

New Testament Studies

Gospel of Luke *(RVS Notes)*

Luke Introduction	2
Summary Outline	7
Detailed Outline	8
Luke Notes	12
Bibliography	65

Luke Introduction

In general—Luke states his methodology and purpose in 1:1-4. He systematically gathered information, checked out the evidence, verified sources, did his own critical evaluation, and then wrote an orderly presentation of the life, ministry, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. He gives his account so that people can base their faith in Jesus on historical facts grounded on firsthand testimony that can stand up under scrutiny.

One purpose of the book is evangelism. Central to both Luke and Acts is the proclamation of the good news of salvation. Luke is also concerned with recording the early history of Christianity to promote the Christian movement. He is making an apologetic to Roman authorities that Christianity ought to be a legalized religion and to share the same rights as the Jewish faith.

Luke is a gospel of stories. He shows us who Jesus is through vignette after vignette. Personal truth, such as the gospel records, is story before it is concept, and we are invited to embrace it “along the way”, first in Galilee and then as the Lord travels to Jerusalem.

Author and Recipients—Most scholars agreed that Luke and Acts came from the same person. The common dedication to Theophilus (Lk 1:3; Acts 1:1), the common interests and style of the books, and the obvious planned continuity between the books (Acts 1:1) are the primary reasons for this agreement. The Lucan authorship of Acts is confirmed by the “we” sections (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16) and Luke’s presence with Paul during his Roman imprisonment when it was written (2 Tim 4:11). Of all Paul’s companions, Luke is the only one likely to be present at those times in the book. Luke’s authorship of the gospel is inferred from his authorship of Acts. The Church fathers from Irenaeus (2nd century) to Eusebius (4th century) all point to Luke as the author of the gospel.

Luke was a well-educated Gentile, a doctor by vocation (Col 4:14), and a traveling companion of the apostle Paul. He was a Greek, hailed from Antioch in Syria, and was at home in the Greek language as evidenced by his polished writing style. He was a clinical observer of life who communicated through stories, narrating life vignettes with words as a painter paints scenes on a canvass with paint. Tradition has it that Luke remained single all his life and died at the age of eighty-four.

Luke writes for a Gentile audience to establish the religious piety, moral purity, and political innocence of Jesus and his followers. He has the God-fearers in mind as he writes: Gentiles at home in secular society, interested in Judaism, monotheistic by conviction, and accustomed to hearing from the Jewish Scriptures. Luke does not exhibit a narrow Jewish interest but has a broader interest in God’s historical plan and in the continuity between Judaism and Christianity.

As for Luke’s sources, the most common accepted theory is that Luke and Matthew both had access to copies of Mark’s gospel as well as to a collection of sayings of Jesus (generally known as “Q”, from the German “quelle” meaning “source”, which has not survived). Luke also received a considerable amount of other information on his own (1:3), which accounts for original material that appears only in Luke. He utilizes his superior literary ability in altering the

style of both passages in Mark and in Q. An interesting feature of Luke among the Synoptics is the amount of material Luke shares with John (far more than either Matthew or Mark). Most observers agree that it is highly unlikely that John used Luke or vice-versa, but that the two evangelists did use common sources.

Arguments against the Lucan tradition argue for an anonymous author and a second century date. The common contours of the argument are as follows:

- Jesus' predictions of the fall of Jerusalem (19:43-44; 21:20-24) show that the book was written after 70;
- Luke makes use of Mark and was written at the same time as Matthew. Since the critics date those other two gospels late, then Luke must be late as well – too late in time for Luke to be the author;
- the picture of Paul in Acts is so distorted that it could hardly have been written by a companion and contemporary of the apostle; and
- the gospel has an “atmosphere” of a time after the apostles, when the church had given up hope in the imminent return of Jesus and had settled down into “early Catholicism” which could not have been the case before the second century, beyond Luke's lifetime.

Date and Place of Writing—Scholars debate the date of Luke's gospel. The three possible dates most frequently suggested are the early 60s, 75-85, and early in the second century. Luke's dating relies on (1) the date of Mark (upon whom he seems to rely), (2) the date of Acts, and (3) the reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 21. Scholars date Mark from 60-70. Luke completed the gospel before writing Acts. Acts 28:30 refers to Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome, between 60 and 62. That would place the writing of Acts in the early 60s.

Luke was written just prior to that. It seems logical to assume that the gospel is earlier than its sequel, the book of Acts, and Acts records no event after 62. The fact that Luke includes details in the discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 21 does not prove that his gospel was written after 70. The discussion in Luke 21 is in general terms which tracks what was common in ancient sieges.

The place of composition is uncertain, with Caesarea, Rome, Achaia (in Greece), and Alexandria suggested. Achaia and Rome are the locales most commonly asserted as the place of origin. An early tradition has Luke coming from Antioch in Syria and composing his gospel “in the regions of Achaia.” That is a reasonable conjecture, but we cannot be sure. Acts was probably written from Rome and many think that Luke might have had its origin in the Empire's capital city as well.

Luke and the Other Gospels—See the discussion in Appendix A, Background for the Gospels, A-1.

Guiding Concepts

Luke-Acts—Luke is unique among gospel writers in that he wrote a two-volume work which deals with the origins of Christianity. The gospel relates the life, ministry, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. In vignette after vignette, we get a picture of this extraordinary, unique God-man Jesus Christ and hear of God's offer of salvation. Luke wrote a second volume about the church. With Jesus ascended to heaven and at the right hand of God, the church, enabled by the Holy Spirit, is to continue the Lord's work among all nations.

Good news of salvation—Luke portrays a salvation message available to all who will receive it. While there is a deep interest in the Jews, there is a disavowal of the attitudes of Jewish particularism. The gospel extending to the Gentiles is mentioned early (in Simeon's song in Luke 2 where the babe is described as a light to the Gentiles) and often. Jesus is presented as having a clear sense of this mission from the very beginning of his public ministry (4:16-21).

The key verse in Luke is 19:10, noting that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Salvation is Luke's central theme, focusing on the person and saving work of the Lord Jesus. The verb "save" occurs in 6:9; 7:50; 8:12, 36, 48, 50; 9:24; 13:23; 17:19; 18:26, 42; 19:10; 23:35, 37, 39. The noun "Savior" appears in 1:47; 2:11. The noun "salvation" is in 1:69, 71, 77; 2:30; 3:6; 19:9. The entire gospel portrays Jesus as reaching out to the lost in forgiveness (7:36-50; 15:3-32).

The Cross is central in Luke. Even before the first passion prediction in 9:22, there are foreshadows of Jesus' suffering (2:35, 5:35). He is clearly moving toward the Cross in 13:33 and his words at the last Supper give evidence of his understanding of his redemptive mission (22:19-20).

Person of Christ—From the birth narrative, it is apparent that Jesus is no ordinary person. He is the unique Son of God, born of a virgin (1:26-35). Luke emphasizes Jesus' prophetic ministry and his messianic identity and destiny. Jesus had to be in his Father's house (2:49), must preach the good news which was why he was sent (4:43), must suffer (9:22). He had to go to the Cross (13:33). It was essential for him to be betrayed and crucified, enduring suffering before entering his glory (24:7, 26, 44-47). Jesus occupies the principal place in salvation history fulfilling the plan of God as prophesied (4:16-21; 24:25-27; Acts 2:14-24; 4:11-12).

Historical focus—Luke tells the story of Jesus as a piece of history. The story of Jesus is part of the ongoing history of God's activity in the world, albeit the most important part. Luke believed that the Christian faith was rooted in historical events which were to be seen as acts of God, and he wished to show that what his readers heard about Jesus and the early church had a firm historical foundation. Luke takes care to get it right, right down to the reigning rulers and their proper titles.

Luke provides information about the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus that no other New Testament writer includes. He tells us much of what we know about the birth of John the Baptist and the birth and boyhood of Jesus (chapters 1-2). He alone tells us of the miraculous catch of fish and its effect on Peter (5:1-11), the anointing of Jesus by a sinful woman (7:36-50), and the women who supported Jesus and his disciples (8:1-3). Much of the so-called Lucan travelogue section (9:51-19:27) is unique to Luke and supplements the picture we have of the historical

details of Jesus' public ministry. Vignettes included in that segment are Jesus' rejection by some Samaritans (9:51-56), the mission of the seventy (or seventy-two, 10:1-24), Jesus' visit with Martha and Mary (10:38-42), teaching on repentance (13:1-5), healing the crippled woman (13:10-17), Jesus' teaching about Herod (13:31-33), the man with dropsy (14:1-6), the invitation to a banquet at a Pharisee's house (14:7-14), Jesus' teaching about unprofitable servants (17:7-10), healing of the ten lepers (17:11-19), and his interaction with Zacchaeus (19:1-10). Luke is also unique in recording a number of events in closing part of the Lord's ministry, including the lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44), the discussion with the disciples about two swords (22:35-38), Jesus before Herod (23:7-12), the words to the daughters of Jerusalem (23:27-31), three of the "words from the cross" (23:34, 43, 46), and the section on the resurrection after the account of the women at the tomb -- the appearance to the travelers along the road to Emmaus (24:13-35) and to the disciples in the Upper Room (24:36-49). Several of the parables are found in Luke alone: the Good Samaritan (10:25-37), the friend at midnight (11:5-8), the barren fig tree (13:6-9), the lost sheep, coin, and son (15:1-32), the unjust manager (16:1-9), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31), the unjust judge (18:1-8), and the Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14).

Jesus' humanity and compassion—Jesus is portrayed as the ideal Son of Man. His humanity and compassion come through loud and clear from the pages of Luke. The gospel is full of His personal ministry to individuals as well as the masses. Luke records the dignity and respect Jesus accords to the poor, the downtrodden, and those of no account in the first century Jewish world – women (8:1-3), Samaritans (10:30-37), known "sinners" (7:36-50), and tax collectors (19:1-10). People at all levels of society were welcomed and touched by Jesus. He is a cosmopolitan Savior with broad sympathies for, and who mingles with, all kinds of people.

Call to discipleship—Luke does speak plainly about the cost of following Jesus. He details the priority of discipleship (14:25-35), the training needed (9:1-6; 10:1-24), as well as the demands made upon those who would follow Jesus (9:23-27, 57-62).

Discipleship and possessions—Luke records a number of Jesus' statements on wealth and poverty. The case of the rich young ruler in 18:18-30 required to sell all is unique. However, Jesus' disciples are required to yield up their possessions, but not necessarily to disperse them. He also addresses possessions in Luke 12 and 16. Acts likewise emphasizes sacrificial giving in the early church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 5:1-11). Luke addresses the wealthy and the affluent in numerous passages and speaks candidly of our responsibility to the poor and downtrodden.

Ministry of the Holy Spirit—Luke speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit more than any of the other gospels. Note some of the many instances of the Spirit's ministry:

- John the Baptist is filled from his mother's womb (1:15).
- Holy Spirit's work in the miraculous birth of Jesus (1:35).
- Elizabeth (1:41-42), Zacharias (1:67), and Simeon (2:25-35) all speak filled with the Spirit.
- The Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism (3:21).
- Jesus is filled with the Spirit for testing (4:1) and ministry (4:14).
- Jesus begins his public ministry quoting from Isaiah "the Spirit of the Lord is on me" (4:18).

- Jesus rejoices in the Spirit when the 70 (or 72) return from their labors (10:21).
- Jesus promised the Spirit in answer to prayer (11:13) and in anticipation of Pentecost (24:49; Acts 1:4).
- Disciples are to be filled with the Holy Spirit for ministry (24:49).

He describes the Spirit as the motivator and source of life and stresses that the Spirit is the key to understanding who Jesus was and is and of responding to him appropriately. Luke continues this focus on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.

Prayer pervades Jesus' life and ministry. Luke portrays the Lord as a man of prayer:

- at His baptism (3:21).
- after ministering to the crowds (5:16).
- before choosing the Twelve (6:12).
- before Peter's confession (9:18).
- at the Transfiguration (9:28-29).
- after the mission of the seventy (or seventy-two, see 10:21).
- before teaching the disciples to pray (11:1).
- in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:39-46).
- from the Cross (23:34, 46).

All these times are distinctive to Luke's gospel as are Luke's parables about the need for persistence in prayer in 11:5-13 and 18:1-8.

End times—Luke's opening chapters emphasize Messianic promise, especially in the songs of Mary (1:46-55) and Zachariah (1:68-79). Luke contains teaching about Jesus' return and about the glorification of the Son of Man. He encourages watchfulness (12:40) and provides a description of the coming of the Son of Man (17:22-37). He also counsels against misguided speculation (17:20-21). During Passion week, Luke records an extended discussion on the destruction of the temple and the end of the age (21:5-36).

Doxology of glory—The prominence of the Resurrection and the Ascension in Luke contributes to his "doxology of glory." There are numerous examples of praising and blessing God throughout Luke's gospel (1:46-55, 68-79; 2:13-14, 20, 28-32; 7:16; 10:21; 18:43; 19:37-38; 24:53).

Summary Outline

Preface; Preparation for Ministry 1:1	Jesus' Ministry in Galilee 4:14	Jesus' Ministry While Journeying to Jerusalem (Luke's Travelogue) (See 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28) 9:51	Passion Week: Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus 19:28
Introduction	Early Ministry	Growing Opposition	Death & Resurrection
Preparation	Galilee	Judea	Jerusalem
Miracles Prominent		Teaching Prominent	

Key Idea: Son of Man Bringing Salvation
 Key Verse(s): 19:10

Detailed Outline—Luke: To Seek and Save the Lost

I. Preface; Preparation for Ministry (1:1-4:13)

- A. Preface (1:1-4)
- B. Birth and childhood narratives (1:5-2:52)
 - 1. Birth of John the Baptist foretold (1:5-25)
 - 2. Birth of Jesus foretold (1:26-38)
 - 3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)
 - 4. Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)
 - 5. Birth of Jesus (2:1-20)
 - 6. Presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:21-40)
 - 7. Passover visit of Jesus to the temple (2:41-52)
- C. Preparation for ministry (3:1-4:13)
 - 1. Forerunner ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20)
 - 2. Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22)
 - 3. Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38)
 - 4. Temptation in the wilderness (4:1-13)

II. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)

- A. Good news of the kingdom announced and initially proclaimed (4:14-44)
 - 1. Announcement and rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30)
 - 2. Initial healing and preaching ministry (4:31-44)
- B. First disciples called (5:1-11)
- C. Beginning of controversy with the Pharisees (5:12-6:11)
 - 1. Healing a person with leprosy (5:12-16)
 - 2. Healing a paralytic: Authority to forgive sins (5:17-26)
 - 3. Calling Levi (5:27-32)
 - 4. Questions about fasting (5:33-39)
 - 5. Sabbath controversy with the Pharisees: Lord of the Sabbath (6:1-11)
- D. Choosing the Twelve (6:12-16)
- E. Sermon on the plain (6:17-49)
 - 1. Blessings and woes (6:17-26)
 - 2. Love for enemies (6:27-36)
 - 3. Judging others (6:37-42)
 - 4. A tree and its fruit (6:43-45)
 - 5. Wise and foolish builders (6:46-49)
- F. Compassion of the Messiah (7:1-17)
 - 1. Faith of a centurion (7:1-10)
 - 2. Raising a widow's son (7:11-17)
- G. Jesus and John, the Baptist (7:18-35)
- H. Jesus anointed by a sinful woman (7:36-50)

- I. Jesus teaches in parables (8:1-21)
 - 1. Women supporting Jesus (8:1-3)
 - 2. Parable of the sower (8:4-15)
 - 3. Parable of the lamp (8:16-18)
 - 4. Jesus and his family (8:19-21)
- J. Group of mighty works (8:22-56)
 - 1. Calming the storm at sea (8:22-25)
 - 2. Healing the Gerasene demoniac (8:26-39)
 - 3. Healing a woman with a hemorrhage and Jairus' daughter (8:40-56)
- K. Sending out the Twelve (9:1-9)
 - 1. Sending out the Twelve (9:1-6)
 - 2. Herod's perplexity (9:7-9)
- L. Feeding the 5,000 (9:10-17)
- M. Peter's confession; Cost of discipleship (9:18-27)
- N. Transfiguration (9:28-36)
- O. Down from the mountain (9:37-50)

III. Jesus' Ministry While Journeying to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)

- A. Setting the course; Counting the cost (9:51-62)
 - 1. Samaritan village: Rebuking a violent course (9:51-56)
 - 2. Cost of discipleship (9:57-62)
- B. Sending out the seventy (or seventy-two) (10:1-24)
- C. Parable of the good Samaritan: On merciful love (10:25-37)
- D. Martha and Mary: On service and devotion (10:38-42)
- E. Teaching on prayer (11:1-13)
- F. Controversy with the Pharisees and teachers of the law (11:14-54)
 - 1. Jesus and Beelzebub (11:14-28)
 - 2. Sign of Jonah; Lamp of the body (11:29-36)
 - 3. Woes on Pharisees and scribes (11:37-54)
- G. Readiness for the coming crisis (12:1-13:9)
 - 1. Warnings and encouragement: Fearless confession (12:1-12)
 - 2. Parable of the rich fool (12:13-21)
 - 3. Anxiety over possessions (12:22-34)
 - 4. Readiness for the coming of the Son of Man (12:35-48)
 - 5. Divisions over Jesus (12:49-53)
 - 6. Interpreting the times (12:54-59)
 - 7. Repent or perish (13:1-9)
- H. Crippled woman healed on Sabbath (13:10-17)
- I. Parables and sayings of the kingdom (13:18-30)
 - 1. Parables of mustard seed and yeast (13:18-21)
 - 2. Entering the kingdom (13:22-30)
- J. Lament over Jerusalem (13:31-35)
- K. Jesus at table (14:1-24)
 - 1. Healing a man with dropsy (14:1-6)

- 2. Concern for prominence (14:7-14)
- 3. Parable of the great banquet (14:15-24)
- L. Cost of discipleship (14:25-35)
- M. Gospel for the lost (15:1-32)
 - 1. Parable of the lost sheep (15:1-7)
 - 2. Parable of the lost coin (15:8-10)
 - 3. Parable of the lost son (15:11-32)
- N. Warnings about wealth (16:1-31)
 - 1. Parable of the shrewd steward (16:1-9)
 - 2. Faithful stewardship and lovers of money (16:10-18)
 - 3. Parable of rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
- O. Discipleship in community: Sin, faith, and duty (17:1-10)
- P. Ten people with leprosy healed (17:11-19)
- Q. Coming of the Son of Man (17:20-37)
- R. Characteristics of kingdom dwellers (18:1-30)
 - 1. Parable of the persistent widow (18:1-8)
 - 2. Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14)
 - 3. Jesus and the children (18:15-17)
 - 4. Rich young ruler (18:18-30)
- S. Passion prediction (18:31-34)
- T. Healing the blind beggar (18:35-43)
- U. Zacchaeus, the tax collector (19:1-10)
- V. Parable of the ten minas (19:11-27)

IV. Passion Week: Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus (19:28-24:53)

- A. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem during Passover (19:28-21:38)
 - 1. Triumphant entry into Jerusalem (19:28-44)
 - a. Entry into city (19:28-40)
 - b. Lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44)
 - 2. Cleansing the temple (19:45-48)
 - 3. Teaching in the temple (20:1-21:4)
 - a. Authority of Jesus questioned (20:1-8)
 - b. Parable of the wicked tenants (20:9-19)
 - c. Paying taxes to Caesar (20:20-26)
 - d. Resurrection and marriage (20:27-40)
 - e. Sonship of Messiah (20:41-47)
 - f. Widow's offering (21:1-4)
 - 4. Destruction of the temple and the last things (21:5-38)
 - a. Fate of the temple and signs of the end (21:5-11)
 - b. Persecution of the disciples (21:12-19)
 - c. Fall of Jerusalem, coming of the Son of Man (21:20-24)
 - d. Certainty of, and preparation for, the end (21:29-36)
 - e. Summary of Jesus' daily activities (21:37-38)

- B. Death and burial of Jesus (22:1-23:56)
 - 1. Judas agrees to betray Jesus (22:1-6)
 - 2. Last Supper (22:7-38)
 - 3. Prayer and arrest of Jesus (22:39-53)
 - 4. Jewish trial (22:54-71)
 - 5. Roman trial (23:1-25)
 - 6. Crucifixion of Jesus (23:26-49)
 - 7. Burial of Jesus (23:50-56)
- C. Resurrection, post-Resurrection appearances, and Ascension of Jesus (24:1-53)
 - 1. Discovery of empty tomb (24:1-12)
 - 2. Appearance to two disciples on road to Emmaus (24:13-35)
 - 3. Appearance to disciples in the upper room (24:36-49)
 - 4. Ascension of Jesus (24:50-53)

Luke—To Seek and Save the Lost

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. (Luke 19:10)

I. Preface; Preparation for Ministry (1:1-4:13)

A. Preface (1:1-4)—Luke’s purpose in writing is to give an accurate, orderly account to show Theophilus that what he had already learned about Christianity was soundly based. Early historians often prefaced their works with a careful explanation justifying their findings. The object was to assure the reader of their capability, thorough research, and reliability. Luke does this at the beginning of his gospel.

