assumed the reader would understand that it was the women who came to the tomb (**they came**; cf. 23:49, 55) to complete the burial rituals for Jesus (24:1). Note that Luke recorded that women were the first to learn of the resurrection. That it was **on the first day of the week** and **at early dawn** (24:1a) accords with the accounts of the other gospels. Luke had not previously mentioned **the stone**, which was now **rolled away** (24:2). On entering the tomb, the women did not find **the body of the Lord Jesus** (24:3). Luke's emphasis was on the absence of the "body"—it was a "bodily resurrection." Furthermore, the fuller identification, "Lord Jesus," conveyed something of the import of the resurrection—it proved His claim to lordship (cf. Ac 22:22-36; Eph 1:20-21).

24:4-5a. **Two men** appeared (24:4a; only Luke mentioned both, one of whom was the only speaker, hence Mark's one man, Mk 16:5, and Matthew's one angel, Mt 28:2-3, 5). They were clearly angels, as revealed by the suddenness of their appearance, the description of their clothing (Lk 24:4b), and the insight they were able to give to the women (cf. 24:5-6). This was later made explicit in v. 23. This manifestation of angelic glory was startling and caused the women look away in fear (24:5a).

24:5b-8. The message of the angels was stunning. First, there was a question: **Why do you seek the living One among the dead?** (24:5b), which came as a mild rebuke. Before the women could protest (it was after all quite reasonable for them to be at the tomb looking for Jesus' body) the angel added: **He is not here, but He has risen** (24:6a). This was quickly followed by an explanation (24:6b-7), emphasizing the "divine necessity" of the events that had led to this moment (24:7, **must be**). In effect, the angel was saying to the women, "You should have expected all these events—the passion, the cross, and the resurrection—because this is what Jesus was telling you all along." Luke noted that they **remembered His words** (24:8). It was not the evidence of their own eyes—an empty tomb—or even the words of angels, that convinced them. Rather, it was the memory of the Word that Jesus taught and now confirmed by His resurrection that brought them to realize that He had **risen!**

24:9-12. The women immediately returned to the city and **reported all these things** to the disciples (24:9). Including the names of some of the women (24:10) is yet another example of how Luke gave prominence to the role of women in the gospel narrative. The report of the women did not receive immediate acceptance (24:11) but prompted Peter to go out to the tomb in haste; he **ran to the tomb** (24:12a). While he saw the evidences of the empty tomb and the linen wrappings—and he was impressed (**marveling**)—the impression from what Luke wrote was that Peter did not yet believe (24:12b).

b. On the Road to Emmaus (24:13-32)

The account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the two on the road to Emmaus is unique to Luke's gospel.

24:13-14. The two discussing **all these things** are identified only as being **of them** (24:13a) that is, of the number of the disciples (not of the Eleven but of **the rest** 24:9c). They were on **that very day** (24:13b), that is, the day of the resurrection, traveling to Emmaus, a village **about seven miles [west] from Jerusalem** (24:13c). That distance might take them half a day to travel and afforded them several hours of conversation on the way. They were probably headed home (cf. Bock, *Luke*, 1907), talking about **all these things** that had occurred, (24:14; "these things" and related phrases are key terms in this account) concerning Jesus' passion and death.

24:15-17a. It is immediately apparent that the One who joined the two travelers was Jesus (24:15), but they **were prevented from recognizing Him** (24:16). The passive "were kept from recognizing" is a "divine passive, that is, *God kept them from recognizing Jesus*" (Stein, *Luke*, 610). His question amounted to, "What were you just talking about?" (24:17a).

24:17b-19a. The question posed by the One stopped them in their tracks (**they stood still**). So direct a question caused them to think of why "these things" had been the topic of their conversation—and that made them sad (**looking sad**) (24:17b). Cleopas—the only one of the two to be named—answered with a mild edge of incredulity—**Are You the only one . . . unaware of the things**, the recent events in the city? (24:18). Incredulous, these men were amazed that He could have missed so shocking an event as Jesus' death. The stranger pressed His question—**What things?** (24:19a).

24:19b-24. Luke took this occasion to rehearse the narrative one more time—giving a historical

summary. He took care to include all the most relevant facts about Jesus—His identity: **Jesus the Nazarene** (24:19b); His calling: **a prophet** (24:19c); His work: **mighty in deed and word** (24:19d); His reputation: **in the sight of God and all the people** (24:19e); His rejection: **the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him** (24:20a); His death: **the sentence of death, and crucified Him** (24:20b); and their disappointment over what they thought was His mission (which it was): **He who was going to redeem Israel** (24:21a). In addition, they related the recent events: it was the third day since **these things** (24:21b), and they had received a report from the women about the empty tomb not containing Jesus' body, and a visitation of angels **who said that He was alive** (24:22-23). Furthermore some of the leaders had checked out the tomb, but **Him they did not see** (24:24). This mere historical account was complete, but by itself it was not convincing.