Luke is the only gospel writer who did not know Jesus during the Lord’s lifetime. His sources are eyewitnesses to events at which he was not present. He visits and interviews Jesus’ family, disciples, and friends and paints a picture of the Lord for posterity. He did not rush through this; he wasn’t the least bit concerned about a publishing deadline. He would tell his vignettes of Jesus in a methodical manner and paint a faithful picture of God in the flesh for the people to whom he wrote.

1:3—He writes to “Theophilus”, a name that means “friend of God”. This may be a metaphor for a general audience who are open to considering the gospel, but more likely he was an actual person. Theophilus is a proper name and “most excellent” suggests an actual person of some distinction. Luke may be addressing his literary patron or publisher, as was customary at that time, who was a believer or at least an active seeker.

Some have contended that the genius of Luke’s gospel is that it is addressed to one person. Perhaps Luke is the most universal of the gospels, because he is the most personal. If someone writes for groups at large, they grow vague. If they aim at a much more targeted audience, the pleasant serendipity of their methodology is its universal appeal.

B. Birth and childhood narratives (1:5-2:52)—Among the gospels, this material is unique to Luke. The structure of the passage is (1) the announcement of John’s coming birth (1:5-25), (2) the announcement of Jesus’ coming birth (1:26-38), (3) Elizabeth’s blessing of Mary (1:39-45), (4) Mary’s praise to God (1:46-56), (5) John’s birth and praise by his father Zechariah (1:57-80), and (6) Jesus’ birth and praise by the angels in heaven (2:1-20), and (7) Jesus’ circumcision and praise by the expectant faithful in the temple (2:21-40). Joy finds expression not only in the songs of Mary (1:46-55), Zechariah (1:68-79), the angels (2:14), and Simeon (2:29-32), but in the whole tone of the passage. Luke’s gospel begins and ends in blessing and praise to God. In Luke 1, the blessing and praise relate to the foretelling of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus and the birth of John. In Luke 24:50-53, the joy and praise relate to the Ascension of Jesus to heaven.

1. Birth of John the Baptist foretold (1:5-25)—John’s parents are devout Jews; indeed, both are of priestly descent (1:5-7). While Zechariah was performing a once in a lifetime priestly function inside the temple just outside the Holy of Holies, an angel appears to him and tells him

that he's going to be a poppa. His post-menopausal wife is going to have a long-sought child in her old age. His name would be John, meaning "God is gracious." This son would be a great prophet, the forerunner to Messiah (1:8-17). Like Abraham of yesteryear (Gen. 15:8), Zechariah is dubious. He asks for confirmation and is struck dumb until the child's birth (1:18-23). Zechariah and Elizabeth return home, and Elizabeth stays in seclusion (2:23-25).

1:5—The priest's name is Zechariah, which means "the Lord remembers." One derivation of his wife's name, Elizabeth, means "my God is a faithful one."

1:8-10—The tribe of Levi supplied priests who served in the temple. The tribe was divided into 24 divisions, each division performing their duty two weeks a year. The rest of the year, priests spent in secular occupations away from Jerusalem. A priest was allowed the honor of making an actual offering in the holy place only once in a lifetime. The priest went in by himself while the people waited outside in an attitude of prayer.

1:15—John would be filled with the Spirit from birth. That's a new concept of the way the Spirit operates. Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit is given for specific tasks at particular times. At Pentecost, God poured out the Spirit on all believers allowing them to live in the Spirit. John was going to be the forerunner of Messiah, but also the forerunner of the Pentecost experience.

The description of John does not identify him with a particular religious group. While Nazirites (Num. 6:1-21) did refrain from wine, nothing is said beyond that to fill out the other aspects of the Nazirite vow.

1:16-17—Luke describes John's forerunner ministry as "in the spirit and power of Elijah" and fleshes it out in language reminiscent of Malachi 4:5-6.

2. Birth of Jesus foretold (1:26-38)—The announcement of Jesus' birth is similar to that of John's, but to Mary, the mother-to-be, rather than to the father, Zechariah. The angel greets her (1:26-28) and announces that she will give birth to a son who will be David's long-heralded heir (1:29-33). Mary, confused, asks how this is possible since she is a virgin. The angel assures her that her pregnancy will be by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:34-37) and departs after Mary's graciously submissive response (1:38). Note the themes are intertwined in this passage: (1) the divine sonship of Jesus (1:32, 35); (2) his messianic role and reign over the kingdom (1:32-33); (3) God as the "Most High" (1:32, 35); (4) the power of the Holy Spirit (1:35); and (5) the grace of God (1:28, 30).

1:27-28—The word "virgin" refers here to one who had not yet had sexual relations. Since betrothal often took place soon after puberty, Mary may have been in her early teens. The angel addresses Mary as the highly favored of God. This was indeed the case. That favor came with a tremendous price – her reputation. Somehow, Mary understood that divine favor has a cost in ways that moderns do not understand. She accepted what the angel said, not knowing what Joseph, her fiancé, would do, but certainly knowing what the gossip of a small Galilean town would entail.

1:32-33—The term “Son of the Most High” (1:32, 35, 76) leads to a clear messianic affirmation, the reference to the eternal throne and kingdom of David. Jesus’ divine sonship is linked to his messiahship in accord with 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Psalm 2:7-9. Note that the description of John’s mission (1:16-17) finds its counterpart in Gabriel’s words to Mary (1:32-33). This is part of Luke’s literary device that connects and compares the roles of John and Jesus.

1:34-35—Luke presents the virgin birth (Mary is identified as a virgin (1:27) and identifies herself as such (1:34)) in a matter-of-fact tone. He was a physician and would, by training, be most skeptical of such a birth. Yet he records in detail the angel’s message to Mary, that she, a virgin, would be impregnated by a process where no earthly father was involved. I can just see Luke interviewing Mary and saying: “Now let me see if I have this right. Let us go over it one more time.” Mary is a simple peasant girl, but one of the faithful remnant of Israel. She is chosen to bear God’s son because she could believe that with God nothing is impossible (1:37).

The birth is presented as a supernatural occurrence but has frequently been subjected to natural explanations. The difficulties that inspire such naturalizing explanations are: (1) the silence of most New Testament writers – the virgin birth is scarcely alluded to elsewhere in the New Testament; (2) pagan parallels – ancient stories exist of great heroes who were offspring of gods siring children with mortal women; (3) some historical details of the narrative open to difficulties; and (4) alleged doctrinal difficulties in that it is argued that if Jesus was not conceived naturally, he was not in all respects a human being.

Note that this is the second time (cf. 1:15) Luke mentions the Holy Spirit in this chapter. The Spirit is mentioned five or six more times in the first two chapters of this gospel (1:41, 67, 80[?]; 2:25, 26, 27).

3. Mary’s visit to Elizabeth (1:39-56)—After the divine encounter, Luke records a very human one. Mary goes to her cousin, Elizabeth, to help with her delivery (the angel had informed Mary of Elizabeth’s pregnancy) and shares her wonderful news (1:39-40). Elizabeth, who is herself overwhelmed with God’s goodness to her and filled with the Holy Spirit, responds with praise and blessing at the arrival of the bearer of Messiah (1:41-45). Mary, in turn, responds with a psalm of praise, commonly called the *Magnificat* (after the Latin verb for “glorifies” in 1:46). It is a shout of exultation to God followed by a series of clauses indicating why God is to be praised. It is really a revolutionary hymn, a glorious word for the downtrodden and the outcast. This is not a nice status quo, establishment recitation. Through the Messiah, the mighty will be brought low and the humble and lowly exalted.

4. Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)—Elizabeth delivers John (1:57-58) and Zechariah recovers his voice at John’s circumcision after indicating what John’s name would be (1:59-64) to the amazement of all around (1:65-66). Then Zechariah, filled with the Spirit, lifts his voice in a psalm of prophetic praise, commonly known as the *Benedictus* (after the Latin verb for “praise be” in 1:68). It is similar to the *Magnificat* in its general sentiments, declaring that God is worthy to be praised for his messianic deliverance (1:68-75) and then celebrates the significant forerunner role the child will have in this deliverance (1:76-79). The section concludes with a brief summary of John’s upbringing and his time of preparation in the desert (1:80).

Who was John and why was he so great? First, his birth was unexpected. His pious parents had given up on having a child and were overjoyed and tremendously thankful when John arrived. That welcome for any child is a priceless gift. Second, he was given his own identity from birth. He was not Zechariah Jr., or some other family namesake. He was John, gift of God. He was not only the welcome arrival of a good family, but he was a child of God, which gave him great worth, acceptance, and importance. Third, he had a significant role to perform. John was to prepare the way for the Lord, for the one who will deliver us from the enemy without and within.

1:80—There are interesting parallels between John’s teaching and way of life and those of the Jewish sect who lived in the desert near Qumran. They lived an ascetic life, bathed themselves regularly as a religious ritual, and were looking forward to the coming salvation of God. In terms of preparing John for ministry (and us for that matter), the desert or the bleak place is better than the university. Often, it is when life is stark that we see the significant issues most clearly.

5. Birth of Jesus (2:1-20)—Luke records Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem to register in a Roman census (2:1-5), Jesus’ birth in a stable nearby the town (2:6-7), and the angels’ announcement of his birth to a group of shepherds tending their flocks nearby (2:8-15). The shepherds hurry to the stable to see the child whose first crib was a feeding trough for livestock (2:16) and then spread the word of this amazing birth announcement (2:17-20). Luke stresses three things: (1) the political situation to explain why Jesus’ birth took place in Bethlehem; (2) that Bethlehem was the town of David to stress Jesus’ messianic claim; and (3) the humble circumstances of Jesus’ birth.

2:1-5—Luke begins the account of the Lord’s birth by describing the wheels of power that caused the Lord to be born in a stable outside Bethlehem. The Romans reorganized their administration in several parts of the empire and conducted a fresh census for the purpose of taxation. Joseph and Mary are required to go to Bethlehem to register. However, those powers unwittingly served the purposes of the God of the ages in arranging fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of Micah 5:2, which he, who was the bread of life, was to be born in a town whose name means “house of bread”.

2:2—A major textual problem is that Quirinius did not become governor of Syria until 6 AD, at which time he imposed a tax that caused a rebellion (Acts 5:37). However, Jesus was born before the death of Herod in 4 BC. Various solutions are offered: (1) Quirinius is a textual error for Saturnius, who was governor of Syria from 9-6 BC; (2) Quirinius held an earlier appointment in the area, not the governor of Syria, but a roving commissioner in the eastern part of the Empire; (3) since a census and the imposition of taxes can take a while, perhaps Luke is referring to a process that began with a census under Herod and concluded with an imposition of taxes based on that census under Quirinius; or (4) an alternate translation that the census “took place before Quirinius was governor of Syria”.

2:6-7—Some ancient traditions suggest that Jesus was born in a cave, but Luke’s description (“there was no room for them in the inn”) may just mean that the part of inn where people stayed was full and Jesus was born in a part of the inn where the animals were kept.

2:8-20—The gospel comes first to the outcasts of society. The Lord reminded David, who was to become Messiah's royal ancestor, that he was called from a shepherd's life (2 Sam. 7:8). The shepherds symbolize ordinary people who joyfully receive the gospel and become in several ways pastors to others. Luke makes much of the word coming to the downtrodden and it begins immediately with the birth of Messiah. God is extending his favor to people who have done nothing to deserve it and graciously grants them peace.

2:10-14—Jesus' birth was to bring peace (shalom), blessedness, and fullness. The babe the shepherds came to see was named Jesus, which means "the Lord is salvation." The angel uses three terms to elaborate on the one who would bring peace. He was "Savior," a rescuer of his people; "Christ", the anointed one, the long-expected chosen one; and "Lord", a term used by Greek-speaking Hebrews to refer to God Himself.

The message of peace is a threefold one: (1) we need peace with God – that's where peace begins; (2) we need peace with our neighbor – reconciliation between people, different clans, different races, haves and have nots alike; and (3) we need to find inner peace that comes with being at harmony with ourselves.

6. Presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:21-40)—Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to be circumcised (2:21-24). The narrative focuses on the responses of Simeon (2:25-33) and Anna (2:36-38) who they meet at the temple. Both praise and thank God for the child. Simeon sees the child's coming as that of a Savior for all people and not merely the Jews. Anna prophesies that God would bring deliverance to Jerusalem. The story concludes with a summary of Jesus' childhood development (2:40). Note what Luke leaves out -- the visit of the Magi (Mt. 2:1ff) and the flight to Egypt (Mt. 2:13ff) among other things.

2:21-24—Jesus is circumcised on the eighth day. Luke then relates a number significant details in this story: (1) Luke runs the purification of Mary, requiring a period of 40 days (Lev. 12:1-8), and the redemption of the firstborn (Ex. 13:13; Num. 18:15-16) together; (2) the sacrifice offered was that made by poor people reflecting the humble status of the holy family; and (3) Luke relates the presence of Jesus at his redemption (not required by the Law) because it seems that Mary was making a special offering of her child to God for his service, akin to that of Hannah's offering of Samuel at the tabernacle (1 Sam. 1:11, 21-28).

2:25-38—The circumcision is described and then Luke presents two pious and authentically Jewish figures who testify to the significance of Jesus as Messiah. The first is Simeon, one of the believing remnant of Judaism. The Spirit had revealed to Simeon that the Messiah would come before he died. Simeon's praise song in 2:29-32, sometimes referred to as the *Nunc dimittis* because these are the first words of the song's Latin translation, emphasizes the fact that Messiah had indeed come to bring salvation to Jew and Gentile alike. No Jew expected Messiah to be for all people. Messiah would deliver Israel and exalt the nation above all others. Simeon said that the light of Jesus would be for all and paradoxically would be the cause for both the rise and fall of many in Israel (2:34). Indeed, this child would bring heartache to Mary herself; the sword of grief would pierce her soul (2:35). Mary was to see Joseph die, her son crucified, and many of his disciples persecuted and martyred. Simon's statement is supported by Anna's prediction (2:36-38).

These two lived hopefully and saw the beginning of the fulfillment of their hope. Their prophecies teach us to serve God faithfully to the end. In England, there is a tombstone of an old Cavalier soldier who lost his life in the civil war between the Puritans and Charles I. The tombstone reads: “He served King Charles with a constant, dangerous, and expensive loyalty.” May we serve the worthiest Sovereign imaginable with a constant, dangerous, and expensive loyalty.

7. Passover visit of Jesus to the temple (2:41-52)—These verses give us the only information we have of Jesus’ childhood years. The holy family annually made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during Passover. Luke relates the story of such a trip when Jesus was twelve years old. The age of twelve was a normal time for instructing a boy for entry into the religious community of Judaism, and therefore a special Passover visit for Jesus and the family. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. Thinking that he was with others in their company, his parents did not realize the truth for a day and then went back to look for him. They found Jesus in the temple among Jewish teachers, who realized that he was not a typical Jewish adolescent.

Jesus’ first recorded words in Luke’s gospel assert his unique divine sonship: “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” From an early age Jesus was aware of an intimate relationship to God as his Father in a way that went beyond the normal religious consciousness of a devout Jew.

2:41-42—Luke again points out the fidelity of Jesus’ family to the Jewish law. Adults were supposed to celebrate three pilgrimage feasts each year – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (see Lev. 23). Passover was a focal pilgrimage feast. It was immensely helpful for adolescent boys to attend the Jerusalem festivals, especially for one or two years before his Bar-mitzvah.

2:43-46—Moderns find it difficult to understand how Joseph and Mary could have left Jerusalem without Jesus. However, the Jews of that day lived in extended families where whole caravans of relatives and friends traveled together. Usually, women and young children traveled in the front of the caravan and men and older boys in the rear. It would have been easy for Joseph to think that Jesus was with his mother and Mary to think that he was Joseph. The three-day period mentioned in the text probably represents one day journey out of Jerusalem when the parents figured out Jesus wasn’t with them or any of their relatives, one day back to Jerusalem, and one more day searching for and finding him in the temple.

2:51-52—Mary reflects inwardly on the significance of the events of this chapter, both here (2:51) and earlier in this chapter (2:19). Luke closes the chapter with a classic summary of Jesus’ growth toward maturity: “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

C. Preparation for ministry (3:1-4:13)—This segment describes the ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20), the forerunner to Jesus, Jesus’ baptism and genealogy (3:21-38), and his time of testing in the wilderness (4:1-13).

1. Forerunner ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20; see Mt. 3:1-12; Mk. 1:1-8)—Luke provides the setting of the forerunner’s ministry (3:1-2), the essence of his message (3:3-18), and John’s imprisonment by Herod (3:19-20).

The beginning of the events that formed the basis of the gospel is the appearance of John the Baptist. His witness to Jesus marked the end of the old age of law and promise and the beginning of the new age of fulfillment. He started preaching in the 15th year of Tiberius (14-37), either 27-28 or 28-29 (3:1-3). His coming fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-5, who spoke of one preparing the way of the Lord (3:4-6).

John does not sugarcoat the message. He warns them sternly not to rely on the Jewish pedigree (3:7-9; see also Jn. 8:31-47; Rom. 9:6-8; Gal 3:6-9) and that their baptism of repentance ought to lead to serious lifestyle changes (3:10-14). In 3:15-17 (see Jn. 1:19-34), John brings home the vital point – John could only cleanse people symbolically with water, but after him would come one who could truly purify them. The Messiah would come not only to purify but to judge and therefore, repentance was an urgent matter.

3:1-3—Luke’s dating places this somewhere in the year 28-29. Pontius Pilate was procurator of Palestine from 26-36. The Herod mentioned is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to 39 AD. His brother Philip ruled in Iturea, northeast of Palestine from 4 BC-34 AD. Annas was high priest from 6-15, but his influence was great after that, especially in the high priesthood of his son-in-law Caiaphas from 18-36.

3:4-6—Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, a clear prophecy of John’s forerunner role. He ends the extended quotation with words that aptly describe his own deep convictions – that all humanity will see God’s salvation.

3:7-9—John had such authority and authenticity that crowds came out to the region around the Jordan to hear him. He was an unusual attraction for several reasons. First, there had been no prophecy in Israel for four hundred years, not since the prophet Malachi was on the scene. It was believed that prophecy would re-emerge when the Messiah’s arrival was near. Second, John was not sweet-talking to anybody. His was a severe word, his regimen a difficult one, and the people recognized an authentic person. John demanded something of his hearers – repentance, a genuine change of heart and behavior. He was not winning friends and influencing people in a superficial manner. He was leading by lifting the people’s vision to a higher plane, raising their behavior to a higher standard, and building personality beyond normal limitations.

John came baptizing, a new idea for many Jews. Typically, only Gentile converts to Judaism were baptized. John was preaching that to be born a Jew did not assure you of a right relationship with God. Jews too must have a baptism of repentance. John was telling the Jews that God had no grandchildren. Jews thought their salvation secure because they were descendants of Abraham. Not so, according to John. He was telling them to prepare for and respond to the Messiah who was coming.

3:10-14—John also addressed issues of conduct, demanding works that spoke of an underlying faith in God. He spoke to soldiers about intimidation and coercion, to tax collectors about

honesty, to others about sharing with people in need. John was not buying easy-believism. He demanded repentance and deeds that displayed the genuineness of that change of mind.

3:15-18—Was John the harbinger of the promised age? He is true to his forerunner role. The heart of John’s message was the announcement of the one to come – “One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loosen.” John does not touch the glory of the One who will follow. John comes baptizing with water, but one will follow and he will baptize with the Spirit and with fire. Fire is a symbol of judgment, refinement, and purification. The Spirit is active in all these ways – in saving, purifying, and judging.

3:19-20—Herod Antipas had married the wife of his brother Philip. When John rebuked him for this, Herod had him arrested. Luke later briefly describes John’s execution by Herod (9:7-9).

2. Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22; see Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Jn. 1:32-33)—Luke mentions Jesus’ baptism almost in passing, noting two features: the descent of the Spirit on Jesus to empower him for his work as a prophet and the heavenly voice confirming his being and role as the Son of God. Curiously, John’s role in Jesus’ baptism is not even mentioned.

Jesus submitted to baptism by way of identification with those he came to save. Luke is showing that Jesus was like us in every way, except for sin. As with his birth, there is a supernatural attestation. His baptism is an occasion for God’s affirmation, both in the dove that descended upon him, symbolic of the Holy Spirit’s presence, and the heavenly voice of the Father, identifying Jesus as his son in whom He delighted. At his baptism, Jesus is given confirmation of his unique mission.

3. Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38; see Mt. 1:1-17)—Jesus’ family tree is placed in the story near the very beginning of his ministry to establish that he was legally a descent of David through his relationship to Joseph and also to demonstrate that he was truly a member of the human race. The genealogy reminds us of the singularity of humanity, that Jesus’ work affects the entire race, and that He is, at the same time, a member of humanity and the summation of it.

Matthew and Luke differ in the way they handle their respective genealogies of Jesus. Matthew begins his gospel with it, while Luke waits until Jesus is ready to begin his public ministry. Matthew begins with Abraham and stresses Jesus’ Jewish ancestry, while Luke reverses the order and goes back to Adam, stressing Jesus’ identification with the entire human race. Luke’s genealogy places Jesus in a wider context than the one in Matthew. Matthew groups the names symmetrically, while Luke simply lists them, a different and longer set of names between David and Jesus. Only Zerubbabel and Shealtiel are common to both lists.

Both trace the lineage through ancestral lines that meet at the generation of David. As for the differences, the theory that Luke really gives us the family tree of Mary rather than that of Joseph is unlikely. The explanation with the fewest difficulties is that Matthew gives the descendants of David down through the royal line (who was heir to the throne at a given time), but Luke gives the line in which Joseph belonged.

3:23—Use of “the son of” need not imply a strict father-son relationship with no gaps. Both Matthew and Luke skip generations.

4. Temptation in the wilderness (4:1-13; see Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13)—The immediate upshot of Jesus’ reception of the Spirit at his baptism is to be sent into the desert for a period of testing. The temptations relate to (1) physical gratification, (2) worldly power, and (3) presuming on God in order to display before others one’s special favor. Jesus meets each of these temptations with quotes of Scripture, all from Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:3 in 4:4; Deut. 6:13 in 4:8; and Deut. 6:16 in 4:12). The temptations were all directed against Jesus as the Son of God. The parallel with Israel is striking. Israel was led into the desert and failed when tested. Jesus is led into the desert where God allows Satan to test him which Jesus successfully resists. Where Israel in the desert distrusted and disobeyed God (Deut. 6-8), Jesus as Messiah was trusting and obedient.

4:3-4—The first temptation urged Jesus to use his power to satisfy his own hunger. Satan suggests that Jesus better take care of himself and eat something. He tempts us all here – you need to take care of number one because no one else will.

4:5-8—In the second temptation, Satan offered to surrender his apparent dominion over the world if Jesus would acknowledge him as a higher authority. The devil promises Jesus success and preeminence if only the Lord bowed and worshipped him. How many people have taken this bait and followed the false idol of ambition?

4:9-12—Here, Satan twists Psalm 91:11-12 to have Jesus put the Father to saving him from casting himself off a height. Satan tempts with celebrity. Show them who you really are and wow them. Throw yourself off the temple and have the Father rescue you. They will be dazzled and follow like lambs. Jesus refused to put the Father to this false test.

II. Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)

A. Good news of the kingdom announced and initially proclaimed (4:14-44)—Luke records Jesus’ initial ministry in Galilee. His teaching and miraculous healing made a strong impression on people everywhere, and their immediate reaction was generally favorable.

1. Announcement and rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30; see Mt. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6)—A synagogue service provided an ideal setting for an opening summary of Jesus’ message. The service consisted of prayers, readings from the law and the prophets, and a sermon. Many synagogues were without clergy, and it was customary to ask someone to preach or teach on a given Sabbath. Jesus had become the subject of a buzz (4:14-15) and he was invited to preach in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth (4:16-30). He reads from Isaiah 61:1-2 and identifies himself as God’s servant depicted in Isaiah. He gave a discourse concerning the fulfillment of the prophecy (doubtlessly much abbreviated by Luke). Initial amazement of the townspeople turned to hostility as the audience took exception to one of their own number making such impressive claims for himself.

This marks the beginning of Luke's record of Jesus' public ministry. What is unveiled here for the first time is a familiar pattern in Luke-Acts: (1) the presentation of the gospel to the Jews in their synagogues or equivalent locales; (2) their rejection of the gospel message; and (3) turning to the wider Gentile world.

4:14-15—Luke mentions the special activity of the Holy Spirit once again. So far, we have seen the Spirit's activity at Jesus' conception (1:35), baptism (3:22), temptation (4:1), and at the launch of his ministry (4:14-15).

4:18-19—The extended quote is from Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus identifies himself as the subject of Isaiah's prophecy, emphasizing three things: (1) Jesus is the bearer of the Spirit received at his baptism (3:22); (2) he is an eschatological prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18 on a mission to proclaim "good news"; and (3) Jesus' prophetic role overlaps his messianic one. Note that the quote omits part of Isaiah 61:2 "the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus' Jewish audience anticipated that the day of their salvation would entail judgment on their pagan enemies. However, the delay in judgment allows this time of the Lord's favor to benefit the Gentiles also.

4:22-30—Initially, the Jewish crowd was amazed at the kind and wise manner of Jesus' speech or by what he said of God's grace. But at some point, things go south. Beginning with "Isn't this Joseph's son," the crowd expresses first perplexity and then hostility at this one among them who was "taking on airs" in making such impressive claims.

Jesus knew that there would be ramifications from his announcement. He asserted that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and suggested that they would face judgment for not accepting him. The subsequent dialogue relating to a prophet not welcome in his hometown and comparisons to the time of Elijah and Elisha enrages them to a murderous, fever pitch. The cheek! They rose up to take him out and kill him, but he calmly walks away. How? The text does not say. He might have escaped by supernatural means. His personal presence may have been such that no one dared touch him. Or he may have walked away because he was so ordinary. In the hubbub, he was there but indistinguishable.

What do we take away from this incident? First, authentic, Spirit sourced credentials are not primarily in arenas of self-improvement, achievement, position, and education. They emanate from ministry that engages people and lifts them up. Second, is the idea that salvation is here and now, not presently or bye-n-bye. Eternity is now and forever, and we need to respond to God now, not by putting it off.

2. Initial healing and preaching ministry (4:31-44; see Mt. 8:14-17; Mk. 1:21-39)

4:31-37—Jesus makes Capernaum his base of operations in Galilee. One of his main activities seems to have been to teach in the synagogues. In one synagogue, he met a man possessed by a demon who had supernatural insight into the nature of Jesus and the purpose of his work. Jesus healed the man confirming the impression of tremendous authority his teaching had already made.

4:35—Here begins a pattern of prohibiting a premature proclamation of Jesus' identity. Jesus guards the fact of his messiahship, probably (1) to prevent a misinterpretation that would draw dissidents seeking a leader against Rome; (2) to allow his messianic works to establish his authority; and (3) to avoid inappropriate self-proclamation.

4:38-44—Jesus left the synagogue and went to Simon Peter's home. This passage and 1 Corinthians 9:5 inform us that Peter was married. A family's serious illness crisis creates the occasion for Jesus to help them and others.

What are we to make of Luke's record of so many cases of demon possession? Demon possession appears frequently in the gospels and is often minimized or discarded as Hellenistic superstition by modern commentators. Years ago, it was typical to think that many so-called cases of demon possession were really descriptions of those having epilepsy or mental illness. However, the New Testament gives us so many accounts of the casting out of demons that to ascribe them all as cures to epilepsy or mental illness is not credible. In addition, Luke distinguishes between those sick and demon possessed. Messiah is on the scene; this is no humdrum time in the history of salvation. The good news preached by Jesus the Messiah signaled an attack on the forces of evil. The demons knew and reacted to this launch of holy war if you will. That the dimensions of the warfare would become more obvious in this period of time should not be seen as so amazing.

4:44—This verse states that he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. This must mean throughout the land of the Jews (Palestine as a whole, especially Galilee), since Jesus did not go south into Judea proper until later.

B. First disciples called (5:1-11; see Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20)—Luke's account of the calling of the apostles is more complete than in Mt. 4:18-22 or Mk. 1:16-20. The story begins with the crowds pressing around Jesus eager to hear the good news. He gets into Simon's boat, has him shove offshore a bit, and uses it as a bully pulpit. Jesus spoke about God in a way that captivated his audiences. After preaching by the seashore, an excellent acoustical amphitheater, Jesus has his disciples launch out to fish after failing to catch anything all night. The miraculous catch of fish is the occasion for assigning them a new mission of being "fishers of men".

5:1—Gennesaret is another name for Galilee and refers specifically to the area just south of Capernaum.

5:6-11—There are three focal points to the narrative: (1) the enormous catch of fish; (2) the abasement of Peter before Jesus in utter awe; and (3) the assignment of the apostolic mission.

C. Beginning of controversy with the Pharisees (5:12-6:11)—Luke relates five incidents, of which various actions by Jesus and his disciples led to criticism from the Pharisees and showed how the new way of the kingdom differed from Pharisaic emphasis on law-keeping. Jesus is presented as not particular enough about Jewish traditions to satisfy the religious authorities. He was running with the wrong crowd, hanging out with sinners and tax gatherers, and far too cavalier about fasting rituals and Sabbath regulations.

1. Healing a person with leprosy (5:12-16; see Mt. 8:1-4; Mk. 1:40-45)—Jesus heals a man with leprosy. As used in Scripture, leprosy is a general term for skin diseases, not all of which were infectious. Though not the equivalent of what we now know as Hansen’s disease, the condition of the “leper” was nonetheless repulsive, resulting in physical, social, and psychological isolation (see Lev. 13). People certified as lepers had to go through a proper form of discharge from the priests in order to freely move in society once again (see Lev. 14:1-32). Jesus’ healing is accompanied by his instruction to the leper to follow the Mosaic law. The incident shows how Jesus performed cures in response to faith (which was clearly present in this incident) and illustrates how his reputation was growing both as a teacher and a healer.

5:13-14—Lepers were the ultimate outcasts of society. People often concluded that illness meant sin of some kind in that day, and an illness like leprosy meant that your sins were great. Jesus’ act of touching the isolated leper was courageous and kind. Such conduct also symbolizes the transfer of power. Again, Jesus commands silence (see 4:35, above). It was essential for the cleansed leper to show himself to the priest as prescribed by Leviticus 14 and to demonstrate that the messianic act of healing was within the framework of the Law.

2. Healing a paralytic: Authority to forgive sins (5:17-26; see Mt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12)—A paralytic is brought to the Jesus while he was teaching and, seeing the faith of the man’s friends, the Lord forgives his sins. Revealing that he knew what his audience was thinking, the Lord proceeded to heal the man that the crowd might know that the Son of Man had authority to forgive sins. The crowds are amazed, but the Pharisees and teachers have other thoughts. Jesus had crossed the line for the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law. God alone could forgive sins. Under the Jewish law, blasphemy was a capital offense punishable by stoning.

The Pharisees placed great emphasis on strict compliance with the Mosaic law. Over the centuries, they preserved the Jewish faith by teaching the Mosaic Law and its accompanying traditions. However, many became rigid, unbalanced, and hypocritical over time. In this healing narrative, Luke balances Jesus meeting the physical need of the paralytic and his running controversy with the Jewish religious leaders.

5:24—This is the first appearance of the term “Son of Man” in Luke. It appears in connection with the right to forgive sins rather than with themes of suffering and glory that characterize its use in other places.

3. Calling Levi (5:27-32; see Mt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:13-17)—Jesus calls Levi (also known as Matthew), a tax collector, to become his disciple. This action highlights the type of people Jesus called. Indeed, outcasts were not only welcome in the Kingdom, but, as the calling of Levi indicates, they were vitally involved with its progression. Jesus’ ministry lay with the needy whom he invited to repent. Those who thought themselves righteous were not his immediate concern because they had to first acknowledge themselves to be sinners before they could truly respond to his call.

Eating with tax gatherers and sinners was nauseous to the Pharisees. Tax collectors were despised because of they worked for the hated Romans and fleeced their fellow Jews to fill their own pockets. The Pharisees saw this as something akin to betrayal. Jesus was befriending the wrong sort, running with the wrong crowd.

4. Questions about fasting (5:33-39; see Mt. 9:14-17; Mk 2:18-22)—Jesus’ participation in Levi’s banquet leads to further questions about religious practices, particularly fasting and prayer. He was criticized because his disciples were less disciplined in fasting than those of John the Baptist and the Pharisees. He replied that it was as fitting for his disciples to fast while he was with them as it would be for the friends of the bridegroom to fast during the wedding festivities. Mournful rites were incompatible with the arrival of the new era of salvation. There would be time enough to fast after Jesus ascended to heaven. Implicit in this reply is Jesus’ refusal to tie the new manifestation of the Spirit with religious legalism.

5. Sabbath controversy with the Pharisees: Lord of the Sabbath (6:1-11; see Mt. 12:1-14; Mk. 2:23-3:6)—Two incidents on the Sabbath put the Lord at loggerheads with the Pharisees. The first incident involves the disciples’ picking heads of grain and rubbing them in their hands to eat the kernels. For the Pharisees, this was impermissible work on the Sabbath. The offense highlights the minuteness of Jewish regulations. To glean by hand in someone’s field was permitted by law (Deut. 23:25). But to do this and to rub the heads of grain was considered threshing and Jewish tradition forbade threshing on the Sabbath. Jesus cites the example of David in 1 Samuel 21:1-6, where he gave consecrated bread from the tabernacle to his hungry men. There is an infringement of a rule to meet a human need received no condemnation. Ceremonial rites must give way to a higher moral law. Jesus cited this example to show that the Old Testament did not teach the strict legalism that the Pharisees had developed.

The second incident involved Jesus healing a man with a shriveled hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The man may well have been a plant, for the text indicates that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. The same principle is at issue -- Jesus is not breaking the Sabbath by doing good to a human being in need. The Pharisees are furious at the flaunting of their Sabbath imperatives and begin plotting against the Lord among themselves (see Mk. 3:6).

The Sabbath was for people, not vice versa. It is a privilege. It is a perspective builder and provides a cadence for our living. It is an occasion for experiencing the dynamic presence of God which ministers to our deepest needs. The Pharisees were guardians of a tradition, not a terrible thing to be sure. But they were missing the sense of God in their midst. The key to worship is relationships, not hind-bound rituals, or legalistic customs. It is not a transaction where we get tanks filled or our needs met (albeit that does happen). God invites us into his presence. Worship is a means of celebration of the Lord’s centrality in the lives of his people.

D. Choosing the Twelve (6:12-16; see Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3:13-19)—After spending all night in prayer, Jesus selects twelve from among his followers to be his apostles. Only Luke records Jesus’ all-night prayer vigil before selecting the Twelve. The term apostle identifies the group who held leading positions in the church after the resurrection of Jesus. The number of apostles corresponds to the number of Jewish tribes thereby establishing a correspondence between the Old and the New Testament. Note that the Greek term (*apostello*) simply means “sent one.” Jesus was sending and would send his companions out on a mission modelled on his own ministry.

E. Sermon on the plain (6:17-49; see Mt. 5-7)—This is Luke’s version of the much longer “Sermon on the Mount” recorded in Matthew 5-7. The sermons were basic affirmations of the

kingdom message beginning with the Beatitudes and ending with the parable of the builders. Luke and Matthew arrange the samples of the Lord's teaching differently to highlight their respective emphases. Most commentators agree that Matthew enlarged a version of the sermon found in Luke by adding other sayings of Jesus on the same or related topics.

This sermon includes segments on blessings and woes (6:17-26), the obligation to love, including one's enemies (6:27-36), a mandate to refrain from judging others (6:37-42), an illustration of a fig tree and its fruit (6:43-45), and an exhortation to wisely build one's life on the rock of obedience to God (46-49).

In this sermon, the Lord is internalizing Torah. It breathes of the spirit of the Ten Commandments and then goes beyond that. Jesus gives us revolutionary standard of conduct. But who can keep such a word is the natural reaction to this. Whether or not we can always live up to Torah on the heart, it does provide us a spiritual barometer. These sayings reflect moral and biblical absolutes that can guide us by no matter how often we get off course. Without it, we have a deficient sense of sin and fail to realize our need for repentance. We talk ourselves into wallowing or even glorying in our waywardness.

1. Blessings and woes (6:17-26; see Mt. 5:1-12)—This is Luke's version of the Beatitudes (from the Latin *beatus* which translates *makarios* = blessed or happy). It contrasts two different classes of people. *Makarios* describes the person who favored by God and the happiness that flows from that state. By all outward appearances, the first group is to be pitied, but Jesus says they are blessed because of what is promised to them. Their characteristics describe a people who feel dissatisfied with the present world and their lot in it and who long for what God has for them. Poverty, hunger, tears, and persecution are the conditions mentioned as being blessings when understood from a kingdom perspective (6:20-23).

The other group has what the present can offer them and wants nothing more. There is no need for them to cry out to God in prayer because they think they have enough. In that they deceive themselves. Luke's list includes "woes" on them, which, in both structure and content, form a direct contrast to the blessings. Prosperity, abundance, and good reputation are accompanied by warnings (6:24-26).

2. Love for enemies (6:27-36; see Mt. 5:38-48)—Love is the theme Luke focuses on throughout the discourse. Here, we are to love those who hate, curse, and mistreat us (6:27-31). This love is the classic Christian sense of *agape*, that of having a genuine concern for someone irrespective of attractiveness or of the likelihood of reciprocation. Luke 6:32-36 provides a remarkable series of comparisons between the courtesies of believers and those of people in the "world". Even sinners are kind when kindness is reciprocated. However, for believers, the pattern of kindness is God's kindness to us.

6:27-28—Disciples are to do good not just when some benefit is likely to return to them, but even when it most certainly will not return. The person who loves like this will receive the same love, and more, from God. One who does not judge will not be judged by God. The person who gives freely will receive an ample reward.

3. Judging others (6:37-42; see Mt. 7:1-5)—These verses describe the kind of mercy expected of the Lord’s disciples. “Do not judge” does not rule out ethical evaluation; rather it proscribes condemnation that is not ours to render. Luke 6:39-42 contains sayings about spiritual sight. Disciples must learn before they teach, see themselves clearly before pointing things out in others. There are pitfalls in the religious community. We often make up our own rules (or subcategories of rules) for Christian conduct and measure others by them. Jesus warns against this judgmental spirit. There is a generosity towards others in Jesus’ teaching that disengages from small-minded, mean-spirited, “check you out and see if you match up” mentality that externalized rule-keeping often descends into.

4. A tree and its fruit (6:43-45)—This continues the thought of the previous segment. These are sayings that illustrate that good conduct must come from a good heart. Only the person whose heart is richly stored with goodwill brings forth good teaching.

5. Wise and foolish builders (6:46-49)—It is not mere words, ethical behavior, or religious practice that mark true believers, but people who do what Jesus says (see Jas. 1:22-25).

F. Compassion of the Messiah (7:1-17)—Luke brings out more of the character of Jesus the Messiah, particularly stressing acts of mercy which demonstrated the compassion of God.

1. Faith of a centurion (7:1-10; see Mt. 8:5-13; Jn. 4:46-53)—Jesus heals a centurion’s servant at a distance. The centurion is a man of the highest character, demonstrated by his concern for his slave, his attitude towards the Jews, and his own sense of unworthiness in the presence of Jesus. However, what Jesus focuses on is the quality of his faith. Luke’s story differs from Matthew’s in that the centurion sends two delegations instead of one and Luke stresses more the humility and faith of the centurion. John 4 records a similar healing involving the son of an official in Capernaum.

This incident marks a pivotal point in the progress of the word of the Lord from its original Jewish context to the Gentile world. The incident has its parallel in Acts 10, which itself marks an historic transition from a purely Jewish church to one including Gentiles.

7:1-5—Luke shows much more interest in the character of the centurion than does Matthew in a parallel account (Mt. 8:5-13). The Jewish elders willingly intercede for him and are genuinely indebted to him for his generosity.