24:25-27. Surprisingly, at this point, Jesus, still hidden to their eyes, rebuked them for their silly unbelief (**O foolish men . . . slow of heart to believe**) (24:25a). They should have understood this "history" in the light of the "predictions" of the Scriptures (24:25b). He pointed out that all of **these things** (24:26) were **necessary**, and He thus patiently took them through the whole of the Scriptures (**Moses and with all the prophets**, 24:27a) and explained **the things** (the theology) about Him and His messianic mission that they should have understood. Had they understood messianic prophecy, it would have explained all "these things" to them. The key point Jesus made here was that the OT Scriptures foretold the coming of the Messiah, including two events: a suffering (the first coming) and an entering into glory (a second coming; cf. 21:27).

24:28-32. This discourse must have taken some time, for by its conclusion the party was at the village **where they were going** (24:28a). The two extended an invitation to the stranger, and it was readily accepted (24:28b-29). It was at this dinner, specifically when He prayed for and began to distribute the bread (24:30), that **their eyes were opened and they recognized Him** (24:31). **Were opened** is another divine passive, cf. 24:16; Stein, *Luke*, 613). The supernatural obscurity was replaced by supernatural illumination (perhaps a way for Luke to explain why some come to faith and others do not). The term **recognized** is the same term used in 1:4 with respect to "knowing (*epignos*) the certainty of the things" taught (Stein, *Luke*, 613).

The impact of this encounter on the two was profound—from "foolish" hearts of unbelief (cf. 24:25) to **burning hearts** of understanding and faith (24:32).

c. With the Disciples in Jerusalem (24:33-46)

24:33-35. Even though the two had just come from Jerusalem, and the hour was late (cf. 24:29b), they returned **that very hour** (24:33a) to the city, found the Eleven, and reported their encounter to the others (24:33b). Once there, they were informed that **the Lord has really risen** (24:34a), confirmed by an appearance to Peter (**Simon**; 24:34b). The two then corroborated this news, as they related their own encounter with Jesus.

24:36-37. While they were busy trying to convince themselves of the truth of the resurrection **He Himself stood in their midst** (24:36a). Luke did not explain how Jesus did this or speculate on the nature of Jesus' resurrection body and its capacities. Ironically, here were the disciples trying to convince each other of the truth of Jesus' resurrection, but when He actually arrived, they were **startled and frightened** (24:37a). Luke related that they thought **they were seeing a spirit** (24:37b). With all the appearances and evidences they were still not convinced of the resurrection. Now, even the presence of the risen Lord Jesus was not enough to overcome their fears and rationalistic thinking.

24:38-43. Again, with a slightly ironic tone, Luke related how Jesus first questioned them: **Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?** (24:38). The thrust of these questions was, "Do you not believe your own eyes? Do you not trust your own reason?" Of course, the point was they did not, nor should they. Second, Jesus challenged them: **See My hands and My feet** (24:39a). The thrust of this challenge was, "Do you not trust your own senses?" And they had to admit that they did not, for **they still could not believe it because of their joy** (24:41a). Luke was emphasizing that this was a bodily resurrection. The proof was Jesus could show **His hands and His feet** (24:40) and even eat some **fish** (24:41b-43), something impossible for a "spirit" (a mere ghost).

24:44-46. But these are not the things that lead to faith in the resurrection. As it was with the women who first confronted the empty tomb, for the disciples real belief came through Jesus' Word. He left off with the physical proofs and evidences and began to speak

to the disciples, as He had done for the two on the road to Emmaus, about how the Scriptures prophesied of Him (24:44). Using the tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible, **the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** (the first book in the writings), Jesus showed how the Hebrew Scriptures predicted that **Christ** (the Messiah) **would suffer and rise again** (24:46). As A. T. Robertson said, “Jesus found himself in the Old Testament, a thing that some modern scholars do not seem to be able to do” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 2. [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1930], 294). It was through the Scriptures (not reasons or evidences) that Jesus **opened their minds to understand the Scriptures** (24:45) and thus to understand that what He—the Messiah—had suffered and how He had been raised was all according to the divine plan of redemption.

2. Commission (24:47-49)

24:47-49. In this short discourse, Jesus turned quickly to the message that must be preached in light of the truth of His person and work. The content of the message would be about sin—the need for **repentance** from it and **forgiveness** for it (24:47a). This was to be proclaimed **in His Name** (24:47b), that is, on the basis of His divine person and authority

(cf. Ac 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:7) they are to preach His death and atonement for sin. The venue for this message was to be the world—to **all the nations** (Lk 24:47c). While Ac 2:38 connects baptism to forgiveness (though see the comments there), Luke made no such association here (writing **repentance for forgiveness of sins** without baptism), suggesting that the key is repentance and not baptism. The means of this gospel message would be human witnesses to the truth (24:48). The power for this message would be **the promise of My Father** (which is the Spirit, cf. the comments on Ac 1:4-5, 8), for which they would have to wait (see chaps. 1 and 2 of Luke’s second volume, the book of Acts).

3. Ascension (24:50-53)

This gospel concludes with an abbreviated account of the ascension (24:50-53). The ascension was necessary for the next phase of the plan of redemption to begin; (cf. Ac 1 for a fuller account of the events and significance of the ascension).

Luke certainly fulfilled his purpose giving the church a portrait of Jesus that, while parallel to Matthew’s and Mark’s, in key ways provided unique and vital information about Him so that we “may know the exact truth about the things” (1:4) concerning Jesus Christ.

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