7:6-10—The centurion’s humility comes to the fore when he sends a second group of friends to express his unworthiness of a personal visit. He was also concerned that he would be subjecting Jesus to criticism for entering the home of a Gentile. What is most remarkable is the centurion’s recognition of Jesus’ authority. Luke contrasts the failure of the Jews to respond to their privileges with the response of the centurion.

2. Raising a widow’s son (7:11-17)—The story of Jesus raising the dead son of the widow at Nain, a village south of Nazareth, is one of three resurrections performed by Jesus. The others are the raising of Lazarus and the daughter of Jairus, the synagogue official. These are authentic marks of Messiah (7:22). In addition, the compassion of Christ is vividly on display. The mother was a widow with only her son to support her. As a widow without a man in the family often

became destitute, unable to earn a living. Restoring her son to life did much more than simply meet her in her grief.

Jesus stops the funeral procession, ignores the fact that touching a dead body would make him unclean, and commands the young man to get up. The people are in awe and praise God, doubtlessly remembering that Elisha and Elijah had worked similar wonders (see 1 Ki. 17:17-24; 2 Ki. 4:18-37). The people's reaction "God has come to help his people" (7:16) echoes an Old Testament expression (see Ruth 1:6).

7:14-15 When the young man returned to life, Jesus "gave him back to his mother", recalling the of 1 Kings 17:23, regarding Elijah and the widow at Zarephath.

G. Jesus and John, the Baptist (7:18-35; see Mt. 11:2-19)—Jesus' messianic calling is once more under consideration, probed by none other than the forerunner himself, John the Baptist. This seems strange given John's role in announcing Jesus' ministry (3:16-17). However, it is true to our frail humanity. John was in prison (3:20). He may have been depressed and questioned why he was not freed if the Messiah was supposed to release prisoners (Isa. 61:1; Lk. 4:18). Furthermore, he had not witnessed any of the Lord's miracles personally, only receiving second-hand reports. Jesus reassures John, pointing to his works (7:21-23) and then testifies to John's greatness (7:24-28). The Pharisees object (7:30) and are rebuked (7:31-35).

7:24-28—Jesus went on to praise John lavishly as the forerunner to Messiah (see Mal. 3:1; Mk 1:2) but then followed it with a surprise. Even the most insignificant person in the kingdom of God is greater than John (7:28). Jesus gives us a new identity, a new set of spiritual genes. We can be born again with all the joy and promise that attended the birth and raising of John the Baptist.

7:29-35—Jesus then goes on to critique his Jewish critics. The Pharisees had taunted both John and Jesus. John came playing a funeral dirge -- life is hard, and doom is at hand. The religious honchos minimized that message, making John out to be an ascetic demoniac (7:33). Jesus came with a lighter touch, celebrating life and offering eternal life to those who would respond. To that message, they were hostile and judgmental, accusing Jesus to be guilty of gluttony and drunkenness (7:34). They were like children in the marketplace who refused to play serious or to be joyful and celebrate. Whichever way the message came, it was wrong at the outset to people who saw themselves as the arbiters all of things spiritual.

H. Jesus anointed by a sinful woman (7:36-50; see Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Jn. 12:1-8)—Jesus attends a banquet at the home of a Pharisee and has his feet washed with perfume by a sinful woman (7:36-38). Jesus then asks the Pharisee a question (7:39-43) that sets him up for an unfavorable contrast with the woman he despises (7:44-47). Her extravagant devotion contrasts with the Pharisee's neglect as a host. The episode ends with Jesus once again asserting the authority to forgive sins (7:48-50).

7:39-47—The Pharisee's reaction reveals his heart. He did not invite Jesus as a social equal but as a curiosity – to scope him out. He immediately judged Jesus negatively after Jesus accepted what he regarded as unseemly respect given by an undesirable person in an embarrassing

manner. Note his line of thinking: (1) if Jesus were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman was anointing his feet; (2) if he knew that, he would not let her do it; and (3) since he's going along with this charade, he obviously is no prophet and should not be acknowledged as such. Jesus responds with a parable whose point is that love is the proof that a person has received forgiveness. Greater forgiveness leads to greater love. The Pharisee had not gone out of his way to give Jesus a special welcome. By contrast, the sinful woman had lavished her devotion upon Jesus. The parable punches home the point that love follows forgiveness.

I. Jesus teaches in parables (8:1-21)—Jesus' entourage is described (8:1-3), the parable of the sower related (8:4-8), Jesus' reason for speaking in parables given (8:9-10), and the interpretation of the parable supplied (8:11-15). The focal point of the parable is not the sower or the seed (word of God), but rather the variety of soils (reception to the word). The low yield from the poor soil is overshadowed by the exceptionally large yield from the good soil. Jesus followed up the parable of the sower by speaking of marks of the kingdom – living in a way that transmits the light and enhances new family bonds. The discussion of placing lamps on lampstands highlights the need for those who receive the Word need to transmit it not to hide it (8:16-18). In the next verses (8:19-21), Jesus broadens the notion of family. To be part of God's kingdom is to be part of his family.

1. Women supporting Jesus (8:1-3)—Luke tells us that women supported Jesus and his disciples. Jesus could have miraculously supplied the needs of the small band, but he did not. He relied on the generosity of women who had been healed, liberated, and forgiven. Unconditional love knows how to receive.

2. Parable of the sower (8:4-15; see Mt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:1-20)—Parable was used in the Old Testament to describe any kind of saying that was not to be taken literally, including oracles, similes, fables, stories, and riddles. The parables of Jesus included brief metaphors and similes (5:36-39), proverbs (4:23), stories of typical events (8:4-8) or more particular ones (10:30-37). Jesus used them to illustrate the nature of God's acts and the kind of response that people ought to make to them.

The parable of the sower is a simple description of the varying fortunes of seed scattered over a field with various kinds of soil – on the wayside, on rocky soil, among thorns, and on good soil. Only the seed on good soil produced results (8:4-8). The intent is for the hearers to ask themselves: "What is this about?" Jesus goes on to explain the parable to his disciples (8:9-15). The wayside represents the hard-hearted ones cynically dismissing the Word. The rocky soil represents the impressionable ones who immediately respond but do not follow on in faith. They lack roots. The thorny soil represents those who allow the care of life to choke out the concerns of God. Good soil represents those who respond and keep on responding. God's word must be accepted with faith and perseverance to produce good fruit in the hearers.

3. Parable of the lamp (8:16-18; see Mk. 4:21-25)—The point of lighting a lamp is that its light may be seen. Similarly, the disciples must reveal to others the light they have received.

4. Jesus and his family (8:19-21; see Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35) - Those who receive the word with obedience are placed on the same level as Jesus' physical relatives. Jesus is not

rejecting his family; instead, their presence provided him with a good illustration of what he was trying to say. Those who hear and do are Christ's true spiritual kin.

J. Group of mighty works (8:22-56)—Miracles are a demonstration of Messianic power and identity. In this set of miracles, Christ is calling water (8:22-25), demons (8:26-39), and illness (8:40-56) to obey their Lord.

1. Calming the storm at sea (8:22-25; see Mt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41)—The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by steep terrain with narrow ravines in between. These form channels through which the wind can rush down in sudden gusts and disturb the water. To be caught in one of these storms could be traumatic. Such was the experience of the apostolic band one time while Jesus was asleep in the boat. Jesus arose and commanded the wind and waves and calmed the sea. The apostles' startled response is "Who is this?" The answer is that it is God who rules the wind and waves and sea, and whose power is at work in Jesus.

2. Healing the Gerasene demoniac (8:26-39; see Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20)—On the other side of the lake, Jesus meets a demon-possessed man. The demons recognize Jesus' identity and authority (8:27-31) and are allowed to enter a herd of pigs who are drowned in the lake (8:32-33). The incident occasions a fearful reaction by the local people, who seem more concerned about the regularity of their lives and their economic loss than the miraculous healing and deliverance of an enslaved man (8:34-37). Finally, Luke records the commissioning and faithful testimony of the cured demoniac (8:38-39). Note that this miracle takes place in Gentile territory and is part of Luke's ongoing validation of the Christian mission to the Gentiles.

8:26 The locale described is uncertain. Gerasa was a city some 30 miles southeast of the lake whose territories could hardly have stretched so far. Some manuscripts give Gadara, which was 6 miles from the lake, or Gergesa (modern Khersa) on the lakeside, as the place.

8:27-29 The effects of demon possession are described: (1) disregard for personal dignity (nakedness); (2) social isolation; (3) retreat to the simplest kind of shelter; (4) demons' recognition of Jesus' identity; (5) demonic control of speech; (6) shouting; and (7) extraordinary strength. Many think that at least some of these incidents were the Lord dealing with mental illness in people, be it paranoia, manic-depressive, schizophrenia, etc. It is difficult to characterize this incident this way. This demoniac living among the tombs had completely lost his own identity and many demons were dividing him. He was isolated and lonely, living on society's fringe. In the presence of Jesus, this man found integration and wholeness.

8:32ff.—The miracle vividly describes Jesus' power over the forces of evil. Inevitably, the discussion occasioned by this miracle moves from the specifics of the cure to problem of evil – why it exists and why God is his wisdom, and power continues to allow it to exist. Jesus is focused on curing the man, who is much more important than the pigs. He merely allows the demons to enter and destroy the herd. But why? Why didn't he order them into the Abyss that they feared? It can be suggested that drowning in the lake is symbolic of the Abyss, but why involve the herd in all of this?

8:34-37—The people of the entire region come out to see this remarkable transformation in the former demoniac (8:34-36). He is seated at the feet of Jesus, under authority, and acting responsibly. He is clothed – another sign of wellness. He is no longer shameless, flaunting morals and conventions. Finally, the demoniac is in his right mind. He sees the world as it really is and not through the eyes of paranoia or another unhinged state. The response of the people was to ask Jesus to leave (8:37). The healing had come at great cost to the townspeople – an entire herd of pigs. Jesus was bad for the local economy!

3. Healing a woman with a hemorrhage and Jairus' daughter (8:40-56)—Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead and heals a long-ailing woman. Jesus is met by a synagogue official seeking help for his sick daughter. On the journey to the official's house, Jesus is touched by a woman with a hemorrhage for 12 years and senses healing power flowing from him. He calls the woman into the open and completes the cure (8:40-48). However, with the delay, the official's daughter passes away. Jesus goes quietly to the official's house anyway and with a simple word of command raises the girl from the dead (8:49-56).

The two people coming to Jesus in great need in this story could not be more different. Jairus is a man of stature, rich, socially powerful, and religiously prominent. In the synagogue, he was in charge. The woman would not even be allowed in the synagogue. Her constant issue of blood made her ceremonially unclean. They were at opposite ends of the social and religious spectrum of the day, but both met Jesus in a faith-filled ambience.

The woman, forbidden by the law to have social intercourse with anyone, defies the law in reaching out to touch Jesus. In her desperation, she does not dare to touch him, just his robe. Jesus' stern insistence for the person who touched him to come forward is an act of gracious kindness. It may have taken the healed woman a long time to convince her friends and neighbors of her cure had Jesus not announced it. She is instantly healed and restored to an active place in normal society. In addition, she needed to know that there was nothing magical about Jesus' garment. Jesus honored her imperfect faith in the healing, a faith mixed up with superstitious expectations. Jesus wanted her to know that it was her faith, not all the other baggage, that made her well.

Jesus then proceeds to Jairus' home. The word comes not to bother the teacher because the girl had died, Jesus had not made it in time. He needed to make faster house calls. The crowd laughs at Jesus when he tells them that the girl is not dead but only sleeping. They knew better! However, the Lord has power over life and death. He goes to the girl's room with only her parents and three disciples (those who believed or wanted to) and raises Jairus' daughter from the dead.

Jesus miraculously brought Jairus' daughter back to life, but her astounded and emotionally drained parents needed to be reminded to rustle up some grub for her. God is the almighty sovereign and can do anything. Yet often the things he wants done, he assigns to us and expects us to get to it.

Once again, the touch of Jesus in a faith-filled ambience leads to restoration. What are the ingredients of a touch from Jesus in a faith-filled ambience today? Exhaustion? Desperation?

You have blown it and you have no place to turn? The one constant in the equation is Jesus who is there, who loves us, who tells us “Do not be afraid; only believe” (8:50).

8:40-48—The episode has caused concern: (1) the woman operating as if touching Jesus’ cloak would work some kind of magic; and (2) Jesus’ awareness of a transfer of power without knowing to whom it went. It may be that Jesus’ question as to who touched him was merely a way to identify the woman and solidify her faith. However, God could have extended his healing power through his Son without Jesus’ being aware of the woman’s identity. This would be a specific occasion illustrating how Jesus set aside the independent exercise of the attributes of deity during his earthly sojourn.

8:51-56—Jesus selects Peter, James, and John to be with him on several special occasions (here at the raising of Jairus’ daughter, at the Transfiguration (9:28), and at Garden of Gethsemane (Mk. 14:33)). The secrecy invoked here and the command to silence is consistent with Jesus’ frequently expressed desire to avoid publicity to prevent premature or misguided declarations of his Messiahship.

K. Sending out the Twelve (9:1-9)

1. Sending out the Twelve (9:1-6; see Mt. 10:5-15; Mk. 6:7-12)—The increased reach of Jesus’ ministry gave him the opportunity to instruct the Twelve in the work of mission. The Twelve receive power and authority to do the types of works that Jesus had been doing (9:1-2). They were to receive hospitality and support graciously (9:4-5). His instructions made it clear that they were to live as simply as possible, focusing on preaching and healing. Luke concludes with a summary statement about their ministry (9:6).

The differences in the gospel accounts on instructions to the disciples may be that Jesus gave similar instructions for bearing witness on various occasions. The common theme is that the servants of Christ should go forth, not seeking support from unbelievers but trusting God completely to supply their needs through his people.

2. Herod’s perplexity (9:7-9)—Herod’s perplexity helps Luke focus on the question “Who then is this?” Herod is wondering who Jesus is, not from redemptive yearning, but from a guilty conscience for murdering John. Jesus is a mere curiosity to Herod and his longing to see Jesus was not from the best of motives (see 23:7-12). However, the question he asks is a serious question for the ages.

L. Feeding the 5,000 (9:10-17; see Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Jn. 6:1-14)—Jesus intended to take the Twelve away by themselves for some rest after their preaching tour, but the crowds prevented this. Jesus took advantage of this teaching opportunity. At the end of the day, the disciples urge him to send the crowds away to get something to eat. However, Jesus used what was available to feed the multitudes. This miracle appears in all four gospels, attesting to its importance. The crowd was much greater than 5,000 since there were that many men alone. When we do what God asks, we can trust him to provide for us. God is urging us to launch out and do what he has called us to do, and he will take care of us.

M. Peter's confession; Cost of discipleship (9:18-27; see Mt. 16:13-28; Mk. 8:27-9:1)— Luke records Peter's great confession prompted by the Lord's query as to his identity (9:18-21). This is followed by the Lord's first prediction of his passion (9:22) and the disciple's responsibility to take up his or her cross and follow the Lord (9:23-27). The Lord's words in 9:26 about those who are ashamed of him are convicting reminders of staying true to the Lord in hostile or mocking environments.

Luke leaves out the stories which Matthew and Mark record about Jesus' activities between the feeding of the 5,000 and Peter's confession of Christ. Jesus accepted Peter's statement as the truth of the matter, commanding the disciples' silence on the matter because the people had certain political expectations of Messiah. The command not to tell others probably stems from two things: (1) the Jewish people, chafing under Rome's rule, were all too ready to join a messianic revolutionary; and (2) one should not claim Messiahship for oneself but should first do the works of Messiah and then be acclaimed as Messiah by others.

What application from this passage on the costly consequence of discipleship? One author distinguishes between thorns (unchosen suffering) and crosses (difficult things that we chose because we are his people and think that he wants us involved). Unchosen suffering is not itself a noble thing. It is part of life. Enduring these gracefully can be a great testimony to God's sufficient grace. We can and ought to be burden bearers with each other in this kind of suffering. However, crosses are different. We choose a hard place, remain in a difficult relationship, do a thankless job because we believe that is what the Lord wants from us. We do things we don't have to do because we think that it's God's agenda for us.

9:22—Jesus reveals decisive new truth that Messiah must suffer and die and be brought back to life. The disciples, like other Jews of their day, did not think anything like that could happen to Messiah. It took them a long time to realize that Jesus was identifying himself with the Suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah 53 and that they, as disciples of Messiah, must also be prepared to suffer.

The Son of Man seems to be an ambiguous phrase. It can sometimes be a way of Jesus referring to himself as a typical human being. But the phrase can also allude to the passage in Daniel where the Son of Man is clearly a heavenly figure of great authority. In the phrase "Son of Man", Jesus appears to link the roles of the Suffering Servant and the sovereign Son.

9:23-26—Those who want to be Jesus' disciples can only "follow" him when they have made a radical decision to "deny" themselves. This does not mean cultivating a weak, nonassertive personality or merely denying ourselves certain pleasures. It means that we must take up our cross daily and live for Christ. A life dedicated to God is never wasted.

9:27—The reference point for this text may be Pentecost or, more likely the Transfiguration, which was only six days after. However, if Jesus was referring to the Transfiguration, why the mention of "not taste death" when the event was just days away? Perhaps because the disciples (Peter, James, and John) may not have imagined seeing the glory of the Kingdom in their lifetimes.

N. Transfiguration (9:28-36; see Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:2-10)—The Lord is transfigured before his disciples. They are dazzled to see him in the company of Old Testament superstars, Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets. The voice of the Father himself echoes from a cloud underlining his identity.

The glorious transfiguration of the Lord is the most significant event between his birth and his passion. In addition to the Transfiguration itself and the voice from heaven, this event contains several motifs of significance: the eight-day interlude, the mountain, Moses and Elijah, Jesus' impending departure, and the cloud. Two realities frame this event: the exodus from Egypt with the events at Mt. Sinai and the Second Coming of Christ.

There may be a connection with the amount of time Moses spent on Mt. Sinai before God spoke with him (Ex. 24:15-16) and the eight-day interlude between Peter's confession and the Transfiguration. In this scene of supernatural glory, Moses and Elijah appear with the Lord. Moses is a typological figure who reminds us of the past (Exodus). He had a mountaintop experience at Sinai, his face shone (Ex. 34:30; 2 Cor. 3:7), and he was both lawgiver and prophet—indeed, the prototype of Jesus (Deut. 18:18). Elijah is an eschatological figure who points us to the future as a precursor of Messiah. He was not only a prophet but was also the one who would one day turn people's hearts back to the covenant (Mal. 4:5-6).

In summary, Moses and Elijah on the Mount draws attention to (1) the place of Jesus in continuing the redemptive work of God from the Exodus to the future eschatological consummation; (2) the appropriateness of Jesus' association with heavenly figures; and (3) the superiority of Jesus over even these great and divinely favored heroes of Israel's past as revealed by the voice from the cloud informing the disciples that Jesus "is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him".

9:33—Peter's suggests building temporary shelters, such as used at the Feast of Tabernacles. His suggestion of three shelters implied a leveling perspective, putting Jesus on a par with Moses and Elijah. More than that, it connotes an intention to perpetuate the situation as though there were no "departure" for Jesus to accomplish (the point of the conversation between the Lord, Moses, and Elijah (9:31)).

9:34—The cloud symbolizes the glorious presence of God (see Ex. 19:16). It could also symbolize the cloud in the desert (Ex. 13:21-22; 16:10; 24:16; 40:34-38), the coming of the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13; Mk. 14:62), and the two prophets in Rev. 11:12.

9:35—The voice is the awesome voice of God the Father expressly declaring Jesus to be the unique Son of God. The supreme person and glory of Jesus is focal throughout the Transfiguration.

O. Down from the mountain (9:37-50)—This concluding section of Jesus' ministry in Galilee records several incidents showing the need of the disciples for power and instruction. These include a healing of a boy with an evil spirit (9:37-43a), a prediction of the Lord's betrayal that the disciples fail to understand (9:43b-45), and two cases of human rivalry (9:46-50).

First, a boy with epilepsy and demon possession was brought to the disciples. They are unable to help the boy. Jesus heals the boy and gives him back to his father (9:37-43a). The incident highlights the disciples' continuing need of depending on the power of God. Then Jesus highlights that the Son of Man must suffer and be betrayed. The disciples are unable to comprehend at this point what the Lord was trying to tell them (9:43b-45).

Finally, two cases of rivalry highlight the obtuseness of the disciples. The disciples failed to understand Jesus' role as the Suffering Servant and their roles as his disciples. They were thinking of Messiah as triumphant and wanted their position assured. They quarrel over who is the greatest among them (9:46-48). Jesus puts a little child before them and admonishes them to receive such a one as they would receive him. Then John recalls a man driving out demons who was not one of their group (9:49-50). The Lord needed to put a stop to that! Jesus takes a contrary attitude to John's parochial spirit. Whoever was not against them should be seen as a potential friend.

We cannot stay on the mountaintop. We are made for the valley, for the ordinary stuff of life. The disciples did not stay on the mountaintop, but descended into the valley where life was real, life was earnest – a child they could not heal (9:37-42), debates about greatness that exposed their misunderstanding (9:43-48), lessons on handling opposition (9:49-56), and a clarion call to costly discipleship (9:57-62).

III. Jesus' Ministry While Journeying to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)

This is the Lucan travelogue, full of on-the-way type of journey statements. This part of the book contains much that is unique to Luke. This is a travel narrative with an imposed framework. We get the impression of a journey to Jerusalem which lasts throughout the section. However, Luke has gathered material from various periods of Jesus' ministry and grouped it here because it fits around the various themes he was introducing. Matthew did a similar edit with his five great discourses. We know from John that Jesus went to Jerusalem several times, and Luke reflects details of several trips in his travelogue here.

There is movement (see 9:57; 10:1, 17, 38; 11:1; 13:10; 14:1, 25) and arrival at destinations (9:51; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:35; 19:1, 11). However, the organization is topical, not geographical. Things come up along the way and those things drive the narrative. This is not a straight path to Jerusalem. The dominant themes are instruction in, and opposition to, the proclamation of the truth. The journey theme suggests a parallel with the journey of the people of Israel through the desert with Moses when they received instruction about their way of life. It also suggests a parallel between Jesus traveling to the cross and the disciples walking a similar path in life. These are lessons in discipleship on a journey to the Lord's Ascension and, not coincidentally, in the shadow of the cross.

A. Setting the course; Counting the cost (9:51-62)

1. Samaritan village: Rebuking a violent course (9:51-56)—This marks a major change in Jesus' orientation. He is heading to Jerusalem where he will die. As the Lord starts this journey, messengers are sent ahead but are not welcomed by a Samaritan village. James and John

want the Lord to call down fire on the Samaritans, but the Lord disapproves of and rebukes such a violent course. He suffered opposition without retaliation because he had come to save (19:10). The disciples display an us-versus-them mentality (and God is on our side!) which has a small-minded understanding of the importance of forgiveness. The Lord rebukes their anger and moves along. The section illustrates the character and attitude of a witness. They were to continue to offer salvation. Judgment will come but not yet, and by God and by them.

The Samaritans were a mixed race since the time of the fall of the northern kingdom. The Assyrians deported the leaders of Israel and replaced them with foreigners and the rest of the Israelites intermarried with them. The mongrel race developed a mongrel faith which the Jews looked down upon. The Samaritans were a fringe segment of the Jewish world for which Jesus and Luke had a concern (see 10:30-37; 17:11-19).

Calling down fire and brimstone still has appeal among some churches of Christ. These churches take strong stands against every evil imaginable. Indeed, they find their identity in what they are against. The priority of redemptive mercy and the saving mission of God is lost in pious outrage.

2. Cost of discipleship (9:57-62; see Mt. 8:19-22)—This section is a series of poignant vignettes of people who wanted to follow the Lord without paying the price. Some think discipleship is glamorous and needs to be disabused of that idea (9:57-58). Others will follow when they have taken care of other things (9:59-62). These incidents highlight the need for readiness in the disciple. There is a cost in following Jesus that the disciple must be ready to bear. There can be no turning back in Jesus' service, any more than a farmer could expect to plough a straight furrow while looking backwards.

B. Sending out the seventy (or seventy-two) (10:1-24)—Luke alone records that, in addition to sending out the Twelve, Jesus sent out another larger group of disciples to do mission work. The numbers in 10:1 and 10:17 varies in ancient manuscripts, either seventy or seventy-two. The disciples are sent out to bear witness, knowing their message will be both accepted and rejected (10:1-16). They return in immense joy (10:17-20) and are then instructed in true joy (10:21-24) – not in power displayed, but in salvation brought.

The instructions to this group are remarkably similar to those given to the Twelve in 9:1-6. The early church followed the principles laid down in these instructions by providing for its teachers and evangelists so they would not be dependent on those they evangelized (see 3 Jn. 7-8). Their message was to be that the kingdom of God had arrived. The signs of its presence were the mighty work they would perform. Reception meant blessing. They warned that the failure to receive the word meant divine judgment.

10:10-16—Rejection of the message will have consequence, as Sodom represents (Gen. 19:24-29). Ignoring God's warning to repent will end in calamity. Tyre and Sidon are cited as examples of defiant opposition to God and his people (Isa. 23:1-18; Jer. 25:22; 47:4). The severity of the judgment will correspond to the degree of mercy spurned.

10:17-20—The disciples return overjoyed by the spiritual power in Jesus' name they had witnessed. Jesus speaks metaphorically of a vision of the toppling of Satan's dominion and the

defeat of his minions. However, true joy does not consist of power but in the reality of salvation brought (10:20).

10:21-24—Jesus enters their joy in the power of the Holy Spirit, a constant emphasis in Luke. These verses show (1) God’s sovereignty in imparting revelation; (2) the relationship between Father and Son; and (3) the privilege the disciples had in participating in this instance of messianic revelation and salvation.

C. Parable of the good Samaritan: On merciful love (10:25-37)—A lawyer enters an exchange with the Lord which results in the Lord affirming the lawyer’s statement summarizing the Law as that of loving God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself (10:25-28; see Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). The lawyer’s follow-up question relating to his neighbor’s identity is answered with the Lord’s parable of the Good Samaritan (10:29-37). A man is mugged and savagely beaten along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Two religious types pass by without supplying help. Finally, a Samaritan stops and helps, puts the injured man up in a nearby inn, and pays for his recuperation. The neighbor is the person who showed mercy. This is not a definitional exercise, but a heartfelt response to human need.

10:30-32—The priest and Levite act contrary to love, but not to the expectations of the day. A combination of a legitimate fear of danger and the ritualistic need to preserve themselves from defilement would have made sense in the day. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a steep, curving road, 17 miles long and descending 3,300 feet through rugged and rocky terrain where robbers could easily hide along the way. It would have been dangerous to stop and help. In addition, Jericho was the country dwelling of many priests and Levites not on temple duty. The priest and Levite may have feared defilement by touching a dead body that would render them ceremonially unclean for the duties they were hurrying to fulfill. They would be unable to enter the synagogue to teach and serve. Perchance, theological propriety prevented them from doing the loving thing. No motive for their conduct is given, but clearly Christ regarded such justifications as unworthy. In his mind, they had no legitimate excuse not to help. The life of kingdom is not displayed by people who reject the command to love in practical ways.

10:36-37—The Lord gives the lawyer a paradigm to emulate. The lawyer’s follow-up question (Who is my neighbor?) was a calculating one. He was trying to find the parameters of the new rules. The Samaritan was not calculating anything or obeying certain rules of conduct. He did what came naturally to him because of who he was. From his mercy flowed blessing. Once we have grasped the central truth of the Christian life, that we are recipients of God’s loving mercy now and forever, we can and should behave like the Good Samaritan.

D. Martha and Mary: On service and devotion (10:38-42)—Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary. Martha is busy with the preparations while Mary sits and listens. Martha complains about being stuck with all the work. Jesus refuses to tell Mary to help because she had chosen the better part. Martha was so busy being the “hostess with the mostest” that she has no time to be with Jesus. The Lord and his word must take priority even over loving service.

Jesus transcends the prejudices of his day. In 8:1-3, Luke mentions several women who traveled with Jesus and the disciples and contributed to their support. Here, he portrays how Mary takes

the place of a disciple or learner, sitting at the feet of the master (10:39). In the first century, it was highly uncommon for a Jewish teacher to accept a woman as a disciple.

E. Teaching on prayer (11:1-13; see Mt. 6:9-13; 7:7-11)—The disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. What follows is what we now call the Lord’s prayer (11:1-4). Note how Luke uses Jesus’ exemplary prayer practice (see 3:21; 6:12; 9:28; 11:1) to introduce his exemplary prayer. Jesus then teaches in a parable and in several sayings that encourage people to pray regularly and to persevere in prayer (11:5-13).

11:2-4—The Lord’s prayer appears here in a shorter form than the more familiar one found in Matthew (6:9-13). The prayer is addressed to “Father” (*Abba*), expressing Jesus’ own unique relationship to God as well as the effects of his work. Through his atoning death on the cross, he brings reconciliation to God, making it possible for us to become God’s spiritual children through the new birth. Jesus invites his disciples to use intimate terms to address God. Next, comes two petitions concerning God himself: (1) hallowed be thy name; and (2) thy kingdom come. “Hallowed be your name” means “let your name be regarded as holy”. It is not so much a petition as an act of worship. In the second petition, Jesus prays that the glory and reign of God might be realized soon.

The prayer concludes with three petitions relating to the prayer’s needs. The first of these is learning to trust and look to God for daily provision. The second relates to our need for forgiveness that relates to our need to forgive others. The forgiveness which we must extend to others is not the basis of our salvation, but the prerequisite for daily fellowship with the Father. The third petition “lead us not into temptation” does not imply that God entices his people to do evil, but that he may allow them to be tested to prove their faithfulness.

11:5-8—Jesus shares a parable about a friend being asked for help at an inconvenient time. Because of the petitioner’s persistence or boldness, he receives that for which he asks. This parable is of a “much more” variety. If human friends, when pressed hard enough, will respond to need, how much more will our gracious heavenly Father meet our needs (see 18:1-8).

11:9-13—Jesus tells us to ask (11:9-10) and then gives a couple of examples (11:11-12) to reinforce the point that God will respond kindly to our petitions (11:13). Each of these are of the “much more” variety. If an earthly father would do such, then our heavenly Father will do much more.

F. Controversy with the Pharisees and teachers of the law (11:14-54)—The Beelzebub controversy (11:14-28) leads to the sign of Jonah (11:29-36) and concludes with the woes on the unbelieving religious leaders (11:37-54).

1. Jesus and Beelzebub (11:14-28; see Mt. 12:22-30, 43-45; Mk. 3:22-27)—The controversy has its setting with Jesus’ healing of a deaf-mute. The Pharisees attempt to explain away Jesus’ miracles of casting out of demons by saying he was in league with Satan. Jesus replies in two ways: (1) by pointing that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and (2) by asking by what power the disciples of his critics cast out demons. Were they in league with Beelzebub too (11:17-20)? He illustrates this inconsistency in the parable of the strong man

(11:21-23) and a discussion of a spiritual renewal taking place without the indwelling of the Spirit and the power of the Kingdom. That eventuality leaves one worse off than before (11:24-28).

The spiritually blind are the first opponents of Jesus' ministry. This state is usually a willful one. The early church fathers considered willful ignorance the essence of sin. People watch a healing miracle and immediately attribute the healing to evil. The Bible warns repeatedly that by calling evil good and good evil, we endanger our very souls. There is a tendency today to glory in the seamy and degrading in life, to be obsessed with sex and violence. This is rarely presented as a thought-provoking critique of social problems, but commonly as a viable, even attractive, alternate lifestyle.

2. Sign of Jonah; Lamp of the body (11:29-36; see Mt. 12:38-42)—The Lord then responds to a demand for a sign from heaven (11:16) by comparing himself with Jonah (11:29-32). Luke joins the other Synoptics in opposing an inordinate demand for signs and miracles beyond those needed for a witness to Jesus' authority. Only in the way Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, would Jesus be a sign to the Jews. This refers to Jesus' teaching but suggests more. Matthew 12:39-40 parallels the resurrection of Jesus to the resuscitation of Jonah and points to the resurrection as the affirmation of the identity and teaching of Jesus.

This reply to the demand for signs is nestled among a group of sayings directed at those who would be impressed with mighty acts but pull up short of really following him. To those who might exclaim "Your Mama would be proud" (11:27-28) or "That's interesting, what else can you show me" (11:29-32), Jesus issues stern words about the seriousness of his call to discipleship. Other generations would condemn this one for missing the time of the Lord's visitation. The illustration of the lamp of the body (11:33-36) is a reference to the light shining from Jesus that people refuse to acknowledge. A healthy eye allows the light in so a person can see; an unhealthy one leaves the person in darkness. The paragraph is a warning against spiritual blindness and hardness of heart.

3. Woes on Pharisees and scribes (11:37-54; see Mt. 23:1-36)—Jesus is invited to dine with a Pharisee, who seems more intent on finding out what was wrong with Jesus and critiquing that than on being with the Lord. Jesus is immediately judged for sitting down to eat without the ritual washing (11:37-38). The washing before meals was not part of the law or customs of cleanliness, but part of the oral tradition and about removing defilement by contact with Gentiles and other sinners. Let us call it what it was – the scribal addendum that made them feel religiously superior. Jesus was critical of this sanctimonious righteousness. In a series of three woes (11:42-44), Jesus exposes the failings of the Pharisees. They concentrated on the tiny details of legalistic regulations and neglected the great moral principles of faith. They had grown to love the respect of the people for their religiosity rather than growing in their love of God. They were hypocrites who misled rather than guided people. They were more concerned with form over substance, appearance over reality.

Jesus then took aim at the legal experts (11:45-52). They are condemned for creating trivial and burdensome legal regulations for others that they failed to shoulder themselves. They elaborately honored the prophets but really were at one with their ancestors who murdered them. Finally,

they obscured rather than clarified God's revelation. The scribes and Pharisees are not "cut to the quick." They seem almost immune to conviction. Instead, they assailed him vehemently, provoking him, and trying to catch him in something he might say, so they could accuse him (11:53-54). Not a pretty picture! However, legalism drawn out and shown for what it really is, never is pretty, then or now.

This section points out common sins that often characterize strict religious people: hypocrisy (11:39-41); imbalance (11:42); ostentation (11:43); impossible demands (11:46); intolerance (11:47-51); and exclusiveness (11:52).

11:49-51—Zechariah may be either the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 or the minor prophet (see Zech. 1:1). However, we have no record that the minor prophet was martyred.

G. Readiness for the coming crisis (12:1-13:9)—In this section, Luke gathers teaching in which Jesus spoke of the crisis that was coming upon the people as a result of his mission. Jesus warned of the frightful consequences of rejecting him both in terms of political destruction and rejection by God in the final judgment. The followers are advised to remain steadfast during the forthcoming trials and to prepare themselves for the arrival of their master.

One commentator extracts six explicit rules about life in the kingdom from these texts: (1) there are no secrets (12:1-12); (2) avoid the tyranny of things (12:13-34); (3) be ready for the Lord's return (12:35-48); (4) don't settle for the status quo so as to avoid making waves (12:49-56); (5) be an agent of reconciliation (12:57-59); and (6) realize that sometimes life just isn't fair (13:1-5).

1. Warnings and encouragement: Fearless confession (12:1-12; see Mt. 10:26-33; 12:31-32; Mk. 3:28-29)—The warning begins by encouraging people to be on one's guard against the teaching of the Pharisees, which penetrated society like yeast in dough with a corrupting influence because their hypocrisy (12:1-3). The Lord continues to warn the disciples against hiding their allegiance to Jesus out of fear. Depending on whether people confess or deny Jesus, the Son of Man will be a witness for or against them at the judgment seat of God (12:4-9). Jesus does not guarantee protection against death but does affirm that God alone controls our destiny, and that God is aware of all that befalls us. The section concludes with the encouragement of supernatural empowerment to speak the truth amidst great opposition. People who do confess Jesus will be sustained by the Holy Spirit when they are on trial before judges they would otherwise fear (12:11-12).

12:10—Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:10; see Mt. 12:32; Mk. 3:28-29) is the attribution of the works of Jesus to the prince of demons. This is the unpardonable sin, the total rejection of God by completely dishonoring the Son, even insinuating that his Holy Spirit is in fact the embodiment of evil.

2. Parable of the rich fool (12:13-21)—There is an abrupt change in topic and a return to one of Luke's favorite motifs, that of wealth. Jesus declines to be an estate dispute arbiter and instead warns us about greed and covetousness (12:13-15). Greed seeks worldly things in a way

that makes material possessions the measure of what really matters. It becomes a substitute for the proper object of worship and therefore, an idolatrous exercise (see Col. 3:5).

Jesus then tells the parable of the rich fool (12:16-21) who fancies himself clever by taking measures to store up wealth to enable a life of ease. He passed away that very night, highlighting the consequences of his material focus and his lack of spiritual fulfillment.

The counsel here is to avoid the tyranny of things. Jesus reminds us that possessions do not give life its meaning. Possessions can become a tyrant consuming our time in their pursuit and fueling our greed in getting and keeping them. There is such a thing as reverse greed as well. There have been times in church history where people abhorred things as if they were evil in themselves. We need not be afraid of possessions. If they come, it is a great privilege to use them in God's causes.

3. Anxiety over possessions (12:22-34; see Mt. 6:25-33)—Jesus explains how we should view possessions. The exhortation “do not worry” in this passage stands alongside the implied “do not covet” in the preceding one. Both rich and poor can worry over adequate provision.

The disciples should not worry about necessities. In a world in which people are in a rat race for more, the disciples are to first seek out God's will and his salvation. Then they will find their bodily needs cared for. Let them give generously to the needy and set their desire on a heavenly treasure that will not pass away.

Some have claimed that such teaching encourages laziness and a lack of concern about the practicalities of everyday life -- a mantra of “God will provide, therefore I don't have to do anything.” However, Jesus is not speaking to lazy people, but worried ones and those tempted to join the rat-race for stuff. The point is that they should trust God and get their priorities straight.

12:24-32—This is a “how much more valuable” type of comparison. God richly provides for the birds of the air and the flowers in the field. How much more will he care for us (12:24-28). The pagan world frets and runs after material possessions but believers are to behave differently, confident in their Father's provision for them. 12:27-28 concludes with two examples of the lesser to greater argument: (1) the grandeur of Solomon compared to common flowers and (2) the limited lifespans of flowers compared to eternal life that lies before us.

12:33-34—It is difficult to assess the reason for the exhortation to give your material possessions away – whether to benefit the poor or to rid the disciples of encumbering “stuff”. The point of emphasis is not the extent of one's possessions but their place. It is the direction of the heart that is important.

4. Readiness for the coming of the Son of Man (12:35-48; see Mt. 24:43-51)—Watchfulness is the theme of this passage, expressed in a number of word pictures. Jesus portrays servants waiting for their masters with burning lamps (12:35-38). The master's response to the prepared servant is significant – he reverses roles and waits on them. A second parable of a householder surprised by the invasion of a burglar stresses the profound consequences of not being ready for the coming of the Son of Man. (12:39-40). Peter's question allows Jesus to

underline watchfulness for the apostles. The parable of the faithful and wise manager (12:42-46) shows that they have special responsibility. Jesus' return will involve a period of waiting and serving. Servants who know their master's will are characterized by watchful service.

5. Divisions over Jesus (12:49-53; see Mt. 10:34-36)—Jesus emphasizes the need to choose. His coming brings division to the world. He did not come to bring peace and ease; his work inevitably arouses opposition to the progress of the gospel even within families. People can tragically fail to realize how serious things are. Like one hauled off to court by an accuser, they ought to settle long before they get to trial.

Luke disabuses the “sweet Jesus” ideas of the sentimentalists in these verses. A Neville Chamberlain-like accommodation with evil is not the Lord's modus operandi.

6. Interpreting the times (12:54-59)—This challenge is for the crowd at large. They know how to interpret the warning signs of weather. They best learn to interpret the warning signs of the times.

12:57-59—Jesus is telling his disciples to be the initiator of dispute settlements. Jesus is advocating reconciliation. If you have a dispute with someone, do not let it come to litigation.

7. Repent or perish (13:1-9)—The problem of human suffering and evil introduces a parable that involves crisis and judgment. There was an incident when pilgrims to Jerusalem for Passover had been slain by Roman soldiers while offering their sacrifices. Jesus refuses to attribute the tragedy to the sin or fault of the Galileans involved but instead affirms the sinfulness of all people. Repentance is what is necessary, not speculation as to the cause of another's misfortune. The Jewish nation was sinful in God's sight and would suffer the fate of sinners if they did not repent. The situation of the nation was like that of a fig tree that produced no fruit. Its fruitlessness fitted it only for destruction.

13:2-5—The common Jewish explanation of the day was that misfortunes were the result of your wrong-doing. Job's comforters have had numerous descendants. Jesus puts to rest the idea that a person's suffering is necessarily caused by sin. Suffering may come just because we live in a fallen and broken world. Fairness in life is not guaranteed. We will all get our just desserts someday, but not necessarily in this life. In this life, evil may prosper while good may suffer. However, God is with us, and He calls us to a kingdom where there is ultimate justice.

H. Crippled woman healed on Sabbath (13:10-17)—The Sabbath controversy reappears. As Jesus is teaching in the synagogue, he sees and heals a woman crippled for 18 years (13:10-13). The synagogue leaders are indignant, citing Exodus 20:8-11 as prohibiting such healing (13:14). They argued that her life was not at stake and therefore the healing could well have waited until a weekday. Jesus sensibly responds with a lesser-to-greater argument from rabbinic tradition. That tradition allowed for helping animals in emergencies on the Sabbath. How much more important is it to help a fellow human crippled for life (13:15-16)?

I. Parables and sayings of the kingdom (13:18-30)

1. Parables of mustard seed and yeast (13:18-21; see Mt. 13:31-33; Mk. 4:30-32)—These two parables relate to the advent of God's salvific reign through Jesus. The kingdom is compared to seeds and to yeast. The point is the power for growth inherent in those objects. That kind of power is implicit in the kingdom as illustrated by the healing of the disabled woman the crowd had just witnessed. The parables contain the promise that God's work would come to a glorious fulfillment, no matter how small its beginnings seem to be.

2. Entering the kingdom (13:22-30; see Mt. 7:13-14, 22-23; 8:11-12)—Who will be saved? Many or few? Contemporary Jews thought that all Jews would be saved, except notorious sinners and heretics. Some thought that only the truly religious (as measured by very legalistic rules) would be saved. Jesus turns this question to the issue of personal responsibility. The kingdom is like a house with a narrow door offering limited admission. There was no automatic admission for anyone. Knowing about Jesus without repentance is useless. The time for salvation is at hand and people need to respond to the gospel now.

J. Lament over Jerusalem (13:31-35; see Mt. 23:37-39)—Jesus expresses a keen sense of destiny in this passage as he makes his final journey to Jerusalem. Warned of Herod's designs on his life, Jesus dismisses Herod as a "fox". In our day, foxes connote cleverness; in Jesus' day, they denoted insignificance (see Neh. 4:3; Song 2:15). Jesus would preach until he reached his goal and there, at God's appointed time, he would suffer and die. Jesus would continue his work and finish his course in Jerusalem. This evokes a lament over the city that had so persistently rejected the messengers of God and would in the end find itself locked out of the kingdom.

K. Jesus at table (14:1-24)—A meal after a synagogue service on the Sabbath provided an opportunity for teaching in which Jesus made use of the imagery of a banquet. First, however, he healed a man with dropsy (14:1-6). The healing caused controversy because it occurred on the Sabbath. In an argument like 13:10-17, Jesus claims that his action was not different in principle from rescuing an animal that had fallen into a pit (an action that many Jews allowed on the Sabbath, although not those of the Qumran community). Then he uses the time at the table of a Pharisee as a foil to instruct them on the nature of discipleship. First, there is a lesson on humility (14:7-11) and generosity (14:12-14) as paramount characteristics. Then he tells a parable of the great banquet (14:15-24), noting a great reversal. Those initially invited refused to come, so the master filled the banquet with "undesirables". You think that you are an insider? The Lord's invitation must be acted on, not presumed upon.

1. Healing a man with dropsy (14:1-6)—The Pharisees are portrayed as the watchdogs of their own distinctives, looking for a theological flaw to appear in Jesus' teaching so they can pounce on it. The man with dropsy may well have been a plant to "catch" him doing good in violation of their Sabbath customs (14:1-2). Jesus asks a question (was it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?) that functions to shift the burden of proof to them and then proceeds to heal the man (14:3-4). Their rabbinical customs allowed them to rescue an ox in distress on the Sabbath (14:5). But not to heal a person? Rabbinical Sabbath regulations were secondary to the well-being of God's people.

2. Concern for prominence (14:7-14)—Fresh from the exchange concerning healing on the Sabbath, Jesus moves to taking on the spiritual pretense of the Jewish crowd. He tells a

parable of a wedding banquet that is based on the practice of seating guests at table by rank and distinction (14:7-11). Jesus' point is that it was far better to adopt a position of modesty and wait for a better seat than to be embarrassed by one's presumption. Next is a piece of advice for the host (14:12-14). Do not just invite those who can return your good deed. Do not let your hospitality be reduced to posturing for quid pro quo social standing and return invites.

These are unusual reversals of custom in that day and ours. We yearn for places of honor. Similarly, our guest lists imply reciprocity. We use social invitations to acquire friends and prestige. Social or political clout is often the goal.

3. Parable of the great banquet (14:15-24)—Jesus follows that scene with the parable of the eschatological banquet. Jesus raises the question of what kind of people will be at the heavenly banquet. The great banquet is set, and a servant is sent with the invitations. He meets wall-to-wall excuses for not coming (14:16-20). The guests give such lame excuses that the audience might have seen them as humorous until they realized that this was how, in Jesus' eyes, they were treating God's invitation to them. The servant is sent out again and instructed to invite the poor, crippled, blind, and lame (14:21-24). Pious sentiments aside (14:15), the point is whether you have accepted the heavenly invitation. The story moves to show how God invites those with no social standing, just as Jesus took the gospel to sinners and tax collectors. Are there allusions to the Gentile inclusion here with the Jews portrayed as the original guest list who declined to come? Theirs were the advantages of heritage but could be forfeited by their failure to respond positively.

L. Cost of discipleship (14:25-35; see Mt. 10:37-38; Mk. 9:50)—The priority of the disciple's allegiance to the Lord is the focus of the concluding portion of the chapter. The Lord speaks of loving him and taking up our cross and following him (14:25-27). He then gives two analogies to counting the cost – building a tower (14:28-29) and a king going to war (14:30-32). He is claiming the disciple's ultimate loyalty (14:33). He ends with the illustration of salt (14:34-35). It has two peculiar properties. It flavors food and preserves it from corruption. When we live devotedly without excuses, we flavor life everywhere. We become a preserving element, those who stand for justice and righteousness despite the world's corruption. When we start with the excuses, we become like salt that has lost its quality.

14:26—The remark on hating one's family seems to command the disciple to violate the command to honor father and mother. "Hate" is used here in a relative sense. To neglect social customs pertaining to family loyalties were interpreted in that day as "hating." Jesus is claiming priority, not in a theoretical way, but in hard reality.

14:33—The parable of counting the cost ends with the statement that the disciple must be willing to give up everything for the Lord. This may mean actual dispossession at times, but the focus is the yielding up of the right of ownership of things or the desire to cling to things rather than their outright disposal. Disciples need to see their possessions as held in trust, a stewardship of items no longer their own.

M. Gospel for the lost (15:1-32)—This is Luke's lost and found chapter – a sheep (15:3-7), a coin (15:8-10), and a son (15:11-32), which illustrate three types of lost states resulting from

unreflective meandering, carelessness, and willful choice. This set of three parables highlights God's invitation to outcasts and the joy he experiences over the recovery of lost sinners. The parables are to be understood in the context of 15:1-2 where the religious leaders are critical of Jesus for associating with tax collectors and sinners. The religious leaders are, in effect, grumbling at the way the down-and-outs are getting saved. They are not jumping through the right hoops. The three parables establish a milieu of rejoicing for those repenting, not in scrutinizing and criticizing them.

1. Parable of the lost sheep (15:1-7; see Mt. 18:12-14)—The first of these parables opens with the typical criticism of Jesus – he kept the wrong kind of company. He welcomed sinners and ate with them. God's attitude towards sinners is highlighted by the shepherd's willingness to leave the flock and seek the lost sheep. What does one sheep matter compared to ninety-nine within the fold? God's answer is to rejoice over the recovery of the one even more than the safety of the ninety-nine.

Two things stand out: (1) the obvious analogy of Jesus' initiative in seeking out lost people to the search for the sheep; and (2) the climax of the story is not the return of the sheep but the triumphant rejoicing in their rescue. Seeking out the lost positively pleases the Lord contrary to the sanctimonious concern of the Pharisees for their purity.

Note that sheep are lost by meandering from one tuft of green grass to the next. When they finish nibbling, they do not know where they are. People can be lost by meandering as well, especially if they neglect to follow the Lord's blueprint.

2. Parable of the lost coin (15:8-10)—Again finding the lost article, this time a coin, is the subject of rejoicing. The description of the woman lighting a lamp and sweeping her house confirms that she was a poor person living in a small peasant's house with a low doorway and no windows. This parable is linked to the preceding one, again emphasizing God's concern for the lost and justifying Jesus' welcome of sinners.

The coin was lost by carelessness. People are lost this way as well. They are indifferent or negligent in their choice of friends, or places to hang out, or in the life choices they make.

3. Parable of the lost son (15:11-32)—The third parable makes the same point at greater length. Its main character is the father who illustrates the character of God. Jesus again identifies himself with God's loving attitude to the lost. The first part of this parable conveys the sense of joy when the lost son is found (15:11-24). The second part deals with the sour attitude of the elder brother (15:25-32), which aptly characterizes the attitudes of the Pharisees.

Property can be disposed of through a will or as a gift given during the giver's lifetime. Here, the younger son demands his share of his father's estate before his father dies. He loses it all in extravagant and dissolute living. He is reduced to tending pigs. His desperate state brings him to repentance, and he determines to go home and humbly requests to be his father's servant. The father sees him at a distance and, before the son can blurt out his intended confession, welcomes him back into the family circle. However, the older brother refuses to join the celebration even at

the father's earnest invitation. The elder brother represents the Pharisees, and the parable is put to them to change their minds about the outcasts that Jesus was welcoming into the kingdom.

15:11-16—The younger son's share of the estate would be one-third, because the older son would receive a double portion (see Deut. 21:17). He squandered it in short order with licentious living.

15:17-24—"Came to his senses" seems to carry the idea of repentance. He intends to acknowledge wrong both before God and his father. The father does not even let the son finish his intended speech. He received him back not as a hired man but as a son, giving him a ceremonial robe of honor and calling for a time of celebration. The father's response portrays the characteristics and attitudes of the loving heavenly father. The paternal welcome contrasts sharply with the attitude of the elder brother.

15:25-33—The older brother is bitter and sharply critical of both his father and his brother. The father goes to him when he discovers his older son's anger at his younger brother's welcome. The older son is disrespectful of his father and displays a smoldering discontent (15:29). He cannot bring himself to even describe his younger kin as his brother, settling for "this son of yours" (15:30). The father concludes the parable by once again underlining the true cause of joy (15:31-32).

This parable illustrates another type of lostness. You know exactly what you are doing, and you chose it anyway. You thumb your nose at God, parents, and society. Like the prodigal, you go to the far country because you choose to do so. Two reassuring truths emerge from this story. First, we have a home. In the parable, the prodigal comes to his senses and decides to go home. So can we! Yes, we have strayed from where we are meant to be, but we still have a memory, however faint, of our home in God. Each of us has a God-shaped vacuum that only God can fill – not marriage, children, job, success, entertainment, etc.

Second, God actively seeks us out. The father is on the lookout for the prodigal. When he sees his straying son on the horizon, he begins preparations to welcome him home. Luke shows us this side of God repeatedly. Jesus seeks the lost in all sorts of unlikely places. He constantly offends the official religious types of the day by associating with "those" people, the outcasts on the margins of "proper" society. He is the great physician who goes to where the patients are.

But there is another lostness in this parable of the prodigal – the elder brother. The prodigal's elder brother is lost and does not know it. He never strayed or broke the rules in any obvious way, but he missed the father's extravagant love because he refused to receive it. He thought he deserved it and thus lived in a box of his own making.

N. Warnings about wealth (16:1-31)—This chapter is one that relates to how to make your money work worthily. This is not an earthly investment chat, but a heavenly one. It begins with the parable of the unrighteous steward (16:1-8), continues with teaching concerning our stewardship of material resources (16:9-18), and concludes with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31).

1. Parable of the shrewd steward (16:1-9)—Here, Jesus portrays a manager employed by a rich man to keep his accounts who was suspected of mismanagement and dishonesty. The manager allows the master’s debtors to lower the account balances of their statements in an attempt to win gratitude and perhaps land a job when his current employment terminated. The owner commends the steward for his shrewdness.

The parable's meaning is debated. Some think that the parable simply urges people to prepare for the crisis brought about by the preaching of Jesus with the same zeal and prudence as the manager. Others think the parable warns people of greed. The point is that they should use wealth to make God their friend. Still others contend that the manager in the story was not in fact acting dishonestly. Instead, he was releasing the debtors from the extremely high interest charges he illegally imposed when the loans were made.

This last approach may be the best -- to see the steward as a rogue with insight. The key to this approach is to view the parable through 16:9 – “make friends for yourselves with unrighteous mammon.” The master commends the cagey steward, not for his dishonesty, but that he had at last learned that wealth could be wisely given away to do good. Jesus uses the story to show that “people of light” could also accomplish much by wisely giving up some of their worldly wealth.

16:5-9 Some have suggested that the amount taken off the bills was not part of the debt owed the master but represented the interest the manager himself was charging. Jews were forbidden to lend money at interest, but got around this by lending out commodities and, in effect, charging interest in commodities. If this is what the manager was doing, the master did not lose anything with the discounted price because it represented the interest the manager was skimming off the top. Furthermore, the forgiveness of debts would have helped the master’s reputation. The master could recognize the shrewdness of his steward without incurring a loss.

2. Faithful stewardship and lovers of money (16:10-18)—The parable of the unrighteous steward introduces teaching on the faithful stewardship of material resources. The key principle is stated in 16:13: “You cannot serve God and mammon.” These verses discuss stewardship in terms of trustworthiness as over against dishonesty. The primary thing is stewardship understanding – we manage our material resources but for a while. There are no pockets on a shroud. “Money is a foreign currency to the person whose citizenship is in heaven.” This teaching on stewardship relentlessly asks the real question: Do you own your money, or does it own you?

16:10-13; see Mt. 6:24—Jesus gives general principles of stewardship: (1) the way people manage a little is an indicator of the way they will manage a lot; (2) if people cannot manage something given in trust, they will not be given wealth of their own to use as they please; and (3) God’s claims over wealth are exclusive.

16:14-17—The Pharisees sneered at this teaching. Jesus deals with the mocking “get real” chorus of those bound by the love of money by warning them that their secret greed was obvious to God, regardless of their pious reputations among people.

16:18; see Mt. 5:32—This is an odd, “stray” text, placed where it is. This brief excerpt from Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce is included as an example of one aspect of the law the Pharisees tended to minimize. It parallels Matthew 5:32 except that Luke (1) omits the phrase “except for marital unfaithfulness”, (2) says that the remarried man commits adultery rather than cause his first wife to do so, and (3) includes a comment about a man who marries a divorced woman.

3. Parable of rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)—The parable implies that the rich man scarcely lifted a finger to relieve Lazarus’ suffering during life and that Lazarus was a pious person. Lazarus found a place of honor beside Abraham, while the rich man found himself in torment in Hades. The rich man’s request is to warn his brothers. The reply is that the teaching of the Old Testament is enough. Not even someone returning from the dead could influence those who have closed their minds to the Scriptures.

The parable does speak strongly against attitudes of entitlement. The Pharisees and others in that time understood wealth as a reward for their righteousness. They saw themselves as entitled to it. Jesus did not see things that way. Wealth was and is a stewardship issue. In addition, there is the insistence that those with resources help those without them. The rich man’s fault was his cavalier attitude, even blindness, towards dire need at his doorstep. People with a stewardship understanding of material resources are to make themselves aware of the needs around them and do what they can to meet them.

16:27-31—Hardness towards Christ carries over to hardness towards his prophetic forerunners. Not even a spectacular sign, like one returning from the dead, can change hearts set against God’s Word. The response of many through the ages to the resurrection of Jesus illustrates this truth.

O. Discipleship in community: Sin, faith, and duty (17:1-10)—This section involves Jesus teaching the disciples on key attitudes in Christian community -- stumbling blocks, faith, and duty. The disciples are warned not to lead others into sin through temptation or bad example. On the contrary, the disciples should help any member of their group who falls into sin by showing them the error of their ways and being eager and ready to forgive (17:1-4). Spiritual survival in the kingdom begins with seeking and extending forgiveness. The apostles react by requesting the Lord to increase their faith, a sentiment that Jesus commends by describing the power of faith (17:5-6). This is followed by a short parable about the duty of servants. There is no place for being proud of your faith or good works because that is what is expected of God’s servants (17:7-10).

P. Ten people with leprosy healed (17:11-19)—Luke describes how the Lord healed ten men of leprosy while on the road to Jerusalem (17:11-13). The lepers were required to respond by faith for they were healed only when they went to show themselves to the priests (17:14). The lone Samaritan who returned in thankfulness and praise becomes the focal point of the story (17:15-19). The story combines several of Luke’s themes: Jesus’ mercy on social outcasts; his conformity to the Law’s legitimate requirements (Lev. 14); faith and healing as bringing praise to God; and the grace of God as extending beyond Judaism.

Gratitude is an essential component of spiritual living. The Samaritan leper returns praising God even though he still had enormous problems. He was still living as an outcast, without family or job or home or larger community. He implicitly knew that God was bigger than the mess he was in.

Q. Coming of the Son of Man (17:20-37)—Luke has two eschatological discourses – here in 17:20-37 and in 21:5-38. Both have close parallels in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. A Pharisee’s question about the kingdom initiates a new cycle of Jesus’ teaching. This includes (1) sayings about the coming of the kingdom which are unique to Luke’s gospel (17:20-21) and (2) the discourse of the coming of the Son of Man (17:22-37).

17:20-21—The Pharisee asked “when?” Jesus’ answer straddles the here and not yet of the kingdom. The admonition by Jesus against seeking signs has frequently been cited as inconsistent with the content of Luke 21:5-36 (and its parallels in Matthew 24 and Mark 13). These verses do not contradict texts speaking of the Lord’s coming, they merely make a point about the kingdom – it begins with a transformation from within. The kingdom resides within believers and will reach its fullness upon the revelation of the Son of Man.

17:22-29—These verses emphasize the suddenness of the culmination. When the Son of Man does come, his glorious arrival will be sufficiently clear for everyone to recognize what is happening. There will be no need to chase rumors. This will come as a surprise – a most unpleasant one – to the world at large. Believers ought to prepare themselves for it, for it will be too late to escape when it begins to unfold, just as it was in Noah’s time (17:26-27). They must beware of attachment to earthly things, remembering the terrible experience of Lot’s wife (17:28-29).

17:30-36—The Lord’s sudden coming will leave no time for the quick gathering of possessions. The theme of the Lord’s imminent return blends into the Lord’s call for decision between eternal values and present possessions. The Lord’s return, which could come at any time, reveals ultimate destinies.

17:37—The Pharisee asked “When?” The disciples now ask “Where?” Jesus’ reply is obscure. Vultures may symbolize judgment on the spiritually dead or they may represent a place of carnage.

R. Characteristics of kingdom dwellers (18:1-30)—This section highlights four qualities we need to be recipients of the abundant blessings God intends for his people: (1) constancy or persistence; (2) humility; (3) childlikeness; and (4) single-mindedness.

1. Parable of the persistent widow (18:1-8)—The judge in the story is a worldly person who, though crooked, prides himself on making shrewd judicial decisions (18:2-3). The woman persistence wears him out (18:4-6). The parable concludes with a “much more” when the lesson turns to God (18:7-8). If the unjust judge will eventually respond, how much more will God guard his reputation and vindicate his people swiftly. However, the parable ends with a poignant question. When the Son of Man does come, will he find faith on the earth (18:8).

This parable should be interpreted in connection with the theme of the Lord's return. The vindication of the Lord's misunderstood and suffering people in the Old Testament needed to wait on God as he worked out justice with apparent slowness. We too wrestle with issues of unfairness and evil and must "always pray and not give up." Believers are to be persistently believing.

2. Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14)—This parable contrasts the characteristics of those who receive and reject the kingdom. The two prayers reflect two types of people. The Pharisee was a pious man, priding himself on doing more than the law required. He considered himself a paragon of virtue, completely lacking a sense of his own unworthiness and need for grace. He made a promenade of his piety, looking down on those around him. His approach to God reflected a smug sanctimoniousness both in where to he chose to pray and the manner of his prayer.

The tax collector was very aware of his failings. Both in posture and manner he poured out a confession of his sinfulness and appealed to God's mercy. Jesus' parable illustrates that God is always ready to receive the unrighteous when they humbly call out to him, but he closes his ears to the prideful self-sufficiency of the righteous ones. Humility is a basic kingdom trait.

3. Jesus and the children (18:15-17; see Mt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:13-16)—This story again illustrates the attitudes of those entering the kingdom. It is not age that is in view, but childlike qualities of trust, openness, and guilelessness. In Mark, Jesus takes the children into his arms and emphasizes the point that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Luke omits the welcoming hugs but does emphasize the point that the kingdom comes to those of a receptive spirit.

Being childlike can be a great protection in life. It means we can receive God's unconditional love and just say thank you. We are not suspicious, doubtful, calculating, and conniving. We can live without a hidden agenda.

4. Rich young ruler (18:18-30; see Mt. 19:16-30; Mk. 10:17-31)—The narrative continues with the theme of an attitude that God accepts. The question is a direct one: What must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus answers in the traditional Jewish way, speaking of keeping the commandments, especially those of the second part of the Decalogue that could be tested (more or less) by a person's outward behavior. When the young man claims to have done that, Jesus gets to the pith of the matter. His personal well-being and his wealth, not God, were at the center of his affections. Jesus commands a radical cure that drives the young ruler sadly away. Peter pipes up and notes that the apostles had done what the rich young ruler refused to do. Jesus promised to those prepared to so sacrifice, greater blessings both now and in the world to come.

Like the previous two stories, this one illustrates the need for human receptiveness to God's grace. A proper response does not lie within human strength. Jesus emphasizes that only by God's power is anyone saved. Thus, this story emphasizes both the responsibility and helplessness of humanity.

18:19-21—This portion of the story is about establishing a standard of goodness infinitely higher than the rich young ruler supposes it to be. Jesus' next demand exposes the rich young ruler's confident answer.

18:22-25—Jesus moved to the heart of the tenth commandment (Thou shall not covet?) by leading the ruler to face his attitude toward his possessions. The requirement to sell all seems to strike at idolatry – his sin of possessive greed. Much has been written on Jesus' requirement here. It seems targeted at the individual sin of this man – his covetousness. The quality Jesus is emphasizing for his disciples is single-mindedness.

18:26-30—If wealth (seen as a blessing by the Jews and us) is such a hindrance to salvation, then who can be saved? Jesus' reply about God's power provides the assurance the audience in that day and ours needs. Peter reminds the Lord that they had left all and the Lord makes a marvelous offer. No one will leave anything for the sake of the kingdom without receiving many times more in this life and eternal life to boot.

S. Passion prediction (18:31-34; see Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34)—Again, Jesus predicts his death (see 9:22, 44; 17:25). This time he indicates that the Gentiles will be his executioners. Luke attributes the disciples' failure to understand as a supernatural withholding.

This is the third time the Lord has done this. The disciples needed to face the reality of the Lord's impending death and the eventuality of their own deaths. First, death is inevitable. Many have commented on how they did not begin to really live until they fully faced their own mortality. Second, death is necessary. In our lives, death and resurrection are certain. We must die to inherit what God has for us. Scripture speaks of mortality putting on immortality, the corruptible that which is incorruptible.

The first practical question is not death's inevitability or necessity, but how we will meet it. Earlier generations had the idea of dying well that we have lost. John Wesley once remarked: "Thank God, our people [the Methodists] die well." He did not mean to slight death's finality and our natural fear of death, but that we can appropriate the grace to view and face death for what it is – a departure for our intended destination.

T. Healing the blind beggar (18:35-43; see Mt. 20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52)—The Son of David approaching the royal city accomplishes a messianic work of healing. Once again, the needy draws Jesus. The blind man's insistent calling highlights his faith and his receptiveness to receiving God's grace. The blind man recognized a *kairos* moment, a moment of opportunity and seized it. He broke the rules of polite society and created a scene. This scene encourages us to seize the *kairos* moments in our lives.

U. Zacchaeus, the tax collector (19:1-10)—Entering Jericho, Jesus passes a sycamore tree that Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector, had climbed to see the Lord pass by. He tells Zacchaeus to come down because he needed to stay with him. Zacchaeus is an example of what is possible with God. The Romans sold the task of collecting taxes in a particular area to the highest bidder. The person appointed did not receive a salary for his work. He simply collected as much money as he could and kept for himself what was left over after he paid the successful bid sum to the

Romans. The populace reviled tax collectors and understandably so. Zacchaeus is overjoyed but the crowd murmurs its disapproval. The incident sparks a full-orbed conversion in Zacchaeus – he receives the Lord and comes clean. If he had cheated anyone, he would return it fourfold and he would give one half of all his possessions to the poor.

The passage emphasizes the universal appeal of the gospel (19:2-4), the ethical problem of wealth (19:2), the call of a social outcast (19:7), the sense of God’s present work (19:5, 9), the urgency, joy, and necessity of salvation (19:5, 6); the need for restitution (19:8), and the receipt of salvation (19:9-10).

19:7-8—In earlier episodes, the Pharisees and teachers of the law opposed Jesus’ association with tax collectors and sinners. Here, the general populace is outraged. Zacchaeus’s abrupt and generous announcement silences the outrage. He promises to restore stolen “four times the amount” which was much more than the Old Testament required (Lev. 5:16; Num. 5:7). This generous response was representative of fruit in keeping with repentance earlier sought by John the Baptist (3:8).

19:10—This verse sums up the story of Zacchaeus and the ministry of Jesus as recorded in Luke’s gospel: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

V. Parable of the ten minas (19:11-27)—This parable fulfills four important functions: (1) it clarifies the time of the appearance of the kingdom of God; (2) it portrays the coming rejection and future return of the Lord; (3) it delineates the role of the disciple in between the advents; and (4) it connects the ideas of Sovereign and Savior – the one with the right to reign is precisely the same Son of Man who came to seek and to save the lost.

19:12-14—The historical background for the parable was the visit of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, to Rome to secure permission to reign as a client king over Roman territory. A delegation of Archelaus’ own subjects opposed this petition.

19:15-23—Jesus singles out three of the ten servants given money to invest as examples. The focus of the story is on the last servant, who allowed his fear of the master’s anger to prevent him from fulfilling his stewardship responsibility.

19:24-27—The principle of taking from one who has little and giving it to one who has much more strikes the modern reader as unfair. However, modern readers would not entrust their money to an incompetent money manager when a skilled one was at hand. The point here is one of stewardship. As stewards of our own lives and resources, are we increasing in fruitfulness?

IV. Passion Week: Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus (19:28-24:53)

A. Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem during Passover (19:28-21:38)—Someone has described this section of Luke’s gospel as highlighting power politics in the church. This section includes Jesus cleansing the temple of its commercial elements (19:45-48), questions from the religious leaders about his authority (20:1-8), the parable of the vineyard (20:9-19), questions relating to

paying taxes to Caesar (20:20-26), questions relating to the resurrection of the body (20:27-40), Jesus' question to them about the lineage of Messiah (20:41-44), and the Lord's observations about true charity and piety (20:45-21:4). It concludes with his prediction of the destruction of the temple and his great eschatological discourse (21:5-38).

1. Triumphant entry into Jerusalem (19:28-44)

a. Entry into city (19:28-40; see Mt. 21:1-9; Mk. 11:1-10; Jn. 12:12-19)—Jesus sent his disciples on ahead to prepare his entrance (19:28-34). He entered the city in an unusual way. He mounted a colt and rode down the Mount of Olives towards the city (19:35-36). The crowd grew boisterous, praising God and hailing Jesus as the coming king with the words of Psalm 118:26 (19:37-38). Jesus rejected the Pharisees' warning to silence his disciples, saying that that would simply mean that inanimate creation would have to raise the welcoming cry (19:39-40).

Jesus planned his own parade. He had been trying to keep a low profile, but now he unveiled his true claim. In effect, He was telling the authorities that it was the time to do their will, which coincidentally fulfilled God's sovereign purposes. He rode a donkey, a symbol of peace, not a warhorse used by conquering generals (fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9). The crowd spread their clothes on the road, typically done for significant leaders entering a city (see 2 Ki 9:13). It was a chance for the crowd to recognize their king. It was also a time to assess the resolve of the disciples.

b. Lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44)—When Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, he wept for he understood the real tragedy that was unfolding. He uttered a sorrowful prophecy over the city. He predicted a siege typical of ancient warfare would result in the destruction of the people and the city. All this would happen because the people had failed to recognize that God was coming to them and longing to save them.

While Jesus certainly deserved to a royal welcome (19:38), Luke's emphasis is that the Lord is moving towards the place of his rejection. Jesus knew that he was soon to be discarded. The crowd, which was shouting "Hosannah," would be screaming "crucify" in less than a week's time. The disciples would waver. Judas would betray him, Peter would deny him with vehemence, and the others would toy with abandoning him.

The passage certainly implies that this was not Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem. It is difficult to understand why he would be condemning the city before he had given it a chance to respond to his message.

2. Cleansing the temple (19:45-48; see Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17)—Then Jesus entered the temple and created havoc by driving out the merchants and money changers. This temple trade, providing for the needs of the worshippers and pilgrims, had commercialized the sacrificial system, bringing substantial profits to insiders. Luke emphasized the temple as a house of prayer and the place of Jesus' teaching ministry. The people hung on the Lord's words in contrast to the religious leaders who were plotting to kill him.

3. Teaching in the temple (20:1-21:4)—This section grows out of the cleansing of the Temple. In Luke 20, the religious leaders ask Jesus numerous questions with the intention of

trapping him. The chapter is an extended illustration of power politics in the church and the twists and turns that such maneuvering takes. This problem of power politics comes when we believe that we are God's faction entitled to control things because we are the best or know what is best. That attitude allows us to look aside when we run roughshod over people who are in our way.

a. Authority of Jesus questioned (20:1-8; see Mt. 21:23-27; Mk. 11:27-33)—

Representatives of the groups that composed the Sanhedrin, the Jewish parliament of the day, demand to know the source of Jesus' authority as a teacher. Jesus meets the question with a question – by what authority did John teach? That put the religious officials on the spot. If they acknowledge John's authority as a prophet, then why not follow him? If they deny that authority, they run against the overwhelming weight of popular religious opinion. Their pitiful reply "We don't know" effectively discredited their challenge to Jesus' authority.

20:8—The religious leaders were unwilling to admit divine authority when they saw it and could not make up their minds on what to do in the situation. Jesus refused to give more light to those who refuse to accept the light they have and make life decisions based on that.

b. Parable of the wicked tenants (20:9-19; see Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-12)—The parable of the wicked tenants draws its imagery from the song of the vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7). This parable tends toward allegory more than most parables do. The vineyard is Israel; the owner, God; the son, Jesus; the tenants, the religious leaders of Israel charged with cultivating the religious life of the people; and the servants, the prophets. The tenants beat and wound the servants of the owner, seeking the fruit of the vineyard that rightfully belongs to the owner. The owner finally sends his son, who is killed by the tenants. The owner takes vengeance on the tenants and appoints new ones.

At the conclusion of the parable, the audience gasps: "May it never be." They recognized that Jesus was applying the story to Israel. They were appalled by the thought of others seizing their homeland. Jesus then quotes to them Psalm 118:22. Their rejection of him and his ministry will have enormous consequences. The rulers immediately recognized that Jesus had spoken the parable against them. They continue their plotting, seeking an opportune moment to rid themselves of one who they regarded as an insolent upstart (20:19).

Jesus is speaking to a basic problem in the church. To whom does the vineyard belong? The church belongs to the Lord, but we tend to forget that. We function as if it belongs to us or to our faction. Deep-seated vested rights lurk just below the surface in many communities of faith.

c. Paying taxes to Caesar (20:20-26; see Mt. 22:15-22; Mk. 12:13-17)—The Jews thought they had the ultimate "gotcha" question. They queried the Lord about the poll tax imposed on the Jews by the Romans. Roman taxes were a burden to the people and very unpopular. Either way Jesus answered, the Jews figured they had him. Speak dutifully about paying taxes and you lose the people. Speak otherwise and they would report the Lord to the Roman authorities. The leaders were sure that Jesus' answer would alienate either the Roman authorities or the pious people and zealots who opposed foreign domination.

He asked them to see one of the coins they used. The silver denarius bore the image of Caesar on one side and on the other the goddess of peace and an inscription of the reigning emperor – Tiberius Caesar. If the priests and the people used Caesar’s coinage, they were under obligation to pay back what was owing to him. Jesus does not define the respective spheres of God and Caesar, church, and state here. His point is simply that people who benefit from Caesar must pay him for it. To give what the government legitimately requires is part of one’s religious duty.

d. Resurrection and marriage (20:27-40; see Mt. 22:23-33; Mk. 12:18-27)—The Sadducees accepted only the material world and denied the resurrection, angels, and spirits (see Acts 23:8). They present the Lord with a hypothetical based on the custom of levirate marriage where a brother of a deceased man without a male heir would marry his widow to raise up a male heir for him (see Deut. 25:5-6). They pose a situation where seven brothers marry the same woman without raising up an heir. So, whose wife is she in the life after the resurrection?

Jesus replies in a twofold manner. First, conditions in the resurrection are not like those on earth. Since there is no death and hence no need to replenish the race, there is no need for procreation. This may mean that earthly relationships like marriage will end or that all human relationships will be lifted to such an elevated level in heaven that the exclusiveness of marriage will not be the kind of factor in heaven as it is on earth. Second, Jesus gave an argument for the resurrection based on the law of Moses. In Exodus 3:6, God describes himself in the present tense as the God of Abraham centuries after the patriarch died. The implication is that Abraham was still alive and able to worship God. God was Abraham’s God during his lifetime and would not let death interrupt that relationship but would resurrect the patriarch. His response silences the Sadducees and puts an end to entrapment type questions.

e. Sonship of Messiah (20:41-47; see Mt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-40)—Jesus now takes up the controversy by posing his own question. The Jews awaited the coming of an earthly deliverer who would be a king descended from David. However, in Psalm 110, David refers to him as “Lord”. How could Messiah be David’s descendant [son] and David refer to him as Lord? The Jewish notion of a father’s superiority to his son is inherent in this argument. The implication is that Messiah is more than an earthly descendant of David. Paul will flesh this out in Romans 1:3-4 where he declares that Jesus was a descendant of David as to his human nature but the Son of God by his resurrection.

This must have been an unforgivable affront to the power mongers. Not only did their shrewd questions fail to trap him, but his questions embarrassingly stumped them.

20:45-47—After exposing inadequate ideas of Messiah, Jesus turns his scrutiny on the failings of the teachers of the Jewish religion. They were proud of their status and loved the respect it gave them. Yet they were hypocrites who cheated the poor and made an empty show of ritualistic religion.

f. Widow’s offering (21:1-4; see Mk. 12:41-44)—A comment on how the teachers of the law victimized widows (20:47) leads to a story on how a poor widow set an example of sacrificial giving. Jesus highlights the widow’s meager offering as compared to gifts of the rich.

She had given all, and they but a fraction of their wealth. God doesn't measure the size of the gift but the degree of a person's sacrifice in giving it.

4. Destruction of the temple and the last things (21:5-38)—Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple (21:5-6) which engenders the disciples' questions of when and how they might know that (21:7-28). They were not to be deceived by the claims of false Messiahs (21:7-8) or by wars and natural disasters (21:9-11). Persecution, betrayal, and hatred may be their lot, but God would be with them enabling their testimony and persevering their souls (21:12-19). The Lord examines the dire conditions of the last days in 21:20-28, and the disciples are advised to remain vigilant in 20:29-36.

Jesus' teaching in this discourse provides a realistic warning about future events with a strong encouragement to persevere. Note the practical exhortations:

- Do not follow false leaders (21:8).
- Do not be awed by events associated with the end (21:9-11).
- Do not worry about your legal defense when charged (21:14-15).
- Persevere when all turn against you (as they will) (21:16-19).
- Flee Jerusalem when besieged (21:21).
- Take heart when end time events come upon you, for the return of the Son of Man is at hand (21:27-28).
- Recognize that all these things point to the coming of the kingdom (21:31).
- Find assurance that the Lord's words will endure (21:32-33).
- Be watchful and prayerful (21:36).

a. Fate of the temple and signs of the end (21:5-11; see Mt. 24:1-8; Mk. 13:1-8)—Jesus discusses the fate of the temple and the signs of the end. Jesus did not share the enthusiasm of the disciples for the magnificence of Herod's temple. Instead, he prophesies its complete destruction. Their follow-on question shows that they thought that the destruction of the temple would be one of the events associated with the end of the age. The disciples should not believe that the precise timing of the end days can be forecasted. False messianic claims that imitate the teaching of Jesus should not mislead them. In addition, End times events should not terrorize them. Wars, revolutions, and natural calamities must happen and do not signal an immediate end of history.

b. Persecution of the disciples (21:12-19; see Mt. 24:9-14; Mk. 13:9-13)—Next, Jesus predicts the persecution of the disciples. He does not provide a chronology for the traumatic events he prophesies but does tell the disciples that these events will provide them with an opportunity for witness. In the hour of crisis, they will be inspired to bold and incontrovertible witness. Whatever happens, the disciples will be under the hand of God and those who endure faithfully to the end will be saved.

c. Fall of Jerusalem; coming of the Son of Man (21:20-24; see Mt. 24:15-22, 29-31; Mk. 13:14-20)—The Lord describes two distinct stages in the coming of the end. First, Jerusalem will be besieged, depopulated, and handed over to the Gentiles. The vivid description of Jerusalem's destruction incorporates both the events of 70 and future destruction. This is not

a prophecy put into the mouth of Jesus after the event. If that were so, one would expect more details than Luke supplies. Second, the Son of Man will come, fulfilling Daniel 7:13-14. His coming will be associated with the day of judgment and the visible establishment of God's rule.

21:24—The times of the Gentiles is a period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem.

d. Certainty of, and preparation for, the end (21:29-36; see Mt. 24:32-35; Mk. 13:28-31, 35-37)—The fig tree is the first to show its leaves in the spring and indicates that summer is coming. So, the dreadful events Jesus prophesied are in reality a sign of hope that the coming of the kingdom is near. The vital thing is not to engage in speculation or give way to despair. The disciples should pray for the strength to remain faithful until the end.

21:32-33—"Generation" can refer to a span of time or to a class or race of people. In the former sense, it may refer to the decades following Jesus' lifetime. If so, this entire passage refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the heavenly portents understood figuratively. But "generation" as a span of time might also refer to the period following the initial events of the end time. The passage implies that once the described sequence begins, it will proceed to completion without delay. If "generation" refers to a class or race of people, the passage makes more sense if it refers to the Jewish people. The Jewish people will endure through the ages.

e. Summary of Jesus' daily activities (21:37-38)—Luke does a summary of Jesus' daily itinerary during Passover. Jesus was an ancient commuter! He taught every day in the temple and traveled back to Mount of Olives at night. He could not afford the high rent in Jerusalem at Passover.

B. Death and burial of Jesus (22:1-23:56)

1. Judas agrees to betray Jesus (22:1-6; see Mt. 26:1-5, 14-16; Mk. 14:1-2, 10-11; and see Jn. 11:45-53)—Once the Jewish leaders had decided to get rid of Jesus, the main problem was to do so without creating an uprising among his supporters. Judas offers them the opportunity to arrest Jesus quietly. Since 100,000 people could be in and around Jerusalem during Passover, the chances of the authorities doing this without insider help were practically nil. The people were a deterrent to these schemes, so Judas looked for an opportunity to betray Jesus when no crowds were present.

2. Last Supper (22:7-38; see Mt. 26:17-35; Mk. 14:12-31; Jn. 13:21-38)—Lord sends his disciples ahead to confirm arrangements for the Passover meal (22:7-13). At the meal, Jesus institutes the Eucharist and predicts his own betrayal (22:14-23), settles strife among the disciples about who was the greatest among them (22:24-30), predicts Peter's denials (22:31-34), and instructs the disciples as to being prepared to carry on after his departure (22:35-38).

22:7-13—The instructions to the disciples at the outset suggest that Jesus had already made arrangements. The room may have been the one mentioned in Acts 1:13, located in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (see Acts 12:12).

The normal procedure at the Passover meal was to have an opening prayer followed by the first of four cups of wine and a dish of herbs and sauce. The Passover story was told, Psalm 113 was sung, and a second cup of wine was drunk. After grace, the main course of roast lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs was eaten, followed by another prayer, and a third cup of wine. Then, Psalms 114-118 were sung and the fourth cup of wine drunk.

22:14-23—Luke forges a strong link between the celebration of the Passover meal and the idea of redemption (22:14-18). The cup referred to in 22:17 may be the first of the traditional four cups taken during the Passover meal or the third cup, mentioned in connection with the Passover setting and again in connection with its place in the Eucharist.

The words of institution (22:19-20) are remarkably similar to Paul's rendition in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. The bread was a thick unleavened bread typically used at Passover. "Give thanks" translates *eucharisteo* from which we get our word "Eucharist." "In remembrance of me" directs our attention to the person of Christ and not merely to the benefits we receive from taking the bread and the cup. The final cup taken during the meal signifies the New Covenant in Jesus' blood. That new covenant (see Jer. 31:31-34) carried with it the assurance of forgiveness through Jesus' blood shed on the cross and the inner working of the Holy Spirit in motivating and enabling us to respond and fulfill our covenant responsibilities. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are joined in the words of 22:21-23. The Son of Man will go as divinely decreed, but the human agent of betrayal has a "woe" pronounced upon him.

22:24-30—The prediction of betrayal leads into a dispute among the disciples about who was the greatest among them. Of the four gospels, only Luke records this dispute as occurring more than once (9:46-48 and in this passage) and as occurring in the upper room. Jesus clarifies that disputes about who is "da man" should not arise in the kingdom of God. In human society, the great ones are waited on, but the disciples had seen and were to follow the example of Jesus who waited on them (22:24-27). Deference and service should characterize their *modus operandi*. Then Jesus accords honor to the Twelve. They were his supporters in his trials, and they would share in the Messianic feast and function as judges in his kingdom (22:28-30).

22:31-34—Next, Jesus predicts Peter's denial. Jesus allowed Satan to sift him, but he also prayed for him that he would not fail in his faith but would remain and be able to strengthen the others. Peter's overconfident reply (22:33) would come back to haunt him.

22:35-38—The passage concludes with a difficult ending. When the Lord sent out the disciples in Luke 9 and the seventy (or seventy-two) in Luke 10 to preach the gospel, he instructed them not to make extensive plans for their own provision. Now, his advice is decidedly different. They were to pack their suitcases, bring their money, and even attend to their own defense. The reason is that the times have changed. In the past, they were welcomed with enthusiasm, but now they could not count on that kind of reception.

3. Prayer and arrest of Jesus (22:39-53; see Mt. 26:36-56; Mk. 14:32-50; Jn. 18:1-11)—In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays in earnest while the disciples sleep (22:39-46). Judas leads the Jewish multitude to Jesus and betrays him with a kiss (22:47-53).

The Garden of Gethsemane was at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Conscious of the temptations surrounding them all, Jesus urges his disciples to pray. He withdrew and prayed that, if possible, the cup of suffering and wrath be averted. Nevertheless, not his will, but the Father's will be done. Returning to the disciples, he found them asleep. The identification of Jesus is carried out by a kiss (22:47) in the darkness of night. It was cruelly hypocritical. Jesus points out the underhandedness of such an armed arrest of a peaceable teacher at night when he was teaching freely in public places during the day. Darkness was Satan's hour and theirs and Jesus was content to obediently go to the cross on God's plan of salvation.

22:43-46—Jesus is supernaturally strengthened, even as his disciples fell asleep, exhausted by sorrow and emotional strain. Luke does not dwell on the weakness of the disciples, merely describes it.

22:50-51—Peter comes off being cowardly in his later denials, but at the time of Jesus' arrest, he is the one that resists (see Jn. 18:10-11). Luke alone tells us of Jesus' healing the ear of the high priest's servant.

4. Jewish trial (22:54-71; see Mt. 26:57-75; Mk. 14:53-72; Jn. 18:12-27)—Taking the gospels in stereo, the probable order of Jesus' trials are: (1) before Annas (recorded in John); before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (recorded in the Synoptics); before Pilate (recorded in the Synoptics and John); before Herod Antipas (recorded in Luke); and (5) before Pilate again (recorded in Luke). The charges against Jesus when brought before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were (1) threatening to destroy the temple and (2) blasphemy. The charges against the Lord before Pilate were (1) subverting the Jewish nation, (2) opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, (3) claiming to be king and thus guilty of sedition.

In Luke, the Jewish trial proceeds in three stages: (1) the informal (illegal) trial at night at the high priest's abode which occasioned Peter's denial of the Lord (22:54-62); (2) the scourging and mockery of the Lord by the soldiers (22:63-65), and (3) the formal proceedings before the Sanhedrin in the morning which resulted in their guilty verdict on Jesus (22:66-71). An informal meeting took place at the high priest's residence during the night, where preliminary decisions were made. These decisions were subsequently ratified in an official session the following morning.

22:54-62—Jesus was taken first to the high priest's residence, the home of Annas, father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas (see Jn. 18:13), which was used for official business. Peter followed at a distance. His denials were threefold: first, in response to a servant girl; second, to a nameless man; and third, to a man emphatically identifying Peter as associated with Jesus. Luke does not record Peter's oaths as Matthew and Mark do but does record that after a rooster crowed upon the third denial that the Lord looked straight at Peter. Peter remembered the Lord's prediction and went outside and wept bitterly. The story of Peter's denial presents a sober and utterly real picture of the apostle and offers a deep spiritual lesson about humility and spiritual conflict.

22:63-65—The soldiers played a grim game of blind man's bluff with Jesus for their own amusement and insulted and abused him. This incident puts Jesus' suffering in sharp contrast

with Peter's denials of even knowing Jesus. The taunting highlights the brutal cruelty practiced upon the Savior.

22:66-71—Luke records the official proceedings before the entire Sanhedrin the next morning. His report of the questioning separates questions regarding messiahship and Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. Independent of and after the queries about Messiah (22:67) is the question of 22:70: "Are you then the Son of God?" Luke is emphasizing that Jesus is the unique Son of God as well as Messiah.

5. Roman trial (23:1-25; see Mt. 27:1, 11-26; Mk. 15:1-15; Jn. 18:28-19:16)—These proceedings occur in three stages: initial hearing before Pilate (23:1-6), an ancillary proceeding before Herod (23:7-12), and then the final proceedings before Pilate (and a riled up Jewish crowd) which concluded with Jesus' condemnation (23:13-25). The real saga of this portion of the trial is the difficulty the Jewish authorities had in trying to convict an innocent man.

The authorities did not want justice, they wanted the sanction of law in disposing of an inconvenient troublemaker. The condemnation is done in a way that everyone can rationalize – the priests do it for the good of the nation (in their eyes), Pilate to avoid a ruckus on Passover, the crowd wanted someone who was really going to fight Rome (Barabbas) rather than some spiritual Messiah (Jesus), and the soldiers were just doing their duty (the mocking and cruelty is more than that, but rationalized as an excusable outlet while performing a grim task).

There are really two struggles going on here. One is a struggle between Jesus and his accusers – the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and the people. But the deeper struggle is between principalities and powers. All the primordial forces are here as God and Satan act out this drama on a puny stage in a distant corner of a self-absorbed empire on earth. God takes all of Satan's ploys and weaves them into a gloriously redemptive act. He uses evil to accomplish his purposes.

23:1-6—Since the Jews were powerless to authorize a death sentence, it was necessary to take the case to the Roman authorities. The Romans would not heed charges of violating Torah or blasphemy and the like, so the Jewish authorities had to frame their charges in the criminal or political terms the Romans recognized. The Sanhedrin's accusations are threefold: (1) subverting the Jewish nation, a concern for Pilate who wanted to internal strife among the already troublesome Jews; (2) opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, patently untrue as 20:20-26 shows; and (3) that Jesus was a political activist and threat to Roman sovereignty, claiming to be a king. Pilate declares Jesus' innocence (23:4), a point especially important to Luke who seeks throughout Luke-Acts to vindicate Christianity by vindicating both Jesus and Paul in their appearances before judicial authorities.

Pilate's own unwise behavior through the years puts him in a bind with the Jews. He does not want a ruckus at Passover that could get back to the emperor at Rome. However, he realizes that Jesus is an innocent man. One gets the sense that Pilate is on trial here, not the Lord. He offers to scourge Jesus to appease the Sanhedrin but wants to let him go. Upon learning that Jesus was from Galilee, he sought to buy time, and possibly support, by sending Jesus to Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem for the Passover.

23:7-12—Only Luke records Jesus' appearance before Herod. Herod's territory as a Roman client king was Galilee and Perea. Herod had beheaded the forerunner (John the Baptist) and had an interest in Jesus when hearing of his works (9:7-9; also see 13:31-33). Herod is portrayed as a frivolous person to whom Jesus had nothing to say. Herod mocked and ridiculed the Lord and sent him back to Pilate.

23:13-25—Pilate then tries to enlist the crowd to resist the Jewish demand for capital punishment. He states that neither he nor Herod had found cause for the death sentence. He would punish the Lord (for what?) and release him. The priests stir up the crowd to release Barabbas, a man imprisoned for insurrection and murder, instead and to have Jesus crucified. With the situation in danger of getting out of hand, Pilate gave in to their demands.

23:13-16—Luke portrays Pilate, a Roman official, as desiring to treat Jesus fairly. One of his apparent goals in writing were to show that Christianity was no threat to the Roman state and deserved favorable treatment by Rome.

23:18-25—The frenzied crowd demanded Jesus' death. Pilate again protests Jesus' innocence. Luke has emphasized the divine "must" in Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and to his death. Now he notes the human factor as Pilate finally surrenders to the crowd's demand and delivers Jesus to the executioners.

6. Crucifixion of Jesus (23:26-49; see Mt. 27:32-56; Mk. 15:21-41; Jn. 19:17-30)—Luke briefly describes the crucifixion of Jesus. He presents the stark facts of Jesus' agony with sober restraint. The inner reality of Jesus' atoning death and his spiritual anguish in bearing the sins of the world are paramount.

Simon of Cyrene carries the cross for the weakened Christ (23:26). The daughters of Jerusalem have their grief redirected (23:27-31). Jesus was crucified between two criminals (23:32-34) amidst sneers, mockery, and insults (23:35-38). Jesus' first recorded words are a prayer for forgiveness for his executioners (23:34). Then Luke records a dialogue between the criminals and Jesus. One of the criminals joins the taunts of the crowd, but the other criminal rebukes him and utters a confession of his own sin and of the innocence of Jesus. Jesus accepts his last-minute faith and promises him a place in Paradise (23:39-43). Only Luke tells us of the darkness that came over the land and the centurion's verdict of Jesus' innocence (23:44-49).

23:26—Capital offenders condemned to crucifixion were required to carry their crossbar to the scene of crucifixion. Jesus was weakened by abuse and Simon of Cyrene is pressed into service to help carry the cross.

23:27-31—The women who followed the Lord raised a death-wail for him but Jesus redirects their grief. They should mourn for themselves. If this is how the people treated an innocent man, how much worse the fate of guilty Jerusalem.

23:32-38—The presence of two criminals with Jesus emphasizes the humiliation of his execution and his identification with sinners in death as well as life. The rulers sneer at him, but the people are passive rather than hostile. The soldiers continued to taunt him, offering

wine vinegar as they mocked him. The notice above the cross mocks both Jesus and the Jews: “This is the king of the Jews.”

23:39-43—The conversation between the condemned and dying men is unique to Luke. Luke has one of the criminals protest Jesus’ innocence and then receive the incredible grace of God in the assurance of joining Jesus in paradise that very day. “Paradise” is a Persian word used in Greek to convey a place of beauty and delight. In Genesis 2:8 in the Septuagint translation, it refers to the Garden of Eden and to the future bliss that Garden symbolizes.

23:44-49—Darkness emphasizes the somberness of the event and links Jesus’ death with the experience God’s judgment. Luke states that the temple curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Ex. 26:31-33) was torn in two (23:45). Access to the most holy God is now open through the atoning death of Christ (see Heb. 10:19-22). Luke describes Jesus’ death described in a terse, restrained way. The Lord committed his spirit into the Father’s hands at death using the words of Psalm 31:5 (23:46). After Jesus’ death, a centurion bears witness to the uniqueness and innocence (23:47) of the Lord Jesus. The final scene of grief is poignant.

7. Burial of Jesus (23:50-56; see Mt. 27:57-61; Mk. 15:42-47; Jn. 19:38-42)—The Romans typically left the bodies of crucified criminals on the crossbar and then cast them into a common grave. Joseph of Arimathea, a dissenting member of the Council, takes quite a chance in requesting the body of Jesus, wrapping it in a shroud, and then burying it in an unspecified tomb. Jewish graves were caves in the sides of hills, large enough for a person to enter to tend the dead body and sealed by rolling a stone across the entrance. Joseph did not embalm the body (he lacked time before the start of the Sabbath), and some women who followed Joseph to the site of the burial decided to repair the omission as soon as possible after the Sabbath.

C. Resurrection, post-Resurrection appearances, and Ascension of Jesus (24:1-53)—Luke 24 contains Luke’s account of the Resurrection of the Lord (24:1-12), his appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35), his appearance to the assembled disciples in the upper room (24:36-49), and his Ascension (24:50-53). The chapter not only presents the climactic event of the Resurrection, but also includes a recapitulation of the saving mission of Christ (24:6-7, 19-27, 45-47). The Ascension, which concludes the book, is the goal of Jesus’ earthly ministry and sets the scene for the church’s ministry recorded in Acts.

1. Discovery of empty tomb (24:1-12; see Mt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Jn. 20:1-9, 18)—After the Sabbath, the women go to the tomb to complete the burial by preparing the body with spices and perfumes (24:1-3). Two angels meet them there and inform them of Jesus’ resurrection (24:4-8). The women then hurry back and inform the Eleven of what had transpired (24:9-11). Then, Peter goes to see for himself (24:12).

The historicity of this story has often been questioned. Those challenging the historicity suggest that the women went to the wrong tomb, without attempting to explain how all subsequent visitors made the same mistake. Others argue that stories of “resurrection appearances” may be “broadly historical,” but the story of the empty tomb developed later and is legendary. However, the tradition of the empty tomb developed early and presented as central to the message (1 Cor. 15:3-7). To hold that Jesus “resurrected” but that his bones remained buried in Palestine rests on

sheer supposition or on a vastly different idea of resurrection than graces the pages of the New Testament.

There are issues in harmonizing the various accounts of the Resurrection. But this certainly would be true with a modern earth-shattering account witnessed by different people. The variances in the story certainly absolve any charge of collusion with one another, but it does leave loose ends.

24:1-3—All four gospels specify the first day of the week as the day of the Resurrection. The change from the traditional biblical Sabbath is in itself strong evidence of the Resurrection because it shows the strength of the disciples' conviction about what happened that day.

Women were the first to learn of the Lord's resurrection. They came to the tomb to embalm him and discovered that he had risen. Women were second-class citizens in that society, not the witnesses first century people would normally choose.

24:4-8—The women meet two angels who inform them of Christ's resurrection by repeating the essence of the three passion predictions (9:22, 43-45; 18:31-33). Luke's pattern is to provide two witnesses to the key events he records. Simeon and Anna give testimony at Christ's circumcision (2:25-38). There were two witnesses to the events on the road to Emmaus later in this chapter (24:13-35). Two witnesses are the minimum number required for validation of testimony under the Law (see Deut. 19:15).

24:9-12—Luke names the women in his record of their report of the Resurrection to the disciples. The apostles are incredulous. The reluctance of the apostles to believe the initial report is important in relation to the evidence for the Resurrection. The disciples were not expecting this event. They are not fit subjects for hallucination as critics have charged.

2. Appearance to two disciples on road to Emmaus (24:13-35; see Mk. 16:12-13)—What a jewel this story is! It is a moving story, a vivid picture of the compassionate love of Christ, a testimony to the Resurrection, an explanation of the empty tomb, and an occasion for Luke to summarize his book's major themes.

Jesus appears to two people walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus while they are discussing the events that had transpired in Jerusalem over the Passover. They did not recognize him at first (24:13-16). Jesus questioned them and the travelers proceeded to tell the story from their vantage point (24:17-24). They affirm that Jesus was a prophet; that the Jewish rulers handed him over for crucifixion; that the people's hope had been that he was the promised deliverer; and the incomprehensible report of the empty tomb. They were bewildered, glum, and downcast. Then Jesus proceeded to explain the events from the perspective of the Scriptures (24:25-27). As the travelers approached Emmaus, the two travelers strongly urged Jesus to stay with them that evening (24:28-29). While at table, he revealed himself to them by breaking bread and then he promptly disappeared (24:30-31). Their reaction to the incident is a classic: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us" (24:32). They immediately returned to Jerusalem to inform the disciples (24:33-35).

24:13—Emmaus is often identified with El-Qubeibah, some 7 miles northwest of Jerusalem, but Amwas (modern Nicopolis), 18 miles northwest of Jerusalem, is more likely.

24:16—“[But] they were kept from recognizing him” is a passive construction in the original language to convey that the action described is the work of God.

24:25-27—The Jewish Scriptures consisted of three parts: the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy), the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel to 2 Kings, and the prophets other than Daniel), and the Writings (all the rest of the books in the Old Testament). Jesus now opens the Scriptures to the two travelers. He invokes Moses and the prophets to substantiate the divine plan of Christ’s path from suffering to glory. This segment shows that the Old Testament predicted the suffering of Christ, as well as his glory. The Jews had ignored the suffering aspects of Messianic prophecy.

24:31-32—The recognition scene is the high point of the story. The two travelers recognize Jesus when the Lord takes on the role of the host, breaks the bread, and gives thanks. They recall both the feeding of the 5,000 (9:10-17) and the Last Supper (22:19). Just as their failure to recognize Jesus in 24:16 was the result of divine action, so too the passive construction in 24:31, “their eyes were opened”, conveys a divine action initiating their recognition of the Lord. God reveals of the risen Christ.

How do we recognize Jesus? The story of the appearance on the road to Emmaus helps us on this front. First, we recognize him by knowing the Bible. Jesus opened the pages of Scripture to the two travelers (24:27) and later to the Eleven (24:45). Second, there was an experience of fellowship. Jesus reveals himself to us when alone, to be sure, but our greatest insights occur when we are in community. Third, we need heightened awareness, orchestrated by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (24:32, 49). Finally, the Emmaus travelers were available to Jesus and so must we.

3. Appearance to disciples in the upper room (24:36-49; see Mk. 16:14-20; Jn. 20:19-23)—This is Luke’s third Easter narrative. In the first, the angels bear witness, but Jesus is not seen. In the second, two travelers see the Lord Jesus and hurriedly return to Jerusalem to bear witness to the disciples. Here, Luke tells of the Lord’s unveiling to the disciples themselves in Jerusalem. This is substance for Luke’s apologetic in Acts 1:3-4 and in Peter’s witness to Cornelius in Acts 10:40-43.

While the disciples were trying to process the report of the travelers from Emmaus, Jesus appeared in their midst. They are terrified, thinking they were seeing a ghost. Jesus showed them his physical body and his hands and feet with the nail prints in them. To give further proof of his physical presence, he ate food while he was with them (24:36-43). He reminded them of what he told them while alive and then opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (24:44-49). They were to be witnesses and promised God’s power to enable them to testify to Jesus.

4. Ascension of Jesus (24:50-53)—Jesus leads the disciples out of Jerusalem to Bethany, gives them a parting blessing, and ascends into heaven. Luke’s gospel opens with blessing in the miraculous conceptions of John and Jesus and ends with the Lord’s enabling blessing on the disciples. The disciples worship him and return to Jerusalem with immense joy.

Luke's story bears resemblances to that of Matthew 28:16-20 where Jesus appears to the disciples in Galilee and gives them his last instructions. There is no great problem in Jesus appearing to his disciples both in Jerusalem (as in Luke, Acts, and John 20) and in Galilee (as in Matthew and John 21).

Luke 24 could be taken to imply that the Resurrection and the Ascension both occurred on the same day, Easter Sunday. However, this would contradict Luke's further account in Acts 1. Luke 24 summarizes events that occurred over an extended time. The Ascension is more than the last event in Luke's narrative or a postscript to the Resurrection. It has great significance for the opening verses of the sequel to his gospel, the book of Acts. He truncates the story here, having the expanded version at the beginning of Acts already in mind.

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